Homilies on Ezekiel

Gregory the Great (c. AD 540–604)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

Book 1

Two Books of Homilies on Ezekiel the Prophet Book One Preface. To my most beloved brother, Bishop Marianus, Gregory, bishop, servant of the servants of God. The homilies which were taken down as I spoke them before the people on the blessed prophet Ezekiel, I had left in neglect due to the pressing of many cares. But after eight years, at the request of the brethren, I endeavored to seek out the notes of the secretaries, and running through them with the Lord's favor, I corrected them insofar as the constraints of tribulations permitted. Your dear self had asked that these be sent for you to read, but I thought it quite unsuitable that you should draw up contemptible water when it is well known that you constantly drink deep and clear streams from the torrents of the blessed Fathers Ambrose and Augustine. But then again, when I consider that often amid daily delicacies even coarser foods taste pleasant, I have sent these lesser things to one who reads better things, so that while the coarser food is taken as if out of weariness, one may return more eagerly to the more refined dishes.

HOMILY I.

Intending to speak about the prophet Ezekiel by the inspiration of Almighty God, I must first explain the times and modes of prophecy, so that when its approach is shown, its power may be better understood. The times of prophecy are three, namely past, present, and future. But it should be known that in two of these times prophecy loses its etymology. For since prophecy is so called because it predicts future things, when it speaks of the past or present, it loses the meaning of its name, since it does not reveal what is to come, but either recalls things that have passed, or things that are. Yet we speak more truly of these three times of prophecy if we demonstrate them from the testimonies of Sacred Scripture. Prophecy concerning the future is: "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son. Prophecy concerning the past: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth. For a man spoke of that time in which there was no man. Prophecy concerning the present is when the Apostle Paul says: "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believes not, or one unlearned, he is convinced by all, he is judged by all; for the secrets of his heart are made manifest, and so falling down on his face he will worship God, declaring that God is truly in you.

Therefore when it is said, "The secrets of his heart are made manifest," it is clearly shown that through this mode of prophecy the spirit does not predict what is to come, but reveals

what is. But in what way is it called the spirit of prophecy, which indicates nothing future, but narrates the present? In this matter it must be noted that it is rightly called prophecy, not because it predicts things to come, but because it reveals hidden things. For just as times withdraw any matter from our eyes in the future, so a cause withdraws it from our eyes in the present. For a future thing is hidden in future time, but a present thought is concealed in the hidden heart. There is also present prophecy when any matter is hidden not by the mind, but by an absent place, which nevertheless is laid bare by the spirit. And there the mind of the one prophesying becomes present where the body is not present. For Gehazi had withdrawn far from the prophet when he was receiving the gifts of Naaman the Syrian, yet the same Prophet said to him: ”Was not my heart present when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? It should also be known that the times of prophecy harmonize with one another for the purpose of confirmation, so that sometimes past events are proven from future ones, and sometimes future events are proven from past ones. For Moses had said: ”In the beginning God created heaven and earth.

But who would believe that he spoke truly about the past if he had not also said something about the future? For at the end of the very book in whose beginning he had spoken those things about the past, he interspersed something of prophecy through the voice of Jacob concerning things to come, saying: ”The scepter shall not be taken away from Judah, nor a ruler from his thigh, until he comes who is to be sent, and he shall be the expectation of the nations. He also prophesied through himself about the one who was to be sent to the people whom he was leading, saying: ”The Lord your God will raise up a prophet for you from among your brothers; you shall listen to him as to me. Moreover, whoever will not listen to that prophet shall be cut off from his people. Why then did he intermingle future events with past ones, unless so that, when those things which he foretold about the future were fulfilled, he might show that he had also spoken truly about the past? Therefore, since we have taught how past things are proved from the prophecy of future things, it now remains for us to show further from the sacred scriptures how in the very spirit of prophecy future things are proved from past things.

Certainly the king of Babylon, when he had seen a dream, sent for the magicians and soothsayers, and summoned all the wise men of Babylon, and sought from them not only the interpretation of the dream, but also the dream itself, so that evidently from the past he might gather whether he could hold anything certain in their answers concerning the future. When they were utterly unable to tell it, Daniel was brought into their midst, who, when asked about both the interpretation of the dream and its narration, not only responded to what he was questioned about, but recounted the very origin of the dream, saying: ”You, O king, began to think on your bed what would be hereafter. And a little later: ”You, O king, were looking, and behold, as it were one great statue,” and so forth. As soon as he told the sequence of this dream, he revealed whatever was to follow from it concerning the future. Let us therefore consider the order of prophecy. From thoughts he came to the dream, from the dream he arrived at future things. He who brought forth, so to speak, the very root of the dream, surely proved from past things how true were the things he would say concern-

ing the future. But prophecy of the present time needs neither the attestation of the past nor of the future, because when a hidden thing is uncovered through the words of prophecy, the very thing which is shown attests to its truth.

Therefore, since we have treated of the times of prophecy, it remains for us to discuss something of its modes and qualities. For the spirit of prophecy does not touch the mind of the prophet always, nor in the same manner. For sometimes the spirit of prophecy touches the mind of the one prophesying from the present, and does not touch at all from the future; sometimes it touches from the future, and does not touch from the present. Sometimes indeed it touches from both the present and the future; but sometimes the mind of the one prophesying is touched equally from the past, and from the present, and from the future. Sometimes the spirit of prophecy touches from the past, and does not touch from the future; but sometimes it touches from the future, and does not touch from the past. Sometimes indeed it touches in part from the present, and in part does not touch; sometimes it touches in part from the future, and in part does not touch. But let us demonstrate these very things, if we can, with testimonies from sacred Scripture in the order in which they have been set forth. The spirit of prophecy touches the mind of the one prophesying from the present, but does not touch it from the future, just as John the Baptist, seeing the Lord coming, said: ”Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. But when he was about to die, having sent his disciples, he inquired, saying:

”Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect another? In these words it is shown that he knew indeed that the Redeemer had come to earth, but he doubted whether he would descend by himself to open the gates of hell. For he had been touched from the present through the spirit of prophecy, who seeing the humanity of the Mediator and understanding his divinity, confessed him to be the Lamb who would take away the sins of the world; but he had not been touched from the future, because he did not know of his coming to hell. Sometimes the spirit of prophecy touches the mind of the prophet from the future, yet does not touch it from the present, as the history of the book of Genesis clearly testifies, when Isaac sent his son Esau to hunt, and Rebecca substituted the younger son for blessing, who, clothed in goatskins, feigned his brother’s body to his father’s touch. Isaac gave the blessing to the younger son as if to the elder, and announced to him things that would happen far in the future; but who it was standing before him, he could not know. Therefore the spirit of prophecy touched the mind of the prophet from the future, yet did not touch it from the present, when the father with dimming eyes both foretold things to come and did not recognize the son present before him.

Sometimes the spirit of prophecy touches the mind of the one prophesying equally from present and future matters, as we are clearly taught from the same book of Genesis. For in it is written that when Jacob was approaching the end of his life, he had the two sons of Joseph stand before him, so that they might obtain blessings for the distant future from his blessing, and Joseph placed the elder at his right hand and the younger at his left. But when Jacob, with eyes dimmed by old age, could by no means discern with human sight which

of his grandsons was the firstborn and which was the younger, he crossed his arms and placed his right hand on the younger and his left hand on the elder. When his son wished to correct this, saying: ”It is not fitting thus, father, for this one is the firstborn,” he heard: ”I know, my son, I know: and this one indeed shall become peoples and shall be multiplied, but his younger brother shall be greater than he. Therefore the spirit of prophecy touched the mind of the one prophesying equally from present and future matters, since Jacob both announced things to come and discerned through the spirit those placed before him whom he could not see with bodily eyes.

Thus the spirit of prophecy had touched the mind of the prophet Ahijah from present and future matters, when, with eyes dimmed, he both recognized her who was pretending to be another woman as the wife of Jeroboam, and revealed to her whatever was going to happen to her, saying: ”Enter, wife of Jeroboam, why do you pretend to be another? But I have been sent to you as a harsh messenger. Go and say to Jeroboam: Thus says the Lord God of Israel: Because you have done evils above all who were before you, and have made for yourself foreign gods and molten images to provoke me to anger, and have cast me behind your back, therefore I will bring evils upon the house of Jeroboam. For the mind of the one prophesying had been touched equally from present and future matters, who was able both to detect her as she entered and to announce to her things to come. Sometimes, however, the mind of the one prophesying is touched equally by the past, the present, and the future, as when Elizabeth, seeing Mary come to her, recognized that she carried the incarnate Word in her womb, and called her the mother of her Lord, saying: ”Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Concerning whose conception it is also said to Joseph through the angel: ”For that which is born in her is of the Holy Spirit. This same Elizabeth said:

”Blessed are you who believed, because those things which were spoken to you by the Lord shall be fulfilled. For by saying: ”Blessed are you who believed,” she openly indicates that she recognized through the Spirit the words of the angel which had been spoken to Mary; and by adding: ”Those things which were spoken to you by the Lord shall be fulfilled,” she foresaw what would also follow for her in the future. Therefore she was touched simultaneously by the past, present, and future through the spirit of prophecy, for she both recognized that Mary had believed the promises of the angel, and by calling her mother, understood that she carried the Redeemer of the human race in her womb; and when she predicted that all things would be fulfilled, she also perceived what would follow in the future. Sometimes the spirit of prophecy touches the mind concerning the past, but does not touch it concerning the future, as is clearly shown in the Apostle Paul, who says to his disciples: ”I make known to you, brethren, the Gospel which was preached by me, that it is not according to man; for I neither received it from man, nor did I learn it, but through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Hence he also says to other disciples: ”According to revelation the mystery was made known to me. Yet when he was going up to Jerusalem to preach this same Gospel which he had known through revelation, he says:

”Behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what things shall happen to me there. For this is the mystery of the Gospel: that the Only-begotten of the Father was incarnate and made perfect man, who was crucified, dead, and buried, and rose again on the third day; and on the fortieth day ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father. He who therefore knew the Gospel through revelation was touched by the spirit of prophecy concerning the past; but because he did not know what he would suffer for that same Gospel, he was without doubt not touched concerning the future. For he says thus: ”Except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city, saying: Bonds and tribulations await me at Jerusalem,” clearly showing that those things which were to happen to him had been revealed to others about him, but not to himself about himself, as it is said of him through Agabus: ”The man whose belt this is must be thus bound in Jerusalem. But sometimes the spirit of prophecy touches from the future, yet does not touch from the past; as it is written concerning an act of Elisha, that when one of the sons of the prophets was cutting wood, the iron of his axe fell into the water, and he cried out: ”Alas! Alas! My lord, and I had borrowed this very thing. But the man of God said: ”Where did it fall? And he showed him the place.

So he cut a piece of wood and threw it there, and the iron floated. In this act of the prophet it is clearly recognized that he who asked where it had fallen knew what he was going to do; but nevertheless, since he asks, it is evident that he did not know where the iron had fallen. The spirit of prophecy, therefore, had touched Elisha’s mind from the future, but was not touching from the past, since he was able to know that the iron submerged in the depths would be recalled to the surface; but where it had fallen he did not know at all. Sometimes the spirit of prophecy touches in part for the present and in part does not touch. The history of the apostle Peter testifies to this, when the soldiers sent to him from Cornelius were announced to him through the spirit; for it is written: ”And the spirit said to him: Behold, three men seek you. He went down to them, and inquiring said: ”What is the reason for which you have come? In these words it is shown that he had not heard through the spirit that same reason which he was asking from the soldiers. Therefore in the present the spirit had touched Peter’s mind in part and in part had not touched it, since it both said that soldiers were present and was silent about the reason for which they had come. Sometimes the spirit of prophecy touches the mind partly concerning the future and partly does not touch it;

just as the sons of the prophets say to Elisha concerning the taking away of Elijah: ”Do you know that today the Lord will take your master from you? Yet after he was taken away, they scattered themselves through various places and sought him in the rocks and valleys. Therefore the spirit of prophecy had partly touched their minds concerning the future and partly had not touched them, since they sought as not to be found the one whom they knew was to be taken away. And so they were partly touched and partly not touched, because they both knew that he could be taken away and did not know that he could not be found. Likewise Elisha himself was partly touched by the spirit of prophecy concerning the future and partly not touched, when he said to the king of Israel: ”Strike the ground with an arrow.

And when he had struck three times and stopped, the man of God was angry with him and said: ”If you had struck five or six or seven times, you would have struck Syria even to its destruction; but now you will strike it three times.

He who knew that Syria would be struck as many times as he had struck the ground, yet when he said to him, ”Strike the ground,” did not know how many times he would strike it (since indeed he was indignant that the ground had been struck only three times)—it is certainly clear that he had been partly touched concerning the future and partly not touched, who predicted that Syria would be struck but wanted the ground to be struck more times. So Samuel, when he was being sent by the Lord to anoint David, answered: ”How shall I go? For Saul will hear and will kill me. Yet he both anointed David and was not killed by Saul. Therefore the mind of the prophet had been partly touched concerning the future and partly not touched, who both knew that David was to be anointed as king and did not know that he would not be killed by Saul. It should also be known that some prophets indeed are touched from near at hand, and are by no means touched from afar; others truly from afar, and are not touched from near at hand; but others are touched by the spirit of prophecy both from afar and from near at hand. For some are touched from near at hand, and not from afar, just as Samuel knew that the donkeys had been lost, and announced that they had been found, and predicts that Saul would be the future king;

he also announces that David would succeed in his kingdom, but does not predict that he would be the father of the eternal King. But some are touched from afar, and are not touched from near at hand, just as the same David knew that the Only-Begotten of God was to become incarnate, saying concerning Judea: ”A man was made in her, and the Most High himself founded her. And he understands that this one would ascend to the heavens and would sit at the right hand of the Father, saying: ”The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand. And yet he did not foresee many things that were done nearby. For to speak of a few things out of many, he did not perceive the servant of Mephibosheth lying to him against his own master; and making a promise to Amasa, he says: ”May God do this to me, and add this, if you will not be master of the army before me for all time in place of Joab,” evidently not knowing what would follow, because that same Amasa would not only not receive the command of the army in place of Joab, but would also end his life through Joab a little later. And when he wanted to build a temple to God, not knowing what would follow close at hand, he sought another prophet. But certain ones are touched both from afar and from nearby, just as Isaiah announces things far in the future, saying:

”Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel. Of whom he again says: ”A child is born to us, and a son is given to us; and the government is upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, God, Mighty, Father of the age to come, Prince of peace. His empire shall be multiplied, and of peace there shall be no end. He also, touched by the spirit of prophecy from nearby concerning King Hezekiah, predicted that he would rise from his illness, and announced how many years he would live after his illness. Sometimes, however, the spirit of prophecy is lacking to the prophets, nor

is it always present to their minds, so that when they do not have it, they may recognize that they have it as a gift when they do have it. Hence Elisha, when he forbade his servant Gehazi to push away the weeping Shunammite woman from his feet, said: ”Let her alone, for her soul is in bitterness, and the Lord has hidden it from me and has not revealed it to me. Likewise, when Jehoshaphat inquired of him about future things, and the spirit of prophecy was lacking to him, he had a psaltery brought, so that the spirit of prophecy might descend upon him through the praise of psalmody and fill his mind concerning things to come.

For the voice of psalmody, when it is performed with intention of heart, through it a way is prepared to the heart for the almighty Lord, so that he may pour into the attentive mind either the mysteries of prophecy or the grace of compunction. Hence it is written: ”The sacrifice of praise shall honor me, and there is the way by which I will show him the salvation of God. For what is called ”salvation” in Latin is called ”Jesus” in Hebrew. Therefore, in the sacrifice of praise a way is made for the showing of Jesus, because while compunction is poured forth through psalmody, a way is made for us in the heart through which we arrive at Jesus in the end, just as he himself speaks of his manifestation, saying: ”He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and I will manifest myself to him. Hence also it is written: ”Sing to the Lord, sing a psalm to his name, make a way for him who ascends above the setting sun, the Lord is his name. For he ascended above the setting sun, who trampled upon death by rising again. When we sing to him, we make a way, so that he may come to our heart and kindle us with the grace of his love. Moreover, that the spirit of prophecy is not always present to the prophets, the man of God also shows, who, being sent against Samaria, announced the evils that were to come upon it;

who nevertheless, though forbidden by the Lord to eat on the way, was deceived by the persuasion of a false prophet—whom the deceitful word would not have deceived if he had had the spirit of prophecy present with him. It should also be known that sometimes the holy prophets, when they are consulted, from their great habit of prophesying bring forth certain things from their own spirit, and they suppose that they are saying these things from the spirit of prophecy; but because they are holy, being quickly corrected through the Holy Spirit, they hear from Him what things are true, and they rebuke themselves for having spoken false things. For who does not know that Nathan was a holy man and a prophet? He both openly rebuked King David for his sin and announced what things would come upon him because of that same sin; yet when the same David had consulted him because he wished to build a temple to God, he immediately responded: ”Go and do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you. Concerning which it is immediately added there: ”But it happened that same night, and behold, the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying: Go and speak to my servant David. Thus says the Lord God: Will you build me a house to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt until this day. And a little later:

"When your days are fulfilled and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, who will come forth from your womb, and I will establish his kingdom; he will build a house for my name. Behold, Nathan the prophet, who had previously said to the king, "Go and do it," afterward, having been taught through the spirit of prophecy, announcing that this could not be done, contradicted both the king's plans and his own words, because he recognized that what he had spoken from his own spirit had been false. In this matter there is this distinction between true and false prophets: that true prophets, if they ever say anything from their own spirit, being instructed by the Holy Spirit, quickly correct this in the minds of their hearers. But false prophets both announce false things and, being estranged from the Holy Spirit, persist in their falsehood. Having considered, therefore, the times and modes of prophecy, it is fitting to observe how almighty God dispenses the moderations of His wrath for the advancement of humanity. For the Israelite people had sinned against their Creator, and therefore served the king of Babylon in captivity; yet with them the prophet Ezekiel was sent into captivity, whom divine grace had made so pleasing to Himself that through him He might predict future events and deign to console the mind of the afflicted people.

Let us consider, therefore, if we can, how great is the dispensation of heavenly mercy, because the Lord was so angry with His people that nevertheless He was not entirely angry. For if He had not been angry, He would never have delivered the people into captivity; and if He had been entirely angry, He would not have sent His chosen ones into captivity with them. But divine mercy acts in such a way that from one and the same circumstance from which it gives a scourge to the carnal, it provides an increase of virtue to the spiritual. And while it purges those through tribulation, it rouses these through fellowship with the afflicted to merit greater things. And so it is angry with the unjust, yet nevertheless consoles their hearts through the company of the just; lest if it should abandon them entirely, no one would return to pardon after their sins. Therefore, by holding it repels, and by repelling it holds, when it sends into tribulation along with those whom it judges those whom it loves. Who could sufficiently weigh these depths of such great mercy? That the Lord does not leave the sins of the people without punishment, and yet does not utterly reject the sinning people from Himself. So when Moses had sent twelve spies to the promised land, of whom ten afterwards caused the people to despair, that same people, inflamed with angry murmuring, complained that they had been deceived by the Lord so that their corpses might lie in the desert;

to whom almighty God, angered, said that none of them would enter the promised land. Struck with terror at this, they recognized that they had acted wrongly, afflicted themselves in tears, and girded with weapons, immediately began to advance against the enemy, so that they might be able to enter the promised land after their tears. To them the Lord says through Moses: "Tell them: Do not go up, and do not fight; for I am not with you, lest you fall before your enemies. In this matter we must consider: if He was not with them, why did He forbid them to go up lest they fall? But if He was with them, what does it mean when He says: "For I am not with you"? But by a wonderful dispensation of discipline and mercy,

He both was with them and was not with them. He was not with them so that they might conquer, but nevertheless He was with them so that they would not perish at the hands of their enemies. O ineffable depths of mercy! He pursues sins, and yet protects the sinners. He indicates that He is angry, and yet defends them from their enemies. So often a mother is angry with her little son when he misbehaves; she rebukes, scolds, and strikes him;

but if she sees him heading toward a precipice where he might rush into mortal danger, she extends her hand and holds him back, and she who had struck him in such anger as if she did not love him, so holds him back in love as if she had not struck him in anger. Speaking these things in the preface alone, we have made an exercise of our voyage as if within the harbor, so that we may then spread our sails toward investigating the mysteries of prophecy, as into the immensity of the sea. Yet we do not presume this in our own strength, but in him who makes the tongues of infants eloquent, because the Spirit of the Lord has filled the world, and that which contains all things has knowledge of speech. For the almighty God is the Word of the almighty Father, and we who desire to speak about him will in no way be mute in him. The almighty Word will give useful words, who incarnate for us lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY II.

The custom of prophetic speech is to first describe the person, time, and place, and afterward begin to speak the mysteries of prophecy, so that in order to demonstrate the truth more solidly, it first fixes the root of the history, and then brings forth the fruits of the spirit through signs and allegories. Ezekiel therefore indicates the time of his age, saying: ”And it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth of the month. Also announcing the place, he adds: ”When I was in the midst of the captives by the river Chobar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. He also indicates the time, adding: ”On the fifth of the month, this is the fifth year of the captivity of King Joachin. And so that he might properly indicate the person, he also relates his lineage, when it is added: ”And the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel the son of Buzi, the priest. But the first question arises for us: why did he who had said nothing yet begin thus, saying: ”And it came to pass in the thirtieth year”? For ”and” is a word of conjunction, and we know that a subsequent word is not joined except to a preceding word. Therefore, he who had said nothing—why does he say ”And it came to pass,” when there is no word to which he might subjoin what he begins?

In this matter it must be observed that just as we perceive corporeal things, so the senses of the prophets perceive spiritual things, and those things are present to them which seem absent to our ignorance. Whence it happens that in the minds of the prophets interior things are so joined to exterior things that they see both at once, and in them there occurs simultaneously both the word which they hear within and that which they speak outwardly. Therefore the reason is clear why he who had said nothing began saying: ”And it came to pass in the thirtieth year”—because he joined this word which he brought forth outwardly to that word which he had heard within. Therefore he continued the words which he brought forth to the inner vision, and for this reason he begins saying: ”And it came to pass. For

he subjoins what he begins to speak outwardly, as if that which he sees within were also outside. Now what is said about his receiving the spirit of prophecy in the thirtieth year indicates something we should consider, namely that according to the use of reason, the word of teaching is not available except at a mature age. Hence the Lord Himself at the twelfth year of His age, sitting in the temple among the teachers, wished to be found not teaching but questioning.

For so that men would not dare to preach at a weak age, He who through His divinity always teaches the angels in heaven deigned to question men on earth in the twelfth year of His age. For since He Himself is the wisdom of God, the angels live by seeing Him, by which they are satisfied with eternal blessedness. Moses also admonishes this under the mystery of allegory, saying: ”You shall not plow with the firstborn of an ox. For we understand the firstborn of an ox to be good work in the weak age of our first time. Yet in this we must not plow, because when the times of our adolescence or youth are first, we must still refrain from preaching, so that the plowshare of our tongue does not dare to break up the soil of another’s heart. For as long as we are weak, we ought to contain ourselves within ourselves, lest while we show forth tender goods too quickly, we lose them, because even planted saplings, if they have not first been rooted in the earth, wither more quickly when touched by hand; but if they have once fixed their root, the hand touches them, and yet does no harm; winds push against them, yet those pushing do not injure them. And constructed walls, if pushed, collapse, unless they have first been dried of their moisture.

Therefore the mind, as long as it has not been perfectly dried from the moisture of its depravity, ought not to be touched by the hand of another’s tongue, lest before it fully perceives, it lose its solidity, lest when pushed it fall, lest like a sapling without roots, while it is shaken more than it can bear, it wither. Therefore only those things that are firm should be shown as an example. For the mind must first grow strong, and afterward be displayed for the benefit of neighbors, when now it neither falls down when lifted up by praise, nor wastes away when struck by blame. For even though it is said to Timothy: ”Command these things and teach; let no one despise your youth,” it should be known that in sacred speech sometimes adolescence is called youth. Hence it is written: ”Rejoice, young man, in your youth. Therefore the prophet, to show of what authority he is in preaching, is described as being of a mature age, so that life and spirit and all things that are fitting for preaching may be seen to accord with him. Neither should anyone be troubled against these things by the fact that Jeremiah and Daniel received the spirit of prophecy as boys, since miracles are not to be taken as examples for regular practice. For the Almighty God both makes the tongues of infants eloquent and perfects praise from the mouths of infants and nursing children.

But it is one thing what we learn from the use and discipline of teaching, another what we know from a miracle. Now indeed if it is asked whether something mystical might be indicated in the very expression of that age itself, it is not absurd that the prophet should show the Lord, whom he announces in words, also by the very time of his own age. In the thirtieth year of the prophet Ezekiel the heavens were opened, and he saw visions of

the Lord beside the river Chebar, because in approximately the thirtieth year of His age the Lord came to the river Jordan. There therefore the heavens were opened, because the Spirit descended in a dove; a voice also sounded from heaven, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. But the Hebrew words themselves are also very useful to us for interpreting the mystery. For Chobar is interpreted as heaviness or weight; Ezekiel as the strength of God; Buzi as despised or contempt; the Chaldeans as those who capture or as demons. Therefore Ezekiel came to the river Chobar; for since Chobar is called heaviness or weight, what is fittingly designated by the river Chobar except the human race? Which flows from birth to death, and is heavy to itself from the sins which it both commits and carries, because, as it is written: Iniquity sits upon a talent of lead. For every sin is heavy, because it does not permit the soul to be lifted up to heavenly things.

Hence it is also said through the Psalmist: Sons of men, how long will you be heavy of heart? But it is written of the Lord that he himself is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Therefore Ezekiel came to the river Chobar, because the strength of God through the mystery of his incarnation deigned to draw near to the human race bearing the burdens of its sins, which from its birth daily flows toward death, as it is said of him through the Psalmist: And he shall be like a tree which is planted by the streams of waters. Indeed, he was planted by the streams of waters, because he was incarnate near the falls of the flowing peoples. Now we said that Ezekiel is interpreted as the strength of God, but Buzi as despised. But Ezekiel is the son of Buzi, because the only-begotten of God deigned to be incarnate from that people whom the Lord despised on account of the fault of their unfaithfulness. Therefore the strength of God is born from contempt or being despised, because our Redeemer deigned to assume humanity from a faithless and despised people. But he came into the land of the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans, as we said, are interpreted as those who capture or as demons. For the wicked, because they both commit iniquities themselves and by persuading draw others to iniquity, are certainly those who capture.

They are also rightly interpreted as demons, because those who by persuading draw others to iniquity take upon themselves in their own persons the ministry of demons toward iniquity, although they are not demons by nature. Therefore the strength of God came into the land of the Chaldeans, because the Only-begotten of the Father appeared among those who had flowed toward sin in themselves and were drawing others captive to sins. But let the discourse of exposition now return to the person of the prophet. And the hand of the Lord was upon him there. The hand or arm of the Lord is called the Son, because through Him all things were made. Of whom the Psalmist also says: ”Let Your hand be upon me to save me. For the hand of God, which through divinity was not made but begotten, was made through humanity, so that it might heal the wounds of the human race. Therefore the prophet recognized the incarnation of the Only-begotten there, where he saw the hand of the Lord made upon him. But as for what is added here: ”And I looked, and behold, a whirlwind came from the North. We must consider what order of expression there is in the words of the prophet. For he who had said above concerning himself, ”The heavens were

opened, and I saw visions of God," afterward adds as if narrating about another: "And the hand of the Lord was upon him there. And then he returns as it were to himself and says:

"And I saw, and behold a whirlwind came from the North. What is this, that now Ezekiel speaks, now about Ezekiel? If he had spoken about himself throughout, there would be no question. If he had spoken throughout as if about another, there would likewise have been no question. What then is this, that the prophetic discourse is so varied that now the Prophet speaks about himself, but now another seems to speak about him? But we must know that those who are filled with the spirit of prophecy, by the fact that they sometimes speak openly about themselves, and sometimes utter words about themselves as if about others, indicate that it is not the prophet but the Holy Spirit who speaks through the prophet. For inasmuch as the word is made through them, they themselves speak about themselves; and inasmuch as they speak by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit speaks through them about them, as the Truth attests who says: "For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. Hence Moses also says: "Moses was the meekest man above all men who dwelt on the earth. For he who does not say "I was" but "he was" plainly indicates that he who was speaking through him about him was another. Hence John says: "He saw that disciple whom Jesus loved. Whence Paul also, to show that it was not he who was speaking, said: "Do you seek proof of Christ who speaks in me?

Therefore, since in prophetic speech one is he who presides, another he who serves, when the prophet speaks about himself it is the person of the one serving, but when the Holy Spirit speaks through the prophet about the prophet, the sublimity of the one presiding is shown. Rightly therefore it is said as if about another: "And the hand of the Lord was upon him there"; and about himself he immediately adds: "And I saw, and behold a whirlwind came from the North. Now therefore we must discuss what it means when he says: "And behold a whirlwind came from the North, and a great cloud. Because the north wind constrains with cold, the torpor of the malignant spirit is not unfittingly designated by the name of the north wind. The prophet Isaiah also testifies to this, who declares that the devil said: "I will sit upon the mountain of the testament, in the sides of the north. For the malignant spirit held the mountain of the testament, because he subjugated the Jewish people, who had received the law, to himself in faithlessness. For when he holds the hearts of teachers, the devil presides over the mountain of the testament. He also sits in the sides of the north, because he possesses the cold minds of men. Whence also it is said in the voice of the bridegroom in the Song of Songs: "Arise, O north wind, and come, O south wind, blow through my garden, and let its spices flow forth.

For when, at the Lord's command, the cold spirit withdraws, the warm spirit occupies the mind of the faithful; which blows through God's garden, that is, the holy Church, so that the fragrances of its virtues may flow forth to the knowledge of many like spices. For when the north wind withdraws, that is, the malignant spirit, the Holy Spirit fills the mind like the south wind. When He blows by warming, immediately the spices of virtues flow from the hearts of the faithful. Therefore the prophet, seeing what things were to come at the

end, saw a wind of whirlwind coming from the north, because at the end of the age the malignant spirit will more grievously occupy the minds of men with the cold of his torpor. Whence it is written: ”Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil has descended to you having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time. For the ancient adversary has more grievously intensified the efforts of his treacheries in human minds. Against his growing pride, the humility of the incarnate God was made manifest: and so that He might heal the human race from its weakness, then the great power of the physician appeared, when the sickness of the patient increased. Well, the sending forth of a malign spirit is called a whirlwind. For a whirlwind shatters a building it touches by shaking it. And every temptation of the ancient enemy, which is carried out in the mind, is a whirlwind;

because by shaking it through desires, it tears it from the state of its uprightness. But let us pass over in silence these things that will come upon the human race from the cunning enemy at the end, and turn our words to Judaea alone, from which the Prophet came, and whose destruction he beholds in prophesying. She endured a whirlwind from the north all the more grievously when the Lord was incarnate, inasmuch as she fell shaken from her uprightness and remained in cold perfidy through the torpor of the mind. Therefore a whirlwind came from the north when the malign spirit shook the life of the Jewish people in temptation. Where it is also rightly added: And a great cloud. For the more anyone burned with cruelty, the more he deserved to be blinded in the darkness of his ignorance. Indeed, they denied the Redeemer of the human race whom they had awaited while understanding him in the law and the prophets, yet denied him when they saw him. Hence it came about that their mind was covered by a great cloud of their ignorance, so that they would not recognize him when seeking him afterward—him whom they had been able to proclaim before, yet refused to love. For when they beheld now his powers and miracles, but now his sufferings, a great cloud had come from the North into the hearts of the unbelievers, because from the cold of their sin, on account of the weakness of his passion, they were blind even amid the signs.

But what followed from that darkness of the great cloud is added, when it immediately says: ”And fire enveloping. For by the name of fire, when it is spoken through signification, sometimes the Holy Spirit is designated, and sometimes the malice of the mind. For concerning good fire it is written: ”I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and what do I desire, except that it be kindled? For fire is cast upon the earth when the earthly mind, breathed upon by the ardor of the Holy Spirit, is consumed away from its carnal desires. But concerning evil fire it is said: ”And now fire shall consume the adversaries,” because the most wicked heart wastes away from its own malice. Moreover, just as the fire of love raises up the mind, so the fire of malice envelops it, because the Holy Spirit elevates the heart which it fills, and the ardor of malice always bends it toward lower things. Therefore Judea, blinded by the cloud of her ignorance, because she soon burst forth into the wickedness of persecution, was enveloped by her own fire, she who entangled herself in the bond of wickedness through that very cruelty with which she burned. ”And a wind of whirlwind was coming from the North, and a great cloud, and fire enveloping,” because having been led from the coldness of her

torpor into the darkness of ignorance, she burst forth even unto the malice of persecution. Whence it is also said to another prophet: ”What do you see? Who immediately responded:

”I see a boiling pot, and its face is from the face of the North. For the mind of the Jews, raging in persecution and rolling waves of thoughts in the cruelty of malice, what else was it but a boiling pot? Its face is said to be from the face of the North, because if she had not subjected herself to the adversary spirit through torpor of mind, she would not have burned against good people in such great malice. Therefore fire enveloping follows the cloud, because in them the cruelty of persecution followed the blindness of mind. For if they had known, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory. But this fire burned in one place and shone in another. For it is added: ”And splendor was round about it. For while persecution was being carried out in Judea, the holy preaching of the apostles was scattered throughout the whole world, as they themselves say: ”The word of God had been sent to you, but since you have judged yourselves unworthy, behold, we go to the Gentiles. Therefore from the cruelty of malice, which burned up the mind of Judea, almighty God spread light to the Gentiles, because through the fact that she persecuted her Redeemer and his members, with the holy apostles scattered in various directions, we who were situated in the region around Judea in darkness saw the splendor of the true light by the gift of heavenly grace. Whence it is written:

”To those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, a light has risen for them. And so this fire of malice which burned from the hearts of the Jews in persecution, before it would afflict the holy apostles by raging against them, exercised itself upon the very author and redeemer of the human race. Whence it is also added: ”And from its midst as it were the appearance of electrum,” that is, from the midst of the fire. What is designated by the appearance of electrum, except Christ Jesus, the Mediator of God and men? For electrum is made from gold and silver. In electrum, when gold and silver are mixed, the silver increases in brightness, while the gold grows pale from its own brilliance. The one advances toward brightness, the other is tempered from brightness. Therefore, since in the only-begotten Son of God our nature was united to the nature of divinity, in which union humanity grew into the glory of majesty, while divinity tempered itself from the power of its brilliance to human eyes—through the fact that human nature was made brighter, as it were the silver increased through the gold. And because divinity was tempered from its brilliance to our sight, as it were the gold grew pale to us through the silver. For that immutable nature, which remaining in itself renews all things, if it had wished to appear to us as it is, would have burned us with its brilliance rather than renewed us.

But God tempered the brightness of his greatness to our eyes, so that while his brightness is tempered for us, even our weakness might become bright in his light through likeness to him, and through grace received might change, so to speak, the color of its condition. Therefore, like electrum in fire is God made man in persecution. There follows: And in the midst of it the likeness of four living creatures. What is said to be in the midst of it, whether of electrum or of fire, nothing prevents us from understanding, because these four

living creatures, namely the holy evangelists, were both strengthened in the virtue of faith from the incarnation of the same Lord, and afflicted with many tribulations in the fire of persecution. But if anyone wishes to understand these things which we have said about the Lord's first coming also concerning His second coming, he is to be followed with swift agreement, because often the spirit of prophecy in one thing it speaks beholds many things at once. For the whirlwind comes from the North, because indeed the cause of sins demands that the shaking of strict judgment disturb all the elements together. For the terror of the final disturbance is said to come from where it is generated. For since the judgment of final disturbance is carried out to strike the cold minds of sinners, rightly the whirlwind is said to come from the North.

This shaking is aptly called a whirlwind, because on that day the hearts of all who shall then be found in mortal flesh will be moved with excessive fear. For when what is written begins to be fulfilled: "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken," what mind of man will there be that does not dread the sentence of the eternal Judge? For there then all sins at once return before the eyes, there all things which were done with delight are recalled to memory with fear, there is the darkness of miserable thought from the punishment of approaching damnation. Whence it is also added: "And a great cloud. For then from the memory of sins the darkness of blindness weighs down the perception of the mind, when the reprobate are not permitted to behold the only-begotten Son of God in the form of divinity. For "they shall look upon Him whom they pierced. And, "Let the ungodly be taken away, lest he see the glory of God. Where it is also openly added: "And fire enfolding itself. Because indeed that fire of judgment, which will burn up the aerial heaven and the earth, will no longer permit sinners to be raised up in their pride, but will enfold them, whom without doubt it will crush in the punishment of their damnation. And there was splendor all around it.

For just as lightning goes out from the East and appears even to the West, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Where no one is then permitted to hide in his mind from the judgment, because he is penetrated by the very brilliance of the Judge. Concerning this it is soon added: And in its midst was something like the appearance of electrum, that is, from the midst of the fire. For He Himself, our Redeemer, presiding over angels and archangels and all the powers, who as in the likeness of electrum remained one from both and in both natures, both God with the Father, and for our redemption was made mortal with men, will then be seen in His terror, and the fire of judgment will serve Him in vengeance upon the reprobate. For thus it is written: The day of the Lord will make clear because it will be revealed in fire. Thus the Psalmist says: God will come manifestly, our God, and He will not be silent; fire will burn in His sight, and around Him will be a mighty storm. Thus the apostle Peter says: The day of the Lord will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with great violence, and the elements will be dissolved by the heat of fire. And because then all the saints who perfectly abandoned the world come as judges, it is fittingly soon added: And in the midst of it was the likeness of four living creatures.

For what is signified by the four living creatures except the four evangelists? And not without reason is the number of all the perfect expressed through the four evangelists, because all who are now perfect in the Church have learned the rectitude of their perfection through their Gospel. For in the midst of it was the likeness of four living creatures, because those who have now followed perfect works according to the Gospel precepts will then be seen united to his body, joined to his majesty, and made judges together with him. For this is why it is said to the holy apostles themselves: You who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his majesty, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Hence Isaiah says: The Lord will come to judgment with the elders of his people. Hence Solomon speaks of the Church, saying: Her husband is noble in the gates, when he sits with the senators of the land. Therefore, having briefly passed over these things, pursuing the order of the first coming as we began, let us return in our exposition to the persons of the Evangelists. It follows: And this was their appearance: there was the likeness of a man in them.

Since a little later these holy living creatures are described as distinct in their individual forms, so that one is said to be like a man, another like a lion, another like a calf, and another like an eagle, what does it mean that in this place it is said of all of them together, "The likeness of a man was in them"? But who is described as a man in this place, if not he of whom it is written: "Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and found in appearance as a man"? Therefore these living creatures, that they may be able to rise to the virtue of holiness, strive toward the likeness of this man. For they would not be holy if they did not have the likeness of this man, because whatever is in them of tender compassion, whatever of gentleness of spirit, whatever of zeal for righteousness, whatever of the keeping of humility, whatever of the fervor of charity—all this they drew from the very fountain of mercy, from the very root of gentleness, from the very power of justice, that is, from the Mediator between God and men, God the Lord. The outstanding preacher shows that he has the likeness of this man, saying: "Be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ. He urges us to rise to his likeness when he says:

"The first man was from the earth, earthly; the second man is from heaven, heavenly. As we have borne the image of the earthly, let us also bear the image of him who descended from heaven. For each holy person is led to the likeness of this man to the extent that he imitates the life of his Redeemer. For to be at variance with his commandments and works, what else is it but to depart far from his likeness? Holy preachers weep over the life of sinners; but of our very Head it is written that he wept over Jerusalem. They rejoice over the good deeds of their subjects, and they love those who act rightly; but of our Redeemer it is written that when a certain young man said, "All these things I have kept from my youth," he loved him more. Holy preachers bear insults inflicted upon them and return no insult in turn; but when it was said to our Redeemer, "You have a demon," he did not return injury but responded gently, saying: "I do not have a demon. Holy preachers burn with zeal for righteousness; but the Redeemer of all, having made a whip of cords, drove out those selling

and buying from the temple, overturned the seats of those selling doves, and poured out the money of the money-changers. In all that they do with strength, they guard humility with their whole intention; but through our Redeemer it is said: ”Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.

Holy preachers also love their persecutors; but he himself, the author and redeemer of all, placed in his passion, interceded for his persecutors, saying: ”Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. They lay down their bodies in suffering for their brothers; but the author of life gave himself up even to death for the life of the elect. Let it therefore be said of the holy living creatures that the likeness of a man is in them, because that they are holy, that they are wonderful—this is in them from the appearance of likeness, that is, from the power of imitation. For our Redeemer is the head of us all. And through Solomon it is said: ”The eyes of the wise man are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. For we have our eyes in the head when we contemplate the life of our Redeemer in silent meditation, when our whole intention raises itself to the imitation of him, lest if the eye of the mind neglects to look upon the ways of light, it immediately falls closed into the darkness of error. The Prophet was hastening to rise to the likeness of this man when he said: ”I will exercise myself in your commandments and consider your ways. For he who silently considers the ways of the Lord in his mind, and hastens to exercise himself in his commandments, what else does he reform in himself but the image of the new man?

Because this is done unceasingly in the hearts of the saints, it is rightly now said of the living creatures: ”The likeness of a man was in them. After this likeness which is now maintained in moral conduct, we eventually arrive at the likeness of glory. For John says of this: ”Now we are children of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him. He soon adds how this can come about, saying: ”Because we shall see him as he is. For God’s being is to remain eternal and unchangeable. For everything that changes ceases to be what it was and begins to be what it was not; but God’s being is never to be in a dissimilar state. Hence it is said to Moses: ”I am who I am. And you shall say to the children of Israel: He who is sent me to you. James also says: ”With whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration. And so it is said through John: ”We shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is,” because through the fact that we behold the essence of his nature, freed from our mutability, we are fixed in eternity. For we shall be transformed in him whom we shall see, because we shall lack death by seeing life; we shall transcend our mutability by seeing the immutable. We shall be held by no corruption by seeing the incorruptible.

Moreover, there will be a likeness of the man even in our bodies at that time. For it is said through Paul: ”Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our lowliness, conformed to the body of his glory. Therefore the bodies of the elect will then be conformed to the glory of the Lord’s body, which even if they do not have equality with his glory by nature, they will nevertheless have a likeness of his configuration by grace. Since therefore a likeness of his life is now drawn

out in the conduct of the elect, and in the resurrection there follows a likeness of eternity in the mind, because we shall see him as he is; and since our bodies also will receive a likeness of him in configuration, let it rightly be said of the holy living creatures: ”A likeness of a man was in them. Let it suffice that we have touched upon these things in advance at the beginning of our exposition, so that the power of speech, refreshed by silence, may arise more robust for investigating the mysteries that follow. For we are certain that we have as our helper him of whom we speak, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY III.

The four holy living creatures, which are foreseen through the spirit of prophecy, are described with subtle narration when it is said: ”Four faces to each one, and four wings to each one. What is expressed by the face except knowledge, and what by the wings except flight? For indeed each one is recognized by the face, while by wings the bodies of birds are lifted up on high. The face therefore pertains to faith, the wing to contemplation. For through faith we are known by almighty God, just as He Himself says of His sheep: ”I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and mine know me. Who says again: ”I know whom I have chosen. But through contemplation, because we are raised above ourselves, we are as it were lifted into the air. Therefore four faces belong to each one, because if you should ask what Matthew thinks concerning the incarnation of the Lord, he undoubtedly thinks what Mark, Luke, and John think. If you should ask what John thinks, it is without doubt what Luke, Mark, and Matthew think. If you should ask what Mark thinks, it is what Matthew, John, and Luke think. If you should ask what Luke thinks, it is what John, Matthew, and Mark think. Therefore four faces belong to each one, because the knowledge of faith, by which they are known by God, is the same in one as it is simultaneously in all four.

For whatever you find in one, you rightly recognize this same thing in all four together. And four wings to each one, because they all together harmoniously preach the Son of God Almighty, our Lord Jesus Christ, and lifting the eyes of the mind to His divinity, they fly with the wing of contemplation. Therefore the faces of the Evangelists pertain to the humanity of the Lord, the wing to His divinity, because in Him whom they behold as corporeal, they gaze as it were with their faces. But when they proclaim that He is uncircumscribed and incorporeal in His divinity, they are lifted as it were into the air by the wing of contemplation. Therefore, since there is one faith in His incarnation in all of them, and an equal contemplation of His divinity in each one, it is rightly said now: Four faces to each one, and four wings to each one. But what virtue would there be if the preachers having faith and contemplation of the Lord did not have holy works? It follows: And their feet were straight feet. What is designated by feet if not the steps of actions? Therefore the feet of the four living creatures are described as being straight, because the works of the holy evangelists and of all the perfect are not twisted to follow iniquity. But those do not have straight feet who are bent back to the evils of the world which they had abandoned. Of whom it is written:

”The dog returned to his own vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. The distinguished teacher grieved over certain ones because they had twisted the straightness of their feet backward, to whom he said by way of rebuke: ”How do you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, which you desire to serve again? You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years. I fear for you, lest perhaps I have labored among you in vain. He who admonishes others, saying: ”Therefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the weakened knees, and make straight steps with your feet. But in order that gravity of life, fortitude, and discretion might be shown in these same holy preachers, it is rightly added: ”The sole of their foot was like the sole of a calf’s foot. For the holy preachers are designated by the name of oxen, as Paul the Apostle teaches, explaining the testimony of the law: ”You shall not muzzle the ox that treads out the grain. In the holy preachers, therefore, the sole of the foot is that of a calf, namely proceeding with maturity, and strong, and divided, because each preacher has both reverence in maturity, and strength in work, and division of the hoof in discernment. For his preaching is not easily received if he appears to be frivolous in his conduct. And there will be no display of maturity if strength of work is not present against all adversities.

Moreover, the strength of work itself loses the merit of virtue if it is not discerning in understanding. For behold, we read Sacred Scripture: if we understand everything according to the letter, we have lost the virtue of discernment; if we lead everything toward spiritual allegory, we are similarly bound by the folly of indiscretion. For the holy preachers read the sacred words, and sometimes they accept the letter in its historical sense, sometimes indeed they seek the spirit through the meaning of the letter. And at times they imitate the good deeds of the preceding fathers just as they find them according to the letter; at times they understand spiritually certain things that are not to be imitated according to history, and they strive toward advancement. What else, therefore, do the holy preachers do in their work but divide the hoof in their foot? Concerning whom it is still fittingly added: ”And sparks like the appearance of glowing bronze. Bronze is a very resonant metal. And rightly are the voices of preachers compared to bronze, because their sound has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world. Moreover, bronze is fittingly called glowing, because the life of preachers both resounds and burns. For it burns with desire and resounds with the word. Glowing bronze, therefore, is preaching set on fire. But sparks come forth from glowing bronze, because from their exhortations flaming words proceed to the ears of the hearers.

Rightly, moreover, are the words of preachers called sparks, because they set on fire those whom they touch in the heart. It should also be considered that sparks are very fine and thin, because when holy preachers speak of the heavenly fatherland, they are not able to reveal as much by their word as they can burn with desire. From their tongue, therefore, certain sparks as it were come to us, because from the heavenly fatherland scarcely something faint is known through their voice, which nevertheless is not faintly loved by them. For they are neither able to see the heavenly glory as great as it is, nor able to speak as much as they see. Glowing bronze, therefore, casts forth sparks when the preacher is scarcely able to

speak faintly of that by which he himself is powerfully set on fire. But by divine mercy it is brought about that from these very faint sparks the soul of the hearer is inflamed, because there are some who, when they hear small things, are filled with greater desire; and from that source they burn perfectly in the love of God, from which they have received only the faintest sparks of words. The word of preaching is indeed a seed in the heart of the hearer. And the good hearer afterwards brings forth from it a great harvest of knowledge, from which he had previously received only a small seed of speech.

To this matter the miracle performed by the prophet Elisha for the widow fittingly corresponds, who, lest she lose her two sons when the creditor took them away, obeyed the prophet's words, and from the little oil she had, she poured it out through empty vessels, which were all afterwards filled to the brim, and from their filling the woman was freed from her debt to her creditor. What else does this woman signify but the holy Church, mother of two peoples, that is, the Jewish and the Gentile, as if of two sons? She had previously received from the creditor, as it were, a certain coin of sin through the persuasion of the cunning spirit by perverse work, and she feared to lose the two sons whom she had begotten in faith. But obeying the prophet's words, that is, the precepts of Sacred Scripture, she poured from the little oil she had into empty vessels, because when the empty minds of many hear something small about the love of the Divinity from the mouth of one teacher, with grace abounding, they are filled to the brim with the ointment of divine love. And now many hearts, which were previously empty little vessels, are full of the ointment of the Spirit, which seemed to have been poured only from a small quantity of oil. While this is given to some and to others, and faith is received by the hearers, the woman of Zarephath, namely the holy Church, is no longer held under debt to her creditor. There follows:

"And the hand of a man under their wings on four sides. The four parts can be understood in this place as the four regions of the world, namely East, West, South, and North, because the preaching of the saints has gone forth by God's authority into all parts of the world. We can also understand by the four principal parts the four virtues from which the remaining virtues arise, namely prudence, fortitude, justice, and temperance. We truly receive these virtues when we maintain their order. For prudence is first, fortitude second, justice third, and temperance fourth. For what good can prudence do if fortitude is lacking? For to know what one cannot do is more a torment than a virtue. But he who prudently understands what he should do, and bravely does what he has understood, is without doubt already just; yet temperance ought to follow his justice, because justice very often falls into cruelty if it lacks moderation. Therefore that justice is truly justice which governs itself with the restraint of temperance, so that in the zeal with which one burns, he may also be temperate; lest if he burns too intensely, he lose the justice whose limits he does not know how to maintain. There are two lives of holy preachers, namely active and contemplative; but the active is prior in time to the contemplative, because through good work one strives toward contemplation.

The contemplative, however, is greater in merit than the active, because the latter labors in the practice of present work, while the former already tastes the coming rest with an inner savor. What therefore is signified by hands if not the active life, and what by wings if not the contemplative life? The hand of a man is therefore under their wings, that is, the power of work is under the flight of contemplation. This is well represented in the Gospel by those two women, namely Martha and Mary. For Martha was busy about frequent service; but Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his words. Therefore one was intent on work, the other on contemplation. One served the active life through external ministry, the other the contemplative through the suspension of her heart upon the word. And although the active life is good, the contemplative is nevertheless better, because the former fails with mortal life, while the latter grows more fully in immortal life. Hence it is said: Mary has chosen the best part, which shall not be taken from her. Since therefore the active is lesser in merit than the contemplative, it is rightly now said: The hand of a man under their wings. For even if through the active life we do something good, yet through the contemplative we fly toward heavenly desire. Hence also in Moses the active is called servitude, but the contemplative freedom.

And since both lives are from the gift of grace, nevertheless as long as we live among our neighbors, one is for us a matter of necessity, the other of will. For who, knowing God, enters into His kingdom unless he first does good works? Therefore, without the contemplative life those can enter the heavenly homeland who do not neglect the good works they are able to perform; but without the active life they cannot enter if they neglect to do the good works they can. The former, therefore, is a matter of necessity, the latter of will. The former is in servitude, the latter in freedom. Hence it is said to Moses: If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve you for six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free without payment. With whatever garment he entered, with such let him go out. If he has a wife, let his wife also go out with him. But if his master has given him a wife, and she has borne sons and daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to his master, but he himself shall go out with his clothing. But if the servant says, I love my master and my wife and children, I will not go out free, his master shall bring him to the gods, and he shall be brought to the door and the posts, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl, and he shall be his servant forever.

We have given this testimony at somewhat greater length in order to show the distinction between servitude and freedom in both lives. But it should not be burdensome if we pursue this in exposition, so that we may confirm those very things which we have said. For "Hebrew" is interpreted as "one who crosses over. And a Hebrew servant is purchased when anyone who now crosses over from this world in mind is subjected to the service of the Almighty Lord. For he desires to serve the true God who has learned to cross over from this world in mind. Thus Moses crossed over, that he might see the vision. Thus David, when he saw the wicked exalted and lifted up above the cedars of Lebanon, crossed over, and behold, he was not. Because we perhaps believe the powers of the wicked to be something great, unless we cross over in mind to the enduring age. But the Hebrew servant who has been

purchased is commanded to serve for six years, so that in the seventh he may go out free without payment. For what is designated by the number six except the perfection of the active life? What is expressed by the number seven except the contemplative life? Therefore he serves for six years, and in the seventh goes out free, because he who through the active life which he has perfectly fulfilled passes over to the freedom of the contemplative life.

And it should be noted that he goes out free without payment, because those who after they have done everything say they are unprofitable servants, for them without doubt, just as the active life itself was from a gift, so also the contemplative will be from grace. With whatever garment he entered, with such let him go out, because it is altogether necessary that each one of us persevere in that which he begins, and continue until the end of the work in the intention with which he began. For he crosses over well to the contemplative life who in the active life has not changed the garment of his intention for the worse. And there are some who before they are joined to the service of Almighty God in holy conduct already love to do good works. But there are others who learn good works after they have come to the service of Almighty God. Therefore he who strove to have good works even before he came to God's service, is a Hebrew servant purchased with a wife. And generally he who is such can pass over to the contemplative life, and yet not abandon the active life. Hence it is also added there: "If he has a wife, and the wife goes out together with him. For the wife goes out with him to freedom when he who has attained contemplation does not abandon outwardly the action of good work by which he can benefit others.

But if the Lord has given him a wife, and she has borne sons and daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to his master, but he himself shall go out with his clothing. The master gives a wife to the purchased servant when any preacher joins to good action him whom he has bound to the authority of almighty God. For preachers are also called masters, as it is said to Elisha the prophet concerning his preacher: "Do you know that your master will be taken from you? And the wife of the purchased servant bears sons and daughters when good action produces strong or tender fruits. But the woman who was given by the master remains with the same master along with her children, while the servant himself goes out with his clothing, because good action, or the fruits of that same good action, are reckoned to the reward of the preacher. But he himself, persevering in the intention of his desire, goes out free to contemplation through heavenly grace. "But if the servant says, 'I love my master, and my wife and children; I will not go out free.'" The servant loves his master when he guards the words of the preacher with a careful mind.

Also loving his wife and children, he refuses to go out free when, loving the active life and its fruits, he does not wish to pass over to the contemplative life, because considering that he has good works in the service of his ministry, he refuses to withdraw to the quiet of freedom. But let his master offer him to the gods, and let him be brought to the door and the posts, and let him pierce his ear with an awl, that he may be his servant forever. For he who has resolved to remain in the active life is offered by his master to the gods when he is instructed by his preacher in the sayings of the ancient fathers, who were priests for us in

the way of the almighty Lord. And he is led to the door and posts of the tabernacle so that he may hear something more profound about the entrance to the heavenly dwelling, and may subtly recognize the day of the fearful judgment, lest through the good works which he does he seek to please men. And so his ear is pierced with an awl when his mind is struck by the subtlety of the fear of God, so that, transfixed by the sharpness of the word, through everything he does he may know to always attend to the entrance of the kingdom, and as it were to carry an ear pierced from the door and post of the tabernacle.

He will be a servant in this age, so that he may be able to be free after this age. For he is a servant in this age who has resolved through the active life to serve men, so that after the present age he may be able to attain true freedom. Concerning this it is said through Paul: ”Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For then there will be true freedom in us, when our adoption shall have attained to the glory of the children of God. But now not only is the active life in servitude, but even contemplation itself, by which we are caught up above ourselves, does not yet perfectly obtain freedom of mind, but imitates it, because that inward rest is seen in a mirror dimly. Yet however great may be the limitation of contemplation, it is already far broader and more sublime than the active life, since it passes over to a certain freedom of mind, thinking not on temporal things but on eternal. Since therefore the contemplative life flies up to higher things and far surpasses the active life by a certain, so to speak, dignity of its security, it is fittingly said now: ”And the hand of a man was under their wings.

But if in this place our Redeemer is understood as the man, the hand of the man is under their wings, because unless God had become man, who raised the minds of the preachers to heavenly things, those living creatures that appear would not fly. Nor is it unfittingly said that the hand of the man is under the wings, because of this same Redeemer of ours it is written: ”Who being the brightness of glory and the figure of His substance, and upholding all things. His hand therefore carries our hearts, His hand raises us up in contemplation. For unless, as has been said, the almighty Word had become man for the sake of men, human hearts would not fly to contemplate the excellence of the Word. Therefore the minds of men have been made lofty from the same source whence the humble God appeared among men. Let it therefore be said of the holy living creatures, let it be said: ”And the hand of a man under their wings. Concerning which it is further added: ”And they had faces and wings on four sides, and their wings were joined one to another. They have faces and wings in four directions, because in preaching throughout all regions of the world they demonstrate whatever they perceive concerning the humanity and whatever concerning the divinity of our Redeemer. For when they preach the incarnate God everywhere, they display their face in the four parts of the world.

And when they announce that He is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, they fly everywhere with the wing of contemplation. Their wings are joined one to another, because all their virtue and all their wisdom, by which they transcend other men through the flight

of their contemplation, is mutually joined together in peace and unanimity. Hence it is written: The wisdom that is from above is first indeed pure, then peaceable. Hence also Truth says to these same preachers of His: Have salt in yourselves, and have peace among you. Therefore the wing of the living creatures is joined one to another, because the virtue and wisdom of the holy preachers is mutually united together in the peace of charity and concord. But the wing of one would be divided from another if, in that by which each one soars into wisdom, he refused to have peace with another. There follows: They did not turn back when they went, but each one walked straight before its face. The feathered creatures, namely the holy preachers, when they advance, by no means turn back, because they pass from earthly actions to spiritual things in such a way that they are in no way turned back again to those things which they left behind. For to advance is, as it were, for them to go along a certain path, always moving in mind toward better things. On the contrary, it is said of the reprobate that they turned back in heart to Egypt. And Truth says through Himself:

No one putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God. For to put one's hand to the plow is, as it were, to open up the soil of one's heart through a certain plowshare of compunction for bringing forth fruit. But he looks back after the plow who, after the beginnings of good work, returns to the evils which he left behind. Because this by no means happens to God's elect, it is rightly now said through the prophet: They did not turn back when they advanced. He indicates why they do not turn back when he adds: "Each one was going before its own face. For eternal things are before us, temporal things behind us, because we find those as we advance, and we leave these behind us as if behind our back as we depart. Hence that great winged creature who had flown to the secrets of the third heaven said: "But one thing, forgetting what lies behind and stretching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the prize of the heavenly calling. For stretched forward to the things ahead, he had forgotten the things behind, because, despising temporal things, he was seeking only those which are eternal. Therefore the holy living creatures go before their own face, because they no longer look back with any desire upon the things they have left behind, and in the eternal things they seek, they place the foot of good work under the eyes of their contemplation.

Whoever, therefore, has already decided to walk before his own face must consider with great deliberation that looking back occurs in one way through deed and in another way through thought. For there are some who deliberate on great things, and, conscious of their sins, they carefully consider distributing much of what they possess to the needy, so that they may redeem their faults before God's eyes through the bowels of mercy. And they begin to do these works, but often as they are doing them, fear of poverty strikes their mind, and fearing that they may become needy themselves, they become tight-fisted toward the needy and suspend themselves from the good work they had begun. These indeed have turned back while walking, because they refused to walk before their own face. Against these it is rightly said through Solomon: "Because of the cold, the sluggard refused to plow; therefore he will beg in summer, and it will not be given to him. For he who now neglects to do good

works because of fear and torpor of mind, when the sun of justice shines forth in judgment as if in summer, will beg for life but will not receive it, because he scorned to do good works for its sake. Another, having despised the desires of the flesh, carefully considers leaving all things and subjecting himself to the service of almighty God, and deliberates on restraining himself under the bridle of continence and chastity;

but when he sees that others have fallen even after chastity, he fears to do that very thing he had deliberated upon. And so it happens that he returns backward through thought, who, looking toward what lies ahead, was already advancing to higher things with the steps of his mind. Of such a one it is well said through Solomon: ”He who observes the wind will not sow; and he who considers the clouds will never reap. Indeed, by the name of wind is meant the malign spirit, who drives the mind with temptations; and by the designation of cloud is expressed the sinner, who is moved by the impulse of temptation. He who watches the wind, therefore, does not sow, and he who considers the clouds never reaps, because he who fears the temptations of the malign spirit and observes the falls of the wicked despairs of himself, and is neither exercised now in the good seed of work, nor will he afterward be refreshed by the gift of just retribution. There are, moreover, some who indeed do the good works they know, and while doing these, deliberate on better things; but reconsidering the better things they had deliberated upon, they change their minds; and indeed they do the good things they had begun, but they succumb from the better things they had deliberated upon. These indeed appear to stand in their work before human judgments, but before the eyes of almighty God they have fallen in their deliberation.

Hence it often happens that even their good work pleases God less, because when the foot of the mind is inconstantly placed on the better step of deliberation, this very inconstancy of thought accuses it. But because all who are perfect observe themselves with great subtlety of discretion, lest they ever slip back to worse things either in deed or in thought, they ceaselessly consider how much they progress daily; rightly it is said of them: ”They did not turn back when they walked, but each one walked before its own face. Among these things, therefore, it is pleasing for us to consider who we are that undertake to expound these matters, and whence we have come, and to what mysteries of sacred eloquence we are raised up to search out. Certainly in our ancient ancestors we were worshippers of idols, but behold, through the Spirit of grace we now explore heavenly words. Whence comes this to us? But the Redeemer of the human race has fulfilled what He said through the prophet: ”And strangers shall eat the deserts turned into fruitfulness. For these sayings of the prophets were deserts among the Jews, because they were unwilling to cultivate them by seeking their mystical meaning. But for us they have been turned into fruitfulness, because according to the history of the vision, by God’s bounty, these words taste spiritually to our mind, and now we strangers eat what the citizens of the Law were unwilling to consume.

Let there be thanks to the Only-begotten, let there be praise to eternal Wisdom, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY IV.

Through the holy spirit of prophecy the winged creatures are described in detail, so that the very subtlety of the description may reveal to us that the persons of the Evangelists are signified through them, and the word of God may leave nothing doubtful to our understanding. For behold it is said: "And the likeness of their faces was the face of a man, and the face of a lion on the right side of the four of them; and the face of an ox on the left side of the four of them; and the face of an eagle above the four of them. That these four winged creatures designate the four holy Evangelists, the very beginnings of each gospel book testify. For because he began from the human generation, Matthew is rightly represented by the man; because of the cry in the wilderness, Mark is rightly designated by the lion; because he began from sacrifice, Luke is well represented by the calf; but because he began from the divinity of the Word, John is worthily signified by the eagle, who saying: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," while he gazed upon the very substance of Divinity, fixed his eyes upon the sun like an eagle. But because all the elect are members of our Redeemer, and our Redeemer himself is the head of all the elect, through the fact that his members are figured, nothing prevents him also from being signified in all these.

For he, the only-begotten Son of God, truly became man; he deigned to die as a calf in the sacrifice of our redemption; he rose through the power of his strength as a lion. The lion is also said to sleep with open eyes, because in that very death in which our Redeemer could sleep according to his humanity, he kept watch according to his divinity by remaining immortal. He also, ascending to heaven after his resurrection, was raised up on high as an eagle. Therefore he is everything to us at once, who by being born became man, by dying a calf, by rising a lion, and by ascending to heaven was made an eagle. But because we have already said above that the four evangelists are signified by these creatures, and under their appearance all the perfect together, it remains for us to show how each of the elect is expressed by these visions of creatures. Every elect person who is perfect in the way of God is simultaneously a man, a calf, a lion, and an eagle. For man is a rational animal. The calf, moreover, is customarily slaughtered in sacrifice. The lion is a mighty beast, as it is written: "The lion, the mightiest of beasts, will not cower before any encounter. The eagle soars to the heights and gazes upon the rays of the sun with unwavering eyes. Therefore, everyone who is perfect in reason is a man. And because he mortifies himself from the pleasures of this world, he is a calf.

Because through that voluntary mortification of his own he possesses the strength of security against all adversities—whence it is written: "The righteous man, confident as a lion, shall be without fear"—he is a lion. Because he contemplates in a lofty manner those things which are heavenly and eternal, he is an eagle. Therefore, since every righteous person becomes a man through reason, a calf through the sacrifice of his mortification, a lion through the strength of security, and an eagle through contemplation, each perfect person can rightly be signified by these holy living creatures. We say this in order to demonstrate

that the things which have been said about the four living creatures pertain also to each individual among the perfect. But a great question arises for us concerning these same evangelists and holy preachers: why is man and lion said to be on the right side of the four of them, while the calf is said to be on the left side of the four? For it is not without wonder why those two are said to be on the right and this one on the left. And again we must ask why the eagle is mentioned as being not on the right or left, but above the four of them. We have thus posed two questions for ourselves, which we must resolve with the Lord's help. Therefore, man and lion are said to be on the right, while the calf is said to be on the left.

For on the right we have joyful things, but on the left we have sorrowful things. Hence we also say that what we consider adverse is on our left. And, as we said before, the incarnation is signified by the man, the passion by the calf, and the resurrection of our Creator by the lion. Now concerning the incarnation of the only-begotten Son, by which we were redeemed, all the elect rejoiced; but concerning his death, those first saints among the elect, the holy apostles themselves, were saddened, who again rejoiced at his resurrection. Since, therefore, both his birth and resurrection brought joy to the disciples, whom his passion had saddened, man and lion are described as being on his right, while the calf was on his left. For those same holy evangelists rejoiced at his humanity, were strengthened by his resurrection, who had been saddened by his passion. Therefore, man and lion are on their right, because the incarnation of our Redeemer gave them life, and his resurrection strengthened them. But the calf is on the left, because his death cast them down into unbelief for a moment of time. Rightly, however, the place of the eagle is described as being not beside but above, because whether through what it signifies—his ascension—or because it proclaims that the Word of the Father is God with the Father, it surpassed the other evangelists in the power of contemplation; although he speaks of his divinity together with them, yet he contemplates this more subtly than all.

But if the eagle, joined with the three others, is mentioned as the four living creatures, it is strange how it is described as being above the four of them—unless it is because John, through seeing the Word in the beginning, also passed beyond himself. For unless he had also transcended himself, he would not have seen the Word in the beginning. Since, therefore, he transcended even himself, he was no longer merely above three, but with himself added, above four. There follows: "And their faces and their wings were stretched upward. The face and the extended wings are described above because every intention and every contemplation of the saints stretches beyond itself, so that it may attain what it desires in heavenly things. For whether one is vigilant in good work or in contemplation, then what one does is truly good when one desires to please Him from whom it comes. For he who appears to do good things but through these desires to please not God but men presses down the face of his intention. And he who contemplates in sacred Scripture the things that pertain to divinity so that through what he understands he might be occupied with disputes—because he does not desire to be satisfied by the sweetness of the sought-after blessedness but rather to appear learned—such a one certainly does not extend the wings of his understanding upward;

but because he occupies the vigilance of his mind in earthly desire, he lays down in the depths the wings which he could have raised on high and by which he himself could have been raised. In this matter it must be considered that every good that is done should always be raised toward heavenly things through intention. For he who through the good things he does desires earthly glory presses down his wings and his face. Hence through the prophet it is said of certain ones: ”They were carrying their victims down into the depths. For what else are the tears of prayer but the victims of our offering? As it is written: ”A sacrifice to God is a troubled spirit. And there are some who afflict themselves with lamentations in prayer in order to acquire earthly benefits or to appear holy to men. What do these do but carry their victims into the depths? Because the things they seek are in the lowest place, they lay down the sacrifice of their prayer below. But the elect, who desire to please almighty God in good work and through the grace of contemplation long to taste eternal blessedness even now, extend their faces and wings above. There follows: ”Two wings of each were joined together, and two covered their bodies. It had been said: ”And their faces and their wings were stretched out above,” and immediately what we have brought forward was added, that ”two wings of each were joined.

Here it is openly understood that they were both stretched out above and joined, while two covered their bodies. But what are the wings of the animals called except pinions? In this matter we must inquire with diligent investigation what the four wings of the saints are, of which two stretched out above are joined, while two cover their bodies. For if we look attentively, we find there are four virtues that lift every winged creature from earthly actions: namely, love and hope concerning future things, but fear and penitence concerning past things. Therefore the wings joined to each other are stretched out above, because love and hope lift the mind of the saints to things above. These are also fittingly called joined, because the elect without doubt both love the heavenly things they hope for and hope for what they love. But two cover their bodies, because fear and penitence hide their past evils from the eyes of almighty God. Thus two wings, as was said, are joined above, when love and hope elevate the hearts of the elect to higher things, suspend them toward heavenly things. But two wings cover their bodies, when fear and penitence hide their past evils from the sight of the eternal judge. For in that they remember that they have sinned, because they fear greatly and weep, what else do they do but cover their body? They who hide their carnal deeds from the strict examination by good works placed over them. For it is written:

”Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. For we cover sins when we place good deeds over evil actions. For everything that is covered is placed beneath; and that by which it is covered is drawn over it from above. Therefore when we renounce the evils we have done and choose the good things we should do, we as it were draw a covering over that thing which we are ashamed to have seen. However holy men may be in this life, they still have that which they ought to cover before the eyes of God, because it is utterly impossible that they should never sin in deed, or in speech, or in thought. Hence blessed Job, who had indeed spoken perfect things to men, yet hearing the voice of God and reproving himself for that very perfect speech of his, said: ”I will lay my hand upon my

mouth. For in the hand is work, in the mouth is speech. Therefore to lay the hand upon the mouth is to cover the sins of speech by the virtue of good work. It pleases me, dearest brothers, to call the teacher of the Gentiles as a witness to this matter, and to see how that holy living creature rests upon four wings, of which with two it flies upward; but with two wings it covers its body, because it hides the past things it had done. Let us see, therefore, how great a love raises him to heavenly things:

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Let us recognize with how great a hope he is raised to higher things: "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us see if, even when established in such great virtues, he still fears: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway. Let us recognize if he repents of having done evil: "I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. In these words of his, what else is accused but the hardness of our mind? Because he mourns what he had committed before baptism, while we have committed many things even after baptism, and yet we refuse to weep. Therefore the holy living creatures use four wings, because through love and hope they fly to heavenly things, and through fear and repentance they lament the unlawful deeds within themselves. But because it was said: "The two wings of each were joined," this is perhaps understood to mean that they do not join their own wings by raising them, but that the wings of one are conjoined to another, so that evidently the raised wings mutually agree with each other in their joining. In this matter a question arises:

if the two wings that elevate designate love and hope, while the two that cover the bodies designate fear and penitence, why are the two that are extended said to be conjoined, and the two that cover the body are not said to be? But in this matter, by the Lord's granting, an easy explanation presents itself: the two wings of the saints that are conjoined are love and hope, while the two that cover the bodies are not conjoined to one another, namely fear and penitence. For David was afflicted by fearing and doing penance for the fall of the flesh. Peter wept bitterly for the fall of faithlessness. Paul laments the cruelty of his past persecution in himself. Yet all seek one homeland, all hasten to reach the one author of all things. Therefore the two wings of each are conjoined, and the two are not, because through love and hope what they desire is one, but through fear and penitence what they lament is diverse. There follows: "And each of them walked before its own face. It had been said above: "Each of them went before its face," but now it is said: "It walked in the presence of its face. And so the same statement seems to have been repeated. But since we use "in the presence of" to mean "in the present" (that is, it signifies "in the present"), we can distinguish by more subtle inquiry that it is one thing to walk before the face, and another to walk in the present.

For to walk before the face is to seek what lies ahead; but to walk in the present is not to be absent from oneself. For every just person who anxiously examines their life and diligently considers how much they grow daily in good things, or perhaps how much they decline from

good things—this one, because they place themselves before themselves, walks in their own presence, since they vigilantly see whether they are rising or falling. But whoever neglects the guardianship of their life, and either despises or does not know how to examine what they do, what they say, what they think—this one does not walk in their own presence, because they are ignorant of what they are like in their habits or in their actions. Nor is one present to oneself who is not anxious to examine and know oneself daily. But that one truly places themselves before themselves and is present to themselves, who attends to themselves in their actions as if to another. For there are many sins which we commit, but they do not seem serious to us because, loving ourselves with a private love and closing our eyes, we flatter ourselves in our self-deception. Hence it often happens that we judge our own serious faults lightly, while judging the light faults of our neighbors severely. For it is written: ”Men shall be lovers of themselves. And we know that private love powerfully closes the eye of the heart.

From this it happens that what we ourselves do, and do not consider to be serious, is often done by our neighbor, and seems to us excessively detestable. But why does what seemed trivial to us in ourselves appear serious in our neighbor, unless because we neither see ourselves as we see our neighbor, nor our neighbor as we see ourselves? For if we looked at ourselves as we do at our neighbor, we would see our own faults with strict judgment. And again, if we looked at our neighbor as we do at ourselves, his action would never appear intolerable to us, since we have often perhaps done the same things, and thought we had done nothing intolerable to our neighbor. Moses strove to correct this badly divided judgment of our mind through the precept of the law, when he said that the bushel should be just and the measure equal. Hence Solomon says: ”A weight and a weight, a measure and a measure, both are abominable before God. We know that in the double weights of merchants, one is larger, the other smaller. For they have one weight by which they weigh for themselves, and another weight by which they weigh for their neighbor. They prepare lighter weights for giving, but heavier ones for receiving. Therefore every person who weighs differently the things that belong to their neighbor and differently those that are their own has ”a weight and a weight.

Both therefore are abominable before God, because if one loved their neighbor as themselves, they would love them in good things as they love themselves. And if one looked at themselves as they do at their neighbor, they would judge themselves in evil things as they judge their neighbor. We ought therefore to see ourselves carefully as we see others, and, as has been said, to place ourselves before our own eyes, so that constantly imitating the winged creatures, lest we be ignorant of what we do, we may always walk before our own face. But the perverse, as we said a little before, do not walk before their own face, because they never consider what they do; they tend toward destruction; they exult in wicked deeds. Of whom it is written: ”Who rejoice when they have done evil, and exult in the worst things. Often indeed the just person who beholds them weeps, but they themselves, in the manner of the frenzied, are lamented over, yet they laugh. Others give much from their own possessions to the needy, but when they find an opportune moment, they oppress the needy and

devastate with whatever plunder they can those whom they are able to. They place before the eyes of their thought the good things they do, and they do not place there the worst things they commit.

These clearly do not walk before their own face, because if they were present to themselves, they would see carefully all that they do, and they would recognize how they lose their good works through evil actions, as it is written: And he who gathered wages put them into a bag with holes (Haggai 1:6). For from a bag with holes there goes out elsewhere what is put in from elsewhere, because undiscerning minds do not see how the reward that is acquired from good work is lost through evil work. Another preserves bodily chastity and vigilantly watches himself, lest he outwardly admit anything blameworthy; he is content with his own things, he does not seize what belongs to others, but nevertheless perhaps he holds hatred in his heart against his neighbor. And though it is written: He who hates his brother is a murderer, he considers how pure he is outwardly in deed, and he does not weigh how cruel he is in mind. What is this man but absent from himself, who walks in the darkness of his own heart and does not know it? Another now does not seize what belongs to others, now guards his body from impurity, now loves his neighbor with a pure mind, and conscious of past evils, afflicts himself with lamentations in his prayers; but when prayer is finished, he seeks happy things to rejoice over in this world, and lets his neglectful soul sink into temporal joys, nor does he care lest immoderate joys exceed the measure of his tears;

and it happens that by laughing excessively he loses the good that he gained by weeping. This one therefore does not walk before his own face, because he refuses to see the losses he suffers. For it is written: The heart of the wise is where sadness is, and the heart of fools is where gladness is. In all things therefore that we do, we ought diligently to observe ourselves inwardly and outwardly, so that following the winged creatures, we may be present to ourselves and always walk before our own face, having as our only helper Jesus Christ our Lord, the Son of the Father, who lives and reigns with him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY V.

Oh, how marvelous is the depth of God's utterances! It is delightful to attend to it, delightful to penetrate its inner meanings with grace as our guide. Whenever we examine it by understanding, what else do we do but enter the shade of the forests, so that we may be hidden in its coolness from the heat of this age? There we gather the greenest herbs of its teachings by reading, and we ruminate on them by reflecting. In the discourse that was delivered to you, dearest brothers, three days ago, it was explained how the living creatures that were shown signify either our Redeemer, or His four evangelists, and all the perfect. The virtue of these living creatures is still expressed more subtly, so that we too, weak and contemptible as we are, may stretch ourselves toward imitating them, insofar as we are able by the Lord's generosity. For behold, it is said: Wherever the impulse of the spirit was, there they went. In the elect and the reprobate the impulses are different. In the elect, namely, is the impulse of the spirit; in the reprobate, the impulse of the flesh. For the impulse of

the flesh drives the soul to hatred, to pride, to impurity, to plunder, to outward glory, to cruelty, to faithlessness, to despair, to anger, to quarrels, to pleasures.

But the impulse of the spirit draws the mind to charity, to humility, to continence, to generous mercy, to inward advancement, to works of piety, to faith in eternal things, to hope of coming joy, to patience, to peace, to consideration of mortal life, to tears. Therefore it is necessary that we should always with great care consider in everything we do what impulse leads us; whether our thought is driven by the impulse of the flesh or by the impulse of the spirit. For to love earthly things, to prefer temporal things to eternal, to possess outward goods not for necessary use but to desire them for pleasure, to seek vengeance against an enemy, to rejoice at a rival's downfall—this is the impulse of the flesh. But on the contrary, to love heavenly things, to despise earthly things, to seek passing things not for the fruit of pleasure but for the use of necessity, to be grieved at an enemy's death—this is the impulse of the spirit. And because all who are perfect always exercise themselves in these virtues, it is rightly now said of the holy living creatures: Where the impulse of the spirit was, there they went. But we must know that very often the impulse of the flesh cloaks itself under the guise of a spiritual impulse, and thought itself lies to itself that what it does carnally it does spiritually.

For often someone, overcome by the goads of anger, is inflamed against offenders with zeal for avenging justice more than is necessary, and crossing the boundary of justice in vengeance acts cruelly, while suspecting that he acts justly. The impulse of the flesh, therefore, is veiled for this person under the appearance of spirit, when what is believed to be done justly is not held under the restraint of discretion. And often another person, devoted to excessive gentleness, observes the faults of his subjects, and refuses to correct these through the fervor of zeal, which by cruelly not correcting he multiplies in them; and so it happens that his mildness is hostile both to himself and to his subjects, since because he reckons the torpor of his mind to be patience, through the spirit of the flesh he distances himself from the impulse of the spirit. Therefore, the first consideration ought to rouse us to inquiry of our own heart, lest we be led to certain things we do through an open impulse of the flesh, lest the mind, seduced by depraved pleasures, recognize things to be evil and nevertheless do them. But the second concern ought to render us vigilant, lest the impulse of the flesh secretly insinuate itself as if under the impulse of the spirit, and pretend to us that the faults we commit are virtues.

It should be known that those faults are more serious which imitate virtues under a false appearance, because those faults which are recognized openly cast the soul into confusion and draw it to repentance; but these not only do not humble one to repentance, but even exalt the mind of the one acting, since they are considered virtues. Moreover, what had been said above about the holy living creatures is repeated again, so that it may be more firmly established: They did not turn back when they walked. Because all the elect strive toward good things in such a way that they do not return to perpetrating evil: "For he who perseveres to the end will be saved. And as it is said through Solomon: "The path of the

just, like a shining light, proceeds and grows until the perfect day. For in their souls the good desire and understanding of the inner light is already part of the day, but because they advance in virtue until the end of life, they come to the perfect day when, having been led to the heavenly kingdoms, they will no longer lack anything in that light which they desire. It follows: "And the likeness of the living creatures, and their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps. Fire of burning coals and of lamps is compared to the appearance of the living creatures.

For whoever touches a coal is set on fire, because he who clings to a holy man receives from the constancy of seeing him, from the practice of speaking with him, and from the example of his work, so that he is kindled in the love of truth, flees the darkness of his sins, burns with desire for the light, and now burns with true love, he who before lay as dead in iniquity as he was cold. But lamps spread their light farther, and while they are in one place, they shine in another. For he who is powerful in the spirit of prophecy, in the word of teaching, and in the grace of miracles, his reputation shines far and wide like a lamp; and all who hear of his good deeds, because through these things they rise to the love of heavenly things, shine as if from the light of a lamp in that they display themselves through good works. Therefore, because holy men kindle certain ones placed near them, as if by touching them, to love of the heavenly fatherland, they are coals. But because they shine for certain ones placed far away, they become lamps for their journey, lest they fall into the darkness of sin. But between coals and lamps there is this difference: coals indeed burn, but do not expel the darkness of the place in which they lie; lamps, however, because they shine with a great light of flames, drive away the darkness spread all around.

From this matter it should be noted that there are many of the saints who are so simple and hidden, concealing themselves in lesser places under great silence, that their life can scarcely be recognized by others. What therefore are these if not coals? For although they have heat through the fervor of the spirit, nevertheless they do not have the flame of example. Nor do they overcome the darkness of sins in the hearts of others, because they entirely flee from having their life known. They are indeed kindled for themselves, but they are not a light of example for others. But those who both offer forth examples of virtues and demonstrate the light of good work through their life and word to those journeying, are rightly called lamps, because both through the heat of desire and through the flame of the word, they drive out the darkness of error from the hearts of sinners. Therefore he who lives well in secret, but profits the advancement of others not at all, is a coal. But he who, placed as an imitation of holiness, demonstrates the light of righteousness from himself to many, is a lamp, because he both burns for himself and shines for others. There follows: And this was the vision running in the midst of the living creatures, the splendor of fire, and lightning going forth from the fire.

The fire is seen running in the midst of the living creatures, because unless those winged creatures received heat from the fire of truth, they themselves would not burn in the likeness of coals and torches. For the Holy Spirit is usually signified by the name of fire. Concerning

which the Lord says in the Gospel: I have come to cast fire upon the earth, and what do I desire except that it be kindled? For when a carnal mind receives the Holy Spirit, inflamed with spiritual love it laments the evil it has done. And the earth burns, when the heart of the sinner is scorched by an accusing conscience, and is consumed in the pain of repentance. Hence again it is written: Your God is a consuming fire. For since He renders the mind that He has filled clean from the rust of sins, our Creator is called both fire and consuming. Therefore the Holy Spirit is said to run in the midst of the living creatures as the splendor of fire, and lightning going forth from the fire, because filling the whole Church, He casts forth flames of love from Himself into the hearts of the elect, so that He may strike with terror in the manner of lightning, and kindle sluggish hearts to His love. Spirit indeed is God eternal before all ages, coeternal with the Father and the Son, we must ask why He is said to run about.

For everyone who runs about approaches a place where he was not, and leaves the place where he was. By what reasoning, then, shall we say that the Spirit runs about, since all things are within Him, and there is nowhere a place where He is not? As it is written: ”The Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world. And yet, when the praise of wisdom was being described, it was added: ”For in her there is a spirit of understanding, a spirit unique, manifold, subtle, mobile. And shortly after: ”Steadfast yet humane. In these words again a great question arises for us: why is this spirit who fills all things said to be both mobile and stable at the same time? But if we return to the custom of human usage, we more quickly find the meaning of the speaker. For a man who runs about everywhere in the region where he is, without doubt comes upon everyone everywhere, and is suddenly found where he was not expected. Therefore the Almighty Spirit, to signify his presence everywhere, is said to be both mobile and stable at the same time. Stable, because by nature he contains all things; but he is called mobile because he meets even those who are unaware of him everywhere. Therefore holding all things he is called stable; showing himself present to all he is called mobile.

Therefore the brightness of fire, and the lightning going forth from the fire, runs among the winged creatures, because the Holy Spirit is present to individuals and to all at the same time, and sets on fire those whom he touches, and illuminates those whom he sets on fire, so that after their former coldness those who have been kindled may burn, and through the fire of love which they have received may give back flames of examples. For the lightning going forth from this fire strikes torpid minds, and by striking rouses and inflames them, so that after the love of that One they may run both burning and shining together. Hence it is written elsewhere: His throne is a flame of fire, his wheels are burning fire. For those who are guardians of souls and have undertaken the burdens of feeding the flock are by no means permitted to change places. But because, placed in one location, they carry within themselves the presence of divinity and burn, the throne of God is called a flame of fire. But those who run about in preaching for love of the Lord are his wheels of burning fire, because when they run through various places out of desire for him, from which they

themselves burn, they also set others on fire. However, the running to and fro and mobility of the Spirit can be understood by the consideration of another inquiry.

Indeed, in the hearts of the Saints, according to certain virtues He always remains, but according to certain others He comes as one about to depart, and withdraws as one about to return. For in faith, hope, and charity, and in other good things without which one cannot reach the heavenly homeland, such as humility, chastity, justice, and mercy, He does not abandon the hearts of the perfect. But in the virtue of prophecy, in eloquence of teaching, and in the working of miracles, He is sometimes present to His elect, and sometimes withdraws Himself. He is present so that they may be lifted up, and He withdraws Himself so that they may be humbled. He is present so that He may glorify them by the virtue shown, and He withdraws so that they may know themselves when His virtue is withdrawn. He is present so that He may show what they are through Him, and He withdraws so that He may make clear who and of what sort they remain without Him. Therefore, in those virtues without which one can by no means attain to life, the Holy Spirit remains in the hearts of His elect; hence He is rightly said to be stable. But in those things through which the virtue of holiness is shown, He is sometimes mercifully present and sometimes mercifully withdraws; hence He is rightly called mobile.

Therefore the Spirit is said to run to and fro and to be mobile, because He is not continuously possessed in signs and virtues according to each one's wish. And it is well said that He runs to and fro among the holy living creatures. For running to and fro pertains to swiftness. And the Spirit runs to and fro among the perfect, because even if He has withdrawn from their heart for a moment, He returns more quickly. There follows: And the living creatures went and returned in the likeness of flashing lightning. Since it was said above, "They did not turn back when they walked," for what reason is it now said, "The living creatures went and returned"? These statements seem very much contrary to each other, because they went and did not return, and they went and returned. But we recognize more quickly how this should be understood if we carefully distinguish the two lives, namely the active and the contemplative. For we can remain fixed in the one, but we are by no means able to hold the mind attentive in the other. For when we leave behind our sluggishness and rouse ourselves to the pursuit of good work, where else do we go but to the active life? From which we should by no means turn back afterward, because whoever returns after it to the sluggishness of negligence, to the wickednesses of depravity which he had left behind, undoubtedly does not know how to be a heavenly creature.

But when we rise from the active life to the contemplative, because the mind cannot long stand in contemplation, but sees everything that it perceives of eternity through a mirror and in an enigma, as if furtively and in passing, the soul, repelled by its own weakness from the immensity of such great loftiness, slips back into itself. And it is necessary that it return to the active life and exercise itself continually in the practice of good work, so that when the mind cannot rise to contemplate heavenly things, it may not refuse to do whatever good things it can. And so it happens that, aided by its own good actions, it rises again to

contemplation toward higher things and receives the nourishment of love from the pasture of contemplated truth. And because the weakness of corruption itself cannot hold itself long in this, returning again to good works, it is fed by the memory of God's sweetness, and is nourished outwardly by pious acts and inwardly by holy desires. For hence it is said of perfect men returning after their contemplation: "They shall pour forth the memory of your sweetness. For they strive always to pour forth the sweetness of intimate delight, which they can somehow touch by foretasting as if from a flash of light, by recalling and speaking of its memory. Hence the Psalmist also aptly admonishes us, saying: "Light has risen for the righteous, and gladness for the upright of heart. Rejoice, you righteous, in the Lord, and confess to the memory of his holiness.

He says again: "How great is the multitude of your sweetness, O Lord! Which indeed he would by no means have known how great it was unless he had somehow tasted it by contemplating. Hence he says again: "I said in my ecstasy, I am cast out from the sight of your eyes. For unless he had been raised up in an excess of mind and known the sweetness of eternal delight, while still held in this world he would not discern how far cast out he lay. Therefore the living creatures shown go and do not return, and they go and return; because holy men both do not fall from the active life which they have grasped into iniquities, and they slip back from the contemplative life, which they cannot hold continuously, into the active. For as was said, overcome by the very weight of their weakness, repelled back to themselves they return, so that by going they may learn what to desire, and by returning they may know where they lie. By going they may understand where they are not yet; by returning, what they are. But how these holy creatures return is demonstrated when it is added: "In the likeness of flashing lightning.

Now the returning creatures are fittingly compared to flashing lightning, because when holy men soar upward to contemplate heavenly things, when they bind the firstfruits of their spirit in love of the heavenly homeland, but weighed down by the burden of human interaction they return to themselves, they proclaim to their brethren the heavenly goods which they were able to contemplate at least through a mirror, and they kindle their souls with love of that inner brightness, which they are able neither to see as it is nor to speak of as they saw it. Yet speaking, they strike and set fire to the hearts of their hearers with their words. Therefore they return like flashing lightning, who, when they speak of heavenly things, because through them the light from above flashes forth, inflame the minds of their hearers with love of the heavenly homeland. Thus in the manner of flashing lightning, when they strike by speaking, they scatter the fire of spiritual desire. The holy creatures also go and return in another way. For they go when they are sent forth in preaching to instill the grace of heavenly gift, and they perform miracles before unbelievers so as to draw them to faith; but they return, because, attributing these things to the power of the Almighty Lord, they do not ascribe to themselves what they have done. For when they perform wondrous deeds, they are lightning, because they shake the hearts of those who behold, terrify, illuminate, and kindle them. Hence it is written:

”Your arrows will go forth in the light, in the splendor of the lightning of your weapons. The Lord’s arrows are the words of the Saints, which strike the hearts of sinners. But these arrows have armor. You know, brethren, that fighting men hurl arrows, but they are protected by armor. Therefore when they add miracles to their words, they fortify themselves as if with armor, lest they themselves be struck: ”Your arrows will go forth in the light,” because the words of God go out openly. But because the deeds of miracles ought to accompany the teachings of holy doctors, it is rightly added: ”In the splendor of the lightning of your weapons,” because when you add to them the armor of miracles, they flash lightning upon the minds of persecutors, so that they do not presume to persecute them. And so these creatures go and return in the likeness of flashing lightning, because after the saints perform miracles among men, after they kindle the hearts of hearers with scattered light, they return to give glory to their Author, so that they may render praise to Him through whom they know themselves able to do such things. Thus Peter, when he had healed the man who had been lame from his mother’s womb and performed a sign at which all who recognized it greatly marveled, said: ”Why do you marvel at this, or why do you gaze at us, as though by our own power or might we had made this man walk?

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Son Jesus. And a little later: ”Through faith in His name, this man whom you see and know, His name has strengthened. Indeed, performing the sign, he struck the eyes of the onlookers with the light of the miracle; but preserving humility and returning praise to the Author, he went back, as it were, to where he had come from, because the flash of lightning shows where it originated. And so the holy living creatures, when they come to perform signs and when they return inwardly within themselves to render glory to their Author, are lightning, because both by displaying miracles and by offering examples of humility, they strike and set ablaze the minds of those who behold them. In all that they do, they always return to the praise of the Creator for this reason: that they may persist with true stability in the virtue they have received. For if they attributed anything to themselves, they could not stand in that which they had received. Hence it is also well said through Solomon: ”To the place from which the rivers go out, they shall return, that they may flow again. For whether in virtues or in teaching, what else are holy men but rivers that water the dry land of carnal hearts?

But whether in the work they do or in the words of their teaching, they would quickly dry up if they did not always carefully return through the intention of the heart to the place from which they go out. For if they do not return inwardly to the heart and bind themselves with the chains of desires in the love of the Creator, both the hand fails from what it was doing and the tongue dries up from what it was speaking. But inwardly they always return through love, and what they pour forth in public by working and speaking, they draw in secret from the fountain of love. For by loving they learn what they bring forth by teaching. Therefore the rivers return to the place from which they go out, that they may flow again, because they always draw the water of wisdom from the source where it rises, lest when it has run it be dried up. Through all that we do, therefore, let us return with a careful mind

to the fountain of true light. Let us give thanks to our Creator for the good things we receive, and let us humbly say to him with the prophet Isaiah: ”All our works you have worked for us. For our good works are the works of him whose heart it did not suffice to raise us up unless he also bowed down himself for us.

For if God, coeternal with the Father before the ages, had not become man in time, when would temporal man have tasted eternal things? Therefore the descent of truth became the ascent of our humility. Let us give him glory, let us give him praise, who lives with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY VI.

Dark water in the clouds of the air, because knowledge in the prophets is obscure. But we have learned from the attesting voice of Solomon: It is the glory of kings to conceal a word, and it is the glory of God to search out speech, because it is both an honor for men to hide their secrets, and it is the glory of God to open the mysteries of His speech. Moreover, Truth itself says to the disciples: What I say to you in darkness, speak in the light; that is, openly expound what you hear in the obscurities of allegories. Indeed, the very obscurity of the words of God is of great usefulness, because it exercises the mind so that it may be expanded through effort, and once exercised it may grasp what it could not grasp while idle. It also has yet another greater benefit, because the understanding of Sacred Scripture, which would become cheap if it were plain in all things, refreshes with so much greater sweetness when found in certain more obscure places, as it wearies the soul with greater labor when sought. For behold, now it is said by the voice of holy Ezekiel: And as I looked at the living creatures, there appeared one wheel upon the earth. But what does the wheel signify except sacred Scripture, which turns from every side toward the minds of its hearers, and is held back from the way of its preaching by no corner of error?

It turns from every side because amid adversity and prosperity it proceeds rightly and humbly. For the circle of its precepts is now above, now below, since what is spoken spiritually to the more perfect suits the weak according to the letter; and the very things that little ones understand according to the letter, learned men raise to the heights through spiritual understanding. For which of the little ones, in the deed of Esau and Jacob—that the one is sent to hunt so that he might be blessed, while the other is blessed by his father through his mother’s substitution—is nourished except according to the history of sacred reading? In which history, if one is drawn a little more subtly to understanding, he sees that Jacob did not seize the blessing of the firstborn through fraud, but received what was owed to him, which he had purchased from his consenting brother for the price of lentils given. But if anyone thinking more deeply should wish to discuss the deeds of both through the mysteries of allegory, he immediately rises from history into mystery. For what does it mean that Isaac desired to eat from the hunting of his elder son, except that almighty God desired to be fed by the good works of the Jewish people? But while that one delayed, Rebecca substituted the younger, because while the Jewish people sought good works outside, mother

grace instructed the gentile people to offer the food of good work to the almighty Father and to receive the blessing of the elder brother.

He provided those same foods from domestic animals, because the gentile people, not seeking to please God through external sacrifices, says through the voice of the Prophet: ”In me, O God, are your vows, which I will pay, praises to you. What does it mean that the same Jacob covered his hands and arms and neck with goatskins, except that a goat was customarily offered for sin? And the gentile people indeed slaughtered the sins of the flesh in themselves, but were not ashamed to confess themselves covered with carnal sins. What does it mean that he was clothed in the garments of the elder brother, except that he was clothed in good work with the precepts of sacred Scripture which had been given to the elder people? And the younger uses in the house those things which the elder, going out, left inside, because the gentile people hold in mind those precepts which the Jewish people could not have, while they attended only to the letter in them. And what does it mean that Isaac did not know the son whom he blessed, except what the Lord said concerning the gentile people through the Psalmist: ”A people whom I did not know served me; at the hearing of the ear they obeyed me”?

What does it mean that he did not see him present, and yet saw what would come to him in the future, except that almighty God, when through his prophets he foretold that grace was to be bestowed upon the gentiles, both did not see them in the present through grace, because he then left them in error, and yet because he would someday gather them, he foresaw them through the grace of blessing? Hence also to the same Jacob, bearing the figure of the gentile people, it is said in blessing: ”Behold, the smell of my son is like the smell of a full field, which the Lord God has blessed. For just as Truth says in the Gospel, ”The field is this world,” and because the gentile people brought to faith are fragrant with virtues through their elect throughout the whole world, the smell of the son is the smell of a full field. For the flower of the grape smells one way, because great is the virtue and reputation of preachers who intoxicate the minds of their hearers; the flower of the olive smells another way, because sweet is the work of mercy which, like oil, refreshes and gives light; the flower of the rose smells another way, because wondrous is the fragrance that gleams and is fragrant from the blood of martyrs; the flower of the lily smells another way, because the chaste life of the flesh comes from the incorruption of virginity;

the flower of the violet smells another way, because great is the virtue of the humble, who from desire hold the lowest places, and do not raise themselves up from the earth on high through humility, and preserve the purple of the heavenly kingdom in their mind; the ear of grain gives off its fragrance another way, when it is brought to maturity, because the perfection of good works is prepared for the satisfaction of those who hunger for justice. Therefore, because the Gentile people is scattered throughout the world in its elect, and from those virtues which it practices fills all who understand with the fragrance of good reputation, let it rightly be said: Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a full field. But because he does not have these same virtues from himself, let him add: Which the

Lord God has blessed. And since the same people of the elect rise through certain ones even into contemplation, but through certain others grow fat only in the works of the active life, rightly it is added there: ”May God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth. For dew falls from above and subtly. And we receive of the dew of heaven as often as through the infusion of intimate contemplation we see something finely from above. But when we also do good works through the body, we are enriched from the fatness of the earth.

But what does it mean that Esau returns late to his father, except that the Jewish people return late to pleasing the Lord? To whom this also is said in the blessing: And the time will come when the yoke shall be loosened from your neck. Because the Jewish people will be freed from the servitude of sin at the end, as it is written: Until the fullness of the Gentiles should enter in, and so all Israel should be saved. Which person would the evangelical history itself not refresh among the little ones in the working of the miracle, because the Lord commanded empty water jars to be filled with water, and immediately turned that same water into wine? But when the more vigilant in understanding hear these things, they both venerate the sacred history by believing, and they seek what it signifies inwardly. For he who was able to change water into wine was also able to fill the empty water jars immediately with wine. But he commands the water jars to be filled with water, because first our hearts must be filled through the history of sacred reading. And he turns the water into wine for us, when that very history is changed for us into spiritual understanding through the mystery of allegory. Therefore the wheel is dragged as if along the ground, because it agrees with the little ones in humble speech, and yet pouring forth spiritual things to the great, it raises as if a circle on high;

and it is raised upward from the very place where it seemed to touch the ground a little before. Because it builds on all sides, it runs as if in a circle like a wheel. Hence it is also written in the Law: ”You shall make a lampstand of hammered work from the purest gold, its shaft and branches, cups and spheres and lilies proceeding from it. Who is designated by the lampstand but the Redeemer of the human race? He who in the nature of humanity shone with the light of divinity, so that he might become the lampstand of the world, in order that in his light every sinner might see in what darkness he lay. Because he assumed our nature without guilt, the lampstand of the tabernacle is commanded to be made from the purest gold. Now hammered work is produced by striking, because our Redeemer, who from conception and birth existed as perfect God and man, endured the sufferings of the passion, and thus arrived at the glory of the resurrection. Therefore the lampstand was hammered work from the purest gold, because he both had no sin, and yet his body advanced to immortality through the insults of the passion. For according to the virtues of the soul, he had absolutely nothing by which he could have advanced through blows. But in his members, which we are, he daily advances through blows, because while we are struck and afflicted so that we may deserve to be his body, he himself advances.

Concerning his body it is written: ”From whom the whole body, supplied and constructed through joints and connections, grows into the increase of God. For we all are his body. Through joints and connections the body is bound together, because while the chest is joined to the head, while the arms are joined to the chest, while the hands are joined to the arms, the fingers to the hands, and the other members adhere to the members, the whole body is completed—just as the holy apostles, because they stood close to our Redeemer, were like the chest adhering to the head. Because the martyrs followed them, they were like arms joined to the chest. When pastors and teachers were joined to these through good works, the hands adhered to the arms. But this whole body of our Redeemer is daily supplied in heaven through joints and connections, because when chosen souls are led there to him, his members are bound together to him. Concerning this it is well said: ”Supplied and constructed, it grows into the increase of God,” because God almighty, our Redeemer, who has nothing in himself by which he might advance, still daily has increase through his members. Hence it is written again: ”Until we all meet in a perfect man, in the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ. The shaft of this same lampstand should be understood as the Church itself, which is his body, because it stands free amid so many adversities.

The branches that proceed from the shaft are the preachers, who produced a sweet sound in the world, namely the new song. Cups are usually filled with wine. What then are the minds of the hearers but cups, which are filled by the holy preachers with the wine of knowledge? And what is the sphere but the mobility of preaching? For a sphere is rolled from every side. And preaching, which can neither be held back by adversity nor lifted up by prosperity, is a sphere, because it is both strong amid adversities and humble amid prosperity, and has neither the corner of fear nor of pride. Therefore it cannot be fixed in its course, because it rolls itself through all things. When we follow through on the example we have set forth, lilies are fittingly described on the lampstand after the reeds, cups, and spheres, because after the grace and fluency of preaching which we have mentioned, that verdant homeland follows, which blooms with eternal flowers for holy souls. The spheres therefore pertain to labor, the lilies to recompense. And so just as in Moses the sphere is understood as the teaching of preaching, so here the sacred Scripture itself is signified by the wheel. Therefore when the prophet saw the living creatures, he added: ”And as I beheld the living creatures, there appeared one wheel upon the earth.

On this matter it must be asked, since the wheels are described below, why is one wheel said to have appeared first, unless because to the ancient people only the Old Testament was given, which would turn like a wheel to instruct their mind? And rightly is the same wheel said to have appeared upon the earth. For to sinning man it was said: You are earth, and into earth you will go. Therefore the wheel appeared upon the earth, because almighty God gave the law upon the hearts of sinners. But since these winged living creatures designate the holy evangelists, as we said before, how is it that the living creatures are seen first and afterward one wheel, when the Old Testament came first and the holy evangelists followed afterward? But we can understand in these things that those were seen first by the prophet who transcend in merit. For as much as the holy Gospel excels the Old Testament, so much

also ought its preachers to have been given precedence in the prophetic description. Although there is still something else that ought to be considered in this description, because the spirit of prophecy gathers together within itself things prior and posterior simultaneously in such a way that the prophet's tongue cannot utter these things simultaneously. But the vast things which he sees flow forth from divided discourses, and now he speaks the last things after the first, now indeed the first things after the last.

Hence the prophet Ezekiel, under the figure of the holy universal Church, both sees the glory of the evangelists through the likeness of the four living creatures, and yet suddenly adds those things which were done in earlier times, so that he might openly indicate that he saw simultaneously what the tongue of flesh would not suffice to say simultaneously. But since we have said that all the perfect are also signified by the four living creatures, it must also be considered that certain of the saints existed even before the law, who lived strictly by natural law and were pleasing to the almighty Lord. Therefore the wheel is described after the living creatures, because many of the elect were perfect before the almighty Lord even before the law. But if we ought to take the living creatures as referring to the Evangelists alone, as we have said, there is still something else that we ought to consider. For the holy prophet was seeing that these very words which he was uttering wrapped in obscurities would be opened not to the Jewish people but to the Gentiles. Therefore, speaking to us, he ought to have described the living creatures first and the wheel afterward, because we, coming to faith by the Lord's bounty, learned the law not through the law but through the holy Gospel. But where or what kind of wheel appeared, he adds when he says: "Beside the living creatures having four faces. Where it is still added:

"And the appearance of the wheels and their work was like the vision of the sea; and the likeness of the four was one, and their appearance and their works, as if there were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. What is this, that when one wheel was spoken of, shortly after it is added, "As if there were a wheel in the middle of a wheel," unless that in the letter of the Old Testament the New Testament lay hidden through allegory? Hence the same wheel which appeared beside the living creatures is described as having four faces, because Sacred Scripture through both Testaments is distinguished into four parts. For the Old Testament consists in the Law and the Prophets, while the New consists in the Gospels and the Acts and sayings of the Apostles. Now we know that where we direct our face, there we see what is necessary. The wheel therefore has four faces, because first it saw through the Law the evils to be cut away in the peoples, afterwards it saw through the Prophets, more subtly through the Gospel, and finally through the Apostles it beheld those things which were to be cut away from the faults of men. It can also be understood that the wheel has four faces on account of the fact that Sacred Scripture, extended through the grace of preaching into the four parts of the world, became known.

Hence the same wheel is well described as having first appeared as one beside the living creatures and afterwards as having four faces, because unless the Law agreed with the Gospel, it would not become known in the four parts of the world. There follows: "And the

appearance of the wheels, and their work, was like the vision of the sea. Rightly are the sacred utterances said to be similar to the vision of the sea, because in them there are great volumes of sentences, heaps of meanings. Nor is it undeservedly that Sacred Scripture is said to be similar to the sea, because the sentences of speech are confirmed in it through the sacrament of baptism. Or certainly it must be considered that we sail by ships into the sea when we proceed toward desired lands. But what is in our desire except that land about which it is written: ”My portion is in the land of the living”? But he who crosses the sea is carried, as I said, by wood. And we know that Sacred Scripture announces to us the wood of the cross through the law, when it says: ”Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. Paul attests this concerning our Redeemer, saying: ”Made a curse for us. Through the prophets also it announces the wood, when it is said: ”The Lord will reign from the wood. And again: ”Let us put wood in his bread.

But through the Gospel the wood of the cross is openly shown, where the very passion of the Lord which was prophesied is declared. Through the apostles, moreover, this same cross is also held in words and works, when Paul says: ”The world is crucified to me, and I to the world. And again: ”But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore for us who proceed toward the eternal homeland, Sacred Scripture through its four faces is a sea. It announces the cross, because it carries us to the land of the living by wood. But unless the prophet perceived Sacred Scripture to be similar to the sea, he would by no means have said: ”The earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters covering the sea. There follows: ”And one likeness of the four themselves, and their appearance and works, as if a wheel were in the middle of a wheel. The likeness of the four is one, because what the law preaches, the prophets also preach; what the prophets announce, the Gospel displays; what the Gospel displayed, the apostles proclaimed throughout the world. Therefore the likeness of the four is one, because the divine utterances, although distinct in time, are nevertheless united in meaning. And their appearance and their workings, as if a wheel were in the midst of a wheel.

A wheel within a wheel is the New Testament, as we have said, within the Old Testament, because what the Old Testament designated, the New Testament displayed. For to speak of a few things out of many, what does it mean that while Adam slept Eve was brought forth, except that while Christ died the Church was formed? What does it mean that Isaac was led to be sacrificed, and carried the wood, was placed upon the altar and lived, except that our Redeemer, led to his passion, himself carried the wood of the cross? And thus in sacrifice he died for us according to his humanity, yet remained immortal according to his divinity. What does it mean that the manslayer, absolved after the death of the high priest, returns to his own land, except that the human race, which by sinning brought death upon itself, after the death of the true priest, namely our Redeemer, is loosed from the bonds of its sins and restored to the possession of paradise? What does it mean that the mercy seat was commanded to be made in the tabernacle, upon which two cherubim, one from one end and the other from the other end, are placed of the purest gold, spreading their wings and covering the oracle, who look upon each other with their faces turned toward the mercy seat,

except that both Testaments so agree with each other in the Mediator of God and men, that what one designates, the other displays?

For what is designated by the mercy seat except the Redeemer himself of the human race? Of whom Paul says: Whom God set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood. And what is signified by the two Cherubim, which are called the fullness of knowledge, except both Testaments? Of which one stands from one end of the mercy seat, and the other from the other end, because what the Old Testament began to promise by prophesying concerning the incarnation of our Redeemer, the New Testament narrates as perfectly fulfilled. Moreover the two cherubim were made of the purest gold, because both Testaments are written with pure and simple truth. And they spread their wings and cover the oracle, because we who are the oracle of almighty God are protected from threatening faults by the edification of Sacred Scripture. While we carefully examine its sentences, we are veiled by its wings from the error of ignorance. Therefore the two cherubim look upon each other with their faces turned toward the mercy seat, because both Testaments disagree with each other in nothing. And they hold their faces toward each other as it were, because what one promises, the other displays, while they see the Mediator of God and men placed between them. For the cherubim would turn their faces away from each other, if what one Testament promised, the other denied. But while they speak harmoniously of the Mediator of God and men, so that they look upon each other in turn, they gaze upon the mercy seat.

Therefore a wheel is in the midst of a wheel, because the New Testament is within the Old Testament. And, as we have often already said, what the Old Testament promised, the New displayed; and what the former announces in hidden fashion, the latter openly proclaims as fulfilled. Therefore the Old Testament is the prophecy of the New Testament; and the New Testament is the exposition of the Old Testament. There follows: They went in four directions, and they did not turn back. Where else do the divine utterances go, if not to the hearts of men? But going through four parts they were going, because Sacred Scripture goes to the hearts of men through the law, signifying mystery. Through the prophets it goes somewhat more openly, prophesying the Lord. Through the Gospel it goes, presenting the one whom it prophesied. Through the apostles it goes, preaching him whom the Father presented for our redemption. Therefore the wheels have faces and ways, because the sacred utterances show knowledge of precepts together with the performance of works. And they go through four parts, because they speak in distinct times, as we have said, or certainly because they preach the incarnate Lord in all regions of the world. Concerning these it is openly added shortly after: And they did not turn back when they walked. These things were said above concerning the living creatures, but the same things cannot be understood concerning the wheels as concerning the living creatures. Indeed, we said that the wheels signify the Testaments.

And the Old Testament did walk, because it came to the minds of men through preaching, but it returned back upon itself, because according to the letter it could not be preserved in its precepts and sacrifices until the end. For it did not remain without change, since

spiritual understanding was lacking in it. But when our Redeemer came into the world, He caused to be understood spiritually what He found being held carnally. And so while its letter is understood spiritually, all that carnal observance in it is vivified. But the New Testament was also called the eternal testament through the pages of the Old Testament, because its understanding is never changed. Therefore it is well said that the wheels going went forward and did not turn back when they walked, because while the New Testament is not rescinded, while the Old is now held as spiritually understood, they do not go back upon themselves, since they persist unchangeable until the end of the world. Therefore they walk but do not turn back, because they come spiritually to our heart in such a way that their precepts or pursuits are not changed any further. There follows: And there was a structure to the wheels, and height, and a fearsome appearance. What is it that in the words of Sacred Scripture these three things are said to be present, so that they are mentioned as having stature, height, and a horrible appearance, that is, a terrible one?

We must greatly inquire what is called the stature of divine Scripture, what is its height, what is its horrible appearance. Therefore it must be known that to stand corresponds to the life of one who works well. Hence it is said through Paul: Let him who stands take heed lest he fall. He who also says to his disciples: So stand in the Lord, beloved. And the prophet, who saw himself standing before the Lord in life and conduct, said: The Lord lives, in whose sight I stand. Height, however, is the promise of the heavenly kingdom. Which is reached when all corruption of mortal life is now subdued. The horrible appearance, however, is the terror of hell, which tortures the reprobate without end, and always preserves them in torment. Therefore stature is in the rectitude of precept, height in the loftiness of the heavenly promise, and horrible appearance in the threats and terrors of the punishment that follows. Sacred Scripture therefore has stature, because it directs conduct toward standing, so that the minds of hearers may not be bent toward earthly desire. It has height, because it promises the joys of eternal life in the heavenly homeland. It also has a horrible appearance, because it threatens all the reprobate with the punishments of hell. Therefore it shows its stature in the building of conduct, it shows its height in the promise of rewards, it shows its horrible appearance in the terrors of punishments. For it is upright in precepts, lofty in promises, horrible in threats.

It has stature when it says through the prophet: Cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the orphan, defend the widow. And again: Break your bread for the hungry, and bring the needy and wandering into your house; when you see the naked, cover him, and do not despise those of your own flesh. It has height when it says through the same prophet: The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor shall the splendor of the moon illuminate you; but the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and your God shall be your glory. It has a horrible appearance when, describing hell, it says: The day of vengeance of the Lord, the year of retribution for the judgment of Zion; and its torrents shall be turned into pitch, and its soil into sulphur; and the land shall be burning pitch, day and night it shall not be extinguished forever. Which blessed Job also describes, saying: A land of darkness and covered with the mist of death, a land of misery and darkness, where

is the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelling there. It has stature when through it the Lord graciously promises, saying: As the new heavens and the new earth, which I make to stand before me, says the Lord; so shall your seed and your name stand. For they truly stand before the Lord who do not waste their life in wickedness. It has height when it immediately adds:

And there shall be month after month, and Sabbath after Sabbath, and all flesh shall come to worship before my face, says the Lord. What is a month but the perfection of days? And what is the Sabbath but rest in which servile work is not permitted? Therefore month after month means that those who live perfectly here are led to the perfection of glory there. And Sabbath after Sabbath means that those who cease from wicked work here rest in heavenly reward there. It also has a horrible appearance when it immediately adds: And they shall go out and see the corpses of the men who have transgressed against me. Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be extinguished. For what can be said or thought more horrible than to receive the wounds of damnation, and never to end the pains of the wounds! Of this horrible appearance of the wheels it is well said through Zephaniah, when the day of judgment is announced as coming upon hard hearts: The great day of the Lord is near, near and exceedingly swift. The voice of the day of the Lord is bitter, the strong man shall be troubled there. That day is a day of wrath, 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.

But since we have set forth the statements about the outer wheel, it remains now that we should also present the stature, height, and terrifying appearance of the inner wheel. Indeed, the inner wheel has its stature when through the holy Gospel it forbids us to bend toward earthly desires, saying in the words of our Redeemer: ”Take heed lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing and drunkenness, or with the cares of this life. It has height when it promises concerning the same Redeemer, saying: ”But as many as believed in him, he gave them power to become sons of God. For what can be said to be higher than this power, what more sublime than this height, in which every created being is made a son of the Creator? It has a terrifying appearance when it speaks of the reprobate, saying: ”These shall go into everlasting punishment. It has stature when the Truth admonishes the disciples, saying: ”Sell what you possess and give alms. Make for yourselves purses that do not grow old. It has the height of promise when it says: ”They shall come from the East and the West, and shall recline with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. It has a terrifying appearance when it adds: ”But the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. To whom again it is said by the voice of Truth: ”You shall die in your sins.

It has stature when it says in the words of the first pastor: ”Supply in your faith virtue, and in virtue knowledge, and in knowledge self-control, and in self-control patience, and in patience godliness, and in godliness brotherly love, and in brotherly love charity. It has height when shortly after it says: ”For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly

into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Who again promises to good pastors, saying: ”When the chief Shepherd appears, you shall receive the unfading crown of glory. It has a terrifying appearance when it says: ”But the day of the Lord will come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be dissolved with heat. Since all these things are to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, whereby the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with the ardor of fire? It has stature when through Paul it raises us from earthly desires, saying: ”Mortify your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil desire, and covetousness, which is the service of idols. It has height when it promises, saying: ”Your life is hidden with Christ in God. For when Christ your life shall appear, then you also shall appear with him in glory. It has a terrifying appearance when it threatens, saying:

”In the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, with the angels of his power in a flame of fire, giving vengeance to those who do not know God, and who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall suffer eternal punishments from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his power. It has stature when it admonishes us, saying: ”See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good toward one another and toward all. It has height when it promises, saying: ”If we die with him, we shall also live with him; if we endure, we shall also reign with him. And again: ”The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the future glory that shall be revealed in us. It has a terrifying appearance when it threatens, saying: ”A certain fearful expectation of judgment, and the fury of fire which shall consume the adversaries. Who again says: ”It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. All of which it also draws together in a brief statement, saying: ”That you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth. For charity is broad, because it encompasses even the love of enemies, and through that charity by which Almighty God loves us broadly, he also bears with us patiently.

Therefore we ought to show to our neighbors what we see being shown to us who are unworthy by our Creator. And so breadth and length pertain to stature, because through love it enlarges our conduct, so that charity may patiently bear the faults of the brethren. But height is that reward of eternal prizes, of whose immensity it is said: ”Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love him. Therefore it has height in its sublimity, because the eternal joys of the saints cannot now be penetrated by any thought. The depth also is that inestimable condemnation of punishments, which plunges those whom it receives into the lowest depths. In these things the sacred words have a terrifying appearance, because they strike inestimable terror into those who hear, when they speak of the punishments of hell. Rightly therefore it is said: ”There was also stature in the wheels, and height, and terrifying appearance,” because Sacred Scripture in both Testaments is upright in admonishing, lofty in promising, and terrible in threatening. Let it suffice, dearest brethren, for us to have said these things

on this day by the Lord's bounty, so that we may return refreshed by rest to discuss the things that follow, trusting in God the author of all things and 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 VII.

As you know, dearest brothers, it is the custom of prophecy to look now at this, now at that, and suddenly to turn words from one thing to another, as the Psalmist, when speaking of the Lord, said: "God is a just judge, strong and patient; is He angry every day? Unless you are converted, He has brandished His sword, He has bent His bow and made it ready; and in it He has prepared instruments of death, He has made His arrows for those who burn"; suddenly he adds: "He conceived sorrow and brought forth iniquity; he opened a pit and dug it out, and fell into the hole he made. Behold, when he was narrating the Lord's justice, as if without changing his voice, he suddenly introduced the guilt of the sinner. Let it suffice that I have said this one example by way of illustration, because whoever has practice in reading the prophets knows how frequently they do this. Hence now the prophet Ezekiel, when he was speaking about the wheels, added: "And the whole body was full of eyes around the four of them. For he who said "of them" (masculine) rather than "of them" (feminine) clearly indicates that his speech suddenly returned from the wheels to the living creatures. By these, as was said before, all perfect persons are designated. Therefore the bodies of the living creatures are described as full of eyes, because the action of the saints is circumspect on every side, desirously providing for good things, skillfully guarding against evil things.

And this is more laborious where the mind of the saints vigilantly watches lest evils hide themselves before their eyes under the appearance of good things. Therefore the life of the saints is circumspect, lest it be so free as to be proud, because often pride exceeds in words, and desires to appear as the freedom of purity. Lest it be so humble as to be fearful, because sometimes fear constrains the mind and does not presume to speak what is right, yet in that same timid thought it pretends to be humility. Lest it be so sparing as to be grasping, because very often greed desires to be considered frugality, so that it may seem to hold justly and necessarily whatever it does not wish to mercifully expend upon a needy neighbor. Lest it be so merciful as to be wasteful, because sometimes it thinks wastefulness to be mercy. For it is one thing to give necessities to neighbors from the zeal of piety, and another to scatter what one possesses without intention of reward. Therefore whatever is done must be weighed in the root of intention, by what merit it may be held at the judgment of the Creator. Hence the same Creator says: "If your eye be simple, your whole body will be full of light. Calling the eye, of course, intention, and the body, action. Because if our intention is simple before God, our action will not be dark in His judgment.

Therefore, because holy men skillfully watch so that they may look upon themselves from every side and guard themselves everywhere, lest they either desire evils for their own sake, or do these same things under the appearance of good things—namely, lest vices deceive them into thinking they are virtues—they have the whole body full of eyes round about,

because all their action is both filled and surrounded by the providence of solicitude. Hence it is that the Apostle Paul, when he perceived that the Corinthians wished to show mercy to a certain penitent for a crime he had committed, says: ”If you have forgiven anyone anything, so have I. For what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I have done for your sake in the person of Christ, lest we be outwitted by Satan. For we are not ignorant of his designs. For if pardon was to be granted, why did that excellent teacher associate himself with such humility to the will of his disciples, so that neither he himself seemed divided from his disciples, nor they from him, in the matter of compassion, unless because with the watchful eye of providence he observed that very often when one pardons, another grows angry? And what kind of sacrifice of mercy is that which is offered together with discord toward one’s neighbor? Hence he rightly says: ”Lest we be outwitted by Satan. For we are not ignorant of his designs.

Because, that is to say, from the very source where he sees one person performing a work of piety, he is accustomed to cast the evil of strife into another’s heart. For the good is imperfect which is done in such a way that no attention is paid lest some evil creep up on it from another side, unless perhaps it would be a fault not to do that which cannot be done without giving offense to someone. We say this, however, to make known to your love that in our good work we must sometimes beware of scandalizing our neighbor, but sometimes it must be despised as nothing. We learned this from our own Author, who, when tribute was sought from Peter after inquiry, first proposed an example through which he answered that he owed nothing, saying: ”The kings of the earth, from whom do they receive tribute or tax—from their own sons, or from strangers? When he was told ”From strangers,” he immediately replied: ”Therefore the sons are free. But after he showed that he was free, lest perhaps he cause scandal to anyone, he added: ”But so that we may not scandalize them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a coin; take that and give it to them for me and for you. Again, when he said that everything which enters the mouth does not defile a man, then the disciples came and said to him:

”Do you know that the Pharisees, having heard this word, were scandalized? But he answered and said: ”Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Leave them alone; they are blind, and guides of the blind. Behold, the Master Truth, lest scandal be generated in the hearts of some, paid the tribute that he did not owe; and again, because he saw that scandal against truth was being generated in the hearts of some, he allowed them to remain in their scandal. From which matter we must consider that, insofar as we are able without sin, we ought to avoid giving scandal to our neighbors. If, however, scandal is taken from the truth, it is more profitable to permit scandal to arise than for truth to be abandoned. Therefore the bodies of the living creatures are full of eyes when they cautiously look around themselves on every side. But we must know that often, while we are attending to some things, it happens that we neglect others; and where we neglect, there without doubt we do not have an eye. For that Pharisee who had gone up to the temple to pray, as the Gospel attests, we have recognized what he said. For he said: God, I thank

you. And rightly he gave thanks to God, from whom he had received the good things he had done. He also added: That I am not like the rest of men, robbers, unjust, adulterers, even like this Publican;

I fast twice on the Sabbath, I give tithes of all that I possess. Behold, the Pharisee had an eye for displaying abstinence, for bestowing mercy, for giving thanks to God, but he did not have an eye for guarding humility. And what does it profit if a city is carefully guarded almost entirely against the ambushes of enemies, if one opening is left exposed through which enemies may enter? What then does a guard profit that is placed almost everywhere around, when the whole city is opened to enemies through the neglect of one place? But the Pharisee who practiced fasting, gave tithes, returned thanks to God, as it were kept watch almost completely around in guarding his city. But because he did not attend to one opening of pride in himself, there he suffered the enemy, where through negligence he closed his eye. Because therefore the minds of the saints keeping watch examine themselves on every side, and in all their work lead around the eye of fear and solicitude, lest they either do wrong things, or fail to do right things that are commanded, or having completed good actions, become swollen in their thoughts, and offend all the more grievously the more they appear righteous outwardly and sin more secretly, it is rightly said: Their whole body is full of eyes round about. It should also be known that in the old translation it does not read: ”Their whole body was full of eyes round about,” but rather it says: ”Their backs were full of eyes.

This statement, of course, does not depart from the sense of edification. For sinful people are often accustomed to guard those things which are in front. But righteous men, because they guard themselves even in those things which are not readily seen and in front, are said to have eyes in their backs. Therefore those who examine even the things that are hidden, and guard themselves from those very things that lie concealed, certainly have eyes in their backs. This, however, can also be understood in another way: because we see the things that are before our face, but another person sees our backs in us, and we ourselves cannot see them. But since holy men carefully examine themselves in those matters by which they can be judged by others, and strictly see themselves just as they are often strictly seen by others—they who are not ignorant even of those things in themselves that could remain hidden—they carry light on their back. There follows: ”And when the living creatures walked, the wheels also walked beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up together with them. The living creatures walk when holy men understand in Sacred Scripture how they should live morally. But the living creatures are lifted from the earth when holy men suspend themselves in contemplation. And because each of the saints, the more he himself has advanced in Sacred Scripture, the more that same Sacred Scripture advances in him, it is rightly said:

”When the living creatures walked, the wheels walked equally with them; and when the living creatures were lifted from the earth, the wheels were lifted together with them,” because the divine words grow with the reader; for each one understands them more deeply to the degree that he attends to them more deeply. Hence the wheels are not lifted if the

living creatures are not lifted, because unless the minds of readers have advanced to higher things, the divine sayings lie as if in the depths, not understood. For when the words of Sacred Scripture do not arouse the mind of any reader (if the sense of the divine word seems lukewarm to him), and no light of understanding flashes forth in his thought, the wheel is both idle and on the ground, because the living creature is not lifted from the earth. But if the living creature walks, that is, seeks the order of living well, and through the steps of the heart finds how to place the steps of good work, the wheels walk equally with it, because you find as much progress in the sacred word as you yourself have advanced in relation to it. But if the winged living creature has stretched itself forth in contemplation, the wheels are immediately raised from the earth, because you understand that those things are not earthly which you previously believed were spoken in the sacred word according to an earthly manner.

And it happens that you perceive the words of Sacred Scripture to be heavenly, if, enkindled through the grace of contemplation, you suspend yourself toward heavenly things. And the wondrous and ineffable power of the sacred word is recognized when the mind of the reader is penetrated by heavenly love. Therefore, because the living creature raises itself to the heights, the wheel flies. There follows: ”Wherever the spirit went, the wheels were equally lifted as the spirit went there, following it. For wherever the spirit of the reader tends, there the divine utterances are also lifted up, because if you seek something lofty in them by seeing and understanding, these same sacred utterances grow with you, ascend with you to higher things. And it is well said of these same wheels: Following him. For if the spirit of the reader seeks to know something moral or historical in them, the moral sense of history follows him. If something typological, the figurative speech is immediately recognized. If something contemplative, at once the wheels as it were receive wings and are suspended in the air, because in the words of sacred utterance heavenly understanding is opened. Therefore wherever the spirit went, there as the spirit went the wheels were likewise lifted up, following him. For the wheels follow the spirit, because the words of sacred utterance, as has often been said already, grow in understanding according to the perception of the readers.

In one and the same sentence of Scripture, one person is nourished by history alone, another seeks the typical meaning, and yet another seeks the contemplative understanding through the type. And it often happens that, as has been said, in one and the same sentence all three can be found together. For when Moses had been called from the burning bush, he drew nearer to see the sight, and behold, the bush was burning and was not consumed. This is a great miracle. If you seek only the history in it, there is something by which the mind of the reader may be nourished, so that you see fire burning in wood and not consuming it. But if you seek the typical understanding, what does the flame signify but the law, of which it is written: ”In his right hand a fiery law”? And what did that bush designate but the Jewish people, beset with the thorns of their sins? But the burning bush could not be consumed, because the Jewish people both received the fire of the law and yet did not abandon the thorns of their sins, nor did the flame of the divine word burn up their vices. Perhaps in

this event another person desires to contemplate greater things through the type. Because his understanding grows, the wheels are likewise raised.

For among men the only-begotten Son of God became perfect man, who had no sins of his own but took upon himself the thorns of our wickedness, and deigned to be humbled even to the passion for us, and to receive in himself the fire of our tribulation. But he burned and did not burn, because he both died according to his humanity and yet remained immortal according to his divinity. He received from us that by which a sacrifice might be made for us, and yet remained impassible and unchangeable in his own nature, so that he might change us from our condition. Perhaps one person seeks morality through history, and another seeks contemplation through allegorical understanding. According to history, what is written in the law is clear to all: that when a turtledove is offered for sin, its head should be turned back to its wings, so that it clings to the neck and is not completely broken off. In these words the historical sense is not doubtful to readers. But if you seek to understand these things morally, the wheel is set in motion when the sentence of the sacred word is brought to moral understanding. For we ourselves ought to be a turtledove in the sacrifice of almighty God, so that our head is turned back to the wings, that is, our mind to the virtues. For not without reason do we understand the mind by the head, because just as the head rules the body, so the mind rules actions.

But the head is commanded to be turned back to the wings, so that you do what you say and join your mouth to your works. Nor should the head be cut off in such a way that it is separated from the body, but when partially cut, it is commanded to cling to its body, because clearly our mind must be cut away from carnal pleasure, but must not be cut away from necessary care of the flesh. For hence it is written: ”Make no provision for the flesh in its lusts. What is therefore forbidden to be done in lusts is without doubt permitted in necessity. The head of the turtledove, therefore, is partially cut off and partially clings, so that, as has been said, our mind is both cut away from the will of the flesh and yet is not cut off from necessity. What if another person seeks this kind of sacrifice for contemplation under the typical understanding of our Redeemer? Let the mind ascend to higher things, let the living creatures be raised up, so that the wheels may likewise be raised up. For who is our head but the Redeemer of the human race? Of whom it is written: ”He gave him as head over all the Church, which is his body. When the Jews persecuted him, they tried to destroy his name from the earth. And when they saw him crucified and buried, they believed they had separated him from the love of all.

But the head of the turtledove was both cut and yet not separated from its body, because from the fact that he endured death for us, he more truly joined all of us to himself in his very death; and through the fact that he visibly withdrew himself from our eyes, he invisibly rooted himself in our minds. The head of the turtledove, therefore, when cut, clung to the body, because our Redeemer indeed suffered for us, but was not separated from us through his passion. Since therefore the words of sacred speech grow with the spirit of the readers, it is rightly now said: ”Wherever the spirit went, there the wheels were likewise raised up

as the spirit went, following it. And it is added: "For the spirit of life was in the wheels. In the wheels there is the spirit of life, because through the sacred utterances we are vivified by the gift of the spirit, so that we may drive away deadly works from ourselves. It can also be understood that the spirit goes when God touches the mind of the reader in various ways and orders, when arousing him now through the words of sacred utterance to zeal, He raises him to vengeance, now softens him to patience, now instructs him in preaching, now pierces him to the lamentations of penitence.

But let us run briefly through these same words which we have spoken, and let us see how the wheels follow the spirit, which is called the spirit of life, and is said to be within the wheels. Certainly if the spirit of life has touched the mind of the reader in the fervor of zeal, immediately in the sacred utterances he sees that Moses, returning to the camp and recognizing that the people had sinned through idols, laid them low with swords through the fervor of the spirit; that Phinehas, by pursuing lust, appeased the wrath of the Lord with the sword; that Peter struck down and killed those who lied to him with a word; that Paul threatens negligent disciples with the rod. If the spirit of life touches the soul of the reader to maintain patience, immediately the wheels also follow, because in the sacred scriptures he finds that Moses and Aaron, when speaking rightly they suffered persecution from the people, ran to the tabernacle, praying for the very people whom they were fleeing. Their holy mind both endured the swelling pride of the arrogant, and yet did not burst forth against them into hatred. For true patience is that which loves the very one whom it bears. For to tolerate but to hate is not the virtue of meekness, but a covering for fury. In those same scriptures he finds that Samuel, cast down from leadership, confesses that he even prayed for those who cast him down;

that none of the saints arrived at heavenly glory except by maintaining patience; that the very author of the human race endured spitting, blows, a crown of thorns, the cross, and the lance, and yet prayed for his persecutors. If the spirit of life rouses the reader's mind to zeal for preaching, immediately the wheels follow as well, because in the sacred Scriptures he finds how Moses, at the Lord's command, raised himself up against the king of Egypt with such words of free preaching; what Stephen said to the faithless Jews: "You have always resisted the Holy Spirit," and he did not fear even amid the stones; what Peter, beaten with rods and told not to speak in the name of Jesus, replied with great boldness: "We must obey God rather than men"; that Paul is bound with the chains of fetters, yet nevertheless the word of God is not bound. If the spirit of life stirs one to the laments of repentance, the wheels immediately follow, as the words of Holy Scripture present David repenting; because when he was rebuked by the prophet, since he had not been subject to the heavenly King, he was not ashamed to confess to the rebuking subject what he had done; because the publican, who recognized the guilt of his wickedness, even though he came to the temple unjust, returned from the temple justified; because Peter washed away the stains of his denial with tears; because the thief who recognized his guilt on the cross found pardon in death itself.

Concerning these wheels the same prophet repeats and adds: When they went, they went, and when they stood, they stood; and when they were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were likewise lifted up following them, because the spirit of life was in the wheels. As you know, dearest brothers, these things have already been said for the most part, but they are narrated through repeated description. Therefore let it not weary us to repeat briefly in exposition what the Spirit deigned to narrate repeatedly through the prophet. For this alone is added as new in these words, namely what was said: "When they stood still, they stood still. Now there are certain people who advance to the point that they know how to dispense well the earthly goods they have received, who devote themselves to works of mercy, who come to the aid of the oppressed. These indeed go forward, in that they extend themselves for the benefit of their neighbor. With these, therefore, the wheels move, because the sacred words arrange the steps of their sayings in their journey. And there are others who are so strong in holding to the faith they have received that they are able to resist any adversities, and not only are they not in the least drawn toward the perversity of faithlessness, but they even fight against those who speak perversely and draw them back to rectitude. With these who stand still, the wheels also stand still, because the words of sacred Scripture confirm their rectitude, when they hear in them:

"Stand firm and hold to the traditions you have learned. And again: "Your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour; resist him, strong in faith. And there are others who despise all earthly things, who deign to possess nothing that passes away, and suspend themselves in the contemplation of God, as was said before. With these who are lifted up, therefore, the wheels are likewise raised, because to the extent that anyone has advanced to higher things, to that extent the sacred words speak to him of loftier matters. The living creatures go, therefore, for the benefit of their neighbor; they stand still for the guarding of themselves; they are lifted up for the contemplation of God. But the wheels likewise go, stand, and are lifted up, because sacred Scripture is found to be such as he himself becomes who seeks it. For you have advanced to the active life—it walks with you. You have advanced to immobility and constancy of spirit—it stands with you. You have arrived at the contemplative life through God's grace—it flies with you. And again it is added: "Because the spirit of life was in the wheels. The reason it is said a second time that the spirit of life was in the wheels is because there are two Testaments of sacred Scripture, both of which the Spirit of God willed to be written, so that He might free us from death of the soul.

Or certainly because there are two precepts of charity, namely love of God and love of neighbor, through both of which the words of sacred Scripture give us life. Therefore it is said a second time that the spirit of life was in the wheels, because we receive love of God and neighbor in the divine utterances. For through the precepts of sacred Scripture we come back to life, we who lay dead in sin. Whence it is said to the almighty Lord through the Psalmist: "I will never forget your justifications, because in them you have given me life. For the Lord's precepts are called justifications, in which He justifies us by correcting us. Of which the Psalmist says more openly: "I will meditate on your justifications; I will not

forget your words. In them, therefore, He gives us life, because through these He shows us spiritual life, and pours it into our minds through the breath of the Spirit. Because this is done daily through the gift of grace in the minds of the elect, it is rightly said: ”The spirit of life was in the wheels. This Scripture has become for us a light for the journey in the darkness of the present life. For hence Peter says: ”To which you do well to attend, as to a lamp shining in a dark place. Hence the Psalmist says: ”Your word is a lamp to my feet, O Lord, and a light to my paths.

Yet we know that even this lamp of ours is dark to us, unless the truth illuminates it for our minds. Whence again the Psalmist says: ”For you light my lamp, O Lord my God, illumine my darkness. For what is a burning lamp, if not a light? But created light does not shine for us unless it is illuminated by uncreated light. Therefore, because almighty God both created and opened the words of the holy Testaments for our salvation, the spirit of life was in the wheels. There follows: ”And the likeness over the heads of the living creatures was of a firmament, like the appearance of terrible crystal, stretched above their heads. With the Lord’s generosity, we shall explain these things in two ways, so that we may leave it to the reader’s judgment to decide what should be chosen. For by the name of firmament, the heavenly powers can be understood. This firmament is rightly said to be like the appearance of crystal, because crystal is indeed exceedingly strong, yet it is solidified from water. And the angelic nature, when it was created, received free will—whether it wished to persist in humility and remain in the sight of almighty God, or whether it would slip into pride and fall from blessedness—it was like water by comparison.

But because, while others were falling, the holy angels persisted in their blessedness, and received this as a gift, that they could no longer fall at all, their nature in them, because it can no longer be led about changeably, was hardened as if into the solidity of crystal. This crystal is said to be terrible and stretched out over the heads of the living creatures, because those angelic powers which stand in the presence of almighty God are terrifying and fearful to us who are still placed in this corruption. Their joys, because they exceed the perception of our minds, are said to be above the heads of the living creatures. For who, placed in corruptible flesh, could comprehend what that ineffable and endless joy of the angels might be? What blessedness it is, to see the face of the Creator without failing, and to persist in delight in Him without change? However, by the name of firmament, our Redeemer himself can be understood figuratively—true God above all things, and made perfect man among all things, in whom our nature has been confirmed with the Father. Of whom it is also said prophetically through the Psalmist: ”Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, and upon the son of man whom you have confirmed for yourself. For human nature, before it was taken up by the Creator of all things, was earth; for it was not firmament. Indeed, to sinful man it was said: ”You are earth, and to earth you shall go.

But after it was assumed by the Author of all things, and raised up into the heavens, and led above the angels, that which was earth became firmament. But what likeness the firmament that is seen has is added below, when it says: ”As the appearance of terrible crystal.

Crystal, as has been said, congeals from water and becomes solid. Indeed we know how great is the mobility of water. But the body of our Redeemer, because it was subject to sufferings even unto death, was in some way similar to water, because by being born, growing, becoming weary, hungering, thirsting, dying, it ran movably through moments of time up to his passion. The Prophet, beholding this course, says: "He rejoiced as a giant to run his way. But because through the glory of his resurrection he recovered from his very corruption into the power of incorruption, as if in the manner of crystal he hardened from water, so that in him there was this same nature, and yet in it the mutability of corruption that had formerly existed was no more. Therefore water was turned into crystal when the weakness of his corruption was changed through his resurrection into the firmness of incorruption. But it should be noted that this crystal is called terrible, that is, fearsome. Yet who does not know how great is the beauty of crystal? And it is wondrous how in this crystal beauty comes together with fear.

But to all who know the truth it is certain that when the Redeemer of the human race appears as judge, He will be both beautiful to the just and terrible to the unjust. For He whom the elect behold as gentle, this same one the reprobate see as fearsome and terrible. But the elect will not then see Him as terrible, because now they do not cease to consider His terror. For they carefully consider how terrible He comes to judgment, they weep over past sins, they avoid impending ones; they place His fear daily before the eyes of their mind, and without ceasing they are apprehensive of how tremendous He will appear, and by fearing daily they act so that when He comes they will not be terrified. Therefore the likeness above the heads of the living creatures of a firmament was like the appearance of terrible crystal. And because that very fear of Him, which they hold in their thoughts, protects their minds, it is rightly added: Stretched out over their heads above. This firmament which appears in the likeness of crystal above the heads of those living creatures is both terrible and stretched out, because it protects the minds of the good from the same source whence it terrifies them. For if He were not fearsome in their hearts, He would not be their protector now from sins and afterward from punishments. But because they always consider what fear threatens from the judgment, they keep the wings of their virtues in uprightness.

Hence it is fittingly added soon after: And under the firmament their wings were straight, one toward the other. Then the wings of virtues are straight beneath the firmament when the good that one person has, he bestows upon another, so that he who has received earthly substance may relieve the poverty of a needy neighbor; he who is full of the grace of teaching may illuminate the darkness of an ignorant neighbor with the word of his preaching; he who is supported by temporal power may relieve those oppressed by violence; he who is full of the spirit of prophecy may turn aside evils threatening a neighbor's life by persuading him to good; he who has received the grace of healing may devoutly and humbly bestow his intercession for the health of the sick; he who, free from earthly activities, has merited to be occupied with God alone, may pray for his erring neighbors. But it often happens that he who is too much occupied with earthly substance does not watch in prayer as much as he ought. And it frequently happens that he who, stripped of all the burdens of the world,

is free to entreat the Lord, does not have the sustenance for living. But when the rich man extends food and clothing to the poor, and when the poor man bestows his prayer upon the soul of the rich, the wings of the living creatures are stretched straight from one to another.

For when that man offers me the word of preaching and expels the darkness of ignorance from my heart with the light of truth, and when I, because perhaps he is oppressed by some powerful person of this world, impart to him the comfort of my defense and rescue him from violent hands, we stretch our wings to one another in turn, so that we may touch each other with mutual affection and assistance from the good we have received. Hence the first pastor rightly admonishes, saying: ”The end of all things has drawn near. Be therefore prudent, and watch in prayers; above all, having mutual charity continuous among yourselves, because charity covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without murmuring. Each one, as he has received grace, administering it to one another. What therefore in Ezekiel is called a wing, in the apostle Peter is called received grace. And what he says: ”The straight wings of one to another,” the pastor of the Church says: ”Each one, as he has received grace, administering it to one another. For our wings are no longer straight if they are bent back only for our own benefit. But they become straight when we direct what we have to the benefit of our neighbor.

For since our goods are not from ourselves, but we have received them from him by whom it was made that we should exist, we ought not to keep them private for ourselves to the extent that we perceive them given to us by our Author for common benefit. Hence the apostle Peter rightly adds in his exhortation on this matter, saying: ”As good stewards of the manifold grace of God. And he still adds: ”If anyone speaks, as it were the words of God; if anyone ministers, as from the strength which God administers. As if he openly said: Humbly bestow good upon your neighbors, because you know that what you have is not from yourselves. For any wing of virtue, when it is stretched out by being imparted to a neighbor, will not be straight if it lacks humility. There follows: ”Each one covered his body with two wings, and another was similarly covered. We have already said above that action is signified by the body, while virtues are signified by the wings. And when he says: ”Under the firmament their wings were straight, one toward the other,” we must ask how it is added: ”Each one covered its body with two wings. In this matter it is clearly indicated that they both extended their wings toward one another, and yet they covered their own body with two wings.

What is this, except that we ought to bestow upon others the virtues we have received, while not ceasing to think carefully about those things in which we have sinned, and to lament our guilt daily through fear and penitence? For we have said above that the two wings by which the body is covered are fear and penitence. Therefore let us so grow in charity that we extend our wings toward our neighbors; and let us never cease to think about and lament ourselves. Let wings be extended toward one another, let wings cover the bodies, so that we both offer examples of good actions, and fear and penitence hide from judgment the evil things we have done. In the old translation it is said of these wings: ”Two were joined to each one,

and covering their bodies. In these words it is understood that those same wings that were joined one to another were also those that covered their bodies. This is rightly understood figuratively, because those virtues protect us before almighty God which we impart and join to our neighbors out of charity; while we live in harmony with them, we cover over the evil things we have done. Therefore by these wings can also be understood the two precepts of charity, namely love of God and of neighbor. For by loving God, we pursue our own evils within ourselves, that is, we cover the body.

But by loving our neighbor, we hasten to help him in whatever way we can, that is, we extend our wings toward another. But that which is added, ”And the other was similarly veiled,” is not found in the old translation. And it can be asked why, after it was said, ”Each one veiled its body with two wings,” there is added, ”And the other was similarly veiled. Searching carefully through the translation of the Seventy interpreters, of Aquila, of Theodotion, and of Symmachus, we find nothing of these words; but rereading the writings of blessed Jerome, we recognized that he found this sentence so placed in the Hebrew truth, not indeed according to the letter, but according to the sense. For it can be asked why, after it was said, ”Each one veiled its body,” there is immediately added, ”And the other was similarly veiled. For if it said ”one and the other,” the manner of speaking would stand. But after it was said ”each one,” why is ”the other” added, when in ”each one” all are comprehended? But if we distinguish both the life of the perfect and the merits of those making progress, we see that both ”each one” and ”the other” are not unreasonably placed. For those who both weep over their own sins and extend the wings of virtues to their neighbors as an example are without doubt perfect. But there are many of the little ones who observe and imitate their tears.

And those who could have been naked in their own depravities consider holy and more vigilant men; and soon, angered at their own depravities, they are kindled to lament and inflamed to repentance. And as they observe the holy ones veiling their bodies, so they themselves are also veiled with the wings of their own tears. For they strike themselves with great reproaches: why do those who do not have virtues not in the least bewail their sins, if those who already extend the wings of virtues to their neighbors through examples still do not cease to lament? In these words it is necessary that we who are still little ones always place before the eyes of our mind both the virtues and the tears of the perfect. Let us imitate what we behold in them, so that when we begin to grow through increases, we may be able to veil the evils we have done from that strict examination. For in constant weeping, in our daily repentance, we have a priest in heaven who intercedes for us. Of whom it is also said through John: If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he himself is the propitiation for our sins. We hear of his power. But fear again gnaws at our exultation, because he who is our advocate is called righteous. For we have unjust cases, but a righteous advocate in no way takes up unjust cases, nor consents to speak words on behalf of injustice.

What then shall we do, my dearest brothers? But behold, it occurs to my mind what we should do. Let us both abandon and accuse the evils we have done. It is written: The

righteous man is his own accuser at the beginning. For any sinner converted in weeping already begins to be righteous when he starts to accuse what he has done. For why should he not be righteous who now rages through tears against his own injustice? Therefore our righteous advocate will defend us as righteous in the judgment, because we both recognize and accuse ourselves as unjust. Therefore let us not trust in our weeping, not in our deeds, but in the pleading of our advocate, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY VIII.

That many profit by the examples of the righteous was treated at the end of the preceding discourse. And the prophet himself opens this very thing more clearly to us when he adds to what he had said: "And I heard the sound of their wings, as the sound of many waters. In sacred speech, peoples are customarily designated by waters. Hence it is said through John: "The waters are peoples. Peoples are designated by waters for this reason: because in life they have sound from the tumult of the flesh, and daily they flow away through the course of mortality. As we have now often said, the wings of the living creatures are the virtues of the saints. What then does it mean that the prophet hears the sound of wings as the sound of many waters, except that by the mercy of almighty God those wings of virtues, which formerly sounded in few saints, now also, with preaching spread abroad, resound in the conversion of many peoples? For when the Lord was incarnate, suffered, and rose again, the winged living creatures were few, because those who desired heavenly things and raised themselves on high by the wings of virtues were very rare. But after the preaching of his divinity was spread throughout the world, how many little ones, how many older persons, how many strong youths, how many weak ones, how many converted sinners, how many aged virgins fly to heavenly things through faith, through hope, through love—who is able to tell, who to estimate?

Behold, the sound of wings, which formerly was in few living creatures, now resounds among peoples, now the wings of virtues lift the multitude of the world to heavenly desire. Well therefore is it said: "And I heard the sound of their wings, as the sound of many waters," because, as we said before, that sound of virtues which was made in God's ear formerly from few saints was afterward multiplied from many waters, that is, from innumerable peoples. Concerning this sound it is well added further: "As the sound of the most high God. What is it that the sound of wings in the holy living creatures is called as the sound of the Most High God, except that Almighty God both fills the minds of the saints with heavenly desire, and himself hears them when filled? For he himself creates love in the hearts of the saints, and he himself receives prayer from loving hearts. Peter wept bitterly over his denial, but yet there it is first stated that Jesus looked upon Peter. Mary Magdalene came after many stains of guilt, to the feet of our Redeemer with tears; but who poured this into her within, except he who kindly received her outwardly? Who was urging her to tears through the spirit of compunction, except he who outwardly was receiving her unto pardon before those reclining together at table?

Therefore our Redeemer was drawing forth the mind of the sinful woman when he pierced her with compunction over her guilt, and was receiving her so that he might free her from guilt. Well therefore is this sound of wings called as the sound of the Most High God, because whatever is done in the virtues of the saints belongs to the grace of him who bestows merits: He is rightly called the Most High God through the prophet. For in Sacred Scripture, God is sometimes spoken of nominally, and sometimes essentially. He is spoken of nominally, as it is written: ”Behold, I have made you a god to Pharaoh. And as Moses says: ”If anyone does this or that, bring him to the gods,” that is, to the priests. Who again says: ”You shall not revile the gods,” that is, the priests. And as the Psalmist says: ”God stood in the assembly of gods, and in their midst He judges gods. But God is spoken of essentially, as He Himself says to Moses: ”I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. Hence the Apostle Paul, wishing to distinguish the nominal name of God from the essential, spoke of our Redeemer, saying: ”Whose are the fathers, from whom is Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all, blessed forever. For he who is called God nominally is among all things; but he who is called God essentially is God over all things.

Therefore, to show that Christ is God by nature, he mentioned that He is not merely God, but God over all things, because any chosen person, as we said before, placed as an example of righteousness, can be called a god, but among all things, since he is god nominally; but Christ is God over all things, because He is God by nature. Therefore, He whom Paul calls God over all things, the prophet Ezekiel calls the Most High God. After it was said: ”I heard the sound of wings, like the sound of many waters,” because it is further added: ”Like the sound of the Most High God,” we can also understand this as what we know will be for all the elect. For the sound of wings, as we said, was in the holy preachers; the sound of waters, in the peoples converted and following. But that same sound will one day be the sound of the Most High God, because the multitude that is now drawn to the faith through holy teachers will one day be gathered into the heavenly homeland, so that there all the elect may praise without end, when they see without end Him whom they praise. And because then the whole multitude of saints becomes perfectly the body of the Redeemer, according to Paul’s words saying: ”Because creation itself will be freed from slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God”;

and they will then so cling to Him that nothing from the corruption, which is conquered through the resurrection, will any longer oppose them in their holy love, but they will become united to the glory of their Redeemer; it is rightly said: ”Like the sound of the Most High God. The order of the description must be noted, because first the sound from the wings of the living creatures is mentioned, which afterward is called like the sound of many waters, and finally like the sound of the most high God. For what the saints first preached, this the peoples converted to the faith afterward believed and held, who finally, raised up to the heavenly realms, will also render praise to the liberator of all. Thus the sound of the living creatures becomes like the sound of waters, and the sound of waters becomes like the sound of the most high God, because the praise of the almighty Lord, which at first few proclaimed in the world, many afterward cried out. And the praise which many now cry

out, while their own corruption still fights against them within themselves, all the elect, now united to their head, will resound in the heavenly fatherland. Moreover, the works and virtues of the holy living creatures are still being described, when it is added: When they walked, there was a sound like that of a multitude, like the noise of an army camp.

If by the sound of the heights the praise of our creator God is designated in the heavenly homeland, it is not surprising that the prophetic discourse returns again to the works of the saints still living in this life, because the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the prophets does not simultaneously cast forth through the tongue outwardly what He simultaneously shows inwardly. For the water of knowledge with which the soul of the one prophesying is filled overflows vehemently in contemplation. But because every mouth of man is narrow for the Spirit, that is, the opening of the flesh is insufficient for expressing that immensity which is beheld, the tongue varies in its utterance. Therefore, after he beheld the sound of the wings to be as the sound of the most high God in the heavens, he returns again to earth and speaks of what the winged creatures do here, so that they may merit those highest things there, saying: ”When they walked, there was as it were the sound of a multitude, like the noise of an army. When the holy preachers go about the world preaching and drawing people, the living creatures walk. And because those whom they gather, as soon as they have believed, rise up in praise of our creator, a sound is made like the sound of a multitude. And because in that preaching they take up war against the powers of the air, it is rightly added: ”Like the noise of an army.

For when faithful peoples are joined to the holy preachers, multitudes of armies are formed in the battle array of faith against the malignant spirits. And while each day all the faithful are filled with heavenly desires, despise earthly things, and set before themselves harsh things for love of the heavenly homeland, they become armies against the powers of the air, because they advance armed with faith and fortified with good works. For as if to certain armies of a spiritual host, it is said through Paul: ”Put on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Therefore, the multitudes of the saints are an army camp, which has undertaken war against the powers of the air. Hence also the holy universal Church is described under the figure of the beloved, so that it is said: ”You are beautiful, my friend, sweet and comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army set in battle array.

For since Jerusalem is interpreted as ”the vision of peace,” by which name the heavenly homeland is expressed, the holy Church is called sweet and comely as Jerusalem, because its life and desire are now compared to the vision of intimate peace, so that in that it loves its Creator, in that it longs to see His face, of whom it is written, ”into whom the angels desire to look,” through those very desires of its love it may be called similar to the angels. And the more it becomes lovable to God, the more it acts so as to become terrible to malign spirits. But how it is terrible is shown by the comparison added, that is, ”as an army set in battle array. What does it mean that the holy Church is to be feared by its enemies as an army

set in battle array? For this comparison is not without great meaning, and therefore must be carefully examined. For we know and it is certain that an army's battle line appears terrible to enemies when it has been so closely packed and densely formed that it appears broken at no point. For if it is so arranged that an empty space is left through which the enemy can enter, it is certainly no longer terrible to its enemies.

And so when we set our battle line of spiritual combat against malign spirits, it is supremely necessary that we be found always united and bound together through charity, and never broken apart through discord, because whatever good works may be in us, if charity is lacking, through the evil of discord a gap is opened in the battle line through which the enemy may be able to enter to strike us. The ancient enemy, however, does not fear chastity in us if it exists without charity, because he himself is not burdened by flesh so as to be dissolved in its luxury. He does not fear abstinence, because he himself does not use food, since he is not pressed by bodily necessity. He does not fear the distribution of earthly things if charity is lacking from that work, because he himself does not need the support of riches. But he greatly fears true charity in us—that is, the humble love which we mutually bestow upon one another—and he exceedingly envies our concord, because we hold on earth what he, being unwilling to hold, lost in heaven. Rightly therefore it is said: "Terrible as an army set in battle array," because the malign spirits fear the multitude of the elect insofar as they see them united against themselves and gathered together through the harmony of charity. How great the virtue of concord is, is shown when without it the remaining virtues are demonstrated not to be virtues. For great is the virtue of abstinence;

but if someone so abstains from food that he judges others in their eating, and even condemns the very foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by the faithful, what has the virtue of abstinence become for him except a snare of guilt? Hence the Psalmist also, indicating that there is no abstinence without concord, says: "Praise him with timbrel and chorus. For in the timbrel dry skin resounds, but in the chorus voices sing together in harmony. What then is signified by the timbrel except abstinence, and what by the chorus except the concord of charity? Therefore whoever so maintains abstinence that he abandons concord, praises indeed with the timbrel, but does not praise in the chorus. And there are some who, while they strive to be wiser than is necessary, recoil from peace with their neighbors, while they despise them as dull and foolish. Hence Truth itself admonishes, saying: "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace among yourselves," so that whoever strives to have the salt of wisdom must necessarily take care that he never depart from the peace of concord. But what we have said concerning these two virtues must be understood of all the others. Hence Paul admonishes terribly, saying: "Follow peace with all, and holiness, without which no one shall see God. But that nothing is pleasing to God without concord, Truth itself demonstrates, saying:

"If you offer your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there at the altar, and go first to be reconciled to your brother, and then coming you will offer your gift. Behold, He does not wish to receive a sacrifice from

those who are in discord; He refuses to accept a burnt offering. Hence therefore consider how great an evil discord is, on account of which even that is rejected through which fault is forgiven. But because the elect are always joined together in charity, and this same charity of theirs renders a sound of praise to its Author, while to malign spirits, that is, to their ancient enemies, it strikes the punishment of fear, rightly now it is said of the winged creatures: ”When they walked, there was as it were a sound of a multitude, like the noise of an army camp. It is pleasing, however, to extend the eye of faith from the origin of the holy Church all the way to the end of the world, and to see how these same camps march. For camps is the name given to multitudes of an army when they proceed in battle array or remain in any fixed place along the journey. The camp's way, therefore, is the life of the present age for all the saints living in harmony. Some camps are those of preachers, who labor here and there in the battle array of holy work to gather souls.

Other camps are those of the continent and those withdrawing from this world, who daily prepare themselves in heart against the wars of malign spirits. Other camps are those of good married people, who living harmoniously in love of almighty God, pay to one another the debt of the flesh in such a way that they never forget what they owe to God in good works. But even if they sin in any way as humans do, they ceaselessly redeem these sins through pious acts. Therefore, because the distinct orders of the faithful, living harmoniously from the origin of the holy Church to the end of the world, fight against the powers of the air, the camps march; and there arises as it were a certain sound of camps, because in them the swords of virtues and the weapons of miracles resound to the praise of almighty God. Concerning the holy living creatures, it is further added: And when they stood, their wings were let down. The holy living creatures stand when they consider the things of God with intent contemplation. But their wings are lowered, because while they behold the lofty judgments of God, their own virtues become worthless to them. This is clearly explained when it is immediately added: For when there was a voice above the firmament that was over their head, they stood and lowered their wings. We have judged that the upper firmament should be expounded under a twofold understanding.

For, as has been said, by the name of firmament the celestial powers can be understood. And by the name of firmament the incarnate Only-begotten can be designated, through the fact that in him our nature has been made firm unto eternity. Let us therefore first speak of what we think concerning the angels, and afterwards concerning the Lord of angels. For behold it is said: When there was a voice above the firmament, they stood and lowered their wings. In this passage, this must first be known, that ”to lower” should be understood not as stretching from lower to higher things, but as putting down their wings from higher to lower things, on account of what was stated before: When they stood, their feathers were let down. Therefore we must inquire what the voice is that occurs above the firmament. But we understand that same voice better if, ascending from the lowest things to higher ones, we climb as if by certain steps. Just as the hearing of the body is aroused by a voice, so the sense of the mind is aroused by understanding, which is exercised concerning interior things. Therefore the voice in the mind is, as it were, a certain sound of understanding. But

it must be known that sometimes the voice of the flesh speaks to our senses, sometimes the voice of the soul, sometimes the voice of the firmament, sometimes the voice that is above the firmament.

Let us set before our eyes the case of someone who has been injured by a neighbor, who thinks according to human reasoning to repay the injury in kind, to return evil for evil. To this person the voice of the flesh speaks in his mind, because when the divine commandments order us to do good to those who hate us, whoever thinks of doing evil to those who hate him, in his soul the voice of the flesh sounds. We do many earthly things daily, and after these we return to prayer. The soul is kindled to compunction, but images of those things which we have done turn about in the mind and impede the intention of compunction in prayer; and what we willingly did outwardly, we suffer inwardly against our will, so that certain phantasms of thoughts scatter the mind through bodily images, lest it gather itself wholly together in strict attention during prayer. This too is the voice of the flesh. But when we subdue even these things and drive away all bodily images from the eyes of the mind, seeking within ourselves the very nature of the soul—what kind of thing it is that can give life to the flesh, yet cannot restrain itself in good thoughts as it desires—we find a certain intellectual spirit, living through the power of the Creator, giving life to the body it sustains, yet nevertheless subject to forgetfulness, subject to change, which fear often afflicts and joy exalts.

This very intellect of the soul is its voice, because it sounds forth what it is; yet this voice is still beneath the firmament. But transcending the soul, we seek the voice from the firmament when we investigate what that innumerable multitude of holy angels is like in the sight of the almighty Lord: what in them is the endless festival of the vision of the Lord, what joy without failing, what ardor of love not tormenting but delighting; how great in them is the desire for the vision of God together with satisfaction, and how great is the satisfaction together with desire. In them neither does desire generate pain, nor does satisfaction produce weariness. How by clinging to blessedness they are blessed, how by always contemplating eternity they are eternal, how joined to the true light they have become light, how always beholding the unchangeable they have been changed into unchangeableness. But when we think these things about the angels, the voice is still from the firmament, not above the firmament. Let the mind therefore pass through and transcend everything that has been created. Let it fix the eyes of faith on the light of its Creator alone: that God who created all things is one and gives life to all; that He is everywhere and everywhere whole; that He is uncircumscribed and incomprehensible, able to be perceived yet unable to be seen; that He is nowhere absent, and yet is far from the thoughts of the wicked;

that He is not absent even where He is far, because where He is not present through grace, He is present through vengeance; that He touches all things, yet does not touch all things equally. For some things He touches so that they exist, but not so that they live and perceive, as are all insensible things. Some things He touches so that they exist, live, and perceive, but not so that they discern, as are brute animals. Some things He touches so that they

exist, live, perceive, and discern, as is human and angelic nature. And though He Himself is never unlike Himself, yet He touches unlike things in unlike ways. He who is present everywhere can scarcely be found; He whom we follow as He stands still, we are unable to grasp. Let us therefore place before the eyes of the mind what that nature is which holds all things, fills all things, embraces all things, surpasses all things, sustains all things. Nor does He sustain from one part and surpass from another; nor does He fill from one part and embrace from another; but by embracing He fills, by filling He is embraced, by sustaining He surpasses, by surpassing He sustains. When the mind, drawn close, contemplates the power of this nature, a voice is made above the firmament, because it conceives the understanding of Him who by His incomprehensibility transcends even the perception of angels.

When therefore the voice is made above the firmament, the living creatures stand and lower their wings, because when the minds of the saints consider the power of their Creator with intent contemplation, the virtues they possess become worthless in their own estimation; and they become humble in their own sight to the degree that what sounds above the angels is lofty to them. For perhaps they are teachers; but when they begin to consider in silent mind what the ineffable wisdom of God is, which teaches the minds of men without the noise of words, and how this same wisdom, if it does not teach the minds of hearers, the voice of teachers labors in vain, their own teaching immediately becomes worthless to them, because neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Perhaps they are prophets; but when they consider in silent mind that they cannot penetrate all the mysteries of Divinity at once with the eye of their prophecy, since as the Apostle says: We know in part, and we prophesy in part, in that immensity of secrets they see that all they see is little, and from that immense height of light they consider how small is what they saw with intent eye as if through cracks. Let them therefore lower their wings when the voice is made above the firmament, that is, let them be humbled in what they apprehend when they behold heavenly things that cannot be comprehended by them.

Often the good things they possess flatter even the thoughts of the saints, so as to lift up their minds in some confidence in themselves; but they immediately return to the hidden judgments of God, how some fall from virtues to hell through pride, while others, corrected from vices, are raised to heaven through humility. Hence the Prophet, calling us back to humility, terrifies and admonishes us, saying: Come, and see the works of the Lord, how terrible in His counsels over the sons of men. For who can worthily consider how great the terror of God's counsels is over us, when one person from virtues tends toward vices at the end, and another from vices concludes the end in virtues? For according to the voice of Solomon: There are just and wise men, and their works are in the hand of God. Yet man knows not whether he is worthy of love or hatred, but all things are kept uncertain for the future. And: There is a way that seems right to men, and its end leads to death. Therefore to ponder these depths of hidden judgment, what else is it but to lay down wings, that is, to trust no longer in any virtue, but to tremble under great fear? For whether they consider the nature of almighty God, or weigh His judgments, they tremble, they are afraid. So for them to lay down wings, as it were, is to humble the virtues they possess.

So Abraham laid down his wings, who when he began to speak with God, recognized himself to be dust and ashes, saying: Shall I speak to my Lord, since I am dust and ashes? So Moses laid down his wings, who, instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, as soon as he heard the words of the Lord, discovered that he had no words, saying: I beseech you, Lord, I am not eloquent from yesterday and the day before. For since you have spoken to your servant, I am of more impeded and slower tongue. As if he were saying openly: After I hear the words of life from you, I recognize myself to be confused in my former words. So Isaiah, whose life had pleased the Lord for preaching, when, having contemplated the same Lord, he was touched on the mouth with a coal from the altar, said: Woe is me because I have been silent, because I am a man of polluted lips. Behold, raised up to higher things, he was displeased with himself concerning the pollution of his lips. For unless he had beheld the heights of heavenly purity, he would not have found himself to be condemnable. So when the Lord speaks, Jeremiah cries out: Ah, ah, ah, Lord God, behold I do not know how to speak, because I am a child. For according to the words he was hearing, he had recognized that he had no words.

So Daniel, seeing a sublime vision, languished and was sick for many days, because those who are strong in virtues, when they behold the higher things of God, become weak and feeble in their own estimation. So blessed Job, of whom the Lord said to his friends: You have not spoken rightly before me, as my servant has, when he heard the words of God speaking with him, responded, saying: I have spoken foolishly, and things that would exceed my knowledge beyond measure. And a little later: Therefore I reproach myself, and do penance in dust and ashes. For he who had spoken wisely as far as men were concerned, hearing God speaking to him, reproached himself for having spoken foolishly, because in the contemplation of true wisdom his own wisdom became worthless to him. Therefore at the voice coming from above the living creatures lay down their wings, because whether we seek to contemplate the power of God in his nature, or think to investigate his hidden judgments, because his heights are impenetrable to us, whatever good things were believed to be in us become worthless to us. And we who were believed to fly in however small a knowledge, weighing the invisible nature above us and his impenetrable judgments, stand humbly with wings lowered. There follows: And above the firmament that was over their head, as it were the appearance of a sapphire stone, the likeness of a throne; and upon the likeness of the throne, a likeness as it were of the appearance of a man above.

What is designated by the throne except those angelic virtues which surpass even the angels themselves in the dignity of a higher place? For while angels are called messengers, and angels often come to announce certain things to men, thrones are nowhere read to have been sent for the ministry of a message, because the Creator of all things presides over them in a far more sublime manner. Hence the Apostle Paul, describing the orders of the heavenly hosts which he had seen when caught up to the third heaven, says: Whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created through him and in him. Therefore he named thrones before those orders of angels which he recognized as being placed above them. The throne is fittingly compared to a sapphire stone, since the

sapphire stone has an azure color. Therefore the heavenly virtues are designated by the sapphire stone, because these spirits, over whom almighty God presides more loftily, hold the dignity of a higher place in the heavens. Above the throne is the likeness of a man, because above those virtues which surpass even the angels themselves is the glory of our Redeemer. Therefore we must note what order is preserved.

For above the living creatures is the firmament, above the firmament is the throne, above the throne a man is described to be, because above holy men still living in this corruption of the body are the angels, and above the angels are the higher angelic powers nearest to God, but above the powers nearest to God is elevated the Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus. But if, as we have said before, by the name of the firmament the Mediator of God and men must be understood on account of the humanity He assumed, because many things are usually signified under the appellation of one name through the spirit of prophecy, a voice was made above the firmament, which sounded from heaven over the baptized Lord, saying: ”You are my beloved Son, in you I am well pleased. Or as it is said through another evangelist: ”This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Let us therefore inquire how the living creatures hear this voice and lower their wings. Let the prophet Habakkuk, when asked, say: ”O Lord, I have heard your report, and I was afraid; I considered your works, and I trembled. But what does it mean that the Father speaks of the Son, saying: ”In whom I am well pleased”? For everyone who by repenting corrects something he has done, by the very fact that he repents, indicates that he was displeased with himself, because he amends what he did.

And because the almighty Father, as He could be understood by men, spoke in human fashion about sinners, saying: ”It repents me that I have made man upon the earth,” He was, as it were, displeased with Himself in the sinners whom He created. But in His only-begotten Son alone, our Lord Jesus Christ, He was well pleased, because it did not repent Him to have created this man among men, in whom He found no sin whatsoever, as it is said of Him through the Psalmist: ”The Lord has sworn and will not repent: you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. Therefore in our Redeemer alone was the Father well pleased, because in Him alone He found no fault for which He might reproach Himself as if through repentance. Therefore let the holy living creatures hear the voice above the firmament and tremble, because if He alone is without sin, in His innocence they perceive how greatly they themselves transgress daily, which they must ceaselessly bewail. Let them also consider that the very Author of life Himself did not depart from this life without the pain of suffering. And so this voice was made above the firmament, because the sentence of the almighty Father proceeded also concerning the death and resurrection of the Only-begotten. But when the voice sounds above the firmament, the living creatures stand still and lower their wings, because all the saints, when they behold the Only-begotten Himself scourged in this world, lay aside whatever presumption they have concerning their own merits.

For if He who came without sin did not depart from here without scourging, how will they not be worthy of scourges who came here with sin? Therefore that firmament which is above

the head of the living creatures, that is, which transcends the minds of the saints, has above it a voice, because our Redeemer bore in the flesh the sentence which He disposed with the Father from His divinity; hearing which, the righteous are terrified and lay aside all presumption concerning their own powers. For with whatever virtues life may abound, what is the life of sinners worth, if even His life, which was subject to no sin, lay under the scourge for us? But behold, a serious question arises for us when it is said that above the firmament which was over their heads, there was as it were the appearance of a sapphire stone, the likeness of a throne. For if by the firmament the Lord is signified, and by the sapphire stone and the likeness of a throne those highest angelic powers are figured, how are they to be believed to be above the firmament, that is, above the Lord, when it is also immediately added: And above the likeness of the throne, a likeness as it were of the appearance of a man above?

For if, as has been said, the Lord is expressed by the firmament, and again the Lord is understood as the man, by what reasoning can it be understood that He Himself is both above the throne and beneath the throne? But He of whom we speak, who by the breath of the Holy Spirit opens what is closed, Himself loosens the tight knots of this question. For the incarnate Only-begotten of the Father, through the fact that He was made man, was below the angels, as it is written of Him: You have made Him a little lower than the angels. But rising again and ascending into heaven, He presides over all the angelic powers, as it is again written of Him there: You have subjected all things under His feet. And as He Himself says: All power has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Therefore the firmament is beneath the throne, and the man is above the throne, because through the assumption of human nature He Himself was both born below the angels and exalted above the angels. And before He was exalted through the glory of the resurrection, He was above the angels by His divinity; but nevertheless, as has been said, He was made lower than the angels by His humanity, through which He was subject to death. But after He trampled death by rising again, He placed His humanity even above the majesties of the archangels.

Therefore, first the throne is described as having been seen above the firmament, and afterwards the man above the throne, because the Redeemer of the human race exalted by ascending above the angels the humanity which He assumed below the angels by descending. Indeed, we say that He was made under the angels in the same way as we have heard the Apostle proclaiming that He was made under the law. Therefore, we understand the assumed humanity to be under the angels on account of that diminishment in which He deigned to appear. For as soon as the Word was made flesh, God as man immediately possessed power over the angels. For it is written of Him before His passion: ”Behold, angels came and ministered to Him. But nevertheless, so that the weakness of His humanity might be shown, it is again written of Him: ”An angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. Therefore, as evidence of both natures, angels are described as ministering to Him, and an angel as strengthening Him. For He is one in both natures, because He who existed as God before the ages was made man at the end of the ages. Yet before His passion, angels both minister to Him and an angel strengthens Him. But after His passion and res-

urrection, angels can minister to Him, but they can no longer strengthen Him, because, as was said before, even if the firmament first appeared beneath the throne, yet now the man is above the throne.

And so that the holy prophet might show that he had seen the union of both natures in His person, he immediately added: "And I saw something like the appearance of amber. What is it that the appearance of a man is seen upon the throne as the likeness of amber, except that in amber, as we said far above, gold and silver are mixed, so that one thing is made from two metals? In which both the brightness of the gold is tempered through the silver, and through the brightness of the gold the appearance of the silver is made bright. But in our Redeemer both natures, that is of divinity and humanity, are united and joined to each other without confusion and inseparably, so that through his humanity the brightness of his divinity could be tempered to our eyes, and through his divinity the human nature in him would be made bright, and being exalted would have splendor beyond what it had been created with. But describing further what the appearance of the man upon the throne and the likeness of amber that he saw appeared like to him, he adds: As the appearance of fire within all around, from his loins and upward; and from his loins downward I saw as it were the appearance of shining fire round about.

What is it that the Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, is described as having the appearance of fire inwardly round about from the loins and upward, and from the loins and downward the appearance of shining fire round about? For we must investigate why from the loins and upward He is said to have fire inwardly, yet not shining fire; but from the loins and downward He is said to have the appearance of fire, yet it is not mentioned that He has it inwardly, because He is described as having it both shining and round about. For what is expressed by the name of loins, if not the propagation of mortality? On account of which it is also said of Levi that he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met Abraham. From the loins of Abraham indeed the Virgin Mary came forth, in whose womb the Only-begotten of the Father deigned to become incarnate through the Holy Spirit. From which incarnation God became known to the whole world, as it is said through the Psalmist: Gird your sword upon your thigh, O most mighty one. For the Most Mighty took His sword upon His thigh, because the word of His preaching gained strength from His incarnation. But what does this fire signify, if not the ardor of the Holy Spirit, who sets ablaze the hearts that He has filled? Of which the Truth Himself says: I came to cast fire upon the earth.

What is it therefore that in this appearance of the man who appeared to the prophet, the fire burns inwardly round about from the loins upward, but from the loins downward it shines not inwardly but round about, unless that before the incarnation of our only-begotten Redeemer, Judea alone had within herself the ardor of His love; but after His incarnation the fire shone round about Him, because He poured out the brightness of the Holy Spirit upon the nations throughout the whole world? First therefore the fire was inward, but was not shining, because the Holy Spirit indeed filled Judea in many fathers, but His light had not yet shone forth to the knowledge of the nations. But from His loins and downward the

fire shines round about, because after He took flesh from the Virgin, He spread abroad the gifts of the Holy Spirit far and wide in the human race. And it should be noted that this fire from the loins upward is described as being round about, not outwardly but inwardly, because the flame of love, as has been said, filled Judea everywhere within its borders in the elect and spiritual men. Yet it did not go forth outwardly, because it was not spreading itself to the multitude of nations. Which flame of ardor was seen afterward to shine round about, because through the corners of the world the love of almighty God began to increase in all nations. Therefore the fire was previously inward, when Jacob said: ”I will wait for your salvation, O Lord.

For what we call ”salvation” in Latin is called ”Jesus” in the Hebrew word. In which word the mind of blessed Jacob is shown how it burned with desire for Jesus, whom he declared he was awaiting as he died. The fire burned when Moses said: ”If I have found grace in your sight, show me yourself, that I may see you. The fire burned in his mind when David said: ”My soul has thirsted for the living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of my God? Who, desiring the incarnation of the Word, said: ”Show us, O Lord, your mercy, and give us your salvation. The fire burned when Simeon, desiring to depart from the corruption of this present life, heard that he would not see death before he saw the Christ of the Lord. But behold, now this fire shines outwardly as if from beneath the loins, because all the Gentile world is kindled with love of God incarnate. Yet this can also be understood in another way, because our Redeemer, God the Lord Jesus Christ, became known to human beings through His humanity, He who through His divinity was known to the angels even before His incarnation. Therefore, to us He shines round about from the loins downward, whose fire burns inwardly in heaven from the loins upward, because those heavenly spirits behold Him in His divinity and are set ablaze by the fires of His love.

But we, who love Him through His assumed humanity, still placed in this corruptible life, have the splendor of that fire outwardly. Therefore One is upon the throne, who both has fire inwardly above the loins in the angels, and has fire round about below the loins in human beings, because in all that is loved by angels, through all that is desired by human beings, there is One who burns in the hearts of those who love. For hence it is that those great angelic powers are called Seraphim, that is, burning. Hence concerning the Creator of all things it is written: ”Our God is a consuming fire. For God is called fire because He sets ablaze with the flames of His love the minds which He fills. And therefore the Seraphim are called burning, because those powers nearest to Him in heaven are kindled with the inestimable fire of His love. Kindled by this fire, the hearts of the righteous burn on earth. Warmed by this fire, the hearts of sinners return to repentance, which, having been greatly inflamed, turn fear into love. For those which had first begun to waste away with dread, afterward blaze with the fire of love. And because the elect angels in heaven are His members, converted human beings on earth are His members;

there is one man who both burns inwardly above the loins and sends forth the splendor of His fire round about below the loins, because He both held the angels to His love through His

divinity and recalled human beings to the desire of His holy ardor through His humanity. There follows: ”Like the appearance of a bow when it is in a cloud on a day of rain. Almighty God placed the rainbow as a sign between Himself and humanity, so that He would no longer destroy the world by flood, saying: ”I will set my bow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. And when I have covered the sky with clouds, my bow will appear in the clouds, and I will remember my covenant with you. Hence in that same rainbow the color of water and fire is shown together, because it is partly blue and partly red, so that it may be a witness of both judgments—namely, of one yet to be done and of another already done—but because the world will indeed be burned by the fire of judgment, yet will no longer be destroyed by the water of a flood, since that is not to happen again. But what does it mean that the prophet beheld the shining fire from the loins of the man presiding on the throne, like the appearance of a rainbow when it is in a cloud on a rainy day?

For since fire, as has been said, signifies the ardor of the Holy Spirit, what is the likeness between a rainbow and the Spirit, that the fire which appeared should be said to have appeared like the appearance of a rainbow? But if we attend to the vision of the rainbow which we mentioned before, we see how the rainbow signifies the Spirit. For in the rainbow, as I said before, water and fire appear. And after the coming of the Mediator, the power of the Holy Spirit shone forth in the human race in this way: it both washed the elect of God with the water of baptism and set them on fire with the flame of divine love. For it is as if a certain rainbow is placed in a cloud for propitiation with the mingled color of water and fire together, when the Truth says: ”Unless one is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. This rainbow is in a cloud on a rainy day, because it is shown in the Lord’s incarnation and in the outpouring of preaching, so that the hearts of believers may be called back to pardon, with the Lord showing mercy. For we may fittingly understand the cloud as the flesh of the Redeemer, of which it is said through the Psalmist: ”Who makes the cloud his ascent. For He made the cloud His ascent, because He who is everywhere by His divinity ascended to the heavens in the flesh.

And when the entire mystical vision was completed, he adds: ”This was the appearance of the splendor all around, and this was the vision of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. For, gazing upon what the grace of the Holy Spirit does throughout the entire world, he says: ”This was the appearance of the splendor round about. But wishing to consider what glory of the same Holy Spirit remains within, yet unable to see it as it truly is, he adds: ”And this was the vision of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. For he does not say ”the vision of the glory,” but ”of the likeness of the glory,” so that it might be shown that however much the human mind has stretched itself with effort, even if it now restrains the phantasms of bodily images from its thought, even if it now removes all circumscribed spirits from the eyes of the heart, nevertheless while still placed in mortal flesh it is unable to see the glory of God as it is. But whatever of it shines in the mind is a likeness, and not the thing itself. Hence that preacher who had been caught up to the third heaven also said: ”Now we see through a mirror in an enigma. In this matter, a question arises for us that should not be

overlooked: how did John the Evangelist, when he had described the faithlessness of the Jews toward the miracles of our Redeemer even from prophetic words, add, saying:

"These things Isaiah said when he saw his glory, and spoke of him. And if Ezekiel saw not glory, but the likeness of glory, what does it mean that the one is described as having seen the likeness of glory, and the other as having seen his glory? But since John the Evangelist first narrated the miracles of our Redeemer, and afterward added the unbelief of the Jews, he makes clear that Isaiah saw this glory of our same Redeemer which appeared in the world. For everything marvelous that is done divinely on earth is the glory of almighty God, and his glory is seen in all things that are done. Therefore Isaiah saw his glory on earth; but Ezekiel could not see his glory in heaven as it is, because his glory is one thing in created things, and another in himself. Therefore this glory of his which is in things can be seen, but that which is in himself cannot be seen now except through a likeness. But let us recognize that the prophet, even when lifted up, could not bear this same likeness of glory. It follows: "And I saw, and I fell upon my face. What then would happen to this man if he had seen his glory as it is, when he who saw the likeness of his glory but was unable to bear it, fell?

In this matter we ought to consider with great grief and contemplate with tears into what great misery and weakness we have fallen, we who cannot bear even the very good for which we were created to behold. Yet there is also another thing concerning the prophet's action that we should consider in ourselves. For the prophet, as soon as he saw the likeness of the Lord's glory, fell on his face. Since we cannot see this likeness of glory through the spirit of prophecy, we ought constantly to recognize it and carefully contemplate it in sacred scripture, in heavenly admonitions, in spiritual precepts. When we perceive something about God, we fall on our face, because we blush with shame at the evils which we remember having committed. For there a man falls where he is confounded. Hence Paul also said, as if to certain ones lying on their face: What fruit therefore did you have then in those things, of which you are now ashamed? Behold, by the generous gift of heavenly grace, we have examined the beginning of the book wrapped in mysteries in the prophet Ezekiel, and discussing the mystical words in a mortal manner, we have drawn the soaring theory of prophecy down to earth, so that what previously flew over the minds of little ones and those like me but did not elevate them, may now be read and understood by them, and may both fly and lift them up.

Let us therefore give thanks to our Redeemer, who always refreshes us with spiritual nourishment, who as the living bread descended from heaven and gives life to the world. Who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY IX.

The beginning of the book on the prophet Ezekiel, closed off by great obscurities and bound by certain knots of mysteries, we have discussed in eight homilies, with our Lord Jesus Christ granting it. Now what follows is more plain and less difficult. And so we speak to

your Charity, giving thanks to the same almighty God, because after so many dark forests, we have at last joyfully come out into the fields, in which we may place the fearless foot of our discourse with free steps. For behold, after the prophet contemplated the likeness of the glory of the Lord and fell on his face, he adds: ”And I heard the voice of one speaking, and he said to me: Son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak with you. Where it is further added: ”And the spirit entered into me after he spoke to me, and set me upon my feet. Behold, the divine voice commanded the prophet lying down to rise. But he could not rise at all unless the spirit of almighty God had entered into him, because from the grace of almighty God we can indeed strive toward good works, but we cannot fulfill them unless he who commands also helps. Thus Paul, when he admonished his disciples, saying, ”Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” immediately added who was working these very good things in them, saying: ”For it is God who works in you both to will and to accomplish according to his good pleasure.

Hence it is that the Truth itself says to the disciples: ”Without me you can do nothing. But in these matters it must be considered that if our good deeds are gifts of almighty God in such a way that there is nothing of ours in them, why do we seek eternal reward as if for merits? But if they are ours in such a way that they are not gifts of almighty God, why do we give thanks to almighty God for them? But it must be known that our evil deeds are ours alone; our good deeds, however, are both almighty God’s and ours, because he by inspiring goes before us so that we may will, and by helping follows after so that we may not will in vain, but may be able to fulfill what we will. Therefore, with grace going before and good will following, that which is the gift of almighty God becomes our merit. Paul explains this well in a brief statement, saying: ”I labored more than all of them. Lest he seem to have attributed to his own virtue what he had done, he added: ”Yet not I, but the grace of God with me. For because he was preceded by the heavenly gift, he recognized himself as if a stranger to his own good work, saying: ”Yet not I. But because the preceding grace had made his free will inclined to good, and by that free will he followed that same grace in his work, he added:

”But the grace of God with me. As if he were saying: In good work I labored, not I, but also I. For in this respect, that I was preceded by the Lord’s gift alone, not I; but in this respect, that I followed the gift with my will, also I. Therefore, having briefly said these things against Pelagius and Coelestius, let us return to the order of exposition. ”Son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak with you. The order of speech and work must be noted by us, because first the likeness of the glory of the Lord appears in order to cast down, afterward He addresses in order to raise up, then He sends the spirit of superabundant grace and lifts up, and sets upon the feet. For unless we saw something of eternity in our mind, we would never fall upon our face in repentance. But already as we lie prostrate the voice of the Lord consoles us so that we may rise in work, which nevertheless we cannot do by our own power. Therefore His spirit fills and lifts us, and sets us upon our feet, so that we who lay prone in penitence for our fault may afterward stand upright in good work. But the prophet

standing adds what he heard, saying: And I heard one speaking to me and saying: Son of man, I send you to the sons of Israel, to apostate nations, who have departed from me.

So the prophet describes his own experiences in order to signify ours. For what does it mean that it is said to him while lying down: ”Stand upon your feet, and I will speak with you”? For He who was speaking to the one lying down, why does He promise that He will speak only to one standing? But we must know that there are some things we should hear while lying down, and other things while standing. For to one lying down it is said that he should rise; but to one standing it is commanded that he should go forth to preach. For to those still lying in the confusion of weakness, the authority of preaching ought not to be given. But when we now rise up in good work, when we have begun to stand upright, it is fitting that we should be sent forth to preach for the winning of others. Therefore the prophet standing saw a spiritual vision, and he fell; but falling, he then received the word of admonition that he should rise, and rising, he heard the command that he should preach. For we who still stand on the height of pride, when we have begun to feel something of the fear of eternity, it is fitting that we should fall to repentance. And when, subtly recognizing our weakness, we lie down humbly, we are commanded through the consolation of the divine word to rise up to strong works.

And when we now persist in the solidity of good works, it is necessary that from the same source by which we have corrected ourselves, we should now also lift up others by preaching. Therefore to one lying down it is not commanded that he should go forth to preach, lest anyone who is weak should destroy by his conduct what he can build up by his word. Hence it is also rightly said through the Psalmist: ”He brought me up out of the pit of misery, and out of the miry clay; He set my feet upon a rock and directed my steps; and He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn to our God. For first he is brought out of the mire of wickedness, so that his feet may be made solid upon the rock through faith. But because right action should follow right faith, his steps were directed, so that after the directing of his steps, that is, after the perfection of good work, he might receive in his mouth also the new song of preaching. Thus Saul, while he was going proudly to Damascus, lay prostrate, struck down by the voice of the Redeemer. And he who was to be a future preacher did not immediately hear that he should preach what he had seen, but to him lying there it is said: ”Enter into the city, and it will be told you what you must do. Therefore lying down he could only hear this:

that rising he should learn what he would hear; but rising he learned this: that he should preach what he had come to know. But we must ask why Ezekiel and Paul fall on their face, while of the horseman, that is, of him who is exalted in the glory of this world, it is said: ”That his rider may fall backward. And again of the persecutors of the Lord it is written: ”They went backward and fell to the ground. What does this mean, that the elect fall forward and the reprobate fall backward, except that everyone who falls behind himself doubtless falls where he does not see, while he who falls before himself falls where he sees? Therefore the wicked, because they fall into invisible things, are said to fall backward, because they

collapse where they cannot now see what will then follow them. But the just, because they willingly cast themselves down in these visible things so that they may be raised up in invisible things, fall as it were on their face, because, pierced with fear, they are humbled while seeing. It should be noted that it is said: ”I send you to the sons of Israel, to apostate nations, who have departed from me. For just as one departs from God in two ways, so in two ways men become apostates from God. For everyone departs from his Creator either by faith or by works.

Therefore, just as one who departs from the faith is an apostate, so one who returns to the perverse work which he had abandoned is without any doubt reckoned an apostate from Almighty God, even if he seems to hold the faith. For one without the other avails nothing, because neither does faith help without works, nor works without faith, unless perhaps they are done for the sake of receiving faith; just as Cornelius deserved to be heard for his good works before he became a believer. From this it is gathered that he was doing good works for the sake of receiving faith. For when the angel says to him: ”Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial in the sight of God,” and immediately on account of that same ascent he is instructed to send for Simon, who should come and preach to him, it is clear that he sought that for which he deserved to be heard. There follows: ”Their fathers have transgressed my covenant unto this day, and the sons are of hard face and indomitable heart, to whom I send you. Behold, there is one fault of pride, because they have transgressed the covenant. Behold, another of obstinacy, because even unto this day. Behold, in the iniquity of the sons there is the grave fault of imprudence, because they are of a hard face, since they no longer blush at the evils they do, and never return to repentance even after their faults, because they are of an untamable heart.

But when those to whom the prophet is sent are of such great depravity and such great obstinacy, who does not already see that the person of the prophet can be despised by such perverse men? But behold, authority is given to his person, when it is added: And you shall say to them: Thus says the Lord God. As if it were openly said: Because you will be despised on your own account, it is necessary that you speak from my voice. Lest you yourself who are sent be held in contempt; bringing forth my words, show who sent you. There follows: If perhaps they themselves may hear, and if perhaps they may be still, because it is a provoking house. While it is established that almighty God knows all things, it is greatly to be wondered why it is said: ”If perhaps they will hear, and if perhaps they will be still. Therefore we must know that this doubt in God’s speech descends not from ignorance, but from some signification. For who does not know that He who made and sees all things knows all things? And Truth itself says in the Gospel concerning the preachers of Antichrist: ”They will give great signs and wonders, so as to lead into error, if it be possible, even the elect. Why is this said under doubt, when what will be is foreknown by the Lord? Truly it is one of two things: for if they are elect, it cannot happen; but if it can happen, they are not elect.

And yet it is said: ”So as to lead into error, if it be possible, even the elect. Therefore this doubt in the Lord’s speech was a designation of temptation from the hearts of the elect, because those who are elect unto persisting will be tempted unto falling through the signs of Antichrist’s preachers. Therefore by what is said, ”If it be possible,” this is expressed: that the elect will be tempted in heart. For they waver, but they do not fall. Therefore it is said, ”If it be possible,” because they will tremble; and yet they are called elect, because they will not fall. Thus the doubt of speech by the Lord expresses in the elect the trepidation of mind. He also calls them elect because He discerns that they persist in faith and good work. Hence here also it is said: ”If perhaps they will hear, and if perhaps they will be still. For by what is said, ”If perhaps,” it is shown that from a great multitude few will hear. Therefore by the doubt in God’s words, what else is signified but the fewness of hearers? It should be noted that after he had spoken of the evils of the deceased parents, sending the prophet to the children he says: ”If perhaps even they themselves may hear, and if perhaps they may be still. What does it mean to say ”even they themselves,” unless because their fathers who died in sin refused to hear?

Let us consider, I ask, what power lies in this deficiency of the Lord’s discourse, that he says: ”If perhaps even they themselves may hear. This is said openly to us, to us who are afflicted, besieged, shut in, who have lost all the good things we had in this world. We see cities torn down, fortresses overthrown, fields laid waste, churches undermined; and yet we still follow our parents into iniquities, we are not changed from their pride which we have witnessed. And indeed they sinned amid joys, but we—what is more grievous—sin even amid scourges. But behold, almighty God, judging iniquities, has already taken away our predecessors, has already called them to judgment. He still waits for us to repent, he still endures us to return. And he who has already exercised judgment upon them extends to us the long-suffering of his patience, lest he destroy us along with our predecessors, saying: ”If perhaps even they themselves may hear, and if perhaps they may be still, for they are a rebellious house. Every soul, even after receiving faith, either persisting in or returning to its perversity, is called a rebellious house, because it repels by wicked conduct God as dweller, whom it had received through faith. For a house is inhabited by its lord. If therefore a house, why rebellious? But if rebellious, why a house, which certainly is no longer inhabited? But it is a house because God had begun to dwell in it through faith;

yet it is rebellious because, repelled from it by wicked conduct, he departed, so that it remains empty which the heavenly inhabitant had previously filled. Hence also, as we have learned from the voice of Truth, the most wicked spirit returning with seven others finds the house swept clean, because he fills the mind alienated from virtues. There follows: And they shall know that a prophet has been in their midst. The knowledge of good things tends to benefit the wicked either as an aid to salvation or as a testimony to their condemnation. Therefore let them know that a prophet has been among them, so that having heard the preaching they may either be helped to rise up, or be condemned in such a way that they lack any excuse. There follows: ”Therefore you, son of man, do not fear them, nor be afraid of their words, because unbelievers and subverters are with you, and you dwell among scor-

pions. It is clear to what perverse people he is sent to preach, who is admonished not to fear. And because all wicked people both do other iniquitous things to those who speak good things to them, and still threaten other things, on account of those things which they do it is said: ”Do not fear them”; and on account of what they threaten, it is added: ”Neither fear their words.

Or certainly because the reprobate both inflict evils upon the good and always disparage their actions, the prophet who is sent is admonished neither to fear their cruelty nor to dread their words. In this therefore that is said: ”Do not fear,” the authority of preaching is given to the prophet. And because all of us who live in God are instruments of truth, so that often He speaks to me through another, and often indeed to others through me; thus the authority of the good word ought to be present in us, so that both he who presides may speak right things freely, and he who is subject may not refuse to offer good things humbly. For the good that is said to a greater by a lesser is then truly good if it is said humbly. For if the rightness of thinking loses the humility of speaking, it has corrupted the root of understanding in the branch of the tongue. Which defect, evidently, is no longer from the branch but from the root, because unless the heart swelled up, the tongue would by no means be proud. Therefore humble authority ought to be present in the superior for speaking, but free humility ought to be present in the lesser. But often in people this very order of speaking is confused, as we said far above. For sometimes someone speaks through the swelling of pride, and thinks that he speaks through the authority of freedom;

and sometimes another keeps silent through foolish fear, and thinks that he keeps silent through humility. The former, attending to the position of his governance, does not measure the feeling of his pride; the latter, considering the position of his subjection, fears to say the good things which he perceives, and does not know how guilty he becomes against charity by keeping silent. Thus indeed pride cloaks itself under the guise of authority, and human fear cloaks itself under the guise of humility, so that often neither the one is able to consider what he owes to God, nor the other what he owes to his neighbor. For the one, while he looks upon those who are subject to him and does not attend to Him to whom all are subject, is lifted up in elation and glories in his elation as though it were authority. The other, however, sometimes fearing lest he lose the favor of a superior and thereby suffer some temporal loss, conceals the right things he understands, and silently within himself calls the very fear by which he is constrained humility. But the one to whom he is unwilling to say anything, he judges in his thoughts by remaining silent; and it happens that from the very thing by which he considers himself humble, he is more gravely proud. Therefore freedom and pride must always be distinguished, as must humility and fear, lest either fear pretend to be humility, or pride pretend to be freedom.

And so Ezekiel, because he was being sent to speak not only to the people but also to the elders, lest he believe imprudent fear to be humility, is admonished that he ought not to fear, when it is said: ”Do not fear them. And lest perhaps he dread the words of their disparagement, it is added: ”Neither be afraid of their words. But why he ought not to

fear the tongues of detractors, the reason is also added, when it is immediately subjoined: ”Because the unbelieving and subverters are with you, and you dwell among scorpions. For those to whom he was sent to speak would need to be feared if they had pleased Almighty God in faith and work. But because they are unbelieving and subverters, detracting in their words, they are not to be feared, because it is very foolish if we seek to please those whom we know do not please the Lord. But the judgments of the just ought to be held in fear and reverence, because they are members of Almighty God, and they reprove on earth that which the Lord rebukes from heaven. For the detraction of the perverse is the approbation of our life, because it is already shown that we have something of justice if we begin to displease those who do not please God. For no one can be pleasing in one and the same matter to the Almighty Lord and to His enemies. For he denies himself a friend to God who pleases His enemy.

And he will be opposed to the enemies of truth who is subjected to that same truth in his mind. Whence holy men, inflamed in the rebuke of free speech, do not fear to arouse against themselves the hatred of those whom they know do not love God. Which the Prophet ardently displaying, offered to the Creator of all as if in a gift, saying: ”Did I not hate those who hate You, O God, and waste away over Your enemies? With perfect hatred I hated them, and they have become enemies to me. As if he openly says: Consider how much I love You, since I do not fear to arouse against myself the enmities of Your enemies. Hence indeed he says: ”Those who render evil for good detracted from me, because I followed after justice. Very good is what the just man renders, when he contradicts with free voice those who act wickedly. But the perverse render evil for good when they detract from the just, because they maintain a defense of justice against them. For the just do not look to human judgments, but to the examination of the eternal Judge, and therefore they despise the words of detractors. Hence indeed Paul said to the detracting Corinthians: ”But to me it is a very small thing to be judged by you or by a human day. Who, not finding even in his own heart anything for which he could reprove himself, adds: ”But neither do I judge myself.

But seeing that not even his own judgment would suffice for him toward the perfection of holiness, he added: ”But I am not justified in this. Why indeed he did not trust even himself concerning himself, he rendered the reason when he subjoins: ”But He who judges me is the Lord. As if he openly says: I do not think my own judgment about myself should be trusted, because He judges me whose judgment I do not comprehend. Hence blessed Job, when through the tongues of detracting friends he suffered the darts of words amid the pains of his wounds, immediately ran back in thought to his conscience, and looked to where he might have a firm mind, saying: ”Behold, for my witness is in heaven, and my advocate is on high. Who also added: ”My friends are full of words; my eye drips tears to God. For in everything that is said about us, we must always silently return to the mind, seeking the inner witness and judge. For what does it profit if all praise when conscience accuses? Or what can it harm if all disparage us, and conscience alone defends us? Blessed Job therefore, persisting with unbending mind amid the tongues of detractors, because he

saw himself attacked on earth by false speeches, sought a witness in heaven. Hence Isaiah says: ”My people, those who call you blessed deceive you, and destroy the way of your steps.

Lest this people attend to the words of their own praise and perish more deeply in faults, it is immediately said whom he should look upon, whose judgment he should fear, when it is added: ”The Lord stands to judge, he stands to judge the peoples. As if it were openly said: Why do you follow human judgments, you who know that the heavenly judge stands above you? Hence it is that Truth denies that John the Baptist was a reed shaken by the wind, saying: ”What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? That he said this by way of denial, not affirmation, the following words testify. For he says: ”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. Now a reed shaken by the wind is at one moment raised up by the blasts, at another moment bent down by the blasts. But every weak soul that is either cast down by disparagement or exalted by praises is a reed shaken by the wind. This John was not, because he maintained an unbending summit of mind amid both the praises and the disparagement of men. But the matter requires great inquiry: when we hold to the path of right action, whether we should always despise the words of detractors, or certainly sometimes restrain them.

On this matter it must be known that we ought not to stir up the tongues of detractors by our own effort, lest they themselves perish; yet when they are stirred up through their own malice, we ought to bear them with equanimity, so that our merit may increase. Sometimes, however, we should also restrain them, lest while they spread evil things about us, they corrupt the hearts of the innocent who could have heard us unto good. For this is why John rebuked the tongue of his detractor, saying: ”Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us; therefore, if I come, I will call attention to his works which he does, prating against us with malicious words. Hence Paul likewise speaks of the detracting Corinthians, saying: ”’His letters,’ they say, ’are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.’ Let such a person consider this: that what we are in word through letters when absent, such we will be also in deed when present. Those whose life is set forth as an example for imitation ought, if they can, to restrain the words of detractors against themselves, lest those who could have heard should not hear their preaching, and, remaining in wicked ways, should despise living well. But in this matter, it is necessary that the mind investigate itself with subtle inquiry, lest perhaps it seek the glory of its own praise, and our thought pretend that it seeks the gain of souls.

For often the mind is fed by praise of its own name, and as if under the pretext of spiritual gains, it rejoices when it learns that good things are said about it. And often it grows angry against detractors in defense of its own glory, and pretends to itself that it does this out of zeal for those whose hearts the word of the detractor disturbs from the good path. Therefore, those who, examining their conscience subtly, find in themselves nothing of the love of private glory, ought greatly to take care that the words of detractors do not prevail against their reputation. For this is why the just and perfect sometimes proclaim their virtues and

narrate the good things they have received from God—not so that they themselves might advance by displaying them before men, but so that they might draw those to whom they preach toward life by their own example. Hence the apostle Paul narrates to the Corinthians how many times he was beaten with rods, how many times stoned, how many times he endured shipwreck, how much he suffered for the truth, that he was caught up to the third heaven, that he was led into paradise—so that he might turn their minds away from false preachers, so that while he made known what sort of man he was, those whom he knew they wrongly venerated might become worthless in their eyes.

When the perfect do this—that is, when they speak of their own virtues—in this too they are imitators of almighty God, who speaks His own praises to men so that He might be known by men. For when He commands through His Scripture, saying, "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth," how does He Himself do what He forbids? But if almighty God were silent about His virtues, no one would recognize Him; if no one recognized Him, no one would love Him; if no one loved Him, no one would return to life. Hence it is also said of Him through the Psalmist: "He will announce the power of His works to His people, that He may give them the inheritance of the nations. Therefore He announces His virtues not so that He Himself might advance by His own praises, but so that those who have come to know Him from His praise might come to the perpetual inheritance. Thus the just and perfect are not blameworthy not only when they rebuke words of reproach against themselves, but also when they speak to the weak about the virtues they possess, because through their own life which they recount they seek to bring the souls of others to life. Concerning these matters, however, it should be known that they never reveal their good deeds unless, as I said, either the benefit of their neighbors or certainly extreme necessity compels them. Hence the Apostle Paul, when he had enumerated his virtues to the Corinthians, added: "I have become foolish;

you compelled me. But it sometimes happens that when compelled by necessity, in the good things they report about themselves, they seek not the benefit of others but their own, just as blessed Job enumerates his deeds, saying: "I was an eye to the blind and a foot to the lame; I was a father to the poor, and the case I did not know I investigated most diligently. And many other things which he recalls having often done. But because, placed in the wound of his suffering, he was said by his reproaching friends to have acted impiously and to have been violent toward his neighbors and an oppressor of the poor, the holy man, caught between the scourges of God and the words of human reproach, saw his mind severely shaken and driven toward the pit of despair; he could have fallen at any moment had he not recalled to memory his good deeds, so that his spirit might be led back to hope, lest, overwhelmed by words and wounds, he perish in despair. Therefore, when he enumerates his good deeds, he does not desire to become known to others as if seeking praise, but he restores his spirit to hope. Thus the righteous, just as they sometimes speak of the good things they do without arrogance, so too without zeal for private glory they refute the tongues of those who detract from them, because they speak harmful things. But when the tongues of detractors cannot be corrected, they must be tolerated with equanimity in all things.

Nor should the speech of disparagement be feared, lest while the criticism of the perverse is dreaded, the path of right action be abandoned. Hence it is now said to the prophet Ezekiel: "Do not fear their words, because the unbelieving and the subversive are with you. They would be less evil if those who are unbelieving had not also been subverters. For since they themselves do not believe that there are rewards of the heavenly kingdom or punishments of hell, abandoned to their own depravities, they subvert others as well from faith and good works, so that the kingdom which they themselves refuse to seek, another might not attain either. For when they perceive that certain tender souls are beginning good things and now avoiding evil, by mocking what is promised in heaven, by despising what almighty God threatens concerning the punishments of hell, by praising temporal goods, and by promising with cunning persuasion the pleasures of the present age, they turn aside the minds of the innocent and pervert their paths. They rejoice if they can call anyone back from life and drag them to death; they take delight in their own depravities and exult in those of others as well. Their own punishment is certainly not enough for those who act so as not to die alone. But if perhaps they find someone righteous of such great virtue that they do not presume to speak contrary things to him, since they cannot be subverters, they immediately become scorpions.

For the scorpion advances by caressing, but strikes with its tail; it does not bite from the front, but harms from behind. Therefore all who are flattering and malicious are scorpions, who do not resist the good to their face, but as soon as they have departed they disparage them, they inflame others whom they can, they send forth whatever harm they can, and they do not cease to inflict deadly wounds secretly. Scorpions therefore are those who appear flattering and harmless to the face, but carry behind their back that from which they pour forth poison. For those who strike in secret, as it were, draw death stealthily. Hence it is also said through the Psalmist: "They surrounded me like bees, and they blazed like fire among thorns. For bees have honey in their mouth, but a wound in the sting of their tail. And all who flatter with their tongue but secretly strike from malice are bees, because by speaking they offer the sweetness of honey, but by striking secretly they inflict a wound. But those doing these things blaze like fire among thorns, because through the flames of detractors it is not the life of the righteous that is burned, but if there were any thorns of sins in them, they are consumed. Therefore let it be said: "The unbelieving and subverters are with you, and you dwell among scorpions. Unbelieving toward God, subverters toward their weak neighbors, but scorpions even toward the strong and robust.

Though they do not presume to contradict these to their face, yet they secretly inflict the wound of disparagement. For they are at once unbelieving and subverters and scorpions, because they do not believe the things of God when they hear them, and they subvert from good morals those whom they can prevail upon, and those whom they cannot bend they strike with hidden machinations. In this matter it should also be noted that when it is said to the prophet: "The unbelieving and the subverters are with you, and you dwell among scorpions," a remedy of consolation is offered to us, whom it often wearies to live when we do not wish to dwell with the wicked. For we complain why all who live with us are not

good. We do not wish to bear the evils of our neighbors; we decree that all ought already to be saints, while we do not wish to be what we must bear from our neighbors. But in this matter it is clearer than light that, while we refuse to bear the wicked, how much we ourselves still lack of goodness. For no one is perfectly good unless he has also been good among the wicked. Hence blessed Job declares of himself, saying: ”I was a brother of dragons and a companion of ostriches. Hence the apostle Paul says to his disciples: ”In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world. Hence Peter, the pastor of the Lord’s flock, says:

”He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the injurious conduct of the wicked. For he was righteous in sight and hearing, dwelling among those who from day to day tormented the soul of the righteous man with their lawless deeds. Often indeed when we complain about the life of our neighbors, we try to change our place, to choose the seclusion of a more remote life; evidently not knowing that if the spirit is lacking, the place does not help. For that same Lot of whom we speak stood holy in Sodom, yet sinned on the mountain. Moreover, that places do not fortify the mind, the first parent of the human race himself testifies, who fell even in paradise. But all these things we speak from earth are less significant. For if a place could have saved, Satan would not have fallen from heaven. Whence the Psalmist, seeing that there are temptations everywhere in this world, sought a place where he might flee, but could not find one fortified without God. For which reason he asked that God himself become his place, on account of which place he sought, saying: ”Be to me a God of protection and a fortified place, that you may make me safe. Therefore neighbors must be tolerated everywhere, because one cannot become Abel whom the malice of Cain does not exercise. There is, however, one reason why the society of the wicked must be avoided: lest, if by chance they cannot be corrected, they draw others to imitation;

and since they themselves are not changed from their wickedness, they may pervert those who have been joined to them. Hence Paul says: ”Evil communications corrupt good manners. And as it is said through Solomon: ”Do not be a friend to an angry man, nor walk with a furious man, lest perhaps you learn his ways and take a stumbling block to your soul. Therefore, just as perfect men ought not to flee from perverse neighbors, because they often draw them to righteousness and are themselves never drawn to perversity, so all who are weak ought to avoid the society of the wicked, lest they be delighted to imitate the evils which they frequently observe and cannot correct. For in this way, by hearing the words of our neighbors daily, we take them into our mind, just as by breathing in and out we draw air into our body. And just as bad air drawn in by constant breathing infects the body, so perverse speech constantly heard infects the mind of the weak, so that it wastes away with delight in wicked work and the iniquity of continual discourse. There follows: ”Do not fear their words, and do not dread their faces, because it is a rebellious house. The good are to be feared lest they be offended, lest perchance through them He who always dwells in their hearts be provoked to wrath.

For, as was said above, if we offend the wicked, we ought not to fear at all, since our action displeases those whom the justice of the Creator does not please either. What then is to be feared if those are ungrateful to us who are not lovable to God? Hence it is rightly said now: ”Fear not their words, and dread not their faces, because it is a provoking house. As if it were openly said: They would be to be feared, unless they provoked me by their actions. Concerning whom it is still added: ”Therefore you shall speak my words to them, if perhaps they may hear and be still, because they are provokers. Everyone who sins, what else does he do but provoke the wrath of his Creator against himself? And we know that as often as we transgress in deed, as often in word, as often in thought, we provoke God against us just as many times. But nevertheless He endures, and mercifully waits, offering patience through Himself, but through His preachers He extends to us the word of exhortation. Moreover, everyone who preaches what is right, if he is heard, appeases the wrath of the provoked Creator over the transgressing people. Hence it is necessary that he himself ought not to do evil, which is accustomed to provoke the fury of his Creator among the people. On account of which it is also added: ”But you, son of man, hear whatever I speak to you, and do not be provoking, as the provoking house is.

That is, do not yourself do the evil things which you see being done, lest you yourself commit what you were sent to prohibit. For every preacher must always consider with attentive mind, lest he who was sent to raise up the fallen should himself fall into wickedness of deed along with the fallen, and lest the sentence of Paul strike him who says: ”In what you judge another, you condemn yourself. Whence Balaam, filled with the Spirit of God for speaking, yet still held in carnal life by his own spirit, speaks of himself, saying: ”The hearer of the words of God has spoken, who knows the doctrine of the Most High, and sees the visions of the Almighty, who falling has his eyes open. He had his eyes open while falling, who saw the right thing that he should say, but despised living rightly. Falling, that is, in perverse work, and having his eyes open in holy preaching. There is, however, another thing that can be understood as to why blessed Ezekiel, who is sent to preach, is forbidden to be rebellious. For unless he obeyed when he was sent to speak words, he would have provoked the almighty Lord—just as the people provoked Him by their perverse deeds, so the prophet would have provoked Him by his silence. For just as the wicked provoke God because they speak or do evil things, so sometimes the good provoke Him because they remain silent about good things. Therefore, for the former it is a fault to do perverse things;

for the latter, to remain silent about right things. In this respect, then, even the good provoke God along with the wicked, because when they do not rebuke perverse things, they grant them license to continue through their silence. There follows: ”Open your mouth and eat whatever I give you. We open our mouth when we speak rightly; and we eat what we receive from God, because the food of life is both granted and increased in our understanding when we begin to preach. Hence another prophet says: I opened my mouth and drew in the spirit. For he would not have drawn in the spirit unless he had opened his mouth, because unless he had devoted himself to preaching to his neighbors, the grace of spiritual teaching would not have grown in him. There follows: And I looked, and behold, a hand was sent

to me, in which was a rolled-up book; and he spread it out before me, and it was written inside and outside. Just as the order of preachers is designated by the prophet, so the pages of Sacred Scripture are designated by the book which he received. Now the scroll is the obscure speech of Sacred Scripture, which is wrapped up in the profundity of its meanings, so that it may not easily be penetrated by the understanding of all. But the scroll is unrolled before the prophet, because the obscurity of sacred speech is opened before preachers. The hand of God had extended a rolled-up scroll when He was saying to the apostles:

"The kingdom of heaven has become like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. And when the grass had grown and produced fruit, then the weeds also appeared," and the rest which your charity remembers even without my recounting it. But He unrolled the scroll which He had shown rolled up when He explained what He had spoken through riddles, saying: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world. The good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; but the weeds are the sons of wickedness. The enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the consummation of the age, and the harvesters are angels. Therefore just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so it will be at the consummation of the age. And so the rolled-up scroll is unrolled when what had been set forth obscurely is opened through the breadth of understanding. Truth unrolled this rolled-up scroll when He accomplished in His disciples what is written: "Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. Concerning this book it is further added: Which was written within and without. For the book of sacred eloquence is written within through allegory, without through history. Within through spiritual understanding, but without through the simple sense of the letter, still suited to those who are weak. Within, because it promises invisible things;

without, because it arranges visible things through the rectitude of its precepts. Within, because it promises heavenly things, but without because it teaches how earthly things are to be despised, whether they are to be used or fled from out of desire. For it speaks certain things concerning heavenly secrets, but commands other things in external actions. And indeed those things which it commands outwardly are plain, but those things which it narrates concerning internal matters cannot be fully apprehended. Whence it is written: Stretching out the heaven like a skin, who covers its upper parts in the waters. For what is signified by the name of heaven except sacred Scripture? From which the sun of wisdom, and the moon of knowledge, and from the ancient Fathers the stars of examples and virtues shine for us. This is stretched out like a skin, because, formed through the tongue of flesh by its writers, it is unfolded before our eyes by being expounded through the words of teachers. But what is signified by the name of waters except the most holy choirs of angels? Of which it is written: And let the waters that are above the heavens praise the name of the Lord. The Lord covers the upper parts of this heaven in the waters, because the deep things of sacred eloquence, that is, those things which it narrates concerning the nature of divinity or concerning eternal joys, while we are still ignorant, are known to the angels alone in secret.

Therefore this heaven is both stretched out before us, and yet its upper parts are covered in the waters, because both certain things of sacred eloquence now lie open to us through the opening of the spirit, and certain things which can be manifest to the angels alone are still kept hidden from us. Concerning which hidden things, however, we already perceive a part through spiritual understanding, we have already received the pledge of the Holy Spirit, because we have not yet fully known these things, and yet we love them from the depths of our heart, and in many spiritual senses which we have already known, we are fed with the food of truth. Let him therefore say: ”Which was written within and without,” because in sacred eloquence the strong are satisfied by more hidden and sublime sayings, and we little ones are nourished by plainer precepts. Whence it is written: ”The high mountains are for the deer, the rock is a refuge for the hedgehogs. For let those have the mountains of understanding who already know how to make the leaps of contemplation. But let the rock be a refuge for the hedgehogs, because we little ones, covered with the thorns of our sins, even if we cannot understand lofty things, are saved in the refuge of our rock, that is, in faith in Christ. Whence also it is said to certain ones: ”I judged myself to know nothing among you except Christ Jesus, and him crucified. As if he were saying:

Because I considered that you could not grasp the mysteries of his divinity, I spoke to you only of the weakness of his humanity. There follows: ”And there were written in it lamentations, a song, and woe. There is no doubt that ”song” (carmen) is sometimes used in a good sense and sometimes in a bad sense, because we can speak of both a joyful song and a mournful song. But following the usage of Sacred Scripture, which almost always uses ”song” in connection with prosperity, we take ”song” in this passage as said in a good sense. For when almighty God had delivered His people from the Red Sea, it is written: ”Then Moses and the children of Israel sang a song to the Lord. And when David had achieved victory over his enemies, it is written: ”David spoke to the Lord the words of this song. Solomon also says: ”Like vinegar on soda is one who sings songs to a wicked heart. For if vinegar is poured on soda, the soda immediately fizzes and bubbles up. And when a perverse mind is rebuked through correction, or is urged toward good through the sweetness of preaching, it becomes worse from the correction; and it is inflamed thereby into the wickedness of murmuring, when it ought to have been restrained from wickedness. Through Elihu also it is said concerning the ungrateful man who despairs of himself:

”And he did not say, ’Where is He who made me, who gives songs in the night?’” For a song in the night is joy in tribulation. We receive a song in the night when amid present afflictions we are consoled by future joys. The Apostle was showing us a song in the night when he said: ”Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation. David indicates that he has a song in the night, saying: ”You are my refuge from the distress that surrounds me; my exultation, deliver me from those surrounding me. For he who recounts that he is surrounded by distresses, and yet declares that God is his exultation, without doubt sings a song in the night. Therefore, since Sacred Scripture has almost always been accustomed to use ”song” in a good sense, it ought to be understood by us in this passage in the same way. But ”woe” in Sacred Scripture is more often understood of eternal grief than of present grief. Whence it is written: ”Woe

to the wicked unto evil; for the retribution of his hands shall be made to him. And blessed Job speaks, saying: ”If I be wicked, woe unto me; but if I be just, I shall not lift up my head, being filled with affliction and misery. For the affliction of the just is temporal. Therefore the woe which he spoke he distinguished from temporal affliction, since he declared that the just man has affliction, and the wicked man has woe. Truth also says through herself:

”Woe to the world because of scandals,” and, ”Woe to you who laugh, for you shall weep. And, ”Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing in those days. Therefore we must consider how these three things are written in the sacred volume: lamentations, song, and woe. Lamentations, that is, because repentance for sins is written in it. Song, because there the joys of the righteous are foretold. Woe, because there the damnation of the reprobate is expressed. Therefore, that you may punish your sins, read the lamentations written in this volume: ”Rend your hearts, and not your garments. And again: ”Be miserable and mourn; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to sorrow. But that you may rejoice in the promise of following joy, learn the songs of eternal praise written in this volume: ”Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord, they shall praise you forever and ever. And as it is said by a certain wise man concerning the heavenly Jerusalem: ”And all its streets shall be paved with precious and pure stone, and through all its lanes alleluia shall be sung. The citizens of the heavenly homeland had come to announce this song to us, who cried out in harmony: ”Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will. But if you still cling in mind to the present age, if you still delight in earthly pleasures, you cannot love the eternal joys you hear about.

Therefore learn the woe that is written in this volume, and drive from your soul through fear what you love, so that from the judgment you may be able to love the song you read. For there under the figure of one condemned the whole multitude of the reprobate is represented, when it is said by the voice of Truth: ”Binding his feet and hands, cast him into the outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For then the reprobate fall into outer darkness, because now they cast themselves down into inner darkness of their own will, so that they would follow the light of truth neither by believing nor by doing good. Bound in feet and hands they are commanded to be cast out, because now while it is the time for working and running, they refused to have free hands and feet for good action. There the woe of the reprobate is written: ”Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched. There it is said to the damned and rejected: ”Depart from me, you cursed, into eternal fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. In this volume, therefore, all things that edify, all things that instruct, are contained in writing. For you have sinned, and now you repent of having committed unlawful deeds—that you may be taught to do penance, there you find lamentations. You desire to refresh your mind with hope of heavenly joys—there you find a song for your consolation.

But if you have both committed evils and do not repent of having committed them, but raise the neck of your mind, bow down to no lamentations of penance, and are corrected by no expectation of heavenly joys, whether you will or not, you shall hear the woe written there,

so that he whom neither fear humbles to repentance nor hope exalts to heavenly rewards may now foresee the punishment of his damnation and fall into eternal torment without excuse. What then, brothers, what must we wretched ones do, except that we awaken to the words of this book and punish with tears the evils we remember having committed, so that through the laments of repentance we may arrive at the song of life? Lest, if we are unwilling to be afflicted now by repenting, we feel woe afterward without end. Nor should the multitude of our wounds cast us down into despair, because the power of the physician is greater than the magnitude of our weakness. For what is there that he cannot restore to health, who was able to create all things from nothing? For he is the Only-begotten, coeternal with the almighty Father, who lives and reigns with him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY X.

When certain people read the writings of sacred Scripture, upon penetrating its more sublime passages, they tend to despise with a swelling sense of pride the lesser commandments that were given for the weaker ones, and they wish to change them into another meaning. If they rightly understood the lofty things in it, they would not hold even the smallest commandments in contempt, because the divine precepts speak in certain ways to the great, yet in other ways they are suited to the little ones, who through increases of understanding grow as if by certain steps of the mind, and arrive at comprehending greater things. Hence now it is said to the holy prophet: Son of man, eat whatever you find. Whatever is found in sacred Scripture must be consumed, because both its small things compose a simple life, and its great things build up subtle understanding. It follows: Eat this scroll, and go speak to the sons of Israel. And I opened my mouth, and he fed me with that scroll. Holy Scripture is our food and drink. Hence even the Lord threatens through another prophet: ”I will send a famine upon the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord. He who says that we are worn down by hunger and thirst when his speech is withdrawn, demonstrates that his words are both our food and our drink. But it should be noted that they are sometimes food, sometimes drink.

For in more obscure matters that cannot be understood unless they are explained, holy Scripture is food, because whatever is explained so that it may be understood is, as it were, chewed so that it may be swallowed. But in more open matters it is drink. For we swallow drink without chewing. Therefore we drink the more open things by command, because we are able to understand them even without explanation. But because the prophet Ezekiel was about to hear many obscure and perplexing things, he is by no means told concerning the sacred volume, ”drink,” but ”eat. As if it were openly said: Work through it and understand it, that is, first chew, and then swallow. But in the words of sacred speech this order of our study must be observed, that we come to know these things so that, having been pierced with compunction for our iniquity, and recognizing the evils we have done, we may avoid doing others. And when now from the great practice of tears there begins to be confidence concerning the remission of sins, through the words of God which we understand let us also

draw others to life. For they are to be understood for this purpose, that they may both profit us and be conferred upon others with spiritual intention. Whence it is now well said: Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the children of Israel. As if it were said to him concerning the sacred food:

Eat and feed, be filled and bring forth, receive and scatter, be strengthened and labor. And it should be noted that the prophet adds, saying: ”And I opened my mouth and he fed me with that scroll. Another Prophet testifies that the mouth is in the heart, saying: ”Deceitful lips in the heart, and with the heart they have spoken evil. Therefore we open our mouth when we prepare our understanding for the comprehension of the sacred word. Thus at the voice of the Lord the prophet opens his mouth, because at the breath of the Lord’s command the desires of our heart yearn eagerly, so that they may receive something from the food of life. But nevertheless this very receiving is not within our own powers, unless he himself feeds us who commanded that he be eaten. For he is fed who cannot eat by himself. And because our weakness is not sufficient for grasping heavenly words, he himself feeds us, who measures out for us the portion of grain in due time, so that in the sacred word, while today we understand what yesterday we did not know, tomorrow also we may comprehend what today we do not know, and may be nourished by daily sustenance through the grace of divine dispensation. For Almighty God extends his hand to the mouth of our heart, as it were, as many times as he opens our understanding and places the food of sacred speech into our senses.

Therefore he feeds us with the scroll, when by dispensing he opens to us the meaning of Sacred Scripture, and fills our thoughts with its sweetness. Hence it is also added: ”And he said to me: Son of man, your belly shall eat, and your bowels shall be filled with this scroll which I give to you. In the old translation it does not have ”Your belly will eat,” but ”Your mouth will eat, and your inward parts will be filled. For our mouth eats when we read the word of God; but our inward parts are filled when we understand and keep those things in which we labor by reading. In the later translation, however, which we also believe to be more accurate, it is written: ”Your belly will eat, and your inward parts will be filled. In sacred Scripture, indeed, the belly is customarily put for the mind. Hence through Jeremiah it is said: ”My belly, my belly, I am in pain. Because he had spoken this of the spiritual and not the bodily belly, he added: ”The senses of my heart are troubled. For it would not have pertained to the salvation of the people if the prophet had proclaimed that his bodily belly was in pain. But he suffered pain in his belly who felt affliction of mind. But why do we bring forward the example of the prophet, when we have a clearer testimony of the Lord?

And it is necessary that when Truth speaks through Himself, the prophet be silent, because a lamp has no brightness in the sun. For He says: ”He who believes in me, as the Scripture says, rivers of living water will flow from his belly. For since holy preachings flow from the mind of the faithful, rivers of living water, as it were, run down from the belly of believers. But what else are the inward parts of the belly except the interior things of the mind, that is, right intention, holy desire, a will humble toward God and dutiful toward neighbor? Hence

it is now rightly said: ”Your belly will eat, and your inward parts will be filled,” because when our mind has received the food of truth, our interior parts no longer remain empty, but are satisfied with the nourishment of life. Let us consider, my dearest brothers, how gracious is that promise by which it is said: ”Your belly shall eat, and your bowels shall be filled with this scroll which I give you. For many read, and from that very reading they remain hungry. Many hear the voice of preaching, but after the voice they depart empty. Though their belly eats, their bowels are not filled, because even if they perceive in their mind the understanding of the sacred word, by forgetting and not keeping what they have heard, they do not store these things in the bowels of their heart. Hence it is that through another prophet the Lord rebukes certain people, saying:

”Set your hearts upon your ways. You have sown much, and brought in little; you have eaten, and have not been satisfied; you have drunk, and have not been inebriated. He sows much in his heart but brings in little who learns many things about the heavenly commandments either by reading or even by hearing, but by working negligently produces little fruit. He eats and is not satisfied who, hearing the words of God, desires the profits or glory of the world. And rightly is he said not to be satisfied, because he chews one thing and hungers for another. He drinks and is not inebriated who inclines his ear to the voice of preaching but does not change his mind. For through the inebriation of those who drink, the senses are usually changed. Therefore, he who is devoted to knowing the word of God but desires to obtain the things of this world drinks and is not inebriated. For if he had been inebriated, he would without doubt have changed his mind, so that he would no longer seek earthly things, and would no longer love the vain and transitory things he had loved. For of the elect it is said through the Psalmist: ”They shall be inebriated from the abundance of your house. Because they are so filled with the love of almighty God that with changed minds they seem to be strangers to themselves, fulfilling what is written: ”He who wishes to come after me, let him deny himself.

He denies himself who is changed for the better and begins to be what he was not, and ceases to be what he was. Often, however, we see certain people at the voice of preaching, as if compelled by conversion, change their habit but not their mind, so that they take up religious garb but do not trample down their former vices: they are savagely driven by the goads of anger, they burn with the pain of malice to injure their neighbor, they grow proud before human eyes over certain goods they have displayed, they greedily seek the profits of the present world, and they place their confidence of holiness solely in the outward habit they have assumed. What else should be said to them except what the excellent teacher says to certain people who observe the externals of the law, saying: ”For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation”? For it is not a matter of great merit if something is done outwardly to us in the body, but what is done in the mind must be carefully weighed.

For to despise the present world, not to love transitory things, to lay the mind deeply in humility before God and neighbor, to preserve patience against insults inflicted, and, while

guarding patience, to repel the pain of malice from the heart, to give one's own goods to the needy, in no way to covet what belongs to others, to love a friend in God, to love even enemies for God's sake, to grieve over a neighbor's affliction, not to exult over the death of one who is an enemy—this is the new creature, which the same teacher of the Gentiles seeks among other disciples with a watchful eye, saying: "If therefore there is any new creature in Christ, the old things have passed away; behold, all things are made new. To seek the present world belongs indeed to the old man, to love transitory things from concupiscence, to raise the mind in pride, to have no patience, to think from the pain of malice about harming one's neighbor, not to give one's own goods to the needy, and to seek others' goods in order to multiply one's own, to love no one purely for God's sake, to return enmities for enmities, to rejoice at the affliction of one's neighbor. All these things belong to the old man, which indeed we draw from the root of corruption. But concerning the one who now overcomes these things and turns the mind to kindness according to the Lord's precepts, it is rightly said:

Because the old things have passed away, behold all things are made new. Then therefore new things come about in our minds when the vices of the old man pass away from us; and the vices of the old man pass away when the belly eats the precept of the sacred word and the inmost parts are filled to the marrow. For we have often seen certain people devote themselves with their whole mind to the study of holy reading, and, recognizing amid the Lord's words how greatly they had sinned, slaughter themselves in tears, be afflicted with continual grief, take delight in none of this world's prosperities, so that the present life became a burden to them and the very light became wearisome; scarcely admit common conversation, and relax their mind from the rigor of discipline with difficulty, for love of their Creator rejoicing only in mourning and silence. Their belly ate the sacred volume, and their inmost parts were filled, because the precepts of life which the understanding was able to grasp the memory did not lose, but the mind, gathered in God, preserved these by always mourning and recalling them. And it often happens that such persons, through the gift of heavenly grace, also receive the word of doctrine, and from the food of truth which they themselves sweetly ruminate upon inwardly, they also sweetly feed their neighbors.

From their mouth, indeed, preaching is sweet to their hearers insofar as their actions are not contrary to their preaching, because they draw from their own life what they bestow upon their neighbors through their tongue. Hence here too the prophet rightly adds: "And I ate it, and it became in my mouth sweet like honey. The book which filled his inward parts became sweet in his mouth like honey, because those who have learned to truly love the Almighty Lord in the depths of their heart know how to speak sweetly about Him. Indeed, Sacred Scripture is sweet in the mouth of one whose inward life is filled with His commandments, because it is pleasant to speak for one upon whom it has been inwardly impressed for living. For speech has no sweetness when a reprobate life gnaws at the conscience within. Hence it is necessary that whoever speaks the word of God should first attend to how he lives, so that he may afterwards gather from his life what he should say and how he should say it. For in preaching, the conscience of holy love builds up more than the exercise of speech, because

by loving heavenly things the preacher reads within himself how he may persuade others that earthly things ought to be despised.

For he who weighs his life inwardly and builds up others outwardly by admonishing them through his example, as it were dips the pen of his tongue in his heart, in that he writes externally to his neighbors with the hand of his word. Hence the admirable preacher, when he said many things in exhorting his disciples, because he bore no contradiction within himself from his conscience, confidently added: ”If there is any virtue, if there is any praise of discipline, think on these things; what you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do these things, and the God of peace shall be with you. There follows: ”And he said to me: Son of man, go to the house of Israel, and you shall speak my words to them. In that the Lord says to the prophet, ”You shall speak my words to them,” what else does He do but place a bridle of restraint upon his mouth, lest he presume to speak outwardly what he has not first heard inwardly? For false prophets spoke their own words and not God’s, of whom it is written: ”Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you and deceive you; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord. And again: ”I did not speak to them, and they themselves prophesied.

From this it must also be gathered that whoever as an expositor in the explanation of sacred Scripture composes something by lying, perhaps to please his hearers, speaks his own words and not the Lord’s—if indeed he lies from a desire to please or to seduce. For if one seeking the power in the Lord’s words should understand them differently than he through whom they were uttered understood them, even if under another interpretation he seeks the building up of charity, the words he relates are the Lord’s, because God speaks to us through all of sacred Scripture for this one purpose alone: that He may draw us to love of Him and of our neighbor. There follows: ”For you are not sent to a people of deep speech and unknown tongue, to the house of Israel; nor to many peoples of deep speech and unknown tongue whose words you cannot understand. And if you were sent to them, they would listen to you. But the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to me. In the very beginning of the command by which the prophet is sent to preach, both the calling of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Israelites are clearly indicated. For when it is said: ”You are not being sent to many peoples of deep speech and unknown tongue whose words you cannot understand,” and immediately it is added:

”And if you were sent to them, they would hear you,” the obedience of the Gentiles is clearly declared, who would one day follow the voices of the preachers without delay. And when it is added: ”But the house of Israel will not hear you, because they will not hear me,” the hardness of Judea is indicated, which both understood the words of the preachers and refused to follow them. But the unknown tongue of the Gentiles caused no delay in obeying, although it was foreign to the speech of the law. And it is well said: ”They will not hear you, because they will not hear me,” according to what is written: ”He who despises you, despises me. The reason why they do not hear is also added when it is said: ”For the whole house of Israel is of hardened forehead and stubborn heart. When the house of Israel is

said to have a hardened forehead, what else is to be understood, what else is to be thought, except that frequent sin hardens the forehead of the heart in shamelessness, so that the more often it is committed, the less the mind of the one committing it feels ashamed of it?

And therefore the sinner sometimes arrives at such great hardness of heart that he is no longer sensitive to correction, because he who has become hardened by the habit of sinning in no way feels the word of one correcting him, that is, the hand of one touching him, just as it is also said to Judea, who sinned more frequently: "You have acquired the forehead of a prostitute; you refused to blush. Or certainly a hardened forehead is one accustomed to the activities of this world, because just as there are some who prefer quiet to all the rewards and honors of the world, so there are some who, in order to appear to be something in this world, sweat at earthly labors, persist in lawsuits, and involve themselves in quarrels. And although they feel their body failing amid their labors, yet conquered by love of earthly things, they are delightfully wearied. To them it is said through the prophet: "Ephraim is a heifer trained to love threshing. For a heifer accustomed to threshing on the threshing floor, even if released from labor, returns of its own accord. So for certain perverse minds nothing is more laborious than if they are commanded not to labor in the activities of this world. For often certain people, driven away from earthly activity, plead to return, ask to be burdened, and think they have incurred a grave danger in rest.

Therefore those have a hardened forehead who not only do not flee labors, but are not even ashamed to appear importunate in seeking labors that are denied them. There follows: "Behold, I have made your face stronger than their faces, and your forehead harder than their foreheads. Just as shame is praiseworthy in evil, so it is blameworthy in good. For to be ashamed of evil is wisdom; but to be ashamed of good is foolishness. Hence it is written: There is a shame that brings sin, and there is a shame that brings glory. For he who is ashamed by repenting of the evils he has done arrives at the freedom of life. But he who is ashamed to do good falls from the state of righteousness and tends toward damnation, as it is said by the Redeemer: Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his majesty. And there are some who already conceive good things in their mind, but do not yet openly contradict evils. These indeed, because they are good in mind but have no authority in speech, are not suited for the defense of truth. For he ought to be a defender of truth who neither fears nor is ashamed to speak what he rightly perceives. Hence now it is promised to the prophet as a great gift: Behold, I have made your face stronger than their faces, and your forehead harder than their foreheads.

But what is a sinner except one who is wounded? And what is a preacher except a physician? If therefore the sinner who lies in his wound is not ashamed, why should the physician be ashamed who provides healing through medicines? Often indeed it happens that a preacher is listened to reverently; but sometimes he is so despised by the perverse as if he were speaking nothing useful to them. Hence it is rightly said now: I have made your face like adamant and like flint. Both diamond and flint are hard; but one of them is precious, the other worthless. The diamond is taken for adornment, the flint is trodden underfoot by

travelers. And it often happens that when we observe those who receive our correction too humbly, we are ashamed to say certain things to them. But sometimes it happens that when we see those who disregard and hold in contempt our rebuke, we are afraid to bring them the word of preaching. But if we think rightly, we take up the authority of exhortation or rebuke both toward those by whom we observe ourselves to be honored, and toward those by whom we see ourselves to be despised, so that we ought neither to blush at the humility of the former, nor to fear the pride of the latter. Let it therefore be said: I have made your face like diamond, that is, if you are honored by your hearers;

I have made your face like flint, if you are trampled upon and despised by your hearers, so that neither through honor conferred may the tongue be restrained by shame, nor through contempt may it be silent from weakness. There follows: Fear them not, neither be afraid at their face, for they are a rebellious house. This has already been said above. But it should be noted how harsh a house is held to be, whose harshness is repeated so frequently. Therefore the sinner must be rebuked and never feared, because it is a provoking house. For a man ought to have been feared if he himself had feared the Author of all things as a man should. For he who did not have the sense of reason for fearing God is to be feared in nothing, inasmuch as he is not what he ought to have been. There follows: And he said to me: Son of man, receive in your heart all my words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears; and go, enter in to the captivity of the children of your people. We must carefully observe that by the voice of the Lord it is said to the Prophet that he should first hear His words, and afterward speak. For we hear the words of God if we do them. And then we rightly speak them to our neighbors when we ourselves have first done them. This Mark the Evangelist confirms well when he narrates a miracle performed by the Lord, saying:

"They bring to Him one deaf and mute, and they besought Him to lay His hand upon him. He indicates the order of the healing, adding: "He put His fingers into his ears, and spitting, He touched his tongue, and looking up to heaven, He sighed and said to him: Ephphetha, that is, be opened. And immediately his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke rightly. For what does it mean that God, the Creator of all things, when He wished to heal the deaf and mute man, put His fingers into his ears and, spitting, touched his tongue? What is designated by the fingers of the Redeemer except the gifts of the Holy Spirit? Hence, when in another place He had cast out a demon, He said: "If I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has surely come upon you. Concerning which matter He is described by another Evangelist as having said: "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. From both these passages it is gathered that the finger of God is called the Spirit. Therefore to put fingers into the ears is to open the mind of the deaf person to obedience through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But what does it mean that spitting He touched his tongue? The saliva received from the mouth of the Redeemer is for us wisdom in divine eloquence.

For saliva flows down from the head into the mouth. Therefore when our tongue is touched by that wisdom which He Himself is, it is immediately formed for words of preaching. He

looked up to heaven and sighed—not because He Himself had need of sighing, He who gave what He asked for, but He taught us to sigh to Him who presides over heaven, so that both our ears ought to be opened through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and our tongue ought to be loosed through the saliva of the mouth, that is, through knowledge of divine speech, for words of preaching. To whom immediately "Ephphetha," that is, "be opened," is said; and immediately his ears were opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed. In this matter it should be noted that "be opened" was said because of the closed ears. But for one whose ears of the heart have been opened to obedience, without doubt the bond of his tongue is also subsequently loosed, so that he may speak to others about the good things to be done which he himself has done. And here it is well added: "And he spoke rightly. For he speaks rightly who has first done by obeying what he advises by speaking should be done. But as for the fact that the prophet is sent to admonish the people concerning their transmigration, not only should that transmigration be understood which was of that people in body, but also that which had occurred in mind.

For they had come from Jerusalem to Babylon. And what is Jerusalem called but "vision of peace," what is Babylon called but "confusion"? But whoever falls from right works into perverse deeds, since he slips from good zeal into vices, comes as it were from Jerusalem to the city of Babylon. For he has abandoned the height of good contemplation and lies in the transmigration of confusion. This often tends to happen to those who, when they do good things, glory in their own virtue in these matters. Hence the Psalmist, lest he should migrate as a captive from the vision of peace, that is, from good deeds, to Babylon, supplicating the Lord, says: "My helper, I shall not migrate. For if he had trusted in himself, he would have migrated by falling from works of righteousness. But neither should those who have fallen from a state of righteousness into wicked action be despaired of, because behold, the prophet is sent to the captivity of Babylon. And through another prophet the Lord says: And you shall come even to Babylon, and there you shall be delivered. For often someone, after falling into the confusion of vices, blushing at the evils he has committed, returns to repentance and raises himself from his falls by living well. What then is this except that he came even to Babylon and was delivered there?

He who, after committing perverse acts with a confused mind, blushing at those very evils he did, raises himself against himself and by working good returns to a state of righteousness. Therefore he was delivered in Babylon, who through divine grace is shown to have been saved even from confusion. The prophet therefore speaks to the captivity when he rebukes those who have fallen by migrating from a state of righteousness to the vices of error. There follows: And you shall speak to them, and you shall say: Thus says the Lord God: if perhaps they may hear and be still. That the difficulty of hearing is repeated so many times in the divine words, so that it is said, "If perhaps they will hear," what else is designated but the hardness of the exiled people? In these words there is great consolation for us, because if almighty God, sending a prophet, declares that His words are heard with difficulty by a perverse people, why should we wretches be saddened when we are often despised by our brothers in our admonition? For frequently we address those who transgress, often we

rebuke them, frequently we deal with them with gentle words, and yet if one hears, another disdains to hear; one partially receives the word of exhortation, and partially refuses to accept it; so that we seem to see daily fulfilled what the Lord narrates through another prophet about what He did in anger, when He says: ”I rained upon one city, and upon another I did not rain.

One part was rained upon, and the part that was not rained upon dried up. For when one mind receives the words of holy exhortation while another refuses to receive them, the Lord rains upon one city and does not rain upon another. But when even the same neighbor who hears corrects himself from some vices and disdains to amend himself from others, one and the same city is both partly rained upon and partly remains dry, in which it repels from itself the rain of preaching. For there are some who do not hear the words of exhortation at all; these completely refuse to receive the rain. And there are some who hear but nevertheless do not follow it from the depths of their heart, because they cut off some vices in themselves but persist gravely in others. For often we see some who through the word of preaching repel from themselves the heat of avarice, and not only no longer seize what belongs to others but also distribute their own possessions to the needy; yet they do not tame the stings of anger, nor preserve the restraints of patience through tranquility of mind. And often others, at the word of exhortation, now overcome in themselves the uncleanness of the flesh, guard the body in chastity, yet still do not incline their spirit toward their neighbors as they ought, but through the rigidity of pride they exalt themselves in their thoughts.

In these, one part has been rained upon because it has borne fruit, and the part that was not rained upon has dried up, because not fully receiving the word of exhortation, it has remained barren of good work. There follows: ”And the spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great commotion: Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place. What is this, that after the prophet is sent to the captivity of the sons of the people, he hears behind him a voice of great commotion, saying: Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place? For he had been turned toward the sinners of Babylon, and he was hearing the voice of the glory of the Lord from his place behind his back. For the place of God is Jerusalem, that is, the vision of peace, because indeed those hearts see the things that are of God which do not descend to the captivity of Babylon, that is, to the vices of confusion. For God dwells there where true peace is sought, where the glory of interior contemplation is loved. For those who flow down to perversity disdain to be the place of God. Therefore the place of the glory of God is either every holy soul, or each angelic spirit remaining in the heavens. And the glory of the Lord is blessed from his place, when eternal praise is sung to the author of all things either by elect men or by holy angels.

Therefore in this, that the just think about converting sinners, because by considering their vices they direct their eye to carnal acts, they look toward Babylon, as it were. Yet because of the condition of their righteousness, since they never cease to consider the good things of the saints in praise of God, although they direct their thought elsewhere, they hear, as it were, behind them the voice of the glory of the Lord from Jerusalem, that is, from his place.

But why do we linger on these matters, we who are able, by the Lord's bounty, to understand these words of the prophet through another and more subtle sense, and to speak more clearly? For he says: "And the spirit took me up. The spirit takes up a preacher when it renders his mind, elevated in love of almighty God, now estranged from earthly desires, so that nothing pleases him to do except those things by which he may gather spiritual gains and carry the fruit of his daily work to the heavenly kingdoms. Hence it is also commanded to us preachers: "Labor not for the food that perishes, but for that which endures unto eternal life. And it is well added: "And I heard behind me the voice of a great commotion. The prophet, filled with the Holy Spirit, narrates as past events what he foresees will happen, because in predestination those things are already done which still follow in their accomplishment. Hence also in the old translation it is said through Isaiah:

"Who has done the things that are to come. What is it therefore that the prophet heard behind him the voice of a great commotion, except that after the word of preaching, which is directed to the hearts of sinners, the lamentations of the penitent follow? The perverse, indeed, while they do wicked things and do not hear right things from the righteous, do not know how grave are the things they commit, and from their very ignorance they are secure in their stupor; and lying in their faults, they rest as if softly, just as it is said of a certain sinful and secure people: "He has settled on his dregs," because he lay secure in his sins. When the perverse begin to hear the word of preaching—what the eternal punishments are, what the terror of judgment is, how subtle the examination of each and every sin—immediately they tremble, they are filled with groans, and they are distressed by sighs they cannot contain, and, shaken by great fear, they break forth into mourning and weeping. Therefore the voice of great commotion follows the prophet; because after the word of preaching, the mourning of the converted and penitent is heard. For those who previously lay quiet in their wound, afterward touched by the hand of medicine, return to health with pain. Concerning this commotion of the penitent it is said through another prophet:

His feet stood still, and the earth was moved, because when the footsteps of truth are fixed in the mind of the hearers, the mind itself, disturbed in the consideration of itself, is moved. Hence the Psalmist prays for sinners, saying: You who sit upon the cherubim, let the earth be moved. Hence, praying for the afflicted and penitent, he says: You have moved the earth and troubled it; heal its fractures, for it has been shaken. For the earth moved and troubled is the sinner anxious from the knowledge of his guilt and brought to the lamentations of penance. For to the sinning man it was said: You are earth, and into earth you shall go. Let him therefore pray that the brokenness of the earth may be healed, because it has been moved, so that the sinner who is afflicted on account of his faults may be consoled by the joy of heavenly mercy. This therefore is the voice of great commotion, when each one, judging his own deeds, is disturbed in the affliction of penance. But let us hear what the voice itself says: "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place. For the hearts of sinners had been the place of the malignant spirit; but when, angry with themselves, they return to life through repentance, they become a place for the glory of the Lord. For now they rise up against themselves, now they pursue with tears of repentance the evils they have committed.

Therefore the blessing of glory in praise of the Lord is heard from the very place where previously the injury to the Creator resounded through love of the present age. And the hearts of the penitent, which formerly, set in sins, had been a foreign place, now become the Lord's own place. Moreover, those who are converted from their sins to the Lord not only wash away with tears the perverse things they have done, but also advance to lofty heights through wonderful works, so that they become holy living creatures of almighty God, so that they fly up to the heights with signs and powers, so that they utterly forsake the earth, and having received gifts, suspend themselves toward heavenly things through desire. Concerning these it is added further: "And the sound of the wings of the living creatures striking one against another. The prophet hears behind him the sound of a great commotion, because, as has been said, the word of those preaching is followed by the lamentation of the penitent. He hears behind him the sound of the wings of the living creatures, because from that very lamentation of the penitent arise the virtues of the saints, so that they advance all the more in holy action, the more they remember having acted wickedly before their knowledge of life.

But there is great uncertainty in these words, because it is not clearly stated by the prophet whether each living creature strikes its wings against itself, or whether these same holy living creatures beat one another in turn with their wings, so that the wing of one touches another, and the wing of another touches this living creature. But because often in sacred Scripture something is said obscurely so that, by God's wonderful dispensation, it may be explained in many ways, we ought by the Lord's gift to explain both meanings to your charity. We have already often said that the wings of the living creatures are the virtues of the saints. How then does each living creature, spreading its wings, strike one wing against another, unless it is openly given to understand that, if we become holy living creatures, virtue in us stirs up virtue, while one strikes against another toward perfection? For behold, someone already has knowledge of the word of God; he learns to have also bowels of mercy. For through knowledge of the word of God he learns: "Give alms, and behold, all things are clean to you. And when he has begun to be merciful in almsgiving, he reads the words of holy authority; and whatever is said in them about mercy, he understands more deeply through experience. For there it is written: "I was a father to the poor. Perhaps before he read this and passed it by.

But when mercy has begun in his heart to imitate nature, he reads and recognizes what it means to be a father to the poor, because returning inward, he understands in himself what he hears outwardly. For it is one thing to give alms from precept, and another from charity. To do good from precept belongs to beginners; but to do good from charity belongs to the perfect, who not only act because it is commanded, but also love what they do in fulfilling the command. Hence it is that it is said with great virtue through the Psalmist: "See that I have loved your commandments, O Lord; in your mercy give me life. For to fulfill God's commandments for the sake of the command belongs to one who serves and obeys, but to fulfill them lovingly belongs to one who obeys and loves. Therefore, because mercy is learned through knowledge of charity, and knowledge is multiplied through the charity of

mercy in a contrite heart, wing strikes wing in us, because virtue stirs up virtue. So one who guards the good of chastity in his body is kindled with zeal against the lustful, that they may be cleansed from the stains of impurity. And often when he finds some in their falls, he subdues, afflicts, and restrains them to the purity of chastity.

If perhaps his mind has been tempted by the impurity of lust, from that very zeal by which he corrected others he convicts himself, and is ashamed to think impure things which he recalls having corrected in others. In this, therefore, wing strikes wing, while virtue strikes virtue and guards against impurity. But if, as we have said, the living creatures in turn strike one another with their wings, and the wing of each strikes against the wing of another, the meaning of this description also lies open, with the Lord's help. What does it mean, then, that these winged creatures in turn strike their wings one against another, except that all the saints mutually touch one another with their virtues, and rouse each other to advancement through the consideration of another's virtue? For all things are not given to one person, lest being lifted up in pride he should fall, but to this one is given what is not given to you, and to you is given what is denied to him, so that while the former considers the good that you have and he does not have, he may set you before himself in his thought; and again, while you observe that he possesses what you yourself do not have, you may place yourself after him in your thought, and so it comes about as it is written: "Considering one another as superiors. For to speak briefly of a few things out of many:

to this one is granted the virtue of marvelous abstinence, and yet he does not have the word of knowledge. To that one, however, is given the word of knowledge; and yet he strives to attain the virtue of perfect abstinence, and cannot. To this one is granted freedom of speech, so that, providing the consolation of protection to all who are oppressed, he may speak freely in defense of justice; but yet, still possessing many things in this world, he wishes to leave all, and cannot. To that one, indeed, it has already been given to leave all earthly things, so that he desires to have nothing in this world; but yet he does not presume to exercise authority of speech against any who are sinning. And he who therefore ought to speak more freely, because he no longer has anything by which he might be held to the world, refuses to speak freely against others, lest he lose that very tranquility of his life. To this one the virtue of prophecy has been given; he already foresees many things that are to come; but yet, seeing and compassionating the sickness of his neighbor in the present, he is unable to cure it. To that one the grace of healing has been given, and by his prayers he drives away from a neighbor's body the affliction that is present; but yet he does not know what will follow him a little later.

By a wondrous dispensation, therefore, almighty God so distributes His gifts among His elect that He gives to one what He denies to another, and grants more to one what He grants less to another, so that while either this one observes that the other has what he himself does not have, or that one considers that this one has received more what he thinks is less present to himself, all may admire the gifts of God in one another, that is, in turn; and from this very admiration one may be humbled before another, and may think that he whom he sees

to have what he does not have has been placed before him by divine judgment. Therefore, the living creatures in turn strike one another with their wings when holy minds touch each other with alternating virtues, and by touching rouse one another, and once roused, fly toward advancement. Let us see how Paul was touched by the wings of the apostles and stirred to repentance. Considering the evils of his past persecution and the innocent life of the apostles, he said: ”For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. He considered indeed the innocence of the apostles, and because of his preceding wickedness, all the care he showed in the Church became worthless in his eyes;

and he did not consider how many he surpassed by the understanding he had received, because, weighing their innocence, he grieved that he had once been a persecutor. But let us see if any of the apostles marvels at the understanding given to Paul. We must first consult the chief of the apostles himself, who, admonishing his disciples, says: ”As also our most beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you; as in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which there are certain things hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable distort. Therefore Paul marvels at the innocence in all the apostles, and the chief of the apostles marvels at the wisdom in Paul. They therefore touch each other with their wings, mutually stirring one another to progress by that whereby they fly. Therefore, Almighty God works in the hearts of men what He does in the regions of the earth. For He could have bestowed all fruits upon any single region; but if any one region did not need the fruits of another region, it would have had no communion with the other. Hence it happens that He grants to one an abundance of wine, to another an abundance of oil;

He makes one abound in a multitude of flocks, another in a richness of crops, so that when one brings what the other does not have, and the other returns what the first did not bring, through the communion of grace the divided lands may be joined together as one. Therefore, just as the regions of the earth, so are the minds of the saints, who, while they mutually share with one another what they have received, as it were bestow their fruits as regions upon regions, so that all may be joined together in one charity. But amid these things it must be known that just as all the elect always observe in others what they have received better from God than themselves, so that they may prefer them to themselves in thought and lay themselves beneath them in humility, so the mind of the reprobate never considers what good another has more than itself, but what good itself has more than another. For they do not weigh what good things of the spirit another has received that they themselves lack, but what good things they have and what evils are present in another.

And while almighty God distributes virtues to individuals for this purpose, that He may humble one to another in thought, the reprobate drag down the good they have received to this end, that they may be destroyed by it through pride, since they always consider the good things that they have and others do not have, and never take care to weigh how many good things others have that they themselves do not have. Therefore what divine mercy

arranges for the increase of humility, reprobate minds turn to the increase of pride; and from the diversity of gifts they fall away from good, whence they ought to have grown in the good of humility. Therefore, for this reason, dearest brothers, it is necessary that you should always look upon what you have less of in yourselves, but in your neighbors look upon what they have received more than you, so that while you look upon them as above yourselves because of the good which they have and you do not have, you too may grow through humility to obtain this as well. For if you weigh the good things received in them, and they consider in you the gifts which you have, you touch one another with wings in turn, so that being stirred up you may always fly toward heavenly things. There follows: ”And the sound of the wheels following the living creatures, and the sound of a great commotion. We said above that the Testaments are signified by the wheels of sacred Scripture.

The voice of the wheels, therefore, is the word of the Testaments. Thus after the voice of the wings of the living creatures, the voice of the wheels is also heard, because when the preaching of the preachers is received, while the virtues of the saints fly upward to accomplish higher things and mutually urge one another toward advancement, the state of the holy Church is raised up, so that throughout the whole world the pages of the sacred Testaments may be read. For everywhere now the holy Gospel resounds, everywhere the words of the apostles, everywhere the law and the prophets. Therefore the voice of the wheels follows after the voice of the wings, because after the miracles of the saints, the words of sacred Scripture are freely and openly heard within the holy Church. The wheels follow the living creatures, because, as was said above, after the life of the saints came into honor, the words of the Testaments also appeared venerable to men. Or certainly the living creatures follow, because in the life of the holy Fathers we recognize what we ought to understand in the volume of sacred Scripture. For their action opens to us what the page of the Testaments says in its proclamations. But we must ask why, after it was said above, ”I heard behind me the voice of a great commotion,” after the voice of the wings and wheels there is added: ”And the voice of a great commotion.

If this is carefully examined, it can be found that it is not repeated idly. For indeed there are two great commotions by which our hearts are stirred. One commotion is from fear, the other from love; one arises from the grief of the penitent, the other from the fervor of those who love. After the word of preaching, therefore, the first commotion occurs when we bewail the evils we have done; but after the sound of the wings and wheels, there is a second commotion, when with great weeping we seek the heavenly goods that we hear about. For behold, because within holy Church we learn examples of virtues from many Fathers, we hear as it were the sound of wings daily; because sacred utterances resound everywhere, we are aroused as if by the voices of wheels. And because through these same sacred utterances we are kindled to love of our Creator, burning with the fires of great fervor, we lament that we are still far from the face of almighty God. After the first sound of great commotion, therefore, at the end there also comes a sound of great commotion, because we who by knowing God began to bewail our sins, now loving him whom we have known, do not cease to desire him with weeping.

After the sound of the wheels, therefore, follows the sound of great commotion, because when the Testaments of God have begun to sound in the ear of the heart, the spirit of those who hear, pierced with compunction from love, is moved to lamentation. For this is why the words of sacred Scripture become savory in the heart of readers; this is why they are often read by those who love them in silence, as it were secretly and quietly. Whence it is also said through another prophet: ”You have cut off in alienation the heads of the mighty; nations shall be moved in it; they shall open their mouths like a poor man eating in secret. For almighty God has cut off the heads of the mighty in alienation, because he repelled the pride of the Jews by alienating them from himself. In which alienation the nations were moved, because while the Jews fell from the faith, the hearts of the Gentiles ran to the knowledge of faith. These nations indeed open the mouth of the heart in the nourishment of sacred reading, and eat in secret like a poor man, because with haste and silence they take in the words of life as they read. But it should be known that the more hearers advance in charity and understanding, the greater grace of the Spirit is given to the holy preachers. Hence, when the prophet had first said:

”The spirit took me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great commotion,” after the voice of the great commotion of wings and wheels, and again of a great commotion, he immediately adds: ”The spirit also lifted me up and took me. Why does he who had said he was already taken up by the spirit narrate that he was again elevated and taken up? But the mind of preachers advances to higher things when through them the senses of their hearers are moved to desire for almighty God. These holy preachers advance for this reason: that through their ministry the gifts of grace may be multiplied in holy Church, as it is written of this same holy Church: ”Making its channels drunk, multiply its generations; in its drops it shall rejoice when it springs forth. For the channels of the Church are the holy preachers, who water the earth of our heart. But when the channels are made drunk, the generations of the Church are multiplied, because when preachers receive a more abundant grace of the spirit, the number of the faithful increases. Holy Church rejoices in its drops. For in a drop, water falls from the roof to the earth, which had fallen from heaven onto the roof. Now the roof of the Church is the holy preachers, who protect us by interceding and fortifying us with admonitions. But because their heart is divinely poured upon in preaching, water comes, as it were, from heaven onto the roof.

Because we are watered by their words, water flows down, as it were, from the roof to the earth. Therefore holy Church, when it springs forth, rejoices in its drops, because when it is born in faith and good works, it considers the gifts it has received and exults in the words of preachers. Therefore, because grace is also multiplied for their preachers when hearers rise to better things, the prophet says: ”The spirit also elevated me and took me up. For the preacher is elevated and taken up more and more from the very source by which the hearer is changed to a better life. But we must ask, since the spirit does not elevate the mind unless it has taken hold of it, why did it first elevate and afterward is said to have taken hold? But in this place ”taken hold” means ”held firmly. For there are some whom it elevates but does not take hold of, whose understanding indeed flashes forth to spiritual

things, yet whose life, remaining in carnal deeds, does not accord with their understanding. For Balaam was elevated by the spirit of prophecy, but was not taken hold of, because he was able to foresee truly things far in the future, and yet was unwilling to separate his mind from earthly desires. But because the holy prophet was elevated in knowledge and likewise taken hold of in his life, let us now hear in what manner he proceeds to preach: "And I went away bitter in the indignation of my spirit.

Ponder, dearest brothers, for whom the gifts of the Holy Spirit had increased, why he departed embittered? Does every heart which the same Spirit takes up become embittered in the indignation of his spirit? Hence it must be known that for one to whom the present life is still sweet, even if he seems to speak the word of God, he is not an elevated and taken-up preacher. For the mind which the Holy Spirit fills, He moves into bitterness toward temporal things through delight in eternal things. For it is sweet to be among human affairs, but only for one who has not yet tasted any joys from heavenly things, because the less one understands eternal things, the more pleasantly one rests in temporal things. But if anyone has already tasted with the mouth of the heart what that sweetness of heavenly rewards is, what those hymn-singing choirs of angels are, what the incomprehensible vision of the Holy Trinity is, for this one the sweeter that becomes which he sees within, the more everything he endures outwardly turns to bitterness. He quarrels with himself about those things which he recalls having done wrongly, and he becomes displeasing to himself, when He who created all things has already begun to please him. He rebukes himself for his thoughts, pursues himself for his words, and punishes himself by weeping for his deeds. He yearns for things above, and now tramples all earthly things through contempt of mind.

And as long as he does not yet have by direct sight what he desires, he finds weeping sweet, and afflicting himself with continual lamentations. And because he does not yet see himself to be in the homeland for which he was created, in the exile of this life nothing else pleases him more than his own bitterness. For he disdains to be subject to temporal things, and ardently sighs for eternal things. Hence it is also rightly said through Solomon: "Because in much wisdom there is much indignation, and whoever adds knowledge adds sorrow. For knowing heavenly things, we disdain to subject our mind to earthly things. And when we begin to understand more about those things we have done wrongly, we become angry at ourselves, and in much wisdom there is much indignation, because the more we advance in knowledge, the more we are indignant at ourselves for perverse deeds. And sorrow increases with knowledge, because the more we know eternal things, the more we grieve that we are in the misery of this exile. Or as it is said in another translation: "And whoever adds knowledge adds labor. For to the degree that we begin to know what heavenly joys are, to that degree we labor by weeping so that we may escape the snares of our errors. In much wisdom, therefore, there is much indignation, because if we now have wisdom of eternal things, we disdain to desire temporal things.

If we now have wisdom of eternal things, we despise ourselves for having done what could separate us from the love of eternity. Conscience rebukes itself, accuses what it has done,

condemns through penitence what it accuses; strife arises in the soul, giving birth to peace with God. So Ahab, that wicked king, when rebuked by the prophet and hearing the divine sentence against himself, was terrified and weighed down with great grief, so that the Lord said to his prophet: ”Have you not seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because therefore he has humbled himself for my sake, I will not bring evil in his days. In these words of the Lord we must consider how pleasing to him is the grief of bitterness in his elect who fear to lose the Lord, if repentance so pleased him even in a reprobate who feared to lose the present world? Or how pleasing to him is voluntary affliction for sins in those who please him, if this pleased him even temporarily in one who displeased him? But we must know that no one can do these things from the whole heart out of love for the almighty Lord except one whose soul the Holy Spirit has taken hold of. For when is a man able by his own strength to despise earthly things, to love heavenly things, to seek peace with God, to engage in strife with himself, to reprove himself in thought, and to punish himself with groans?

No one can do these things except one whom divine grace has strengthened. Hence it is also added: ”For the hand of the Lord was with me, strengthening me. We cannot perfectly rise to good things unless the Spirit both lifts us up by going before and strengthens us by following after. But we must ask, since it was written above concerning the scroll that he had received: ”And it became in my mouth sweet like honey,” for what reason is it said afterwards: ”I went away bitter in the indignation of my spirit”? For it is indeed very strange if sweetness and bitterness should come together. But according to the sense given above, we must understand that when the word of God has begun to be sweet in the mouth of someone’s heart, without doubt his soul becomes bitter against himself. For the more subtly he learns in it how he ought to reproach himself, the more harshly he chastises himself through the bitterness of repentance, since he displeases himself all the more, the more he sees in the sacred volume about almighty God that he should love. But because man cannot advance to these things by his own strength, it is rightly now said: ”The hand of the Lord was with me, strengthening me. For the hand of the Lord in sacred Scripture is sometimes also called the only-begotten Son, because all things were made through him. And concerning his ascension the almighty Father speaks through Moses, saying: ”I will raise my hand to heaven.

This hand, which strengthens the hearts of his elect, said to the disciples: ”Without me you can do nothing. In everything therefore that we think, in everything that we do, we must always pray that we may think by his inspiration and act by his help, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY XI.

Among the other miracles of prophecy, the books of the prophets also have this wonder: that just as in them things are explained by words, so sometimes words are explained by things, so that not only their sayings but also their deeds are prophecy. Hence it is now said: ”I came to the captivity, to the heap of new fruits, to those who dwelt by the river Chobar. When the

occasion required that he should have indicated that he was coming to the captivity, what necessity of speaking was there to express the place also through fruits, saying "to the heap of new fruits," unless it is that often causes are signified through things and places? For many years of captivity had already passed while Ezekiel was prophesying, and of those who had been led into captivity, many had already died in the death of the flesh, to whose children the prophet was coming to speak. Hence it is also said to him above: "Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to apostate nations who have departed from me. Their fathers transgressed my covenant until this day, and the children are of stiff neck and indomitable heart, to whom I am sending you. Because many of these were going to believe and through obedience were going to arrive at the fertility of good work, they are called a heap of fruits. For that good souls are called the fruits of God, another prophet testifies, saying:

"Israel is holy to the Lord, the firstfruits of his fruits. For the Gentiles converted to the faith also became the fruits of the Lord afterward. But because Israel first believed in the Lord, this prophet rightly called him the firstfruits of his fruits. Therefore, because the prophet was sent not to the earlier people but brought words to the children of that same people, he came to a heap of new fruits. But what is designated by the river Chobar, we have already said above; we do not repeat these things now, lest by repeating we generate tedium. There follows: "And I sat where they were sitting, and I remained there seven days mourning in their midst. It should be noted with what great compassion the holy prophet joins himself to the captive people, and by sitting and grieving unites himself to their sorrows, because the root of the word is the power of the work. And that speech is willingly received by the hearer which is brought forth by the preacher with compassion of soul. Thus when iron is joined with iron, it is first liquefied, so that afterwards it may be held fast by itself in turn. For if it does not first become soft, it cannot afterwards hold firmly. Thus the prophet sat with the captive people, and stood grieving in their midst, so that while through the grace of charity he rendered himself softer to them by condescending, he might immediately hold them through the strength of the word.

But if the Israelite people, who are called the house of exasperation, because they did not recognize their faults even amid scourges, did not depress their spirit with any grief, the prophet took care to sit grieving among those who were rejoicing, so that by being silent he might show what he had come to teach by speaking. And before he spoke words, in this that he was silent in grief he took on the form of words. There follows: And when seven days had passed, the word of the Lord came to me, saying. In that he sat mourning for seven days, and after the seventh day received the words of the Lord's command that he ought to speak, he clearly indicates that during those same days he had been silent while mourning. Now he had been sent to preach, and yet sitting for seven days he was silent. What is it that the holy prophet suggests to us in this silence of his, except that he truly knows how to speak who has first learned how to be silent well? For the discipline of silence is, as it were, a kind of nourishment for speech. And rightly does he receive the gift of speaking through

increasing grace, who first keeps silent in an orderly manner through humility. Hence it is said through Solomon: ”A time to be silent, and a time to speak.

For he did not say, ”A time to speak, and a time to be silent,” but he puts the time for silence first, and afterwards adds that for speaking, because we ought to learn to speak not by speaking but by being silent. If therefore the holy prophet who had been sent to speak was first silent for a long time, so that afterwards he might speak rightly, we must consider how great a fault it is for him not to be silent whom no necessity compels to speak. There follows: ”Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. It should be noted that He whom the Lord sends to preach, He declares to be a watchman. For he to whom the care of others is committed is called a watchman, so that he may sit in the height of the mind and draw the meaning of his name from the power of his action. For he is not a watchman who is in the lowest place. Indeed, a watchman always stands in a high place, so that he may see from afar whatever is to come. And whoever is appointed as a watchman of the people ought to stand on high through his life, so that he may be able to benefit them through his foresight. Hence another prophet admonishes the watchman, saying: ”Get up onto a high mountain, you who bring good tidings to Zion.

So that evidently he who has undertaken the office of preaching may ascend to the height of good action; may pass over to lofty things and transcend the works of those who have been committed to him; so that he may see the life of his subjects all the more keenly, inasmuch as he does not subject his mind to the earthly things which he looks down upon. Oh how harsh to me are these words that I speak, because in speaking I strike myself, whose tongue neither maintains preaching as is worthy, nor does my life follow my tongue to the extent that it is able to maintain it. I am often entangled in idle words, and I cease from exhortation and the edification of my neighbors, being sluggish and negligent. I have become mute and verbose in the sight of God—mute in necessary things, verbose in idle ones. But behold, the word of God concerning the life of a watchman compels me to speak. I cannot be silent, and yet I fear to strike myself by speaking. I will speak, I will speak, so that the sword of God’s word may pass even through me to pierce the heart of my neighbor. I will speak, I will speak, so that the word of God may sound against me even through me. I do not deny that I am guilty; I see my sluggishness and negligence. Perhaps before the merciful Judge the very recognition of fault will be an obtaining of pardon.

And indeed while I was stationed in a monastery, I was able both to restrain my tongue from idle words and to keep my mind almost continuously fixed on the intention of prayer. But after I placed the shoulder of my heart beneath the pastoral burden, my mind cannot collect itself upon itself regularly, because it is divided among many things. For I am compelled now to examine the affairs of churches, now of monasteries, often to weigh the lives and deeds of individuals; now to bear certain business matters of citizens, now to groan over the attacking swords of barbarians, and to fear wolves lying in wait for the flock entrusted to me; now to take care of material concerns, lest resources fail those very ones who are held by the rule of discipline, now to endure certain plunderers with equanimity, now to

oppose them while striving to preserve charity. Therefore, when my mind is led torn and mangled to think upon so many and such great matters, when does it return to itself, so that it might gather itself wholly for preaching and not withdraw from the ministry of speaking the word? Moreover, because by the necessity of my position I am often joined with secular men, sometimes I relax the discipline of my tongue. For if I keep myself in the constant rigor of my strictness, I know that I am avoided by the weaker ones, and I never draw them to what I desire. Hence it happens that often I patiently hear even their idle talk.

But because I myself am also weak, being drawn along a little in idle conversations, I now begin to speak willingly those things which I had begun to hear unwillingly; and where it was wearisome to fall, it becomes pleasant to lie there. Who then or what manner of watchman am I, who do not stand on the mountain of action, but still lie in the valley of weakness? Yet the creator and redeemer of the human race is powerful to grant to unworthy me both the height of life and the efficacy of speech, for whose love I do not spare even myself in speaking his word. The life of a watchman, therefore, must always be both lofty and circumspect. Lest he succumb to the love of earthly things, let it be lofty; lest he be struck by the darts of the hidden enemy, let it be circumspect on every side. Nor is it sufficient for a watchman to live loftily, unless he also continually draws his hearers to lofty things by speaking, and kindles their minds by speaking to the love of the heavenly homeland. But he does these things rightly when his tongue blazes forth from his life. For a lamp that does not burn in itself does not ignite the thing beneath which it is placed. Hence Truth says of John: He was a burning and shining lamp. Burning, that is, through heavenly desire, shining through the word. Therefore, that the truth of preaching may be preserved, the loftiness of living must necessarily be maintained.

Hence it is also rightly said in the voice of the Bridegroom of holy Church in the Song of Songs: Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon. What kind of praise is it, my brothers, that the bride's nose should be compared to a tower? But since we always distinguish pleasant and foul odors through the nose, what is designated by the nose except the discernment of watchmen? This nose is said to be both like a tower and of Lebanon, because indeed the discernment of overseers must always be fortified with circumspection and established in loftiness of life—that is, not lie prostrate in the valley of feeble work. For just as a tower is placed on a mountain for watching so that enemies who approach may be seen from afar, so the life of a preacher must always remain fixed on high, so that in the manner of nostrils he may distinguish the stench of vices and the fragrance of virtues. Let him look far ahead at the assaults of malignant spirits, and render the souls committed to him cautious through his foresight. There follows: And you shall hear the word from my mouth, and you shall announce to them from me. Behold, again the prophet is warned not to presume to speak what he has not heard, but first to open the ear of his heart to the voice of the Creator, and afterward to open the mouth of his body to the ears of the people. Hence another prophet says:

I will incline my ear to a parable, I will open my proposition on the psaltery. For he who preaches rightly first, as has been said, inclines the ear of his heart to the inward speaking, so that afterward he may open the mouth of his body in the proposition of admonition. There follows: If when I say to the wicked, You shall surely die, you do not announce it, nor speak so that he may turn from his wicked way and live; that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. In these words, what should we note, what should we carefully consider, except that the subject does not die because of the fault of the superior, nor is the superior without fault when, not hearing the words of life, the subject dies by his own fault? For death is owed to the impious, but the way of life must be announced to him by the watchman, and his impiety must be rebuked. But if the watchman is silent, the impious man himself will die in his iniquity, because it was the merit of his impiety that he was not worthy for the watchman's word to reach him. But the Lord requires his blood from the hand of the watchman, because he himself killed him, because by remaining silent he betrayed him to death.

In both of these cases, we must weigh how closely connected are the sins of subjects and superiors, because where the subject dies by his own fault, there the one who is in charge, because he was silent, is held guilty of death. Consider therefore, dearest brothers, consider, because the fact that we are not worthy pastors is also due to your fault, over whom we have been placed as prelates. And if at times you slide into iniquity, this is also due to our guilt, since you do not have us resisting and crying out against your wicked desires. Therefore you spare both yourselves and us if you cease from wicked work. We spare both you and ourselves when we do not keep silent about what displeases. Oh how free from the blood of those committed to him was that excellent preacher who said: I am clean from the blood of all; for I did not shrink from announcing to you the whole counsel of God. For if he had not announced it, he would not be clean from blood. But because he strove to announce the whole counsel of God to them, he was clean from their blood. By this voice we are summoned, we are bound, we are shown to be guilty, we who are called priests, who on top of the evils that are our own also add the deaths of others, because we kill as many as we see going to death daily while we remain lukewarm and silent. But when it is said:

"His blood I will require at your hand," if by the name of blood in this passage the death of the body is designated, our fear regarding our silence is greatly increased, because if he who is set over others as a watchman is held so gravely guilty even for the bodily death of those who will someday die anyway, by what guilt is he bound for the death of the soul of his subjects, which could have lived forever if it had heard words of correction? But sins can better be signified by the name of blood. Whence a certain one, when he was lamenting the sins of the flesh, said: "Deliver me from bloodguilt, O God, God of my salvation. Therefore the blood of the dying is required at the hand of the watchman, because the sin of the subject is imputed to the fault of the superior if he has remained silent. There is therefore something he can do, so that even when his subject dies he may render himself free. Let him rise up, keep watch, oppose evil deeds, as it is written: "Run about, make haste, rouse your friend; give no sleep to your eyes, nor let your eyelids slumber. Whence here also it is added: "But if you

warn the wicked, and he is not converted from his wickedness and from his wicked way, he indeed shall die in his wickedness, but you have delivered your soul.

For then your subject dies without you, when in the cause of death he has endured you as one who does not speak against it. For you are joined to the death which you do not oppose. And it should be noted what things ought to be preached by the watchman, namely faith and works. For he says: ”But if you have announced to the wicked man, and he has not been converted from his wickedness and from his wicked way. For wickedness pertains to unbelief, but the wicked way pertains to depraved action. And every watchman ought to have this zeal: that he first draw people to the piety of faith, and afterward to the pious way, that is, to good action. But since the discussion has turned to exhortation, we ought briefly to make known how great should be the order and consideration of speech in the mouth of a pastor. For a teacher ought to weigh what he speaks, to whom he speaks, when he speaks, how he speaks, and how much he speaks. For if one of these is lacking, the speech will not be fitting. Indeed it is written: ”If you offer rightly, but do not divide rightly, you have sinned. We offer rightly when we do a good work with good zeal; but we do not divide rightly if we neglect to have discretion in the good work. For we ought to consider what we speak, so that according to Paul’s words, ”Let our speech always be seasoned with grace as with salt.

We must consider to whom we are speaking, because often a word of rebuke that one person accepts, another does not accept. And often the same person becomes different according to their deed. Hence Nathan the prophet struck David after his adultery with a strong sentence of rebuke. When he spoke about the one who seized the sheep, saying ”The man who did this is a son of death,” he immediately responded to him, saying: ”You are that man. Yet when he spoke to him about Solomon’s kingdom, because there was no fault, he humbly prostrated himself before him in adoration. Therefore in one and the same person, because the circumstances were different, the prophetic discourse was also different. When we ought to speak must also be considered, because often even if reproof is delayed, it is afterwards kindly received. And sometimes it grows weak, if it has lost the time when it ought to have been brought forth earlier. For the wise woman also, seeing Nabal drunk, did not wish to reprove him for the fault of his avarice, but when the wine was digested she profitably struck him with the words of her reproof. And the Prophet announces that the tongues of flatterers are not to be deferred to a subsequent time, who says: ”Let them immediately be confounded with shame who say to me, Well done, well done.

For flattery, if it is patiently endured even for a time, increases, and little by little soothes the mind, so that it grows soft from the rigor of its rectitude in the delight of speech. But lest it should increase, it must be struck immediately and without delay. We must also consider how we speak. For often the words that call one person back to salvation wound another. Hence the apostle Paul, who admonishes Titus, saying: ”Rebuke with all authority,” exhorts Timothy, saying: ”Reprove, entreat, rebuke with all patience and teaching. Why does he prescribe authority to one and patience to the other, unless because he perceived that

the one was of a gentler spirit, while the other was of a more fervent spirit? Upon the gentle one, severity of speech had to be enjoined through the authority of command, but he who burned with fervor of spirit needed to be tempered through patience, lest if he grew more heated than was right, he would not lead the wounded back to salvation, but would wound the healthy. We must also be careful how much we speak, lest if we draw out a word of exhortation or reproof too long for one who cannot bear much, we lead our hearer to weariness. Hence the same excellent preacher speaks to the Hebrews, saying: "I beseech you, brethren, that you bear with the word of consolation, for I have written to you in very few words.

This is especially fitting for the weak, that they hear few things indeed, and things they are able to grasp, but things that pierce their mind with the sorrow of repentance. For if a lengthy discourse of exhortation is spoken to them all at once, because they cannot retain many things, they lose everything together. Hence physicians of bodies also apply cloths to ailing stomachs with suitable medicine, but they apply it thinly, lest if they are filled with much medicine, they not help the weakness of the stomach by strengthening it, but burden it by oppressing it. It should be known, however, that even if at times a rather lengthy discourse exceeds its proper measure, this is not dangerous for the hearers. But if how something is said, and to whom it is said, is not carefully considered, it is very dangerous. For modest minds, if they have perhaps committed some faults, should be reproved gently, because if they are rebuked too harshly, they are broken rather than instructed. On the other hand, harsh and shameless minds, if they are reproved gently, are provoked by that very gentleness to greater faults. We learn this well in the same distinguished preacher, who when he knew that the Corinthians were divided into schism out of love for personalities, being considerate of their modesty, began his speech to them with thanksgiving and praises, saying:

"I give thanks to my God always for you in the grace of God, which was given to you in Christ Jesus, because in all things you have been made rich in him, in all speech and in all knowledge, just as the testimony of Christ has been confirmed in you. He adds further and says: "So that you lack nothing in any grace, as you await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. I ask you, Paul, if they already lack nothing, why do you weary yourself writing to them? Why do you speak while positioned at a distance? Let us consider then, dearest brothers, how much he praises them. Behold, he asserts that the grace of God was given to them, he says they were made rich in all things in all speech and in all knowledge; he declares that the testimony of Christ, that is, what he testified about himself by dying and rising, has been confirmed in their life, and he attests that they lack nothing in any grace. Who, I ask, would believe that shortly after he rebukes those whom he praises so much? For after other things he adds: "But I beseech you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all say the same thing, and that there be no schisms among you. For how could schism creep in among those so perfect and so praiseworthy? "For it has been signified to me about you, my brothers, by those who are of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

But this I say, that each one of you says: 'I indeed am of Paul, but I am of Apollo, but I am of Cephas, but I am of Christ.'" Behold, those whom he had praised in all speech and in all knowledge, those whom he had said lacked nothing in any grace, speaking a little while, coming gently to rebuke, he reproves as divided among themselves; and those whose health he had first described, he afterward laid open their wounds. For a skilled physician, seeing a wound that must be cut, but perceiving the patient to be fearful, stroked it for a long time, and suddenly struck. First he placed the soothing hand of praise, and afterward he drove in the blade of rebuke. For unless modest minds are reproved with gentle stroking, so that they hear from other matters what they might take for consolation, through rebuke they immediately fall into despair. But did Paul lie, so that he first said they lacked nothing in all grace, when afterward he was going to say they lacked unity? Far be it: who, even if foolish, would believe such things of him? But because there were among the Corinthians some filled with all grace, and there were some cut off by favoritism toward persons, he began with praises of the perfect, so that by modest rebuke he might arrive at reproof of the weak. And in this too he drew upon the practice of bodily medicine for the healing of the heart.

For when a physician looks at a wound to be treated, he first touches those parts around the wound that are healthy, so that afterward he may gently reach by touching those that are wounded. Therefore when Paul praised the perfect among the Corinthians, he touched the healthy parts near the wound; but when he reproved the weak for their division, he struck the wound in the body. Let us see, however, how this same man who is led with such modesty and gentleness to correct the Corinthians conducts himself against the Galatians, who had departed from the faith. For without any patience of modesty offered beforehand, without any sweetness of speech granted in advance, those whom he knew had departed from the faith he rebukes with invective from the very beginning of his epistle. For after the greeting, he began thus: "I marvel that you are so quickly being transferred from him who called you in the grace of Christ. To whom also, after other things, he adds in open rebuke: "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? For hard minds, unless they were struck with open rebuke, would in no way recognize the evil they had done. For often those who are shameless feel they have sinned only to the degree that they are rebuked for the sins they have committed, so that they consider their faults to be lesser when a lesser invective chastises them, and those which they see are vehemently reproved they perceive to be greater.

Hence it is necessary that the speech of the preacher must always be formed according to the quality of the hearers, lest he speak harshly to the modest or gently to the shameless. But what is surprising if the dispenser of God's word does this, when even the farmer who casts seeds into the ground first considers beforehand the quality of the soil, which seeds it seems suited for, and after he has considered the quality beforehand, then he scatters the seeds? But because we have drawn out the discussion about the quality of teaching too long, it is fitting that we return to the order of exposition which we had begun. "But if the just man, having turned away, does iniquity from his justice, I will place a stumbling block

before him; he himself will die, because you did not announce it to him. He will die in his sin, and his deeds of justice which he did will not be remembered; but his blood I will require from your hand. Because the preacher remained silent toward the just man who fell into sin, he is held guilty of his blood. And he who did not strive to be diligent in preaching has become a participant in damnation. But when it is said: "He will die in his sin, and his acts of justice which he performed will not be remembered," we must especially consider this:

that when we commit evil deeds, we recall our past good deeds to memory in vain, since in the perpetration of evil there should be no confidence in past good deeds. But it can be asked whether preaching should be done to the just man after he has fallen, or also before he falls? The preacher must be vigilant lest he come to a fall—without doubt, even before he falls. For it follows: "But if you warn the just man not to sin, and the just man does not sin, he shall surely live, because you warned him; and you will have delivered your own soul. If, therefore, the preacher freed his soul because he warned the just man not to sin, when the just man has fallen into sin while the preacher remained silent, the preacher is held guilty because he was silent. But who among us, I ask, is sufficient for these things, not only to zealously rebuke sinners, but also to watch over the just lest they fall? For we, conscious of our own weakness, when we behold just men, do not presume to admonish them to hold to the way of justice, which we see they already hold; and yet it is the duty of a preacher to admonish even the just. Hence the distinguished preacher said: I am a debtor both to the wise and to the unwise.

But in all these things which have been said about the just man turned to iniquity, this is difficult to speak of, this is greatly to be feared: that the Lord says, "I will place a stumbling block before him. For He says: "If the just man, having turned from his justice, shall commit iniquity, I will place a stumbling block before him. For we say that if he commits iniquity, he stumbles, and what we say is entirely true. Why then does almighty God place a stumbling block before him whom He already sees to have struck against it and fallen through the iniquity he has committed? But the judgments of almighty God are strict; and He who long waits for the sinner to return, places before the one who does not return and who shows contempt yet another place where he may stumble more grievously. For indeed a sin which is not quickly wiped away through repentance is either a sin and a cause of sin, or a sin and a punishment for sin, or a sin that is simultaneously both a cause and a punishment for sin. For everything that is first committed is a sin. But if it is not quickly cleansed through repentance, by just judgment almighty God permits the bound mind of the sinner to fall into yet another fault, so that the one who refused to amend what he had done through weeping and correction begins to heap sin upon sin.

Therefore the sin which is not washed away by the lament of repentance is simultaneously a sin and a cause of sin, because from it arises that by which the sinner's soul is bound still more deeply. But the sin which follows from sin is simultaneously a sin and a punishment for sin, because, as blindness increases, it is generated from the retribution of the prior fault, so that the very increases of vices become, as it were, certain punishments in the sinner.

Indeed it sometimes happens that one and the same sin is both a sin and a punishment for sin, and simultaneously a cause of sin. For let us place before our eyes someone who coveted a neighbor's property, which because he could not obtain openly, he seized by theft, but when accused of the theft, he denied under oath that he had taken it. For this man, covetousness was a sin and a cause of sin, because through it he arrived at robbery. But the very theft by which he seized the coveted property both became a sin for him and a punishment for sin, because from the retribution of the concupiscence that was not repressed, it came about that he proceeded to theft, and the fault of the heart grew into action through the vengeance of blindness. But because he took care to cover the theft with perjury, from sin he again begot sin.

Therefore the theft which proceeded from covetousness and produced perjury became both a sin and a punishment for the preceding fault, and a sin and a cause of sin for the subsequent fault, because having been born from the former, it generated the latter. This Paul rightly suggested concerning certain ones who understood God but did not honor him, saying: "Although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give thanks, but became vain in their thoughts. Behold, there is a sin and a cause of sin. What follows from this cause he adds: "And their foolish heart was darkened. For claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and of serpents. Behold, there is a sin and a punishment for sin. But it would be only a sin and a punishment for sin if yet another sin did not follow from this sin. For after their unbelief it is added: "Therefore God handed them over to the desires of their hearts, to uncleanness, so that they dishonor their own bodies among themselves. Those therefore who, knowing God, did not glorify him as God, from that sin which was also a cause of sin were brought to this point as well, that they slipped into the worship of serpents and birds.

But because through this blindness they also fell into uncleanness and the disgraces of the flesh, their very blindness of unbelief is both a sin and a punishment for sin in relation to their preceding understanding, but in relation to the subsequent uncleanness it became a sin and a cause of sin. But because these matters have been treated at length in the books of the Morals, we must not linger on them longer now. But this we must consider with trembling: how the just and almighty God, when He is angry at preceding sins, permits the blinded mind to fall also into others. Hence Moses says: "The sins of the Amorites are not yet complete. David also says: "Add iniquity upon their iniquity, that they may not enter into Your justice. Another prophet also says: "Cursing and lying and murder and theft and adultery have overflowed, and blood has touched blood. For blood touches blood when sin is added to sin, so that before the eyes of God the soul is bloodied by accumulated iniquities. The Apostle Paul says: "That they may fill up their sins always. To John also it is said through the angel: "Let him who does harm do harm still; and let him who is filthy be filthy still. Hence now also the Lord says: "If the just man turns from his justice and commits iniquity, I will place a stumbling block before him. As if He were saying openly:

Because he was unwilling to see through repentance where he had already stumbled, I, abandoning him by just judgment, will cause him to stumble elsewhere as well. Yet this placing by the Lord is by no means to press him toward sinning, but to be unwilling to free him from sin; just as it is said of Pharaoh: "I will harden his heart. For the Lord does not harden the heart of the one sinning, but He is said to harden when He does not free from hardness. For the merciful God grants us time for repentance; but when we turn the patience of His grace toward an increase of guilt, that very time which He mercifully arranged for sparing us He turns more strictly toward striking us, so that when someone has been unwilling to return even after receiving a space of time, through this very thing he increases his evils to his condemnation, through which he could have washed them away if he had been willing to convert. Hence it is written: "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 of the revelation of the just judgment of God. Therefore from the kindness of almighty God the reprobate stores up wrath for himself on the day of wrath, because while time is received for repenting and is used for sinning, he turns the very remedy of grace into an increase of guilt.

Hence also almighty God, because He sees that the remedies He has bestowed are being drawn toward an increase of guilt, turns that very kindness which He bestowed into the strictness of judgment, so that afterward He may strike more heavily from the source whence He now waits more patiently. And because man is unwilling to abandon evil that he may live, he increases the means by which he may die. But whether the just man falls into guilt or the sinner into death, the watchman must fear lest the guilt of those sinning equally entangle him through his silence. But meanwhile, while I speak, I want to turn my eyes away from myself, and behold, again the divine word drives me back upon myself, that I may see my own negligence and fear that these things I hear are spoken to me. For as I said above, whose heart, scattered among innumerable cares, can gather itself back to itself? For when am I able both to attend carefully to all things around me and to behold myself with a unified mind? When am I able to correct the wickedness of the wicked by pursuing them, to guard the actions of the good by praising and admonishing them, to show terror to some and gentleness to others?

When am I able both to think about what is necessary for the brothers and to bear anxiety for the watches of the city against hostile swords, to take care lest citizens perish from a sudden attack, and amid all these things to devote myself fully and effectively to the word of exhortation for the custody of souls? For to speak about God belongs to a mind that is very quiet and free. For then the tongue is rightly directed in speech when the mind has rested securely in tranquility, because agitated water does not return the image of one looking into it, but the face of one gazing is seen in it only when it is not moving. What exhortation, then, dearest brothers, can your watchman offer you, whom the confusion of so many things disturbs? Certainly the prophet of whom we speak, seeing the temple in his final revelation, narrates among other things what he beheld in that same temple, saying: "Earth up to the windows, and the windows were closed. The apostle Paul also says: "For the temple of God

is holy, which you are. Now in this temple the windows are the priests and watchmen, who pour forth the light of holy preaching among the faithful people. But when earth reaches up to the windows, the windows are closed, because when earthly thought grows up in the hearts of priests, the windows do not pour forth light, because the priests fall silent from the office of preaching.

There is also another thing very grave in the order of priests, because they are not able to remain fixed in their own meditation like those who lead a quiet and secluded life. For these, as we said above, who are far from a position of governance, are able both to wash the stains of their sins with weeping and after weeping to persist in the same sorrow of mind, just as it is written of a certain good woman who had prayed at the tabernacle and did not change her mind from its purpose after the grace of compunction, when it says: ”And her countenance was no longer changed in various ways. In this we must consider that if a woman who was seeking a son lamented thus, how ought a soul that seeks God to lament? But a priest, even after compunction and tears, is compelled to learn whatever needs of his children there are, and to hear patiently those things from which his mind shrinks, and after sighs for heavenly things to bear the burdens of any carnal men whatsoever, and often to pour out his heart into various states with those who come upon him. For sometimes he rejoices over spiritual gains, but when someone grieving comes upon him, unless he takes that person’s grief into himself, he is not compassionate toward his tribulation. And sometimes he mourns over the loss of souls, and suddenly there come upon him those who are rejoicing over certain prosperities of theirs;

if the priest does not rejoice together with their joy, he is believed to love less those children in whose joy he does not exult, especially since Paul says: ”Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. I see nothing, therefore, so burdensome to the order of priests as to bend the rigor of the mind through compassion, and to change one’s disposition according to the persons who come before them; and yet this is greatly necessary. For when a sinner is brought back to the grace of good works through his preaching, what if the preacher himself appears ungracious? Hence through this same prophet it is said in the latter part: ”And when the priests minister within, they shall not use woolen garments. Concerning which it is added: ”And when they go out to the outer court to the people, they shall put off their garments in which they had ministered, and lay them up in the treasury of the sanctuary. Woolen garments are indeed coarser. But when the priest approaches the sacred ministry, when he enters within through compunction, it is necessary that he be clothed as if with a linen garment of more refined understanding.

But when he goes out to the people, he ought to put away the garments in which he had ministered within, and appear before the people clothed in other garments, because if he holds himself in the rigor of his compunction, if he persists in the grief he had at the time of prayer, he does not allow himself to receive words about external matters. And what shall the flock do about necessary things, if the Pastor refuses to hear and consider even what the present time demands? Therefore let the priest going out before the people put on coarser

garments, so that he may dispose the habit of his mind for the benefit of his children even to tolerating earthly matters. Consider, I ask you, dearest brothers, how great a labor it is for the watchman both to stretch his heart toward sublime things, and suddenly to call it back to the lowest things, and to refine his soul in the sublimity of intimate knowledge, and on account of the external concerns of his neighbors, so to speak, to suddenly become thick in thought. It is therefore not now necessary for me to expound the words of the prophet, but to bewail my own misery before you. Wherefore I ask that your prayer may make me such that I may be able to profit both myself and you. He who out of His own loving-kindness deigned to become weak for us is able to grant these things to me, unworthy and weak, through your intercession.

For the power and wisdom of God, who took upon Himself our weakness in order to strengthen us by His own strength, is Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY XII.

With the truth of history preserved, the divine utterances sometimes designate causes from time, sometimes from place, which they do not indicate by open speech. From time indeed, as when the Lord was preaching to the Jews it is said through the evangelist: ”It was winter. For among those mysteries which the Truth was speaking, what was the reason for adding the name of winter, unless to show through the quality of the time the coldness of heart? Because even when they were receiving the words of truth, the hearts of the Jews remained cold. Sometimes indeed from place, as when to the carnal Israelite people, with Moses descending from the mountain, the law was given in the plains; and to the holy apostles the Lord sitting on the mountain spoke the highest and spiritual precepts, so that from the places it might be shown that to those as carnal ones the least commandments were given in the valley of the earth, and these as spiritual and holy ones might hear the heavenly commandments on the mountain, so that it might be openly shown that those ascending in heart to heavenly things would leave behind the lowest things of the world and would stand on the summit of the mind. Hence now the prophet Ezekiel describes what he did in places at God’s command, so that through the qualities of places he might indicate what would follow in the future concerning the mysteries of the prophecy. For behold he says:

”The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he said to me: Arise, go out into the plain, and there I will speak with you. What is the meaning of this, that previously the Lord had spoken to His prophet in the midst of the Israelites, and yet afterward He says: ”Go out into the plain, and there I will speak with you,” unless that He deigned both to pour out the grace of His prophecy first upon Judea, and afterward to demonstrate it in the breadth of the Gentiles? For not without reason is the Gentile world designated by the plain, which extends far and wide, that is, throughout the entire world. Where it is also added: ”And rising I went out into the plain, and behold, there the glory of the Lord stood, like the glory which I saw beside the river Chebar. The prophet saw in the plain the glory of the Lord, which he had seen beside the river Chebar in the midst of the Israelites, because that

same majesty appeared to the Gentiles which had first revealed itself to the elect among the Jewish people through the revealing Spirit. There follows: And I fell upon my face. Having seen the glory of the Lord, the prophet falls on his face, because although a man may be elevated to understand sublime things, nevertheless from the contemplation of God's majesty he understands the weakness of his own condition;

and he who sees himself to be ashes and dust before God's eyes has, as it were, no standing. There follows: And the spirit entered into me and set me upon my feet. When we humble ourselves before God, when we recognize that we are dust and ashes, when, weighing the weakness of our own condition, we do not maintain a state of rigidity and pride, almighty God lifts us up through His Spirit and sets us upon our feet, so that we who have lain and lie humbly within ourselves from the thought of our weakness may stand upright, as it were upon our feet, in good works afterward. Why is this done to the prophet in a plain, unless to specially designate that the Holy Spirit was also to be given to the elect of the Gentiles, who would first cast down from their state of pride those whom He would take up, and afterward establish them upon their feet, that is, upon good works? As it is said through Paul: "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet. There follows: "And He spoke to me and said to me: Enter and shut yourself in the midst of your house.

What does it mean that the prophet is led out from the midst of the Israelite people to the plain, and afterward called back from the plain to the house, except that the grace of preaching was taken away from the Jewish people and spread abroad in the breadth of the Gentiles? Yet at the end of the world, when the Jews return to faith, the prophet is, as it were, led back to the house, so that preaching may again dwell among his people—preaching which now shines forth among diverse nations as if in a plain. For it is written: "Until the fullness of the Gentiles should enter in, and so all Israel should be saved. And through another prophet it is said: "If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved. Therefore let the prophet go out from the midst of the people to the plain, and let him return from the plain to the house, so that the preaching which was done in Judea may go forth to the Gentiles, and when the Gentiles have been filled with faith, let Judea receive back the gifts of spiritual teaching which she lost. Moreover, the prophet is commanded to be shut in the midst of his house, because in the time of Antichrist the converted people of the Jews will be constrained by harsh persecutions from those Gentiles who remain in unbelief. Hence it is written:

"But the court which is outside the temple, cast out and do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles, and they shall trample the holy city for forty-two months. "And you, son of man, behold, chains have been placed upon you, and they shall bind you with them, and you shall not go out into their midst; and I will make your tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth, and you shall be mute, not like a man who rebukes, because it is a rebellious house. If we follow these words through the order of typological exposition, the prophet receives bonds in his house and is bound, because in the last days, when Judea shall

have believed, she will experience the most grievous persecutions in the time of Antichrist, so that the ministers of iniquity will not receive his preaching, but by resisting will press it down with the bonds of sorrows. And he does not go out into their midst, because preaching does not reach the hearts of the wicked, while the tongue of the good, bound by tribulations, is silent. For there will be at that time many of the unbelieving Jews who will persecute those very ones from among the Jews who shall have believed. Hence it should be noted that here too it is said that the prophet endures bonds in his own house: so that it may be signified that Judea, even from her own people, when she shall have become faithful, will bear the tribulation of persecution.

For as long as it is not believed that the Only-Begotten of the Most High Father, having become incarnate and died, rose again and ascended to the heavens, as is preached through the pages of Sacred Scripture, prophecy will certainly be bound among the Jews. If it had flowed into their understanding just as it was spoken, it would have had, as it were, the free steps of its preaching. Therefore, the knowledge of the preachers is then compelled to be silent to the reprobate. Hence it is also added here: ”And I will make your tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth, and you shall be mute, and not as a man who rebukes, because it is a provoking house. But because, when Enoch and Elijah preach, many of those who then remain from the Jews in unbelief return to the knowledge of truth, just as it is said of the same Elijah: ”Elijah will come, and he will restore all things,” who are both called through Zechariah two olive trees, and through John two candlesticks, rightly here also it is added: ”But when I shall have spoken to you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them: Thus says the Lord God. Then, as it were at the end, the mouth of the prophet is opened, when through the preaching of Enoch and Elijah, as the Jews return to the faith, the prophecy of sacred scripture is recognized to have been about Christ.

But since we have spoken these things typologically, let us now discuss the same words to your charity in a moral sense. For what is it that the prophet is commanded to go out to the plain, except that everyone who preaches, on account of those placed outside himself whom he corrects and restrains from iniquity, goes out to the plain by speaking? And there he sees the glory of the Lord, because he receives the grace of teaching all the more abundantly as he extends himself in the labor of preaching out of love for his neighbors. Therefore by going out he is led into a lofty vision, because from that source by which he illuminates the blindness of ignorance in the hearts of others through the ministry of his speech, from that same source heavenly grace exalts him to a higher understanding. But because a preacher must always return to his mind, guarding humility and purity within, after the plain it is necessary that he return to his house, so that in those things which he says he may also recognize what kind of person he himself is within his conscience. For if he either fails to keep what he says, or seeks temporal glory from those things which he speaks, he indeed goes out to the plain by speaking, but by not thinking he scorns to return to his house.

For having received the Spirit, we are enclosed in the midst of the house, when through his grace we are called back to examine the secrets of our mind, so that the soul may rest

in God within itself, and may no longer run about through exterior desires in pursuit of praise and glory through the restlessness of thought. Concerning this house of the heart, Truth Himself says to a certain man who was healed: ”Take up your bed and go to your house. For by the bed in which the flesh finds rest, the flesh itself is signified; by the house, however, the conscience is represented. And because when we are dead in mind we lie in vices, we rest in the delight of the flesh, and when sick we are carried on a bed; but when we have been healed in mind, so that we may now resist the vices of the flesh that assail us, it is necessary that we also endure the insults of temptations from our flesh. Therefore it is commanded to the sick man restored to health: ”Take up your bed,” that is, carry the bed in which you were carried, because it is necessary that everyone who has been healed carry the insult of the flesh in which he previously lay sick. What then does it mean to say: ”Take up your bed and go to your house,” except:

carry the temptations of the flesh in which you have lain until now, and return to your conscience, so that you may see what you have done? Therefore the prophet, after the plain, is commanded to be enclosed in a house, so that the preacher may always, after the grace of teaching which he ministers to his neighbors, return to his conscience and examine himself with careful scrutiny, lest concerning those things which he preaches outwardly he himself inwardly seek any passing praise. Hence it is also said through Solomon: ”Drink water from your own cistern, and the streams of your own well. Let your fountains be dispersed abroad, and divide your waters in the streets; have them for yourself alone, and let not strangers be partakers with you. But what he says seems very contradictory: ”Let your fountains be dispersed abroad, and divide your waters in the streets,” when he immediately adds: ”Have them for yourself alone, and let not strangers be partakers with you. For how will he be able to have the water of knowledge alone, if he divides it in the streets? How are strangers not partakers of his water, if his fountains are dispersed abroad? But when we preach to the people, we certainly divide the waters in the streets, because we spread the words of knowledge to the multitude of hearers.

But when, with divine grace assisting, we guard ourselves inwardly, and with watchful care look around lest the evil spirits—who are rightly strangers to us because they have lost the lot of blessedness—steal upon us through pride, we alone have the waters that we divide in the streets, so that strangers may not be partakers with us in them. These indeed are they of whom it is written: ”Strangers have risen up against me, and the mighty have sought my soul. Therefore he both divides the waters in the streets and has them alone, who through the fact that he preaches to many does not exalt himself in the thought of temporal glory. For then a man possesses what he teaches, when he rejoices not in being known, but in being of benefit. Therefore the prophet is led back from the field to the house, so that he who speaks from God, after he has gone forth by speaking for the benefit of his neighbors, may always be called back through humility to examine the secrets of his own heart. Hence it is also added: ”And you, son of man, behold, chains are placed upon you, and they shall bind you with them, and you shall not go out into the midst of them.

For when any preacher is brought back to the conscience of his own house, bonds are placed upon him, and he is bound in them, because the more he examines himself in thought, the more the soul of the just man recognizes how many infirmities of his mortality it is bound by. For unless Paul had seen himself bound, he would never have said: ”Having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Hence it is said through the Psalmist: ”That he might hear the groaning of those in bonds, and loose the children of the slain. And again: ”Let the groaning of the fettered come before your sight. Often, however, when the soul now desires to go forth to contemplate the appearance of its Redeemer, when it sighs to be present among heavenly joys, it beholds and groans at the very bonds of its mortality by which it is still held bound in the present world. Hence it is that Jeremiah, beholding the subtle judgment of almighty God, says: ”He has built against me so that I cannot go out; he has made heavy my fetters. For we have fetters, the very weakness and corruption of our mortality; but when tribulation and groaning are added to us, our very fetters are made heavier. And indeed, as long as the just man endures delays in this life, by speaking good things he hastens to benefit others; but when he beholds hardened minds and considers them occupied with contentions, he withholds the word of preaching.

And he does not go forth in the midst of them, because he falls silent from the good things he could have spoken, as it is said through Paul: ”Nothing through contention. And again: ”If anyone wishes to be contentious, we have no such custom. Hence here also it is fittingly added: ”And 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. Sometimes indeed the Lord also kindles the hearts of preachers with zeal for Himself against the tongues of those who resist, so that they may not be silent, but may press down the sayings of the deceitful with words of truth. Whence it is added here: But when I shall have spoken to you, you shall open your mouth, and you shall say to them: Thus says the Lord God. But it is pleasing to pass through these things which we have briefly discussed under a twofold understanding, touching lightly according to the consideration of the letter. For what more is commended to us through the very words of the history than the virtue of obedience? When the prophet is commanded now to proceed to the transmigration by the river Chobar, now to go out to the plain, now to return from the plain to his house?

So that first going forth by command, and a little later going out, and again returning home, and shutting himself in, he might always break the judgment of his own will according to the precept of the divine word, so that, suspended in the heavenly command, he might fulfill not his own will, but that of his Creator? To whom it is said: ”And you, son of man, behold, bonds have been placed upon you, and they will bind you in them, and you will not go out in their midst. In this matter it should be noted that the prophet foreknows adversities, so that he may be prepared against all things. For evils prevail less against the mind which do not come unexpectedly; and yet while contrary things are foreknown, how great is the virtue of obedience in him is shown, who both knows that he is about to suffer adversities, and yet is not disobedient to the Lord’s voice. But the words which are immediately added require great consideration: ”And I will make your tongue cleave to your palate, and you

will be mute, nor like a man rebuking, because it is a provoking house. For we must discern whether the word of preaching is withdrawn only on account of evil hearers, or sometimes also on account of the fault of the one preaching. For this matter, when considered, is distinguished by four qualities. For sometimes the word is taken away from good teachers on account of bad hearers.

Sometimes, however, the word is given even to bad teachers on account of good hearers. Sometimes, moreover, for the justification of both those teaching and those hearing, the word is given to good teachers, so that they themselves may grow through merit, and their hearers may advance in understanding and life. Sometimes, however, because neither are those worthy to receive to whom the word of teaching is brought forth, nor are those worthy to bring forth the word of teaching who hold the position of teaching, the word of preaching is taken away, so that both parties may be strictly judged. For on account of bad hearers the word is taken away from good teachers, just as it is now said to Ezekiel: ”I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, and you will be mute, not like a man who rebukes, because it is a rebellious house. And as it is said to Paul: ”Make haste and go out quickly from Jerusalem, because they will not receive your testimony concerning me. And as when the apostles wished to preach in Asia, it is written that the Spirit of Jesus forbade them. On account of good hearers the word is given even to bad teachers, just as the Lord says of the Pharisees: ”Whatever they tell you, observe and do, but do not act according to their works; for they speak and do not act.

For the merit of those teaching and the justification of those hearing, the word of teaching is also granted, just as it is said to the holy apostles: ”Go and teach all nations. But on account of bad hearers and the unworthy life of those who ought to have taught, the word of teaching is withdrawn, just as Eli did not have a word of strict rebuke for correcting his sons, because both his negligence and the life of his sons demanded that the people should fall along with them, and the ark of the Lord, captured, should pass over to the foreigners. For it is a great grace of almighty God when a harsh word of rebuke is brought forth by teachers against those acting wickedly. Against which it is now said: ”And you will be mute, not like a man who rebukes. For he would have rebuked the transgressors if they had been worthy of that grace of rebuke itself. But since there is such great diversity of merits in teaching and in silence that it cannot easily be known whether the word of teaching is withdrawn because of the fault of the hearer or of him who seems to hold the place of teaching, what else are we commanded but to always preserve humility in doubtful matters? So that when we are able to speak we are not exalted, lest perhaps this very grace of our speaking was bestowed not on us but on our hearers;

and again when we are not able to speak, those who have been committed to us should by no means judge us, lest perhaps we are unable to speak not because of our own sin but because of the sin of the hearers. Therefore all things concerning our merits are uncertain to us for this purpose: that we may hold fast to one certain grace—humility—so that when we speak, we may consider this to be from the gift of almighty God and your merit. And when

we fall silent from the word of teaching, although it may be our fault, yet you should believe this to be especially yours, so that when we mutually attribute evils to ourselves and goods to others, through this very grace of humility it may come about that the word of teaching which had been taken away may return. There follows: ”But when I shall have spoken to you, you shall open your mouth and say to them: Thus says the Lord God: He who hears, let him hear; and he who is silent, let him be silent, for it is a provoking house. Often some desire to hear the word of God, but when they observe others turning away their ear, they themselves also deviate from hearing salvation;

and frequently many desire to rest and to be free from all the activities of this world, to succumb no longer to any earthly desires, but when they see others advancing by acting restlessly and being exalted in this world by riches and honors, because they are not yet firm in the way of righteousness, they slip into wicked works by the example of others. For hence it is that the Psalmist, speaking in the figure of the weak, said: ”But my feet were almost moved, my steps were nearly poured out, because I was zealous concerning sinners, seeing the peace of sinners. Hence again he says: ”While the impious man is proud, the poor man is set on fire. Hence to the prophet Jeremiah it is said by the Lord’s voice concerning Judah and Israel: ”Have you seen what the turning away Israel has done? She went off by herself upon every high mountain and under every leafy tree, and committed fornication there. And I said when she had done all these things: Return to me, and she did not return. Where it is immediately added how Judah, who seemed to stand, also fell through emulation of her. For he says: ”And her treacherous sister Judah saw that because the turning away Israel had committed adultery, I had dismissed her and given her a bill of divorce; and her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went off and committed fornication herself also.

Behold, the merciful God is despised and calls out, to those turning away from him he opens a sign of mercy, because he says to the one sinning: ”Return to me,” and yet she did not return. But because the Israelite people deserted the almighty God, not wishing to return, she received a bill of divorce. She deserted, that is, by sinning, but she received a bill of divorce by remaining in her iniquities without the scourge. For the soul that sins departs. But if prosperity follows her after sin, no discipline, no rebuke of severity recalls her to heart; in the division she made between herself and the Lord, she also received a bill of divorce, so that now, as if abandoned as a stranger, she may do the evil things she wishes, may not feel the scourges of God’s zeal, in order that she may descend more deeply to eternal punishments. But her sister Judah, because she saw the Israelite people dismissed in their pleasures, herself also burned into the uncleanness of fornication. For because she observed the adulteress flourishing in her perversity, she herself also did not fear to sin more grievously and to withdraw from union with the Lord, as if from the bed of a lawful husband. Hence it is necessary that we consider all those sinning to be more wretched when we observe them abandoned in their fault without the scourge. For hence it is said through Solomon:

”The turning away of the little ones will kill them, and the prosperity of fools will destroy them. For he who is turned away from God and prospers becomes so much nearer to perdition as he is found more estranged from the zeal of discipline. Let it therefore be said: ”Let him who hears hear, and let him who rests rest, because it is a provoking house. As if it were openly said: You who have already begun both to hear the words of truth and to rest from wicked action, do not imitate those by whose conduct you see me provoked. However, we can also understand this in another way. For some who hear the word do not truly hear, because they lend their ear to sacred speech but do not tear their heart away from worldly desires. And there are some who, while resting, do not rest at all, because though they are idle from wicked deeds in body, they turn over perverse works in their mind out of love for them. For this is why it is written concerning Judah coming into captivity: Her enemies saw her and mocked her Sabbaths. Indeed, enemies mock the Sabbaths when malign spirits cast wicked thoughts into an idle mind, so that even if it rests from work, it does not rest from delight in evil works. Rightly therefore it is now said:

Let him who hears, hear—so that the word may sound in the ear of the body in such a way that it resounds in the ear of the heart. And let him who rests, rest—so that desires for wickedness may be driven from thought, since they are now seen to be driven from action. And lest we follow the examples of the wicked, as we have said, it is added: For it is a rebellious house. But though the wicked are tolerated for a long time, they suddenly fall, and the weak behold their punishments, lest they imitate those whose sins they think go unpunished. Hence here too the desolation of that same Judah is added, which is called a rebellious house, when the Lord immediately says to His prophet: And you, son of man, take a brick for yourself, and place it before you, and draw upon it the city of Jerusalem, and arrange a siege against it, and build siege works, and heap up a mound, and set camps against it, and place battering rams around it. And take for yourself an iron griddle and place it as an iron wall between you and the city, and set your face firmly against it, and it shall be under siege, and you shall surround it. This is a sign for the house of Israel. In these words, indeed, what else is designated according to history but the siege and destruction of the city of Jerusalem, and what else is expressed but the affliction of a sinful people?

It is called a provoking house, when it is openly said: ”You shall set a siege against it, and you shall build fortifications, and you shall heap up a mound, and you shall place camps against it, and you shall set battering rams all around. But because the words of prophecy often narrate historical events in such a way that through these mystical things are also described, it is necessary that we discuss these same words we have set forth in a spiritual manner, especially because something is inserted in them that does not seem able to be held according to the letter, when it is said: ”And you, take for yourself an iron pan, and you shall set it as an iron wall between you and the city, and you shall harden your face against it, and it shall be under siege. For unless mystical things were mixed with historical events, what need did the prophet have of an iron pan, that he should place it between himself and the city, so as to separate himself from its siege? For when it is said: ”Take for yourself an iron pan, and you shall set it as an iron wall between you and the city,” it is openly declared

that through that same iron pan the prophet renders himself free from the siege of the city. Hence also what he predicted is added: ”And you shall harden your face against it, and it shall be under siege.

From this matter it is shown that the prophet will not be in that same siege, if he places the iron pan as an iron wall between himself and the city. And certainly, whether in that captivity which occurred first, or in that which afterward befell the Israelite people, no one was free from the danger of that same captivity, but an equal calamity enveloped all together. What therefore can be understood according to the letter, that the prophet should place an iron pan between himself and the city that is to be besieged? But although all this which is read in the description of the brick under the sign of the city of Jerusalem was done according to the letter, nevertheless we must know that something typical is figured through the pan, and a true siege of Jerusalem is described. From this we are instructed that when we know one thing is fulfilled according to history, and we recognize another thing according to history to be empty of reason, we should hold to both in the sacred word, so that we may believe the siege of Jerusalem, which was later accomplished according to the letter, to be prefigured in the words and deeds of the prophet, and yet through that same siege another siege, that is, an interior one, may be designated. In this we rightly ask what may be designated by the iron frying pan, which is called an iron wall. That siege by which the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, we know has already taken place;

but let us now seek another one within, which is carried out daily. Of this it is said through signification: And you, son of man, take for yourself a brick, and you shall place it before you, and you shall draw upon it the city of Jerusalem. But first we must inquire why the prophet Ezekiel, whenever he beholds sublime things or whenever he is commanded to perform something mystical, is first called ”son of man. For often he is lifted up to heavenly things, and his mind is fed on hidden and invisible realities. It is therefore necessary that among the hidden things which he penetrates, he be called ”son of man,” so that he may always recognize what he is and never be exalted because of those things to which he is led. For what does it mean to always say ”son of man” to a prophet lifted up to spiritual things, except to make him mindful of his own weakness? So that, conscious of his frail condition, he ought not to be elevated in thought because of the greatness of his contemplation. Because this same prophet, as we have already said above, holds the type of preachers or teachers, it is rightly said to him now: ”Take for yourself a brick, and you shall place it before you. For every teacher, when he receives some earthly hearer for instruction in the heavenly word, takes up a brick.

When he begins to speak to him about what the reward of the heavenly homeland is, what the vision of supernal peace is, he describes the city of Jerusalem on the brick. He places it before himself, because with attentive mind he considers the quality of the hearer, that is, he observes his progress or deficiency, and according to that person’s understanding he moderates the words of his preaching, so that the city of Jerusalem, that is, the vision of peace, may be described in the hearer’s mind. Let it therefore be said: ”Take for yourself a

brick," namely the earthly heart of your neighbor. "And you shall place it before you," that is, so that you may guard his life and understanding with attentive mind. "And you shall describe upon it the city of Jerusalem," so that you may make known to him what the supernal joys are concerning the vision of peace. For it is as if Jerusalem has already been described on the brick when an earthly mind has begun to recognize what are the true joys of that inner peace, and to long to behold the glory of the heavenly homeland. It is as if the vision of peace is being described on earth when the mind, which had previously savored earthly things, is now raised up through love to contemplate the glory of the heavenly kingdom.

But as soon as the soul begins to love heavenly things, as soon as it gathers itself with complete attention toward the vision of inner peace, that ancient adversary who fell from heaven grows envious, and begins to lay more snares, and brings on sharper temptations than he was accustomed to, so that often he tempts the resisting soul as he had never tempted it before when he possessed it. Hence it is written: "Son, when you come to the service of God, stand in justice and fear, and prepare your soul for temptation. Hence also the demoniac who is healed by the Lord is torn apart by the departing demon, as it is written: "And crying out and greatly tearing him, it went out from him. For what does it mean that the ancient enemy, who had not torn apart the possessed man while he held him, tore him apart as he was leaving, except that often when he is expelled from the heart, he generates sharper temptations in it than he had previously stirred up when he possessed it in peace? Hence also the Israelites say to Moses and Aaron: "May the Lord see and judge, because you have made our odor stink before Pharaoh and his servants, and you have given him a sword to kill us. For in Moses and Aaron the law and the prophets are prefigured.

And often the weak soul murmurs within itself as if against the sacred utterances, because after it has begun to hear and follow heavenly words, the adversity of the Egyptian king, that is, the temptation of the evil spirit, increases. Therefore the teacher must vigilantly make known to the progressing soul what temptations follow it, so that it may be able to prepare itself cautiously against the snares of the malignant spirit. Hence it is well that now, after the city of Jerusalem has been described on the brick, it is said to the prophet: "And you shall set the siege against it, and you shall build fortifications, and you shall heap up a mound. For when the vision of peace is already being described, it is necessary that the wars of temptations be announced to it. For in order that it may be able to reach those eternal joys of peace, it must without doubt endure here many struggles of tribulations. Of which it is well said: "You shall set the siege against it.

For the preacher sets a siege against the soul to be instructed when by forewarning he indicates in what ways vices oppose themselves to virtues, how lust strikes chastity, how anger disturbs the tranquility of the mind, how much foolish joy dissolves the vigor of the mind, how talkativeness destroys the fortification of the heart, how envy kills charity, how pride undermines the citadel of humility, how deceit, when it has corrupted truth in speech, corrupts it also in understanding, so that he who was unwilling to speak the truth that he understood no longer even understands what he might speak. Therefore the siege is set by

the preacher when through the words of holy admonition it is shown which vices lie in wait against each and every virtue, and in what ways. And the preacher builds fortifications against the Jerusalem which he describes on the brick when he demonstrates how fortified all evils come against the mind, so that vices hide themselves under the appearance of virtues; so that, as we have often already said, immoderate anger may seek to appear as justice, and relaxation of discipline may wish to appear as gentleness, and stinginess may call itself frugality, and disordered pouring out of resources may call itself benevolence. For there are, as it were, fortifications built against the mind when vices grow up under the appearance of virtues and show themselves on high through an image, though they always lie low through their action. You shall also heap up a mound.

For when the mind has begun to desire heavenly things, malignant spirits through their temptations heap up earthly thoughts all the more against it. Therefore the prophet heaps up a mound when the holy preacher announces to good minds how earthly desires are accustomed to creep in. And it is still added: And you shall set camps against it, and place battering rams round about. The teacher sets camps against the soul, as it were, when he points out the ambushes of malignant spirits gathered and united together against it, so that they may sometimes tempt not only from one vice, but from vices joined together at once. For there are certain vices that are closely related to one another by a kind of kinship, such as dissipation of spirit, appetite for gluttony, and the uncleanness of lust, as well as excessive talking, deceit, and perjury. For from dissipation of spirit the mind is swept away to the gorging of the belly, and when the belly is distended with food, the flesh is drawn captive to lust through pride. And again from excessive talking deceit is generated, because it is very difficult for one who speaks much not also to lie; and often a lie is even covered by perjury, so that it may be concealed before human judgments. Pride also can in no way exist without envy and vainglory. For every proud person envies others the honor that he himself seeks.

And when he has perhaps obtained it, he is raised up in the elation of temporal glory, and what he sees others were unable to attain, he rejoices through vainglory to possess above all others. It should also be known that often certain vices do not come to the mind simultaneously, but are substituted one for another, so that one succeeds another in temptation. And one comes against the face, while another insinuates itself into temptation from the side, so that while one is being resisted, the mind, deceived, is captured by the other. For those very vices which we mentioned above often stealthily substitute themselves one for another, just as sometimes when we strive to conquer anger within ourselves, gentleness occupies the mind more than necessary, so that it fails to present the severity that ought to be shown to sinners. Often indeed, when incautious gentleness within us displeases us, zeal draws itself into fury and carries the captive soul beyond the limit of patience. Therefore, because vices come against the mind mixed together and united at once, rightly in the mouth of the preacher siege camps are set against the Jerusalem that has been described. And because sometimes individual vices strike the sense from here and there, battering rams are arranged in a circle. Therefore the preacher sets battering rams in a circle when

he cautiously declares how softly lust strikes, how harshly impatience kills, how laboriously avarice inflames and destroys, how proudly pride extinguishes.

Thus to place battering rams in a circle is to show by preaching which blades of the vices are accustomed to strike the soul from every side. There follows: ”And take to yourself an iron frying pan, and you shall place it as an iron wall between yourself and the city. Because iron is a strong metal, and food is fried in a frying pan, what is signified by the iron frying pan except the strong frying of spiritual zeal? For all spiritual zeal fries the soul of a teacher, because he is greatly tormented when he sees any weak persons abandoning eternal things and taking delight in temporal things. How well Paul had taken up the iron frying pan, when, tormented by zeal for souls, he said: ”Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not burned? His own heart, which he had set on fire with zeal for souls—what else had he made it but a frying pan, in which he burned with love of virtues against vices? For the fact that he was burned was the frying pan. For he was inflamed and he cooked, because he was set on fire with bitterness, yet from his afflicted thought he prepared the nourishment of virtues.

But what does it mean that the prophet places the same frying pan as an iron wall between himself and the city, except that the same strong zeal which is now exercised in the mind of the teacher will be a witness between him and the soul for which he is zealous against vices on the day of the final judgment? So that even if the one being taught refuses to listen, the teacher nevertheless, because of the zeal he displays, will not be held guilty for the negligence of his hearer. Therefore he places an iron wall between himself and the city, because at the time of vengeance the teacher is fortified from the danger of damnation by that very thing through which he now suffers the frying of his heart through zealous watchfulness. For there is no sacrifice to almighty God such as zeal for souls. Hence the Psalmist says: ”Zeal for your house has consumed me. How much the frying of the heart that is driven by spiritual zeal pleases the almighty Lord God is clearly shown when fine flour is commanded to be offered in sacrifice through the law. Concerning which it is written: ”It shall be fried in a pan with oil sprinkled on it, and the priest who has succeeded his father by right shall offer it hot as a most sweet odor to the Lord, and it shall be wholly burned upon the altar.

For then fine flour is fried in a pan when the pure mind of the righteous person is burned through the ardor of holy zeal. It is commanded to be sprinkled with oil, that is, to be mixed with the brightness of mercy, which burns and shines in the sight of the almighty Lord. Therefore let the mind that is fried in a pan be sprinkled with oil, because the strictness of holy zeal must both burn and shine forth from the virtue of mercy. For it loves the very one whom it seems to pursue. Hence it is also commanded to be offered hot as a most sweet odor to the Lord, because if zeal does not have love, the fine flour that is offered from the frying pan has lost its heat. And it should be noted who is commanded to offer it, namely the priest who has succeeded his father by right. For that priest succeeds his father by right who demonstrates by his conduct that he is a son of the almighty Lord, and does not depart

from his inner nobility by the ignobility of his works. It is commanded to be wholly burned upon the altar, so that it may become a holocaust. For we call a holocaust that which is entirely burned. Hence also in another translation in this place this same fine flour which is fried in the pan is commanded to become a holocaust. Moreover, this is the difference between a holocaust and a sacrifice:

every holocaust is indeed a sacrifice, but not every sacrifice is a holocaust. For there are many good works that are done as sacrifices, but they are not holocausts, because they do not completely set the mind ablaze in spiritual love. For those who do the things that are of God in such a way that they nevertheless do not abandon certain things that are of the world, assuredly offer a sacrifice and not a holocaust. But those who abandon all things that are of the world and set their entire mind ablaze with the fire of divine love, these assuredly become both sacrifice and holocaust to the almighty Lord. Therefore the fine flour in the frying pan is the pure mind of the righteous person in the affliction of spiritual zeal; it is fried through concern for souls, and is reckoned to be not only a sacrifice but also a holocaust to the Lord. Let us therefore take up the iron frying pan, and let us place it as an iron wall between us and the city, that is, let us assume strong zeal, so that we may afterward find this strong fortification between us and the soul of our hearer. For we will find this iron wall then, if we now hold it firmly, namely by teaching, guarding, persuading, rebuking, soothing, terrifying, sometimes acting gently, but sometimes also more severely. Concerning which severity it is rightly added: ”And you shall set your face firmly against it, and it shall be under siege.

What does it mean to set one’s face firmly against Jerusalem depicted on the brick, except that the teacher who announces to a soul the vision of heavenly peace should by no means show himself more lenient and merciful if he still sees that soul weakened in its actions? Hence it is written: ”Do you have daughters? Guard their bodies, and do not show a cheerful face to them. For weak souls given over to worldly desire are sometimes better preserved through severity, so that a hardened face—that is, one guarded through severity and withdrawn from all hope of frivolous leniency—may terrify the inconstant soul and restrain it from the delight of vices through the force of strictness. When this is done by a teacher, it is always necessary that sweetness and humility be held in the heart, so that he may both love greatly and never rise up against the one whom he nevertheless refuses to reveal his love and humility to, for that person’s own benefit. There follows: And you shall surround it. The teacher surrounds the soul of his hearer when he proclaims that snares of temptations can be set against everything that is done in this life, so that while the mind becomes fearful everywhere, watchful everywhere, the more timid it is, the more vigilantly it may live. There follows: ”It is a sign for the house of Israel.

If we look to the history of the siege that took place according to the letter, what the prophet did is a sign for the house of Israel; if we look to the mystery that is daily enacted by a teacher concerning each individual soul, both what he did and what he announced by doing it is a sign for the house of Israel, because just as the house of Israel endured a siege bodily,

so every soul that now begins to serve almighty God feels the besieging snares of malign spirits attacking it. If it truly desires to be rescued from them, it ought to know that it cannot be rescued by its own strength; but it must hope for the help of him who, even while we live in corruptible flesh, is able through the mystery of his redemption to strengthen us even over spirits that are without flesh—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.

Book 2

Two Books of Homilies on Ezekiel the Prophet Book Two Preface.

Since, being pressed by many cares, it was not permitted to examine the entire book of the prophet Ezekiel in order before your charity, it pleased your good desires to request that at least his final vision, which was made to him concerning a building established on a mountain, which is also more obscure than all his other visions, ought to be expounded. And indeed it is necessary for me to comply with your will, but there are two things which disturb my mind in this matter. One, that this same vision is covered by such clouds of obscurity that scarcely anything in it seems to shine through with understanding. The other, that we have learned that Agilulf, king of the Lombards, hastening with great urgency to besiege us, has crossed the Po. Therefore consider, dearest brothers, what a wretched mind, occupied with the disturbances of its own fear, is able to accomplish in penetrating dark and mystical meanings. For the more it is distressed about earthly things, the less it sees in those things which are heavenly; and because it is led outside itself by its cares, it is greatly diminished within, because, as it is written: "The earthly dwelling weighs down the mind that ponders many things." For what does not suffice to penetrate higher things even when collected, consider what it will be able to do when divided? Moreover we know, we all know, that a river which is divided into many streams is dried up from its channel. But nevertheless amid these things, heavenly grace is present. And if the weights of my thoughts press down my mind, the wings of your desires lift it up. Indeed the work we are undertaking is very obscure, but let us set it in our mind that we are making a nocturnal journey. It remains therefore that we pursue this by groping.

HOMILY I

In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck, on that very day the hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me there. About to speak of mystical things, he sets forth the historical narrative first, so that he may establish from the time what is to be believed from the revelation. It should be noted that at the beginning of this book he indicated in what year he began to prophesy; but at the end he inserted when he saw the final vision, so that it might be known over how many years he composed the book of his prophecy. For the time when he began to prophesy, he placed at the beginning of his speech, saying: The

heavens were opened, and I saw visions of the Lord on the fifth of the month; this is the fifth year of the captivity of King Jehoiachin. But now he speaks, saying: In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity. For the same prophet had been carried off to Babylon in the first captivity with King Jehoiachin. For concerning the second captivity of Jerusalem he adds: In the fourteenth year after the city was struck. For Zedekiah had reigned in the city of Jerusalem for eleven years after the first captivity, in which the prophet Ezekiel was led to Babylon with King Jehoiachin.

But in the fourteenth year after the captivity of that same Zedekiah, which was now the second captivity of the city, the prophet was seeing the final vision. Thus eleven and fourteen joined together make twenty-five. If therefore he spoke the first vision in the fifth year of the earlier captivity, and he describes this final one as having occurred in the twenty-fifth year, it is clearly evident that in twenty years he extended the delays of his speech up to the words of his final vision. Nor should it disturb anyone that in the middle of the volume of his prophecy, when he was speaking about the Babylonian king, he makes mention of the twenty-seventh year. In that place, since he inserts nothing about the time of his own captivity, he clearly demonstrates that he is describing the times of that king about whom he had received the commission to prophesy. But as for his saying: At the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, he simply expresses the time, so that from that very time also he may fix in the hearts of his hearers, according to the letter, the root of the word, from which he may afterward bring forth spiritual fruits. It should be noted what he says: ”In the fourteenth year after the city was struck, on that same day.

For what does it mean that through this final vision almighty God deigned to show the mercy of His promise on that very day on which He fulfilled the wrath of justice upon the stricken city, except that that power of divinity, which is not drawn into any movement of change or mutability, by that same light of justice gives life to the afflicted and penitent by which it strikes down the proud and obstinate? Therefore, having stated beforehand the time of his vision, he adds: ”The hand of the Lord came upon me, and brought me there in visions of God: He brought me into the land of Israel, and set me down upon a very high mountain, upon which there was as it were the structure of a city facing toward the South. The building of this city certainly cannot be understood according to the letter. For shortly afterward he adds that this same building was measured with a reed of six cubits and a palm, while the gate of the same building was measured at fourteen cubits, and he reports that the fronts of this gate are sixty cubits. All of these things cannot stand according to the letter. For how is the whole building together measured with a reed, that is, six cubits and a palm, while the gates of the building extend to fourteen cubits, and the fronts of the gates to sixty cubits? For the gate is in the city, and the fronts are in the gates.

And no reasoning permits it to be accepted that what contains is less than what is contained. Moreover, in Sacred Scripture, even those things which can be understood according to history must often be understood spiritually, so that both faith may be held in the truth of the history, and spiritual understanding may be grasped from the mysteries of allegory.

Just as we also know what the Psalmist says: ”For I shall see your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and stars, which you have established. For behold, in the outward description the word of reason stands, because both the heavens are the works of God, and the moon and stars were created and established by him. But if the Psalmist asserts this according to outward works alone, and not also according to mystical understanding, he who professed that the heavens are the works of God, when about to speak of the moon and stars, why did he not also enumerate the sun equally, which we know is his work? For if he was speaking according to the letter alone, when about to speak of the lesser light, he ought first to have spoken of the greater light, so that he might report that the sun was established first, and afterward the moon and stars.

But because he was speaking according to mystical understanding, so that we should understand the moon as the holy Church, and the stars as all the saints, he did not wish to name the sun, because indeed he was speaking to that eternal Sun himself, of whom it is written: ”But for you who fear the Lord, the sun of justice shall rise. Of whom the reprobate will say at the end: ”The sun of justice has not risen for us. Therefore by saying, ”The moon and stars which you have established,” and yet being silent about the sun which was made, he indicated that he spoke to that Sun who not only made the sun and moon and stars corporally, but also made the moon of the Church and the stars of all the saints spiritually. If therefore, when something is lacking to history, we are led by clear reason to the understanding of allegory, how much more should those things be understood spiritually in which, according to the reasoning of the letter, nothing historical sounds? ”The hand of the Lord came upon me, and brought me there in the visions of God; he brought me into the land of Israel. What he had said, ”He brought me there,” repeating this he added: ”He brought me into the land of Israel. For he says: ”The hand of the Lord came upon me, and brought me there in the visions of the Lord.

For the hand signifies the power of might, while the visions signify the very revelation which he had received. For the hand in vision is power in contemplation. By which words what does he openly indicate, except that he speaks nothing about the city which he had seen according to the letter? For he speaks spiritually about that which he contemplates spiritually. And he set me upon a mountain exceedingly high. What then does the high mountain signify except the Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus? Who is indeed from the earth, but beyond the earth, because the flesh of our same Redeemer has its matter from below, but excels in the heights by his power. It would have been insufficient to call him high unless he added exceedingly, because he is not only man, but from that same conception of humanity which was assumed by him, God-man, not only man beyond men, but man made even above the angels. For concerning him it is said through Isaiah: In that day the fruit of the earth shall be sublime. For our Creator, because he was incarnate for us, was made the fruit of the earth for us. But now the fruit of the earth is sublime, because man born on earth reigns above the angels in heaven, because according to the voice of David and Paul, He has subjected all things under his feet. For in that he subjected all things to him, he left nothing not subject to him.

Therefore this mountain is both high and exceedingly so, because even if he is from earth through the substance of humanity, nevertheless he is incomprehensible from the height of divinity. For hence it is that when the prophet Isaiah foresaw that the same Lord was to come in the flesh, raised up by the spirit of prophecy, he said: And it shall be in the last days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the summit of the mountains. For the house of the Lord was the Israelite people. Therefore he was called the mountain of the house of the Lord, who deigned to become incarnate from the Israelite people. Moreover there were in that same people holy men who might rightly be called mountains, because through the merit of their life they drew near to heavenly things. But the incarnate Only-begotten was not equal to these mountains, because by his divinity he transcends the nature, life, and merits of all. Whence also rightly he is called a mountain above the summit of mountains, because he was found to be exalted by his divinity even above the peaks of the saints, so that those who had advanced greatly in God could scarcely touch his footprints from the summit of their thought. He therefore who there is called the mountain above the summit of mountains, here is declared to be the mountain exceedingly high. There follows: Upon which there was as it were the building of a city facing toward the South.

It should be noted that it does not say, ”Upon which there was a building,” but ”as it were a building,” so that it might clearly be shown that all these things were said not of a corporeal but of a spiritual city’s building. For he who declares that he saw not a building but as it were a building directs the hearts of his hearers to a spiritual construction, as is said through the Psalmist: ”Jerusalem which is built as a city. For since that vision of inner peace is constructed from the congregation of holy citizens, the heavenly Jerusalem is built as a city. Yet while in this land of pilgrimage she is struck with scourges, beaten with tribulations, her stones are daily squared. And this is the city, namely the holy Church, which though destined to reign in heaven still labors on earth. To whose citizens Peter says: ”And you as living stones are built up. And Paul says: ”You are God’s field, God’s building. Which city indeed already has here in the conduct of the saints its great building. For in a building stone bears stone, because stone is placed upon stone; and he who bears another is borne by another. So therefore, so in holy Church each one both bears another and is borne by another. For neighbors mutually tolerate one another, so that through them the building of charity may rise. Hence Paul admonishes, saying: ”Bear one another’s burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Declaring the power of which law, he says: ”Love is the fulfillment of the law. For if I neglect to bear you in your conduct, and you disdain to tolerate me in my conduct, whence does the building of charity rise between us, whom mutual love does not join together through patience? Moreover in a building, as we said before, the stone that bears is borne, because just as I now tolerate the conduct of those who are still unpolished in the way of life of good work, so I too was tolerated by those who preceded me in the fear of the Lord and bore me, so that having been borne I might learn to bear. But they too were borne by their elders. However the stones that are placed at the top and at the end of the structure are indeed

borne by others, but they bear no others at all, because those who will be born at the end of the Church, that is at the extremity of the world, are indeed tolerated by their elders, so that their conduct may be shaped to good works; but since none follow them who might progress through them, they bear no stones of the faithful structure upon themselves. Now therefore some are borne by us, but we were borne by others. Yet the foundation bears the entire weight of the structure, because our Redeemer alone tolerates the conduct of all together. Of whom Paul says:

"For no one can lay another foundation besides that which has been laid, which is Christ Jesus. The foundation bears the stones and is not borne by the stones, because our Redeemer tolerates all our faults, but in him there was no evil that needed to be tolerated. Hence it is well said now: "He set me down upon an exceedingly high mountain, upon which there was as it were the building of a city," because he alone sustains our conduct and faults, who bears the entire structure of holy Church. Who says through the voice of the prophet concerning those still living perversely: "I have grown weary enduring. Yet the Lord does not grow weary by enduring, whose power of divinity no weariness touches; but, speaking in human words, he calls his very patience toward us labor. And it should be noted that the prophet saw that same city which he beheld inclining toward the South. For those who are devoted to sacred eloquence recognize that the south wind is customarily placed as a type of the Holy Spirit; just as, on the contrary, the devil is often designated by the North wind, because the former relaxes with heat, and the latter constricts with cold. And the Truth says: Iniquity shall abound, and the charity of many shall grow cold. The prophet also asserts concerning Judea, saying: As a cistern makes its water cold, so has she made her malice cold. Hence the devil, as the same prophet attests, is reported to have said:

I will sit upon the mountain of the Testament, in the sides of the North. But on the contrary, this city inclines toward the Southern part, because the grace of the Holy Spirit relaxes the torpor of the mind. Hence the Psalmist says: Turn again, O Lord, our captivity, as a torrent in the South. For our captivity, which had remained sluggish in following God due to the coldness of torpor, is relaxed through the heat of the Holy Spirit, so that it may run into the love of God. Whence it is also now said that the city which is established on the mountain inclines toward the South, because the Church of the elect opens her thoughts in the breath of the Holy Spirit, and, descending from every summit of her pride, conceives the warmth of love in God, in whom she believes, so that nothing pleases her except to be submitted to His grace, to be warmed by His love, to be always filled by the gift of His breath. Whence also the contemplator, inflamed with mighty love, was saying: My soul shall exult in the Lord, and shall delight in His salvation. For He who in Latin is called "the Savior," the same in Hebrew is called Jesus.

Therefore the prophet, because he was contemplating His ways and miracles and also the mystery of our redemption through the spirit of prophecy, declares that he exults in the Lord and delights in Jesus, because from that source he had conceived joy in his mind from which he burned strongly through love. Let us therefore consider, if the minds of the spiritual

fathers were delighted in Him who had not yet come, but was foreseen, how great is the guilt of one who does not love His ways, His examples, His admonitions, after He came and accomplished redemption. Therefore this city is said to incline toward the South, as if it were openly said that that former city, namely the Synagogue, stood toward the North in her unbelievers, which hardened in the coldness of unbelief. But Holy Church, which conceived the charity of faith, inclines toward the South through warmth, and leans as it were upon the warm wind, because she rejoices not in confidence in herself, but in the gift of spiritual grace. There follows: And he brought me in there. He enters the building of the heavenly city who considers by imitating the ways of the good in holy Church. For to enter the building upon the mountain is to consider with love how the elect of holy Church, established on the summit of virtues, advance in the Lord.

For this one leads a life bound by marriage, is content with his own possessions, does not seize what belongs to others, bestows whatever he is able from his own goods upon the needy, and does not neglect to weep for the sins without which daily life cannot be led by married people. For because that very domestic care disturbs his mind, he stirs himself to tears. But that one has already abandoned all things that are of the world, desires to have nothing of it, is nourished by the exercise of contemplation alone, rejoices with weeping in hope of heavenly rewards, transcends even those things which are permitted to be possessed, seeks to have daily intimacy with the Lord; no care of the passing world disturbs his mind; he always expands his mind in expectation of heavenly joys. But another has already abandoned all things of this world, and his mind is lifted up to the contemplation of heavenly things; yet nevertheless, for the edification of many, holding a position of governance, he who does not succumb to passing things out of desire is sometimes turned back to them out of compassion for his neighbors, so that from care for them he may show mercy to the needy; he preaches the word of life to his hearers, ministers things necessary for souls and bodies alike. And he who on his own account already soars by contemplation to heavenly desire, still toils in temporal affairs for the advancement and benefit of his neighbors.

Therefore whoever in holy Church diligently strives to consider, so that he may advance either in the life of the good who are married, or in the citadel of the continent who abandon all things that are of this world, or even in the height of preachers, has already entered the building of the city set on a mountain. For he who neglects to consider the life of better persons in order to advance still stands outside the structure. And if he admires the honor which holy Church now holds in the world, he gazes upon the building as if from outside and is amazed. And because he is intent only on external things, he has not entered within. There follows: And behold a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze. He Himself is signified in the man who is figured on the mountain. Moreover, this man is said to measure the building. And rightly is the Lord signified by the man and the mountain, because He Himself arranges all things within holy Church by judging, and He Himself bears that same holy Church, and by bearing it raises it up to heavenly things. So also in the holy Gospel our same Redeemer speaks, saying: ”He who enters by the door is the

shepherd of the sheep. And shortly after: ”I am the door. And again after a little He adds: ”I am the good shepherd.

If therefore He Himself is the shepherd, and He Himself is the door, and the shepherd enters through the door, why is it not understood in this place that He Himself is both the mountain and the man who measures the building on the mountain? But we must ask why it is said of this man, ”Whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze. Now we all know, brothers, that the metal bronze is very durable, and altogether sonorous. What then does it mean that the appearance of the Mediator of God and men is compared to the appearance of bronze, unless it is what we openly know, that the only-begotten Son, taking the form of a servant, transformed the frailty of human flesh through the glory of his resurrection into eternity, because in him flesh was made now enduringly without end? For rising from the dead he dies no more, death shall no longer have dominion over him. But what does it mean that his very incarnation is compared to a sonorous metal, unless that through that same assumption of our humanity the glory of his majesty resounded to all? And he has, as it were, the appearance of bronze in his body, because God became known to the world through flesh. Hence also through John it is said: ”He had written on his garment and on his thigh: King of kings, and Lord of lords. For what is his garment, except the body which he assumed from the Virgin?

Yet his garment is not one thing and he himself another. For our garment too is called flesh, yet we ourselves are the flesh with which we are clothed. But Isaiah, beholding this garment of his long before, bloodied with blood through the cross of the passion, said: ”Why is your apparel red, and your garments like those of one treading in the winepress? To which he himself answered: ”I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the nations there is no man with me. For he alone trod the winepress in which he was trodden, who by his own power conquered the passion which he endured. For he who suffered even unto the death of the cross rose from death with glory. And it is well said: ”And of the nations there is no man with me,” because those for whom he had come to suffer ought to have been partakers of his passion, and since at that time they had not yet believed, he complains about them in his passion, whose life was being sought in that passion. By the thigh indeed is meant the propagation of flesh. Because therefore through the propagation of the human race, as the orders of generations are described by Matthew or Luke narrating, he came into this world from a virgin, and through the mystery of his incarnation indicated to all nations everywhere that he was King and Lord, he had written on his garment and on his thigh: ”King of kings, and Lord of lords.

For where he became known in the world, there he impressed the knowledge of reading about himself. Therefore his preaching through flesh is like a certain sound from bronze. Let it therefore rightly be said: ”Whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze. There follows: ”And a linen cord in his hand. In the Septuagint translators, a linen cord is not found, but a mason’s cord. If we hold to their translation in this verse for the purpose of exposition, what else do we understand by masons than holy teachers, who, by speaking

spiritual things, assemble living stones, that is, the souls of the elect, for the heavenly building? For whatever the ancient fathers spoke, whatever the prophets, whatever the apostles, whatever the successors of the apostles spoke—what else was it but the arrangement of stones in this construction of the saints that is built daily? Now with a mason's cord, this is customarily done: that the evenness or straightness of the rising wall may be recognized; and if a stone is too far inward, it may be cast outward; if it projects too far outward, it may be called back inward. And certainly the preaching of teachers does this daily: that any soul for whom it is perhaps not expedient to undertake the burdens of governance, even if it desires to appear outwardly, may be called back inward;

and again, one who wishes to remain hidden and care only for itself, if it can be useful to itself and to many, even when it desires to remain hidden, may be brought forth outwardly to appear. And so it happens that the order of holy stones is maintained, since often one wishing to come to honor is repelled, and one fleeing honor is elevated to the height of sacred office. But since, as we have learned through our translator, the Hebrew text does not have "of masons," but "a linen cord in his hand," we ought to expound what is held more certainly among us. Now we know that a linen cord is finer than if cords were made from something else. And what should we understand by the linen cord except the more refined preaching, that is, the spiritual? For the censure of the law was a cord, but it was not linen, because it restrained an uncultivated people not with refined preaching, in which through the sentence of punishment it cut off not sins of thought but of deed. But after the Lord through himself bound even the thoughts of men by preaching, and made known that sin is complete even in the heart, he held a linen cord in his hand. For he says: "You have heard that it was said to those of old: You shall not commit adultery; but I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Therefore the linen cord is the refined preaching that binds the mind of the hearer, lest it dissolve itself even in wretched thought. And it should be noted that it says the cord is in his hand, that is, preaching is in action. For he showed in himself everything that he taught, as it is written: "What Jesus began to do and to teach. And because he also committed to Scripture the very things he said, so that they might be handed down to posterity, it is rightly added: "And a measuring reed in his hand. The Lord promises concerning holy Church through another prophet, saying: "There shall spring up in her the greenness of the reed and the rush. I remember having explained this in another place, that by the reed we should understand writers, and by the rush, hearers. But since both rush and reed are accustomed to grow near the moisture of water, and both spring forth from one and the same water, and the reed indeed is taken up for writing, while with the rush one cannot write, what should we understand by the rush and the reed, except that there is one doctrine of truth which irrigates many hearers? But some who are irrigated advance in the word of God even to the point that they also become writers, that is, like reeds; but others hear the word of life, maintain the greenness of good hope and right works, yet cannot advance to writing at all.

What are these in the water of God except certain rushes, so to speak? They indeed advance by growing green, but they cannot express letters at all. Our Redeemer, therefore, because He granted that the words which He spoke should also be written through the zeal of teachers, held a reed in His hand. This reed is called a reed of measure, because the very zeal of teachers is held under a certain dispensation of hidden judgment, so that it may benefit some who read, and may not be able to benefit others who read. Hence the holy apostles, when they asked the master of truth speaking to them more openly why He spoke to the crowds in parables, heard: ”Because it is given to you to know the mystery of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not. Or certainly it is a reed of measure, because in that sacred eloquence of His which has been written for us, we recognize that there are hidden dispensations of His. For through His incomprehensible judgment, one is sent within the measure of the elect, and another is left outside, so that he may in no way deserve to belong to the number of the elect. He has therefore a measuring cord, He has in His hand a reed of measure. For he who measures a place with a cord draws the cord to one spot, withdraws it from another, and leads here what he removes from elsewhere.

Thus indeed, thus does our Redeemer act in the gathering of men, while He leads some out from their iniquities, and leaves others in their iniquity. For in those whom He has deigned to gather, He drew the cord of hidden measure, and from those whom He judged should be abandoned, what else did He do but withdraw the cord? So that the good may be held within the measure of the heavenly building, and the evil may remain outside the building, in whom the good things that are supposed are not, as if without measure. Our Redeemer held this cord and measuring reed in His hand when He deigned to admonish the apostle Paul through a man of Macedonia appearing to him, so that this same Macedonian man said: ”Come over and help us. And yet when the apostles wished to go into Asia to preach, the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them. What does it mean that the holy apostles are both called to go where perhaps they had not thought to proceed, and are forbidden to go where they desired to proceed, except that the cord of hidden judgment and the measuring reed is held in the hand, so that some may hear the words of life, while others may by no means deserve to hear? Therefore there is a cord of measure, which was drawn to one place and withdrawn from another. We have also learned from the testimony of the Holy Gospel that one came who said:

”Master, I will follow You wherever You go. To whom the answer was given: ”Foxes have dens, and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. Another came who said: ”Master, let me first go and bury my father. To whom it is said: ”Let the dead bury their dead, but you follow Me and proclaim the kingdom of God. What does it mean that the one who promises to go is abandoned, while the other who wishes to return home is nevertheless commanded to follow? The former is not received, the latter is not released from service even for a moment. Therefore, by the internal dispensation of hidden judgment, the measuring line and the measuring rod are drawn out, by which this one is drawn in and that one is left behind, so that the heavenly structure may be built not without a devout and just examination. The measuring rod can also be understood as

Sacred Scripture for this reason: that whoever reads it measures himself in it—either how much he advances in spiritual virtue, or how far removed he remains from the good things that are commanded; how much he now rises up to do good, how much he still lies prostrate in wicked deeds. There follows: And he stood in the gate. Whoever stands in a doorway is partly inside and partly outside, because one part of him is seen outside while another part is hidden within.

And so our Redeemer, mercifully incarnate for us, stood as if in a doorway before human eyes, because through his humanity he appeared visible, yet kept himself invisible in his divinity. Hence the Jews, who had awaited him according to the promise of the prophets, were troubled by the confusion of their own faithlessness, because they saw as mortal the one whom they had believed would come for their deliverance. Therefore he who stands in a doorway, as was said above, is seen partly outside and partly inside. Hence even the faithlessness of the Jews was not left without a display of divine power. For seeing his miracles, they were drawn to believe, but then again, weighing his sufferings, they disdained to believe that he was God whom they saw mortal in the flesh; whence it came about that they doubted in their knowledge of him. For they saw him hungering, thirsting, eating, drinking, growing weary, sleeping, and they supposed him to be merely a man. They saw him raising the dead, cleansing lepers, giving sight to the blind, casting out demons, and they perceived him to be more than human. But his humanity, considered in their hearts, disturbed their understanding of his miracles. Hence holy Church, in the voice of the bride, desiring now to see him openly, says: ”Behold, he stands behind our wall.

For he who showed to human eyes what he assumed from mortal nature, and remained invisible in himself, stood as if behind a wall for those seeking to see him, because he did not offer himself to be seen with his majesty revealed. For he stood as if behind a wall, who showed the human nature which he assumed but hid the divine nature from human eyes. Hence it is added there: ”Looking through the windows, gazing through the lattices. For whoever looks through windows or through lattices is neither entirely hidden nor entirely seen. Just so, indeed, our Redeemer appeared before the eyes of doubters, because if while working miracles he had suffered nothing as a man, he would have appeared fully to them as God; and again, suffering human things, if he had done nothing as God, he would have been thought merely a man. But because he both did divine things and suffered human things, he looked out to humanity as through windows or lattices, so that as God he would both appear through miracles and be hidden through sufferings, and as man he would be perceived through sufferings, yet be recognized as more than man through miracles. But since this man is said to stand in the doorway, we must ask whether his face was toward the inside and his back toward the outside. In this matter, if we consider what precedes and what follows, we quickly discover how he stood. For first it says:

”There was something like a building of a city facing toward the south, and he led me there. And a little later it is added about this same man: ”And he was standing in the doorway. And immediately it is added: ”And the same man spoke to me. For he who spoke to the

prophet when he was introduced into the building, standing in the gate, certainly stood with his face inward and his back outward. But the prophet who was introduced, to whom the man standing in the gate spoke, without doubt held his face toward the gate, from where he heard the words of the speaker. What does it mean, then, that the man looks inward while the prophet looks outward? What does it mean that the face of that same man is toward the building, but the eyes of the prophet are toward the gate, except that the Only-begotten of the Father became incarnate for this reason: that he might introduce us into the spiritual building, that is, into faith in the holy Church? His eyes always look upon his building, because they unceasingly observe how much each person advances in virtues. But the prophet looks toward the gate, because he who hears the words of God must always place the eyes of his heart upon his departure, and meditate without ceasing on when he will leave this present life and reach eternal joys. For God became incarnate for this very reason:

that he might introduce us to faith and lead us back to the sight of his vision. Hence also in the holy Gospel, Truth speaks, saying: ”If anyone enters through me, he will be saved, and will go in and go out, and will find pasture. He will go in, namely, to faith; he will go out to sight; and he will find pasture in eternal satisfaction. Hence also the Psalmist says: ”May the Lord guard your entrance and your departure. For the Lord guards the entrance of each soul, by which it enters into faith, and also the departure by which it goes out to sight, so that neither when entering the Church is it tripped up by errors, nor when departing from this temporal life to the eternal is it snatched away by the ancient enemy. Concerning this departure of ours, which we ought to meditate upon daily in our mind, the Apostle speaks of our Redeemer, saying: ”That he might sanctify the people through his own blood, he suffered outside the gate. Let us therefore go out to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach. For we do not have here a lasting city, but we seek the one to come.

The man who appeared, therefore, stood in the gate and spoke in this way, because the Mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus, even in the very time of his passion gave precepts of life to his disciples, so that those who believe in him might always look toward the gate, and, weighing his passion with careful consideration, might not turn the eyes of their heart away from their own departure. We also, when we have already begun to despise the confines of the flesh, to pass through the straits of our mortality through the desire for immortality, to reach toward the freedom of the supernal light, to yearn for the joys of the heavenly homeland—we hold our eyes toward the gate, because while we desire to pass from temporal sacraments to eternal ones, we have, as it were, already turned our backs on the present life, and we have the face of our heart fixed on the desire of our departure. For it is written: ”The body that is corrupted weighs down the soul, and the earthly dwelling oppresses the mind thinking many things. Thus, therefore, through contemplation we already stretch the mind beyond the straits of the flesh; yet we are still held within the gate by that very carnal constraint in the sacraments which we have come to know. For often the mind is so suspended in divine contemplation that it now rejoices to perceive something of that eternal liberty which eye has not seen nor ear heard, through a certain image;

yet nevertheless, struck back by the weight of its mortality, it slips back to the depths, and is held bound by certain chains of its punishment. Therefore he strains toward the gates who beholds the joys of his true liberty, and now desires to go out, but is not yet able. Hence it is that the Hebrew people, freed from the servitude of Egypt, when they beheld the pillar of cloud as God spoke, each one stood at the doors of his tabernacle and worshiped. Of whom it is said a little earlier: "When Moses went out to the tabernacle, all the people rose up, and each one stood at the door of his tent. For we stand there where we fix the eyes of our mind. Whence Elijah says: "The Lord lives, in whose sight I stand. He surely stood there where he had fixed his heart. But what is it for the people to gaze upon the pillar of cloud and to stand at the doors of their tabernacle and worship, except that when the human mind somehow beholds those higher and heavenly things in an enigma, it now exits the enclosures of its bodily habitation through uplifted thought, and humbly adores him whose substance it cannot see, yet now marvels at his power through the illumination of the spirit?

And when Moses enters the tabernacle, the people gaze upon his back, and stand at the doors of their tents, because when any holy preacher speaks lofty things about God, he somehow enters the tabernacle of the heavenly dwelling. Though the weak cannot fully weigh the power of his preaching, nevertheless they gaze upon his back as it were, because they follow through understanding the last things they are able to grasp. But even in those very small things which they are able to comprehend, they now go out from their tents as it were, and stand at the doors, because they strive both to leave the dwellings of the flesh and to advance toward those joys of eternal life which they hear. Hence also Elijah, when he heard the voice of the Lord speaking with him, is described as having stood at the door of his cave and veiled his face, because when through the grace of contemplation the voice of heavenly understanding comes into the mind, the whole man is no longer within the cave, because care of the flesh does not possess his soul, but he stands at the door, because he meditates on escaping the straits of mortality.

But now he who stands in the entrance of the cave and perceives the words of God in the ear of his heart must cover his face, because while we are led through heavenly grace to understand higher things, the more subtly we are raised up, the more we must always press ourselves down through humility in our understanding, lest we strive to be wiser than we ought to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety; lest while we examine invisible things too much, we go astray; lest in that incorporeal nature we seek something of corporeal light. For to extend the ear and cover the face is to hear the voice of the inner substance through the mind, and yet to turn away the eyes of the heart from every corporeal form, lest the soul fashion for itself anything corporeal in that which is everywhere whole and everywhere uncircumscribed. Therefore, dearest brothers, we who have already learned of eternal joys through the death and resurrection of our Redeemer, and his ascension into heaven, we who know that our fellow citizens the angels appeared outwardly in testimony of his divinity, let us long for the King, let us desire the citizens whom we have come to know, and standing in this edifice of holy Church let us keep our eyes on the door; let us turn our back of the mind

to this corruption of temporal life, let us direct the face of our heart toward the freedom of the heavenly homeland.

But behold, there are still many things that press upon us from the care of corruptible life. Therefore, since we cannot go out perfectly, let us at least stand in the entrance of our cave, destined to go forth prosperously someday through the grace of our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY II.

Let no one perhaps reproach me in silent thought because I presume to discuss such profound mysteries of the prophet Ezekiel, unattempted by great expositors; let them recognize with what mind I do this. For I undertake this not with rashness but with humility. For I know that very often many things in sacred Scripture which I was unable to understand alone, I understood when placed before my brethren. From which understanding I have also studied to understand this as well, so that I might know by whose merit understanding was given to me. For it is clear that this is given to me on account of those in whose presence it is given to me. From this matter, by God's generosity, it happens that both understanding grows and pride decreases, since I learn for your sake what I teach among you, because (I confess truly) very often I hear with you what I say. Whatever therefore I shall understand less in this prophet is due to my blindness; if indeed I shall be able to understand anything fittingly, it is from the divine gift of your veneration. Often however through the grace of the almighty Lord certain things in His Scripture are understood better when the word of God is read more privately, and the soul, conscious of its faults, when it recognizes what it has heard, strikes itself with the dart of grief and pierces itself through with the sword of compunction, so that nothing pleases it except to weep, and to wash away stains with flowing tears.

Among which things sometimes it is also snatched up to contemplate higher things, and is tortured with sweet weeping in desire for them. The soul grieves to be here, where it still lies prostrate through weakness, and to not yet be there where, illuminated, it might vigorously flourish, and no longer bring back the eye of the mind to the darkness of mortality. Hence therefore, hence ardor is born in the mind, grief arises from ardor. And because it is not yet able to cling to heavenly things, wearied by its fervor it rests in tears. But it is one thing when the matter concerns the progress of one person, another when it concerns the edification of many. Therefore those things are to be brought forth in the discourse of teaching, by God's generosity, which compose the life and conduct of the hearers. Now therefore let us pursue, as we have begun, whatever edifies us toward the zeal of good works in the words of the prophet. Son of man, see with your eyes, and hear with your ears. Brought to the testimony of spiritual things, what is it that when it is said: "See with eyes," "your" is added, and when it is subjoined "Hear with ears," "your" is added? But it should be known that the eyes and ears of the body are present even to carnal men, and are in use for them for things that are seen corporeally.

But the eyes and ears of the heart belong only to spiritual men, who see invisible things through the intellect, and hear the praise of God without sound. The almighty Lord was seeking these ears when He said: ”He who has ears to hear, let him hear. For who in that people could there have been then who did not have ears of the body? But when it is said: ”He who has ears to hear, let him hear,” it is openly shown that He was seeking those ears which not all could have. Let it be said therefore: ”Son of man, see with your eyes, and hear with your ears. Now in the earlier part of our expositions we have already said why the prophet, as often as he is led to see spiritual things, is called son of man. But lest this should slip from mind, I briefly repeat that by this appellation he is always reminded what he is from weakness, lest he be lifted up by the greatness of contemplation. And it should be noted that it is distinctive that he is told, ”See with your eyes, hear with your ears,” and yet is called son of man. But through these words what else is openly said to him, except: behold spiritual things spiritually, and yet remember your carnal weaknesses? Hence it is also that often one who is more caught up in contemplation happens to be more wearied in temptation;

as is wont to happen frequently to certain ones who are making good progress, whose mind, while either compunction affects it or contemplation carries it above itself, temptation also immediately follows, lest it be exalted on account of those things to which it was carried. For by compunction or contemplation it is raised up to God, but by the weight of its temptation it is beaten back to itself, so that temptation may burden it lest contemplation puff it up; and likewise contemplation may elevate it lest temptation plunge it down. For if contemplation were to lift it up in such a way that temptation were utterly absent, the soul would fall into pride. And if temptation were to press down in such a way that contemplation did not elevate, it would slide fully into fault. But by a wondrous dispensation, the soul is balanced in a certain middle state, so that it neither grows proud in good things nor falls in evil things. Whence also it is said of the Lord through blessed Job: ”And he weighs out the waters by measure. For to weigh out the waters by measure for God is to guard the perception of souls in humility between prosperity and adversity, between gifts and temptations, between the highest and lowest things. Thus Elijah had brought down fire from heaven, had bound up the waters from heaven, and yet terrified by the fear of one woman, he was fleeing through the wilderness.

An angel appears to him as he flees, offers him food, foretells that a long journey remains, and yet does not shake the fear from his heart, because in the prophet’s mind that weakness of fear was a great guardian of fortitude. There follows: ”Set your heart upon all that I shall show you, for you have been brought here so that they might be shown to you. Announce all that you see to the house of Israel. Set your heart upon it. As if it were said: Consider. Because you have been brought here that these things may be shown to you, and declare all that you see. That is, you have been brought here in order to see, and you see in order to declare, because whoever advances by seeing spiritual things, must also offer them to others by speaking. Indeed, he sees in order to declare, who in that wherein he himself advances also takes care to preach for the advancement of his neighbor. Hence it is also written

elsewhere: Let him who hears say: Come. For he in whose heart the voice of God calling has already become effective, must necessarily break forth in voice to his neighbors through the office of preaching; and therefore he calls another, because he himself has already been called. Hence also the bridegroom speaks in the Song of Songs, saying: You who dwell in the gardens, friends are listening, make me hear your voice.

For the holy Church dwells in gardens, each soul dwells in gardens, which is already filled with the greenness of hope and the charity of good works. Indeed, the hope of this world is dry, because all things that are loved here wither with haste; and the apostle Peter urges us to hasten, saying: To an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, unfading. She therefore who already dwells in the gardens must make her bridegroom hear her voice, that is, send forth the song of good preaching, in which he whom she desires may delight, because friends are listening, namely all the elect, who, that they may be revived to the heavenly homeland, desire to hear the words of life. But now let the prophet open to us the things he sees. There follows: And behold a wall outside round about the house on every side. Generally in sacred Scripture the incarnate Lord Himself is accustomed to be called a wall from the protection of His defense, just as it is said of holy Church through the prophet: "A wall and a rampart shall be set in her. For He Himself is a wall to us, who surrounds us by guarding us on every side. But the rampart of our wall were all the prophets, who before the Lord appeared in the flesh were sent to build up faith by prophesying.

In holy Church, therefore, the Lord is set as a wall to us and His prophets as a rampart, because to us whom He Himself perfectly protects, the words of the prophets also came for the building up of faith. Whence also the wall is rightly placed first, and the rampart afterward, because we who were called from the Gentiles would by no means have received the sayings of His prophets unless we had first come to know the Lord. And it should be noted that this wall of the spiritual building is said to be on the outside. For a wall that is built for the fortification of a building is customarily placed not on the inside but on the outside. What need was there, then, to say "on the outside," since a wall is never customarily placed on the inside? Because it is necessary that being placed on the outside it defend those things which are within. But in this word what is openly demonstrated except the Lord's incarnation itself? For God is a wall to us within, but God made man is a wall to us without. Whence it is said to Him through a certain prophet: "You went forth for the salvation of Your people, to save Your anointed ones. For this incarnate wall, namely the Lord, would not be a wall to us if He had not been on the outside, because He would not protect us within if He did not appear outwardly.

But neither should this be carelessly passed over, that this same wall is said to be placed around the house on every side. For the house of God is not only the holy angels, of whom the Psalmist says: "Lord, I have loved the beauty of Your house, and the place of the tabernacle of Your glory," but we also are His house, whose minds He deigns to inhabit. And this wall is on every side around the house, because the Only-begotten of the Father, who is the strength of the angels above, He Himself became below the redemption of men. To them He

is strength lest they fall, to us He is help that we may rise after the fall. But if by the house of God in this place only the multitude of redeemed men is signified, the Lord is our wall on every side and all around, because, in order to guard us perfectly, He demonstrated all things that He taught, as it is written: ”What Jesus began to do and to teach. For since He came to call us to the heavenly fatherland, He surely taught us to despise transitory goods and not to fear temporal evils. Hence He did not disdain reproaches, He endured injuries, He did not fear death, He did not flee from the gibbet of the cross; and when they wished to seize Him and make Him king, He immediately fled;

what else was He indicating to us by these examples, except that we ought not to fear the adversities of this world, and to avoid its prosperities? Because its goods usually occupy the mind more than its evils disturb it. Indeed, before His passion He heard insults, yet did not return insults; He silently endured His betrayer for a long time, and did not refuse to give a kiss to him who greeted Him deceitfully; He accepted death, so that we would not fear to die; He showed forth the resurrection, so that we might believe that we can rise again. After His passion also, He called to the grace of faith those who had crucified Him, He returned a gift for iniquity. Therefore He who instructed us by His own example concerning all things has become a wall for us all around and on every side. There follows: ”And in the man’s hand was a measuring reed of six cubits and a handbreadth. In the previous reading we already said that Sacred Scripture is signified by the reed. This reed is said to be for measuring, because in it we measure every action of our life, so that we may see either how much we are progressing, or how far distant we are from progress. For often when doing something, we believe ourselves to be of a certain merit; but when we return to the words of God, we hear the lofty precepts, and there we recognize how far short we fall of perfection.

Therefore the reed is for measuring, because through the hands of those who write, the life of those who hear is measured. This reed is said to be in the hand of the man, either because sacred eloquence is in the power of the Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, or certainly because what He willed to be written He fulfilled by His working. Moreover this same reed is described as being six cubits and a handbreadth. For there are two lives in which almighty God instructs us through sacred eloquence, namely the active and the contemplative. And by the six cubits what else is expressed but the active life? Because on the sixth day God completed all His works. But the handbreadth, which is said to be beyond the six cubits, is already of the seventh, yet is not a cubit. Therefore the active life is signified by the six cubits, the contemplative by the handbreadth, because we complete the former by work, but of the latter even when we strive, we are scarcely able to attain some small part. The active life is to give bread to the hungry, to teach the word of wisdom to the ignorant, to correct the erring, to recall a proud neighbor to the path of humility, to care for the sick, to dispense what is expedient for each individual, and to provide for those entrusted to us how they may subsist.

But the contemplative life is to retain the love of God and neighbor with the whole mind, yet to rest from outward action, to cling only to the desire of the Creator, so that nothing is

now pleasing to do, but, with all cares trampled underfoot, the soul burns to see the face of its Creator; so that it now knows how to bear the weight of corruptible flesh with sorrow, and with all desires longs to be present among those hymn-singing choirs of angels, to be mingled with the heavenly citizens, to rejoice in eternal incorruption in the sight of God. In the palm, therefore, the hand and fingers are extended. But only a small part of the cubit's measure is touched by the palm, because however great the love with which the soul burns, however great the strength with which it stretches itself toward God in thought, it does not yet perfectly see what it loves, but still only begins to see what it loves, because as the most mighty preacher says: We see now through a mirror in an enigma, but then face to face. And, Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known. From the seventh cubit, therefore, we touch only a palm, because while placed in this life we taste only the beginnings of intimate contemplation. For since the active life can be held perfectly, and man was created on the sixth day, who ought to do good works, the measuring rod has six cubits.

These two women have aptly signified both lives, namely Martha and Mary: one of whom was busy about frequent service, while the other sat at the Lord's feet and listened to the words from his mouth. And when Martha complained against her sister that she neglected to help her, the Lord answered, saying: Martha, you are occupied and busy about many things; but one thing is necessary. Mary, however, has chosen the best part, which shall not be taken from her. Behold, Martha's part is not reproved, but Mary's is praised. For he does not say that Mary chose a good part, but the best, so that Martha's part also might be indicated as good. And why Mary's part is best is added when it is said: Which shall not be taken from her. For the active life fails with the body. For who in the eternal homeland will offer bread to the hungry, where no one hungers? Who will give drink to the thirsty, where no one thirsts? Who will bury the dead, where no one dies? Therefore, with the present age the active life is taken away, but the contemplative begins here to be perfected in the heavenly homeland, because the fire of love which begins to burn here, when it sees him whom it loves, will blaze more greatly in love of him. The contemplative life, therefore, is by no means taken away, because when the light of the present age is withdrawn, it is perfected.

These two lives, as has also been said before us, the two wives of blessed Jacob signified, namely Leah and Rachel. For Leah is interpreted as "laborious," but Rachel as "sheep" or "the beginning of vision. The active life indeed is laborious, because it sweats in work; but the contemplative life, simple, yearns only to see the beginning, namely Him who says: "I am the beginning, wherefore I also speak to you. Now blessed Jacob had desired Rachel, but in the night he received Leah, because indeed everyone who is converted to the Lord desires the contemplative life, longs for the rest of the eternal homeland; but first it is necessary that in the night of the present life he work the good things he can, that he sweat in labor, that is, that he receive Leah, so that afterward he may rest in the embraces of Rachel to see the beginning. Now Rachel was seeing, but barren; but Leah was blear-eyed, yet fruitful; Rachel was beautiful and unfruitful, because the contemplative life is beautiful in the soul,

but while it desires to rest in silence, it does not beget children through preaching. It sees and does not give birth, because while it loves the pursuit of its own quiet, it kindles itself less in the gathering of others; and however much it perceives inwardly, it does not suffice to open this to others by preaching.

But Leah is blear-eyed and fruitful, because the active life, while it is occupied in work, sees less, but while it kindles neighbors to imitation of itself now through word, now through example, it begets many children in good work. And if it cannot stretch the mind in contemplation, yet from what it does outwardly, it is able to beget followers. Rightly therefore in the measure of the rod six cubits are said first, and afterward a handbreadth, because the active life is carried out first, so that one may come afterward to the contemplative. But it must be known that just as the good order of living is to advance from the active life to the contemplative, so very often the mind is usefully turned back from the contemplative to the active, so that through what the contemplative life has kindled in the mind, the active life may be held more perfectly. Therefore the active life ought to transfer us to the contemplative, and yet sometimes the contemplative life ought to call us back better to the active from what we have beheld inwardly with the mind. Hence the same Jacob, after the embraces of Rachel, returned to Leah, because even after seeing the Beginning, the laborious life of good work must not be utterly abandoned.

There is, moreover, in the contemplative life a great straining of the mind, when it raises itself toward heavenly things, when it directs its attention to spiritual realities, when it strives to transcend everything that is seen corporally, when it narrows itself in order to be enlarged. And indeed sometimes it prevails, and overcomes the resisting darkness of its own blindness, so that it touches something of the uncircumscribed light, furtively and faintly; but nevertheless, immediately repelled, it returns to itself, and from that light to which it passed over by breathing in, it returns by sighing to the darkness of its blindness. Sacred history designates this well, which narrates that blessed Jacob wrestled with an angel. For when he was returning to his own parents, he found an angel on the way, with whom he had a great contest in wrestling. For he who contends in wrestling sometimes finds himself superior, but sometimes finds the one with whom he has contended inferior. The angel therefore designates the Lord, and Jacob who contended with the angel expresses the soul of any perfect man established in contemplation. Which soul indeed, when it strives to contemplate God, as if placed in a certain contest, now as it were prevails, because by understanding and perceiving it tastes something of the uncircumscribed light; but now it yields, because even in tasting it fails again. The angel is therefore as it were conquered when God is apprehended by the innermost understanding.

But it should be noted that the same angel, being conquered, touched the sinew of Jacob's thigh and immediately made it wither, and from that time Jacob limped on one foot, because indeed when almighty God is now known through desire and understanding, He dries up all fleshly pleasure in us. And we who before seemed to seek God and hold onto the world, as if leaning on two feet, after the knowledge of God's sweetness one foot in us remains sound

and the other limps, because it is necessary that, with love of the world weakened, the love of God alone may grow strong in us. If therefore we hold the angel, we limp on one foot, because while the strength of inward love grows in us, the strength of the flesh is without doubt weakened. For everyone who limps on one foot leans only on that foot which he has sound, because whoever has had earthly desire already dried up sustains himself with all his strength on the sole foot of the love of God. And he stands on that one, because the foot of worldly love which he was accustomed to place on the earth, he now carries suspended from the earth. And therefore if we return to our own parents, that is, to our spiritual fathers, let us hold the angel on the way, that we may apprehend God with inward sweetness.

For the lovable sweetness of the contemplative life is very great, which snatches the soul above itself, opens heavenly things, shows that earthly things ought to be despised, and reveals spiritual things to the eyes of the mind while hiding corporeal things. Whence the Church well says in the Song of Songs: I sleep, and my heart watches. For she sleeps with a watching heart, because through that which she advances inwardly by contemplating, she rests from restless outward work. But amid these things it must be known that as long as one lives in this mortal flesh, no one advances so far in the power of contemplation that he may fix the eyes of his mind upon that very uncircumscribed ray of light. For Almighty God is not yet beheld in His brightness, but the soul gazes upon something beneath it, whereby being refreshed it may advance, and afterward attain to the glory of beholding Him. For thus Isaiah, when he confessed that he had seen the Lord, saying: "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up," immediately added: "And the things that were under Him filled the temple. When king Uzziah, proud and presumptuous, dies, the Lord is seen, because when the exaltation of this world is slain from the desire of the mind, then the mind itself contemplates the glory of God. And it should be noted that the Lord sits upon a throne high and lifted up.

For what is His throne, except the angelic or human creature, over which He presides through the understanding He gave? Which throne indeed is called high and lifted up, because both human nature advances, being raised to heavenly glory, and the angelic creature, since when many spirits were falling it was already made firm in heaven lest it fall, was lifted up from the same source whence it was also confirmed. But His temple is the same as His throne, because the eternal King dwells where He sits. We therefore are His temple, in whose minds He deigns to dwell. But the things that were under Him filled the temple, because whatever is now beheld of Him is not yet Himself, but is beneath Him. Thus Jacob saw an angel, and confesses that he saw the Lord, because when we behold His ministers, it is already much that we are raised above ourselves. But it should be noted that it says: "They filled the temple," since even if an angel appears, he satisfies the desire of a weak mind, so that if it cannot yet see something greater, it may nevertheless already wonder at the lesser thing it sees. Therefore the things that are under Him fill the temple, because, as has been said, even when the mind has advanced in contemplation, it does not yet contemplate what He Himself is, but that which is beneath Him. In which contemplation indeed a taste of inner rest is touched.

Because this is as it were a certain part, and cannot now be perfect, it is rightly written in the Apocalypse: ”There was silence in heaven, as it were for half an hour. For heaven is the soul of the just, as the Lord says through the prophet: ”Heaven is My throne. And, ”The heavens declare the glory of God. Therefore when the rest of the contemplative life is carried on in the mind, there is silence in heaven, because the tumult of earthly activities is quieted from thought, so that the mind may apply its ear to the innermost secret. But because this rest of the mind cannot be perfect in this life, the silence made in heaven is by no means said to be a full hour, but as it were half an hour, so that not even that half hour itself is fully perceived, since ”as it were” is put before it, because as soon as the mind has begun to raise itself up, and to be suffused with the light of innermost rest, when the tumult of thoughts returns more quickly, it is confounded from within itself, and being confounded is blinded. Therefore the contemplative life which is there called as it were half an hour, is called by the prophet Ezekiel not a cubit, but a handbreadth. Behold, dearest brethren, while we desired to express the conditions of each life, we have spoken a little more extensively in digression.

But to good minds, to whom both of these same lives are lovely to pursue, it should not be burdensome to hear. There follows: ”And he measured the breadth of the building, one reed, and the height also one reed. Almighty God, who is neither stretched in great things nor confined in the smallest, speaks of the whole Church at once as if He speaks of one soul. And often what is said by Him of one soul presents no obstacle if it is understood of the whole Church at once. The breadth of the building, therefore, pertains to charity, of which the Psalmist says: ”Your commandment is exceedingly broad. For nothing is broader than to receive all in the embrace of love and to endure no narrow straits of hatred. Indeed, charity is so broad that in the amplitude of its love it can embrace even enemies. Hence it is also commanded: ”Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. We must also consider that breadth extends in equality, while height extends in sublimity. Breadth, therefore, pertains to love of neighbor; height to the understanding of the Creator. But the breadth and height of the building are measured by one reed, because indeed each soul, however broad it may be in love of neighbor, will be equally high in knowledge of God. For while it expands itself alongside through love, it exalts itself above through knowledge; and it becomes as lofty above itself as it extends itself alongside itself in love of neighbor.

And because the building that God inhabits is completed from both angelic and human nature together, through the fact that the angelic creature is above and the human still below, both of these creatures can be signified by the breadth and height of the building, because the latter still dwells in the depths while the former remains in the heights. But both are measured by one reed, because the humility of humans is at some point brought to equality with the angels. Hence it is written: ”They shall neither marry nor be given in marriage, but shall be as the angels of God in heaven. And hence it is said through John: ”The measure of a man, which is of an angel. Because man is brought to that height of glory in which the angels rejoice that they are established. The breadth of the building, therefore, is as great as its height, because all the elect who now labor in the depths will at some point not be unequal to those most blessed spirits. But let us amid these things return to our

mind, and love God and neighbor with all the marrow of our heart. Let us be expanded in the affection of charity, that we may be exalted in the glory of loftiness. Let us suffer with our neighbor through love, that we may be joined to God through knowledge.

Let us condescend to the least of our brothers on earth, that we may be made equal to the angels in heaven, because the man who signifies the Redeemer by his image measured the breadth of the building with one reed, and the height also with one reed. Now therefore He measures conduct, weighs works, considers thoughts, so that afterward He may render recompense without end—Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten of the Father, who lives and reigns with Him in the unity of the Holy Spirit, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY III.

The man is described as having a measuring reed in his hand. He came to the gate that looked toward the way of the East. Who else is signified by the name of this gate, except our Lord and Redeemer himself, who was made for us the door of the heavenly kingdom? As he himself says: No one comes to the Father, except through me. But since we have said that the same man clothed in linen held the figure of the Lord, we must ask by what reasoning it is fitting that the same Lord can be designated both by the man and by the gate, when the man comes to the gate? Does he come to himself? Or is it so, because in the Gospel he himself testifies, saying: He who does not enter by the door into the sheepfold of the sheep, but climbs up another way, that one is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. And a little later he says: I am the door. And again he adds: I am the good shepherd. If therefore the shepherd enters by the door, and he himself is the door, he the shepherd, he without doubt enters through himself. Behold, while we desire to unravel the meaning of Ezekiel, we also bind a question from the Gospel. We must therefore ask how he both enters and enters through himself.

For our Lord and Redeemer, with the holy Church which he redeemed, is one substance according to the flesh, as Paul attests who says: I fill up what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh for his body, which is the Church. Of this head the body is the Church, and of this body the head is Christ. Concerning its head the body, that is the holy Church, exults, when it says through the Psalmist: But now he has exalted my head above my enemies. For because she herself is also to be exalted at some time, she now rejoices that her head is exalted above her enemies in heaven. Therefore when all the elect arrive at life, because his members enter through him to him, he enters through himself to himself. For he himself is in his members who enters, he himself is the head to which the entering members arrive. The prophet Ezekiel suggests this in many ways, who says that the man came to the gate, and shows what that same gate is, saying: Which looked toward the way of the East. For he himself is the way for us, who said: I am the way, the truth and the life. He is also the Eastern way, of whom it is written: Behold the man, the Rising is his name. Therefore the gate looks toward the Eastern way, because it signifies him who made for us the journey to the rising of the light.

The name of gate can also be understood as each preacher, because whoever opens for us the door of the heavenly kingdom by his mouth is a gate. Hence twelve gates are described both in John's Apocalypse and in the final vision of this prophet. The name of gate can also not unsuitably be understood as knowledge of Sacred Scripture, which, while it opens understanding for us, spreads wide the door of the heavenly kingdom. We can also take the name of gate as faith, which we touch first in order to enter the buildings of the virtues. Hence here it is openly added: And he ascended by its steps. For what are the steps of this gate but the merits of virtues? For whether in the knowledge of the Mediator of God and men, the man Jesus Christ, or in the knowledge of divine eloquence, or in that very faith which we have received from Him, we arrive at higher advancements by certain steps. For no one suddenly becomes supreme, but in good conduct everyone begins from the least things in order to arrive at great things. Concerning these steps it is said through the Psalmist: "God shall be known in her steps when He shall receive her. For when the Lord receives holy Church, He is known in her steps, because His glory is declared through her advancements. For as much as holy Church has advanced by ascending, so much does God become known to men from her virtues. Concerning these steps blessed Job also speaks, saying:

"Through each of my steps I will proclaim Him. For he proclaims the Almighty Lord through each of his steps, who through the advancements of virtues which he receives always renders to Him the praise of His loving-kindness. If there were not certain steps in the ascent of the heart, the Psalmist would not say: "They shall walk from virtue to virtue. Nor is it surprising if there are steps from virtue to virtue, since each virtue is increased as if by certain steps, and thus is brought to the highest point through growth in merits. For the beginnings of virtue are one thing, progress another, perfection another. For if faith itself were not led to its perfection by certain steps, the holy apostles would never have said: "Increase our faith. And a certain man came to Jesus who wished his son to be healed, but when asked whether he believed, he answered: "I believe, Lord, help my unbelief. Consider, I ask, what is said. If he believed, why did he speak of unbelief? But if he knew himself to have unbelief, how did he believe? But because through the hidden inspiration of grace faith grows by the steps of its merits, at one and the same time he who had not yet perfectly believed both believed and was unbelieving. The Lord describes these steps under the name of harvest, saying:

"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, while he knows not how. For the earth brings forth fruit of itself: first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the fruit has come forth, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest time has come. A man casts seed into the ground when he plants a good intention in his heart. And after he has cast the seed, he sleeps, because he rests in the hope of good work. But he rises night and day, because he advances through adversity and prosperity. And the seed sprouts and grows while he knows not, because even when he is not yet able to measure his growth, the virtue once conceived is led toward advancement. And the earth brings forth

fruit of itself, because, with grace going before it, the mind of man rises spontaneously to the fruit of good work. But this same earth first produces the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. For to produce the blade is to still have the tenderness of a good beginning. But the blade reaches the ear when the virtue conceived in the soul draws itself forward to the advancement of good work. And it bears full grain in the ear when virtue now advances so greatly that it can become robust and perfect work.

But when the fruit has come forth, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest time has come. For Almighty God, when the fruit has been produced, puts in the sickle and cuts down his harvest, because when he has led each one to perfect works, he cuts short his temporal life by the sentence sent forth, so that he may bring his grain to the heavenly barns. Therefore, when we conceive good desires, we cast seed into the ground. When we begin to do right things, we are the blade. When we grow toward the advancement of good work, we reach the ear. And when we are made firm in the perfection of this same good work, we now bring forth full grain in the ear. The grass, indeed, Peter had been, who, at the time of the Passion, following the Lord through love, feared to confess Him before the voice of a maidservant. For there was already greenness in his mind, because he believed in the Redeemer of all, but still very pliable he was trampled underfoot by fear. He had already risen into an ear of grain when he saw Him whom he had feared to confess as about to die, living in Galilee, as the Angel announced. But then the full grain had come into the ear, when, with the Spirit coming from above and strengthening his mind in love of Him, he was so solidified that, being beaten, he despised the forces of his persecutors and freely preached his Redeemer amid the scourges.

Therefore let no one who is seen to be still in tenderness of mind regarding a good resolution be despised, because the wheat of God begins from grass in order to become grain. The man clothed in linen, therefore, came to the gate, because our Lord and Redeemer is led to Himself through His members entering. And he ascended by its steps, because, as we advance, He is the more exalted to us, the more He is known to be high and incomprehensible. Indeed, in the steps of our virtues He Himself is said to ascend, because He is shown to be all the more sublime to us, the more our mind is separated from the lowest things. There follows: And he measured the threshold of the gate with one reed in width, that is, one threshold with one reed in width. Why, after ”the threshold of the gate” was said, is ”one threshold” immediately added, unless because it openly indicates that another threshold is mentioned still further below? Moreover, the gate rises from the threshold so that it may be a gate. If therefore the Lord is the gate, who is the threshold of this gate except those ancient fathers, from whose lineage the Lord deigned to become incarnate? As is said through Paul: ”Whose are the fathers, from whom is Christ according to the flesh, who is over all things God blessed forever. But it should be noted in this statement of Paul that gods and other men have been called such, as is said to Moses:

”I will make you a god to Pharaoh. And through the Psalmist it is said: ”I said, you are gods. And again: ”God stood in the assembly of gods. But it is one thing to be called God nominally,

another to be called God by nature. And although Moses was made a god to Pharaoh, he is called a god within all things, not God over all things. But he who was incarnate within the Virgin's womb is called God over all things. And so the threshold of the gate are the ancient fathers, from whom he was born who opened for us the entrance to the heavenly kingdom. Moreover, the threshold of the gate is measured by one reed, because those ancient fathers themselves, who were able to proclaim our Redeemer both by prophesying and by living well, had as it were six cubits in the perfection of work and a palm in the beginning of contemplation. For since both perfect work and begun contemplation rendered their life sublime in the unity of faith, the measure of the threshold was in one reed. There follows: "And the chamber one reed in length, and one reed in width. Let us consider what usually happens in a bridal chamber, and from that let us understand what takes place in the holy Church. In the bridal chamber, of course, the bridegroom and bride are joined in covenant and united to each other in love.

What then are the bridal chambers in the holy Church, if not the hearts of those in whom the soul is joined through love to the invisible bridegroom, so that it burns with desire for him, no longer covets the things that are in the world, considers the length of this present life a punishment, hastens to depart, and rests in the embrace of love in the vision of the heavenly bridegroom? The mind, therefore, that is already such receives no consolation from the present life, but sighs from its inmost depths for him whom it loves, burns, pants, is filled with anxiety. The very health of the body becomes worthless to it, because it has been pierced by the wound of love; hence in the Song of Songs it says: I am wounded by love. But it is an evil health of the heart that knows not the pain of this wound. But when it has begun to pant for heavenly desire and to feel the wound of love, the soul becomes healthier from the wound, whereas before it was sick from health. But for the soul that strongly loves her spouse, there is usually one consolation for the delay of this present life: that through the very fact that she herself is deferred from the vision of him, the souls of others may profit by her word and be kindled with the flames of love toward the heavenly spouse. She grieves because she sees herself delayed;

everything she beholds is sad to her, because she does not yet see him whom she longs to see. But as I said, it is no small consolation if, while a fervent soul is delayed, many are gathered through her, so that she may see late with many the one whom she wished to see sooner alone. Hence again the bride says in the Song of Songs: "Stay me with flowers, and surround me with apples, for I languish with love. For what are flowers except souls already beginning a good work and giving forth the fragrance of heavenly desire? What are apples from flowers except the already perfect minds of the good, who arrive at the fruit of good work from the beginning of holy purpose? She who languishes with love therefore seeks to be stayed with flowers and surrounded with apples, because if she is not yet permitted to see him whom she desires, it is a great consolation to her if she may rejoice in the progress of others. Therefore the soul languishing with holy love is stayed with flowers and apples, so that she may find rest in the good work of her neighbor, she who is not yet able to contemplate

the face of God. Let us consider, I ask, what kind of bridal chamber the mind of Paul had been, who said: ”For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

How greatly had he joined himself to almighty God in love, he who reckoned that Christ alone was life to him, and that to die was gain? Hence it is that he says again: ”Having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, which is far better. But behold, you who desire to be dissolved, let us see with what love you languish. Since you perceive that you are being delayed in the meantime, do you not seek, I ask, to be supported with flowers? You do indeed seek this, for it follows: ”Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is necessary for your sake. And to his advancing disciples he says: ”For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glory? Is it not you before our Lord Jesus Christ? Hence it is that the same chamber is said to be measured at one reed in length and one reed in breadth. For length pertains to the longsuffering of expectation, and breadth to the amplitude of charity. Therefore each chamber has as much in length as it could have in breadth, because the mind kindled with heavenly desire exhibits as much longsuffering in waiting for God as it has love for gathering in the neighbor, and patiently bears the delays of length because the amplitude of charity expands itself in the advancement of the neighbor. The length can also designate the longsuffering of patience which is shown to the neighbor.

And because breadth signifies charity, which opens the bosom of the mind and receives both friends and enemies alike into love, the length of the chamber is as great as its breadth, because as broad as the mind has been through love, so patient will it also be through longsuffering. For one bears the neighbor as much as one loves. For if you love, you bear; if you cease to love, you cease to tolerate. For the one whom we love less, we also tolerate less, because, when weariness rushes in, the deeds of the neighbor are more quickly brought into the weight of a burden which the wing of charity does not lighten for us. There follows: And between the chambers, five cubits. He had said one above concerning the bedchamber, and afterwards he relates that there are five cubits between the bedchambers: for the reason evidently that many bedchambers make one, just as many Churches are also called one Church. Hence also in the Apocalypse of John it is written to seven Churches, through which one catholic Church is designated. Therefore those who in the holy Church, as we have said, thirst with fervent love to see God, and are now joined to Him through desire, are called bedchambers. But nevertheless there are in her certain ones who, not being able to penetrate subtle things, and still weighed down by the five bodily senses, love Him who made all things so much less as they are more bound up in those things which have been made.

And indeed they now strive to exercise themselves in the fear of the Lord, and to extend themselves in love of neighbor, to do good works bodily, to redeem sins through almsgiving; but because they do not know how to burn with intimate love toward heavenly desire, they are held as if still bound by bodily senses. Therefore these are not bedchambers, but nevertheless they are contained among the bedchambers, because through the guidance of those who perfectly love the vision of God, they themselves also are directed toward advancement

of mind. Therefore there are five cubits between the bedchambers, because those who from the five exterior senses do not yet rise up to mystical understanding, while they are among those who burn with the spirit of love, as if remaining among the bedchambers they make progress in the construction of faith, and are not separated from the measure of the heavenly building. For they also withdraw themselves somewhat from the appetite of bodily senses, and with the space of the mind enlarged, imitating the charity which they behold, they are extended on this side and that toward the bedchambers. The fact therefore that they are described not by six cubits, but by five, designates their very imperfection still remaining. But nevertheless through good desire they are remembered in the measure of the spiritual edifice, because by the voice of holy Church it is said through the Psalmist: Your eyes saw my imperfection, and in your book all shall be written. Hence again the same Psalmist says:

The Lord has blessed all who fear him, the small with the great. Therefore even if these are imperfect and small, yet insofar as they are able to know, they love both God and neighbor, and therefore do not neglect to do the good works they can. Even if they do not yet advance to spiritual gifts, so as to raise their soul either to perfect action or to fervent contemplation, nevertheless they do not withdraw from the love of God and neighbor, insofar as they are able to grasp in their mind. Whence it happens that they too, though in a lesser place, are nevertheless set in the edification of holy Church, because even if they are perhaps lesser for teaching, for prophecy, for the grace of miracles, for more fully carrying out contempt of the world, nevertheless they are in the foundation of fear and love, in which they are made firm, because even if they do not burn with the fire of heavenly desire, they are animated by the warmth of charity in those outward things which they are able to practice, and are contained among the edifices of their more excellent neighbors. Whence the bride also rightly speaks in the Song of Songs, saying: King Solomon made himself a litter from the woods of Lebanon, its pillars he made of silver, its reclining seat of gold, its ascent of purple, its middle he spread with love on account of the daughters of Jerusalem.

For it should not be believed that Solomon, a king of such greatness, who so abounded in immense riches that the weight of his gold could not be estimated and silver in those days had no value, made himself a wooden litter. But our Solomon is clearly the peaceful one, who made himself a litter from the woods of Lebanon. For the cedar woods of Lebanon are indeed very resistant to decay. The banquet litter of our King, therefore, is the holy Church, which is constructed from strong fathers, that is, from incorruptible minds. It is rightly called a banquet litter because it carries souls daily to the eternal feast of its Creator. Silver columns have been made for this litter, because the preachers of the holy Church shine with the light of eloquence. Moreover, with the silver columns there is a golden reclining place, because through what is spoken luminously by the holy preachers, the minds of the hearers find the splendor of inner brightness in which they may recline. For through what they hear lucidly and openly, they rest in that which shines bright in the heart. Therefore its columns are silver and a golden reclining place has been made, because through the light of the word, brightness of rest is found in the soul. Indeed, that inner splendor illuminates the mind, so

that through contemplation it rests there where the grace of preaching is not sought. For concerning this same holy Church it is written:

"The wings of a dove covered with silver, and the feathers of her back with the gleam of gold. For she who here, filled with the spirit of meekness, has silvered wings like a dove, contains in the feathers of her back the appearance of gold, because here she clothes her preachers with the light of the word; but in the age to come she displays the splendor of brightness in herself. But to that which is shown bright within, what the ascent is like he adds, when he immediately continues concerning the same litter: "A purple ascent. For true purple, because it is dyed with blood, is not undeservedly seen in the color of blood. And because a very great multitude of the faithful in the beginning of the nascent Church came to the kingdom through the blood of martyrdom, our King made a purple ascent in the litter, because to that bright place which is seen within, one arrives through the tribulation of blood. What then shall we miserable ones, destitute of all fortitude, what shall we do? Behold, we cannot be pillars in this litter, because in us neither the fortitude of work nor the light of preaching shines forth. We do not have a golden reclining place, because we do not yet behold, as we ought, through spiritual understanding, the rest of inner clarity. We are not a purple ascent, because we are unable to pour out our blood for our Redeemer. What then is to be done about us?

What hope will there be, if no one reaches the kingdom except one who has been endowed with the highest virtues? But our consolation is also at hand. Let us love God as much as we can, let us love our neighbor also, and at the same time we too belong to God's litter, because as it is written there: "The middle he spread with love. For have love, and you will without doubt arrive there where the silver pillars are raised up and the purple ascent is held. For that this is said on account of our weakness is openly shown, when it immediately adds there: "For the daughters of Jerusalem. For the word of God, which says not sons but daughters, what else did it signify through the female sex than the weakness of minds? Therefore, that which is said there—that love is in the middle among the silver pillars, the golden reclining place, and the purple ascent for the sake of the daughters of Jerusalem—this is designated here among the chambers by the five cubits, because even those who are weak in virtues, if they do not neglect to do the good things they can with love, are not strangers to the building of God. There follows: "And the threshold of the gate next to the vestibule of the gate on the inside, one reed. While the threshold which is now described is mentioned to be inside next to the vestibule of the gate, it is openly shown that the threshold which was described before was outside.

But if the gate is the Lord, let us inquire what the threshold of the gate inside and outside might be. For through the threshold everyone enters the gate. And what are these two thresholds, except the fathers of the Old Testament and the fathers of the New Testament? For not only those from whom the Lord deigned to become incarnate, but all the fathers of the Old Testament were the threshold of this gate, because those who merited to foretell Him and to hope in Him opened the entrance of faith to all coming to Him; and all who

believed in the Lord through these, as it were, already entered the gate of this threshold. But why is it called before the outer threshold and after the inner threshold, except because first were the fathers of the Old Testament, and afterward the teachers of the New Testament? Rightly, moreover, the outer threshold designates the fathers of the Old Testament, because through their preaching perverse works were punished. But through the sayings of the new fathers, the mind of each person is restrained even from illicit thoughts, while guilt is shown to be complete even in the deliberation of the heart. For those took care to prohibit the souls of their hearers from shameful acts, from cruelties, from robberies; but these, since they cut off not only perverse works but also illicit thoughts, what else have they become for us except an inner threshold? Hence Truth Himself also speaks, saying: ”You have heard that it was said to the ancients:

You shall not kill, and whoever kills will be guilty of judgment. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother without cause will be guilty of judgment. Rightly also the outer threshold designates those fathers who stood at a greater distance through intervals of time from the very incarnation of our Redeemer. And indeed from the blood of Abel the passion of the Church already began, and there is one Church of the elect who preceded and who followed. But nevertheless, because it is said to the disciples: ”Many kings and prophets wished to see what you see, and did not see,” for the ancient fathers to have stood as it were outside is not to have seen corporally the presence of our Redeemer. Therefore they were outside, but nevertheless not separated from the holy Church, because in mind, in work, in preaching, they already held these sacraments of faith, they already beheld this loftiness of the holy Church, which we behold not yet by awaiting but already by possessing. For just as we are saved in the past passion of our Redeemer, so they were saved through faith in the same passion to come. Therefore they were outside not beyond the mystery, but beyond the time. Hence also in the construction of the tabernacle, so that the silver columns might stand within, bronze pegs were commanded to be fixed around the outside, by which the tabernacle would be held bound.

Thus silver columns are fixed within, but bronze pegs without, and ropes are tied to these so that the tabernacle might remain fixed, because clearly so that the holy apostles might stand firm in the light of their preaching, so that the whole tabernacle, that is, the holy Church, might stand in the integrity of faith, the fathers of the Old Testament and the prophets were fixed outside like bronze pegs, who would bind the minds of preachers in firmness by the ropes of their words, and would tie this dwelling place of God in the state of faith. Therefore the pegs are outside, those who existed before the time of this holy Church. But nevertheless they bind those who are within it, because while they proclaim the heavenly mysteries to come, they made these things credible to all after they were revealed. Therefore, so that the columns might stand immovable within, the pegs outside hold the ropes, because so that the holy apostles might perfectly believe the mystery of the Lord’s incarnation, the preaching of those prevailed who were able both to see and to foretell this before it happened. Hence rightly also the first of the apostles himself, that great column of the true tabernacle, speaks saying: ”We have the more sure prophetic word, to which you do well to attend, as to a lamp

shining in a dark place. By these words he indicates that although it has risen to higher things from the summit, it persists bound there in faith.

Yet this lamp of the prophetic word indeed shines for those who understand, but still remains covered with the obscurities of allegories for those who do not understand. Hence also through the Psalmist it is said of the same sayings of the prophets: "Dark water in the clouds of the air," because clearly the knowledge is hidden in the prophets. And not undeservedly were the columns made of silver, but the pegs of bronze, because what the apostles now preach clearly, the prophets spoke obscurely under mystical understanding. Rightly therefore they were signified by the metal of bronze, who were not clear in their preaching. But the holy apostles, because they had the light of preaching concerning the mystery of our Redeemer, were represented by silver columns. And it should be noted that silver both sounds and shines, but bronze sounds and does not shine, because the preachers of the New Testament spoke openly what they were also able to show. But the preachers of the Old Testament, because they brought forth obscure sayings about the heavenly mystery through the shadows of allegories, gave forth sound as it were without light. Therefore what is designated there by pegs and columns is designated here by the outer threshold and the inner threshold. But if in this place we understand the gate to mean Holy Scripture, it too has two thresholds, an outer and an inner, because it is divided into the literal sense and the allegorical. The outer threshold of Holy Scripture is indeed the letter;

but its inner threshold is allegory. For since we proceed through the letter to allegory, we come as it were from the threshold which is outer to that which is inner. And there are very many things in it which so edify the mind according to the letter that through what is outwardly treated, the mind of the hearer is drawn inward. For there we find the precepts of work from the examples of virtue; there it is commanded what we ought to do even bodily; there what is prescribed for doing is shown in the action of holy and brave men, so that after the clearer precepts and examples of the just instruct us for good work, then we may direct the foot of the mind, if we can, to the inner threshold, that is, to the mystical understanding of intimate contemplation. Strive, I beseech you, dearest brothers, to meditate on the words of God; do not despise the writings of our Redeemer which have been sent to us. It is of very great value that through them the soul is rekindled to warmth, lest it grow numb from the cold of its iniquity. When we learn that the righteous who came before us acted bravely, we ourselves are girded for the strength of good work, and the soul of the reader is set aflame by the flame of holy examples. He sees what brave deeds were done by them, and is greatly indignant with himself because he does not imitate such things.

Hence it is rightly said in the voice of the bridegroom to the bride in the Song of Songs: "Your neck is like the tower of David, which was built with its battlements. A thousand shields hang from it, all the armor of the mighty. For in the neck is the throat, and in the throat is the voice. What therefore is designated by the neck of holy Church, if not her sacred utterances? When a thousand shields are mentioned as hanging upon it, by this perfect number the universal number is shown, because all our protection is contained in sacred

utterance. For there are the commandments of God, there the examples of the righteous. For if the soul grows sluggish from desire for its Creator, let it hear what is said: ”You shall love the Lord your God with all your mind, and with all your strength. Perhaps one slips into hatred of neighbor? Let him hear what is said: ”You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Does he covet another’s possessions? Let him hear what is written there: ”You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods. Is the mind kindled to anger over an injury inflicted by a neighbor’s word or deed? Let him hear what is said: ”You shall not seek vengeance, nor be mindful of the injury of your fellow citizens. Is a badly wounded mind kindled to lust of the flesh? Lest the eye follow the mind, let him hear what was said a little earlier:

”Whoever looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Does someone perhaps dispose his soul to relax into hatred against an enemy? Let him hear what is written there: ”Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. But he who no longer seizes another’s goods, does he perhaps still retain his own in a disordered way? Let him hear what is said there: ”Sell what you possess, and give alms. Does a weak soul desire to enjoy both God and the world at the same time? Let him hear what is written there: ”No one can serve two masters. Does another retain his possessions not for the necessity of sustenance, but according to the will of desire? Let him hear what is said there: ”Whoever does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple. For some leave all things, but many even while possessing them renounce them, because they retain their possessions for use in such a way that they do not succumb to them through desire. Does someone wish to be idle, and even when he has the strength, does he flee from undertaking labor for the Lord? Let him hear what is written there: ”He who does not gather with me, scatters.

Therefore in the neck of the Church, that is, in the preaching of sacred utterance, which is said to be like the tower of David because of its protection and height, a thousand shields hang, because however many commandments are there, so many also are the defenses of our heart. To preserve innocence, then, do we hasten to endure in humility even when harmed by our neighbor? Let Abel come before our eyes, who is both written to have been killed by his brother and is not read to have resisted. Is purity of mind chosen even in the conjugal bond? Enoch ought to be imitated, who, though placed in marriage, walked with God and was not found, because God translated him. Do we hasten to place God’s precepts before our present advantage? Let Noah come before our eyes, who, setting aside domestic care, at the command of the almighty Lord, lived occupied for a hundred years in the construction of the ark. Do we strive to undertake the virtue of obedience? We ought to look upon Abraham, who, leaving behind home, kindred, and country, obeyed to go out to the place he was to receive as an inheritance, and went out not knowing where he was going; who stood ready to kill, for the sake of an eternal inheritance, the beloved heir he had received. And because he did not delay to offer his only one to the Lord, he received the whole multitude of nations in his seed. Does simplicity of character please us?

Let Isaac come to mind, whom the tranquility of his life adorned in the eyes of almighty God. Is laborious fortitude sought, that it may be obtained? Let Jacob be brought to memory, who, after he learned to serve a man bravely, was also brought to such virtue that he could not be overcome by the wrestling angel. Do we endeavor to conquer the enticement of the flesh? Let Joseph return to memory, who, when his mistress was tempting him, strove to guard the continence of the flesh even at the peril of his life. Whence it came about that because he knew how to rule his own members well, he was also set over all Egypt to rule. Do we seek to obtain meekness and patience? Let us bring Moses before our eyes, who, ruling six hundred thousand armed men, not counting the little ones and women, is described as being meek above all men who dwelt upon the face of the earth. Are we kindled by zeal for righteousness against vices? Let Phinehas be brought before our eyes, who, piercing with a sword those who were lying together, restored chastity to the people, and being angry, appeased the wrath of God. Do we seek to presume upon the hope of almighty God in doubtful matters? Let us recall Joshua to memory, who, while he undertook doubtful battles with a certain mind, arrived at victory without doubt. Do we now desire to lay aside enmities of the mind and enlarge our soul in benignity?

Let Samuel be brought into thought, who, cast down from leadership by the people, when the same people asked that he pour out prayers to the Lord for them, responded saying: Far be this sin against the Lord from me, that I should cease to pray for you. For the holy man believed he would perpetrate a fault if he did not return the benignity of grace in prayer to those whom he had endured as adversaries even to the point of being cast down. Who again, when, at the Lord's command, he was being sent to anoint David as king, responded: How shall I go? For Saul will find me and kill me. And yet because he knew God was angry with the same Saul, he had afflicted himself with such great mourning that the Lord said to him directly: How long will you mourn for Saul, when I have rejected him? Let us consider, therefore, how great an ardor of charity had inflamed his soul, who both wept for the one by whom he feared to be killed. But do we wish to beware of one whom we fear? We must consider with anxious mind, lest if perhaps we find an opportunity, we render evil for evil to the very one we flee.

Therefore let David return to memory, who both found the king persecuting him so that he could have killed him, and yet, placed in that very power of striking, chose the good that he himself ought to do, not however the evil that the other deserved to suffer, saying: Far be it from me that I should put my hand upon the Lord's anointed. And when the same Saul had afterward been slain by enemies, he wept for the one slain whom he had endured as a persecutor while he lived. Do we determine to speak freely to the erring powers of this world? Let the authority of John be brought back to mind, who, reproving the wickedness of Herod, did not fear to be killed for the rectitude of his word. And because Christ is the truth, he therefore laid down his life for Christ, because for the truth. Do we hasten now to lay down our flesh for God in death? Let Peter come to mind, who rejoices amid scourgings, who resists the rulers though beaten, who despises his life for the sake of life. With the desire for death, do we resolve to despise adversities? Let us bring Paul before our eyes,

who, prepared not only to be bound but also to die for Christ, does not make his life more precious than himself. Do we seek to have our heart kindled with the fire of charity? Let us consider the words of John, whose every utterance breathes with the fire of charity.

Because therefore in the voice of sacred Scripture, while we seek the protection of any virtue we find it, a thousand shields hang from it, all the armor of the mighty. For if we wish to fight against spiritual wickedness, let us seek weapons of protection in the neck of the Church, which has been raised up for us like a tower of David, that is, in the divine Scripture, so that from the discernment of the commandment, the strength of assistance may be taken up against vices. For behold, do we hasten to be strong against the powers of the air? In this tower we find the armor of our mind, so that from there we may take up the commandments of the Creator, from there the examples of those who went before, through which we may be armed invincibly against our adversaries. For when you desire to undertake any virtue, and you see it already fulfilled there by the fathers, there you find your armor, through which you may be fortified against spiritual battles. Indeed a thousand shields hang from it: if anyone desires to fight, let him take it up, and from that virtue let him fortify his breast, and let him send forth the javelins of words. And it should be noted that it is said to be built with its battlements. For battlements serve the same purpose as shields, because both protect the one fighting. But between the two there is this difference: we move a shield wherever we wish for our protection;

but we can defend ourselves with a battlement, yet we cannot move it. A shield is in the hand, for a battlement is not held. What then is the difference between battlements and shields, except that in sacred Scripture we read both the miracles of the preceding fathers and hear of the virtues of their good works? For there we learn that one was able to divide the sea, another to make the sun stand still, another to raise the dead, another to lift up a paralytic by his word, another to heal the sick by his shadow, another to drive away fevers through his handkerchiefs. Yet all these men were gentle with the longsuffering of patience and fervent with zeal for righteousness; rich in the preaching of the word and likewise in the generosity of mercy. Therefore their miracles testify how truly they spoke of God, because they would not have done such things through Him unless they had spoken truly about Him. And their deeds testify how pious, how humble, how kind they were. If therefore we are tempted regarding the faith which we have received from their preaching, let us behold the miracles of those who spoke, and we are confirmed in the faith which we received from them. What then are their miracles if not our battlements? Because we can be protected by them, and yet we do not hold these in the hand of our own choice, for we are not able to do such things.

But a shield is in the hand and defends, because the virtue of patience, the virtue of mercy, with grace going before us, is both within the power of choice and protects from the danger of adversity. Therefore our tower has been built with its battlements, on which a thousand shields hang, because in sacred Scripture we are hidden from the darts of adversity under the miracles of the fathers, and we also hold the defenses of holy conduct in the hand of our

work. But it should be noted that the threshold of the gate is measured by one reed. Now the reed extends to six cubits and a handbreadth, because clearly in sacred Scripture both the teaching of perfect action and the beginning of heavenly contemplation are found. But if by gate in this place each preacher is understood, the outer threshold in the gate is the active life, while the inner threshold is the contemplative life. For through the former one walks in faith, through the latter one hastens toward sight. The former leads outwardly, so that each person ought to live well; the latter leads inwardly, so that from the good life one may attain to eternal joys. Let it suffice that we have treated these matters today.

For since, passing on to other things, we have spoken at length through digression, let us reserve what follows for another reading, hoping to be refreshed through silence in the Word, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY IV.

The man, whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze, measured the vestibule of the gate at eight cubits, and its front at two cubits. And lest we should believe the vestibule to be outside the gate, it is added: But the vestibule of the gate was on the inside. What is signified by the inner vestibule, if not the breadth of eternal life, which is now conceived in the mind through hope amid the narrow constraints of the present life? Of which it is said through the Psalmist: Enter his gates with confession, his courts with hymns of confessions. For when we confess our sins through tears, we enter the gate of the narrow life. But when after these things we are led to eternal life, we enter the courts of our gate with praises of confessions, because there will no longer be any narrowness there, when the joy of perpetual festivity has received us. On account of the narrowness of our confession, the Truth says: Enter through the narrow gate. And when the Psalmist presumed that he would be received into the breadth of eternal joy, he said: You have set my feet in a spacious place. Therefore one proceeds through the gate to the court, because one arrives at the breadth of solemnity from the narrowness of confession. Those joys, therefore, which are called courts in David, are called the inner vestibule in Ezekiel. Hence this same vestibule is said to have been measured at eight cubits.

For there all are to be received who now both labor in the exercise of work and sigh for eternal joys through the grace of contemplation. Nor is it unfitting that the measure of the vestibule is set at eight cubits, because all time unfolds in seven days. For the eternal day, which follows after the completion of the sevenfold succession of days, is indeed the eighth. Hence also the Psalmist, considering the day of resurrection, because he was about to speak of the severity of the final judgment, prefixed the title, saying: ”Unto the end, a Psalm of David for the eighth. For to show which eighth day he meant—that day of tremendous terror—he continued at the beginning of the Psalm, saying: ”O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor chastise me in your fury. For now whoever is chastised through scourges and amended by corrections is chastised in gentleness, not in anger. But in that severe examination, all reproof and correction is fury and anger, because there is no pardon after

correction. The reason for this number eight is that the Lord willed to rise from death after the Sabbath. For the Lord's Day, which is the third from the Lord's death, is numbered as the eighth from the creation of days, because it follows the seventh. Hence also the true passion of our Redeemer and his true resurrection prefigured something concerning his body in the days of his passion.

For he suffered on the sixth day, rested in the tomb on the Sabbath, and rose from death on the Lord's Day. For the present life is still for us the sixth day, because it is spent in sorrows and tormented by afflictions. But on the Sabbath we rest as if in the tomb, because we find rest of soul after the body. But on the Lord's Day—that is, the third from the passion, the eighth from creation as we said—we rise in body from death, and we shall rejoice in the glory of the soul together with the flesh. Therefore what our Savior wondrously accomplished in himself, he truly signified in us, so that sorrow may receive us on the sixth day, rest on the seventh, and glory on the eighth. Hence it is said through Solomon: "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for you know not what evil shall be upon the earth. For we give a portion to seven and also to eight when we so arrange those things which unfold in seven days that through them we may come to eternal goods; so that while we act cautiously now, the wrath of the coming dreadful judgment may afterward be avoided. Therefore the vestibule is measured at eight cubits within, because through the light which follows after seven days, the breadth of eternity is opened to us. But no one comes to that place unless he has held here with a devoted mind love of God and neighbor. Hence it is added:

"And its front was two cubits. For the front of the gate is the good merit of the present life. For just as the vestibule within must be understood as eternal rest, so by the front of the gate the quality of visible life must necessarily be signified. Therefore the front of the gate is measured at two cubits, because whoever has striven here to preserve love of God and neighbor will himself reach the court of eternity. Therefore our life, that it may be measured by two cubits, must daily be stretched through charity into love of God and neighbor together. For charity is not true if it has less than two cubits. Hence when Moses expressed the virtues of the elect through the colors of garments, he commanded that twice-dyed scarlet be used in the ornament of the high priest. For what is designated by scarlet except charity, which is always kindled by the flame of love? But scarlet is twice dyed when our charity is inflamed not only from love of God but also of neighbor. For whoever so loves God that he abandons the care of the neighbor entrusted to him, in him the scarlet is still dyed only once. And whoever so loves his neighbor that he diminishes the desire with which he ought to burn toward God, in him the color of the dyeing is not yet doubled. Therefore we must both love those with whom we live and pant with all desires toward him in whom we may truly live.

For behold, we who seem clothed in religious habit have come together from the diverse condition of the world to faith and to hearing the word of the almighty Lord, and from dissimilar iniquities we have been gathered into the concord of holy Church, so that what is said of the promise of the Church through Isaiah now seems to have been openly fulfilled:

"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. For through the bowels of holy charity the wolf dwells with the lamb, because those who were plunderers in the world rest in peace with the gentle and meek. And the leopard lies down with the kid, because he who was spotted with the stains of his sins consents to be humbled with him who despises himself and confesses himself a sinner. Where it is also added: "The calf and the lion and the sheep shall dwell together," because he who prepares himself as a daily sacrifice to God through a contrite heart, and another who raged severely from cruelty like a lion, and another who perseveres in the simplicity of his innocence like a sheep, have come together in the folds of holy Church. Behold what charity is like, which kindles, burns up, melts together the diversities of minds and reforms them as it were into one appearance of gold. But in that the elect so love one another, they must hasten to him whom they may merit to see with eternal joy in heaven.

For our Lord and Redeemer is one, who both binds the hearts of his elect here to unanimity and always spurs them to heavenly love through inward desires. Hence there too it is added: "And a little child shall lead them. Who is this little child except he of whom it is written: "A child is born to us, a son is given to us"? He leads those dwelling together, because lest our hearts cling to earthly things, he daily inflames them through inward desire. And this very leading of his is to kindle us unceasingly to love of him, lest when we love one another we remain in mind in this exile, lest the rest of this life so please us that it leads to forgetfulness of our homeland, lest the mind delighted by prosperity grow sluggish. Hence he also mingles scourges with his gifts, so that everything that delighted us in the world may become bitter to us, and that fire may rise in the soul which always disturbs us, rouses us, and, so to speak, delightfully bites us, sweetly torments us, cheerfully saddens us toward heavenly desire. Therefore the little child leads us, because he who was made a little lower than the angels does not permit us through the charity he grants us to fix our mind on this world. Therefore the scarlet is twice dyed in us if we both love our neighbors here as ourselves and hasten with those very ones whom we love to the author of all.

If therefore our life is twice dyed from perfect charity, the front of the gate is measured in us at two cubits. Whether therefore the teacher, or sacred eloquence, or certainly faith is signified by the name of gate, in the measure of each cubit charity is not unsuitably understood, which he truly preaches who teaches love of God and neighbor; and that is certain knowledge which charity builds up; and faith is strong which exercises itself in love of God and neighbor. There follows: "Moreover the chambers of the gate toward the way of the East were three on this side and three on that side, and there was one measure for the three. What the chambers and what the Eastern way designate, we have already said above, and we do not think it necessary to repeat them at greater length. But we must inquire what it means when it says, "Three on this side, and three on that side. For the chambers next to the Eastern way are the hearts of those fervent in the love of God. And whether those who were chosen in the Old Testament, or those who followed in the New Testament, it certainly stands that all were kindled by love of the Trinity. For they would not truly love God if they had not received the grace of the same Trinity, which is God.

Therefore, next to the Eastern way there are three chambers on this side and three on that side, because while the Lord deigned to become incarnate between the ancient and new fathers, the Eastern way appeared as if in the midst of the chambers, which chambers are adorned for the true appearance of virtues in the knowledge of the Trinity. But if we refer the same number to the virtues of the elect, there are three virtues without which one who is now able to do something cannot be saved, namely faith, hope, and charity. And because the same faith, hope, and charity was in the ancient fathers as in the new teachers, three chambers on this side and three on that side are described next to the Eastern way. Or certainly, because there were three distinctions of the ancient fathers, three also of the new follow under grace. For the ancient people had fathers before the law, and then under the law, and afterwards prophets. In the new people, however, first the firstfruits of the Hebrews believed, afterwards the fullness of the Gentiles followed in faith, and then at the end of the age the remnants of the Hebrews are saved.

Therefore, because the incarnation of the Lord had from the earlier part fathers before the law, fathers under the law, and finally prophets, and from the later part will gather the faithful from the Hebrews, the faithful from the Gentiles, and afterwards the remnants of the Hebrews, the eastern way is said to have three chambers on this side and three on that. But we also accept this not unsuitably if we say there are three orders of the faithful. For whether in the old or in the new testament, there is one order of preachers, another of the continent, and another of good spouses. Hence the same prophet in the earlier part saw three men delivered: Noah, Daniel, and Job; in which three, namely, preachers, the continent, and the married are signified. For Noah guided the ark in the waters, and therefore held the figure of rulers. Daniel in the royal palace was devoted to abstinence, and therefore signified the life of the continent. But Job, placed in marriage and exercising care of his own household, pleased God, through whom the order of good spouses is fittingly figured.

Therefore, because even before the coming of the Mediator there were preachers, and the continent, and good married people, who awaited his same coming and desired to see it with great thirst of longing, and afterwards preachers, and the continent, and good married people exist, as we see, who no longer desire our Redeemer to be incarnated but to be contemplated in the glory of his majesty, the eastern way has three chambers on this side and three on that, according to the voice of the Psalmist, who says of that same way, namely our Redeemer: Round about him are his tabernacles. But we must consider with careful attention what is said, that there is one measure of the three. For since the excellence of preachers is far from the continent and silent, and the eminence of the continent differs greatly from the married, what does it mean that there is said to be one measure of the three? For the married, although they act well and desire to see almighty God, are nevertheless occupied with domestic cares, and compelled by necessity, divide their mind between both. But the continent are removed from the activity of this world, and restrain the pleasure of the flesh even from lawful marriage; they are entangled in no care for a spouse, no care for children, no harmful and difficult concerns of household affairs. But

preachers not only restrain themselves from vices, but also prohibit others from sinning, lead them to faith, and instruct them in the pursuit of good conduct.

How then is there one measure for those whose equality of life is not one? But there is one measure of the three, because although there is great diversity of merits among them, yet there is no distance in the faith toward which they are stretched. For the same faith that strengthens these in the greatest things contains the weakness of those in small things. Or certainly there is one measure of the three because in the final recompense, although there will not be the same dignity for all, yet there will be one life of blessedness for all. Hence the Lord also says through himself: In my Father's house there are many mansions. But yet those who were led into the vineyard, although they came at different hours, received one denarius. By what reasoning then do many mansions agree with one denarius, unless because there will indeed be diverse dignities of the blessed citizens, yet one rest of eternal recompense? For even if the merit of each will be unequal, there will not be diversity of joys, because even if one rejoices less and another more, yet one joy from the vision of their Creator gladdens all.

This also is to be understood concerning both the old and the new fathers, because the Eastern way, since it has three chambers on one side and three on the other, has one measure for the three, since the same faith and the same merit held the hearts of those who preceded as filled the hearts of those who followed, placed under the new testament, just as it is also said through Paul: ”Having the same spirit of faith, as it is written: I believed, therefore I spoke: we also believe, therefore we also speak. For those spiritual fathers believed almighty God to be a Trinity just as the new fathers have openly declared that same Trinity. For Isaiah heard the angelic hosts crying out in heaven: ”Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. For in order that the trinity of persons might be shown, ”holy” is said three times; but in order that the substance of the Trinity might appear to be one, it is declared not ”of the Lords of hosts” but ”Lord God of hosts. David also, sensing this similarly, said: ”May God bless us, our God, may God bless us. When he had said God three times, in order to show that this one is one, he added: ”And let all the ends of the earth fear him. Paul also speaks, saying: ”For from him, and through him, and in him are all things. From him, namely from the Father; through him, through the Son; but in him, in the Holy Spirit.

When he had said ”him” three times, he added: ”To him be glory forever and ever. Amen. For he who did not say ”to them” but ”to him,” by saying ”him” three times, distinguished the persons, and by adding ”to him be glory,” did not divide the substance. Therefore, because the faith of the old and new fathers is one, rightly is the measure of the chambers described as one for three. This is repeated in other words when it is added: ”And one measure of the fronts on each side. For from both parts there is one measure of the fronts, because our fathers, whether coming earlier from the old or now from the new testament, meet together in the one faith of the Mediator. Because they are full of charity, they subdue their flesh by abstinence, illuminate the hearts of their hearers with the light of preaching, perform signs, work miracles; through the fact that their good deeds become known to us outwardly,

they are not undeservedly called the fronts of this heavenly building. For everything that is now shown openly is a front, so that what is reserved for us within may be the vestibule of the building. Hence it is also said to the holy Church in the Song of Songs: ”Your cheeks are like the rind of a pomegranate, apart from your hidden things. For the cheeks of the holy Church are the spiritual fathers, who now shine forth in her with miracles and appear venerable as if in her face.

For when we see many performing wonders, prophesying future things, perfectly renouncing the world, burning with heavenly desires, the cheeks of the holy Church blush red like the rind of a pomegranate. But what is all this that we admire in comparison to that thing of which it is written: ”What eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it ascended into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love him”? Rightly therefore, when he had admired the cheeks of the Church, he added: ”Apart from your hidden things. As if it were openly said: Those things indeed which are not hidden in you are great, but those which are hidden are utterly ineffable. There follows: ”And he measured the width of the threshold of the gate as ten cubits, and the length of the gate as thirteen cubits. We have already said much above about the meaning of the gate, but we ought to hold to one thing through which the prudence of the reader can also penetrate the rest. Indeed it was said that Sacred Scripture can be figured through the gate. But we must now laboriously discuss why the width of the threshold of the gate is measured at ten cubits, and the length of the gate at thirteen. Moreover in this place the length of the gate is called height, just as we call someone of tall stature whom we see to be lofty.

For the length of the gate cannot be said to run crosswise, whose width is shown by ten cubits. What then was the width of the threshold of the gate, except the law of the old testament, and the length of the gate, except the grace of the new testament? Because clearly Sacred Scripture, while it restrained crimes of works through the old testament, commanded tithes to be given, as if through humble commands it lay in the width of the threshold. But while through the new testament it restrained wicked thoughts, it commanded all things to be relinquished, and life of the body to be despised along with the present age for the sake of God, as if our gate rose up to the height of length. For lesser precepts were given to the Israelite people through the law: whence also Moses spoke to that same people on the plain. The Lord gave higher things to the holy apostles, whence also he taught them about the commandments of life on the mountain. When indeed our Redeemer says through the Gospel: Do not think that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets; I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For he had come to fulfill the law who added grace to the righteousness of the law, so that what it commanded in the least things, he himself would help to be perfected in the greatest, and what it restrained from the work, he himself would cut away from the heart.

Therefore the law understood, which lay in width, rose up into height. For that very knowledge of God which was among the spiritual fathers in it was not known to the entire Hebrew people. For while the prophets proclaimed almighty God, namely the holy Trinity, the peo-

ple were ignorant; they held only the Decalogue in the law, not knowing the faith of the Trinity. Therefore the width of the threshold of the gate is measured at ten cubits, because that hardened people, ignorant of the subtlety of faith, served the commandments of the Decalogue. But the length of the gate is measured at thirteen cubits, because through the new testament in the heart of the faithful people, above the commandments of the Decalogue which it more truly keeps, the knowledge of the Trinity grew. And it fulfills the commandments of the law by believing the Trinity to be the almighty Lord. Here one may also reasonably ask why this width of the threshold of the gate, which he said above was measured by one reed, he added below was measured by ten cubits, and then it is added that the length of the gate was measured at thirteen cubits. For one reed, as has already often been said, has six cubits and a palm, but ten cubits already hold their measure above a reed, and thirteen more than ten.

What then does it mean that first the threshold of the gate is measured by one reed, afterward its width by ten cubits, and finally the length of the gate by thirteen, except that the holy fathers, whom we know through Sacred Scripture to have existed before the law, indeed knew that there is one almighty God, namely the Holy Trinity, but they did not openly preach that same Trinity which they knew? They, obeying His commands and preserving purity of life, had as it were the perfection of work in the six cubits of the reed, and often seeing angels they had the palm of contemplation. But when the law was given, that unlearned people of the Hebrews strove to keep the commandments of the Decalogue, but nevertheless was not instructed concerning the knowledge of the Holy Trinity. And although the spiritual fathers had known this perfectly, nevertheless the great multitude of the Synagogue could neither discover the mystery of the Trinity nor knew how to seek it. Through the coming of grace by the new testament, all the faithful people came to know that the one God is a Trinity, and fulfilled the power of the Decalogue in the knowledge of Him.

Therefore the threshold of the gate is first measured by one reed, afterwards its breadth by ten cubits, and finally the length of the gate by thirteen cubits, because both active and contemplative life were not lacking to the holy fathers before the law, and under the Decalogue of the law the people, not knowing the mystery of the divine substance, served in the breadth of the commandments. And now under grace, with the precepts of the Decalogue more truly kept, everyone who has come to the faith knows the mystery of the Holy Trinity. In which matter this also must be known by us: that the knowledge of the spiritual fathers grew through the advances of times. For Moses was instructed more than Abraham, the prophets more than Moses, the apostles more than the prophets in the knowledge of almighty God. I am mistaken if Scripture itself does not say this: ”Many shall pass through,” it says, ”and knowledge shall be manifold. But let us show these same things which we have said about Abraham, Moses, the prophets and the apostles from the words of the same Scripture, if we can. For who does not know that Abraham spoke with God? And yet the Lord says to Moses: ”I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and my name Adonai I did not reveal to them.

Behold, more was made known to Moses than to Abraham, since he reveals to Moses that about himself which he was recounting that he had not revealed to Abraham. But let us see if the prophets were able to apprehend divine knowledge more than Moses. Certainly the Psalmist says: ”How I have loved your law, O Lord! It is my meditation all day long. And he added: ”I have understood above all who teach me, because your testimonies are my meditation. And again: ”I have understood above the elders. He who recalls that he meditates on the law, and testifies that he has understood above all who teach him and above the elders, makes clear that he received divine knowledge more than Moses. But how shall we show that the holy apostles were taught more than the prophets? Certainly the Truth says: ”Many kings and prophets wished to see what you see and to hear what you hear, but they did not see. Therefore they knew more of divine knowledge than the prophets, because what those saw by spirit alone, these also saw bodily. Therefore that sentence of Daniel which we mentioned above is fulfilled: ”Many shall pass through, and knowledge shall be manifold. Therefore let the measure of the reed, which is six cubits and a palm, be extended to ten cubits; and let the measure of ten cubits rise at the end to thirteen, because the more the world is led toward its end, the more broadly the entrance to eternal knowledge is opened to us. There follows:

”And a border before the chambers of one cubit. As we have often said, the chambers are the hearts of the elect, burning with love for almighty God. What then is expressed by the border before the chambers, if not faith? Because unless this is first held, one can by no means attain to spiritual love. For charity does not precede faith, but faith precedes charity. For no one can love what he has not believed. Therefore the border is before the chambers, faith before the ardor of charity, because, as has been said, unless you believe what you hear, you will in no way be inflamed with love for what you have heard. But the border before the chambers is of one cubit, because faith joins the hearts of hearers to God in love when it is not divided through errors and schisms, but endures in unity, so that evidently a border of one cubit may lead the soul of the hearer to the chamber, because the beauty of the heavenly bridegroom which it proclaims here it afterward displays in the heavens. Where it is also well added: And one cubit the border on each side. On both sides, however, is said as if it were said ”to both,” namely to the threshold and to the gate. For we have said that the Old and New Testament are designated by the width of the threshold and the length of the gate.

At the end, moreover, it is added that one cubit is the boundary on both sides, because indeed both the Old Testament announced to us one Mediator of God and men, and the New Testament announces to us that the same one will come in eternal glory, whom we have already known to have become incarnate for us. Therefore one cubit is the boundary of both, because both he whom the law foretold appeared in the flesh, and he himself of whom the New Testament now speaks will appear in the glory of majesty. And then will be the end of both, when, having been seen in the power of his divinity, he will have fulfilled all things that were foretold. For it is written: ”Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. The end, that is, not one who destroys, but one who perfects. For he perfected the law when, as the law had foretold, he appeared incarnate. But the New

Testament still speaks many things about his judgment, still narrates many things about his kingdom, which we do not yet see fulfilled. Behold, the Gospel is read daily, the life to come is preached. Therefore there will also be an end of the New Testament when the Lord will have fulfilled the things he promised concerning himself. The new testament will indeed come to an end, because it will be perfected. For when He of whom it speaks shall have been seen, the words of that same testament will cease.

Hence also to holy Church, awaiting the day of true light as if it were springtime, it is said through the voice of the Bridegroom: ”Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For now the winter has passed, the rain has departed and gone away, flowers have appeared on the earth. For whether it be holy Church or each elect soul, she is the beloved of the heavenly Bridegroom through love, a dove through the Spirit, beautiful through the beauty of her conduct. When she is now led forth from the corruption of the flesh, the winter without doubt passes for her, because the torpor of the present life departs. The rain also departs and recedes, because when she is led forth to contemplate almighty God in His own substance, drops of words will no longer be necessary, so that the rain of preaching need not be poured forth. For what she was less able to hear, she will more fully see. Then flowers appear on the earth, because when the soul has begun to taste beforehand certain first-fruits of sweetness from the life of eternal blessedness, as if already going out she smells the fragrance in the flowers, what she will have more abundantly in fruit after she has departed. Hence it is also added there: ”The time of pruning has arrived. In pruning, indeed, barren branches are cut away, so that those which prevail may bear fruit more abundantly.

Therefore the time of our pruning arrives when we abandon the unfruitful and harmful corruption of the flesh, so that we may be able to attain the fruit of the soul. This fruit will be most abundant for us: the vision of the One. Therefore there is one cubit at the end on each side, because He is the one who said: ”I am alone until I pass over. He who alone with the Father and the Holy Spirit presides in heaven, like a solitary sparrow in a building. Just as He fulfilled the law through the mystery of His incarnation and perfect humanity, so He will fulfill the promises of the new testament through the revealed glory of His brightness. This one cubit the measure of the ark has also declared to us. For the ark, which was commanded to be made three hundred cubits in length, sixty in width, and thirty in height, was completed in one cubit. For what is figured by the ark except the holy Church, which is broad below and narrow above? Which is gathered from three hundred, sixty, and thirty cubits to one cubit, because from that breadth which the holy Church has in its still weak members, being gradually narrowed and advancing upward, it tends toward one. For reason itself demands that we believe that in that breadth of the ark all beasts, all quadrupeds and reptiles were in the lower parts, while humans and birds were certainly in the upper parts.

For near the upper part there was a window in the side, from which the man released the raven and the dove, so that he might know whether the waters of the flood had now passed. And because that same ark was completed in one cubit, humans and birds were near the

cubit. Rightly therefore by the ark the universal Church is designated, which is still broad in its many carnal members, narrow in its few spiritual ones. And because it is gathered to one man, who is without sin, it is completed, as it were, in one cubit. For we see many within the bosom of this same holy Church lifted up in pride, dissolved in carnal pleasure, gaping after the acquisition of earthly things, crossing seas at the command of avarice, enslaving themselves to wrath, giving themselves to quarrels, and injuring their neighbors whenever they can. But because the holy Church still tolerates them so that they may be converted, the beasts, as it were, dwell below in the breadth of the ark. We see others who now seek not what belongs to others, bear injury inflicted upon them with equanimity, are content with their own possessions, and live humbly. But because these are now few, the ark grows narrow. Moreover, we behold others who even abandon what they possess, give no attention to earthly things, love their enemies, subdue the flesh from all pleasures, suppress all impulses under the judgment of reason, and are lifted up by the wing of contemplation through heavenly desire.

But because such persons are exceedingly rare, the ark is now brought to a cubit, where men and birds are contained. Yet let it be asked whether anyone among them can be without sin, and none is found. Who therefore is without sin, except He who was not conceived in sins? Therefore the ark is completed in one cubit, because the one Author and Redeemer of the holy Church is without sin, to whom and through whom all advance who know themselves to be sinners. Let it therefore be said of the threshold and the gate: "And one cubit, the end on both sides," because when the one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, shall appear in His majesty, He will fulfill all things of both testaments that have been foretold and promised. If indeed in this place he mentions both the border and the chambers, neither does this disagree with this meaning, because when the majesty of our Redeemer shall have been shown to us, faith comes to an end, since man will then have begun to see what he believed. And the chambers reach their end, because the hearts of the faithful are perfected in love of Him incomparably far beyond what they are now. Therefore one cubit is the end on each side, because the vision of the one Lord and Savior in His elect brings faith to an end and perfects charity. It is pleasing to consider who we are who treat these matters.

Certainly we came from the Gentiles, certainly our parents were worshippers of wood and stone. Whence then is this for us, that we search out such profound mysteries of the prophet Ezekiel which the Hebrews do not know even now? Let us therefore give thanks to the One who fulfilled by deed all the things that were written about Him in sacred Scripture, so that what could not be understood when heard might be revealed when seen. For there His incarnation is contained, there His passion, there His death, there His resurrection, there His ascension. But who among us would have believed these things when heard, unless he had known them when accomplished? Therefore the sealed book, as is read in the Apocalypse of John, which no one could open and read, the lion of the tribe of Judah opened, because He revealed to us all His mysteries in His passion and resurrection. And through the fact that He bore the evils of our weakness, He showed us the good things of His power and glory. For he was made flesh, that he might make us spiritual; he graciously

stooped down, that he might lift us up; he went out, that he might bring us in; he appeared visible, that he might show forth invisible things; he endured scourges, that he might heal; he bore reproaches and mockings, that he might free us from eternal reproach; he died, that he might give life.

Let us therefore give thanks to him who gives life and who died, and all the more for giving life, because he died. Whence Isaiah, contemplating our salvation and his passion, well says: "That he might do his work, his strange work; that he might perform his work, his work is alien to him. For the work of God is to gather the souls which he created, and to call them back to the joys of eternal light. But to be scourged and covered with spittle, to be crucified, to die, and to be buried—this is not the work of God in his own substance, but the work of sinful man, who merited all these things through sin. But he himself bore our sins in his body upon the tree. And he who in his own nature remains always incomprehensible, in our nature deigned to be apprehended and scourged, because unless he had taken upon himself the things that belonged to our weakness, he would never have raised us up to the power of his strength. Therefore, that he might do his work, his strange work; and that he might perform his work, his work is alien to him, because God incarnate, that he might gather us to his righteousness, deigned to be beaten for us as if he were a sinful man.

And he did a strange work that he might do his own, because through this, that in weakness he bore our evils, he brought us who are his creatures to the glory of his strength, in which he lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY V.

The chambers having been mentioned above, the prophet adds that the chambers were six cubits on this side and on that side. In this matter a great question arises for us: why did he say above that the chamber was measured by one reed, which reed he declared to have six cubits and a handbreadth, yet below he says the chambers are measured by only six cubits? For if they are measured not by the reed but by six cubits, the handbreadth is missing, which above was said to be present in the measure of the reed. But if the chambers are the senses and thoughts of the faithful, in which chaste souls are joined to their Creator in love, and through the six cubits perfect work is expressed, while through the handbreadth the beginning of contemplation is expressed, we ought to observe the members of the holy universal Church, and we quickly discover that in her there are chambers measured by one reed, and there are others measured by only six cubits. For certain faithful in her love almighty God in such a way that they are both perfect in work and lifted up in contemplation. These indeed have the reed in their measure, because they possess both the six cubits of work and the handbreadth of contemplation. But certain others indeed love almighty God and are perfectly exercised in good works, yet they do not know how to contemplate His greatness with subtler understanding.

They love, indeed, but they do not know how to search out the joys of His brightness. These therefore have six cubits and do not have the handbreadth, because they are already joined to Him through love, but separated from contemplation. Yet these chambers are reported to be on this side and on that side after the mention of one cubit, because clearly faithful souls have come together in the love of our Author and Redeemer both from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles. Hence also our same Redeemer, when, sitting upon an ass, He was heading toward Jerusalem, as the evangelist testifies, many spread their garments in the way; but others cut branches from the trees and spread them in the way; and those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. For our Savior, sitting upon an ass, heads toward Jerusalem when, governing the soul of each faithful one, namely His beast of burden, He leads it to the vision of inward peace. He also sits upon a beast of burden when He universally presides over holy Church and kindles it with desire for heavenly peace. But many spread their garments in the way because they tame their bodies through abstinence, so that they might prepare a path for Him to their mind, or provide good examples to those who follow.

But others cut branches or fronds from trees and spread them in the way because in the teaching of truth they pluck words and sentences of the fathers from their eloquence, and submit these in the way of God to the soul of the hearer coming through humble preaching. Which we also, though unworthy, are now doing. For when we take up the sentences of the fathers in a sermon of exhortation, we cut fronds from trees so that we may spread them in the way of almighty God. But those who went before and those who followed cried out: Hosanna. For the Jewish people went before, and the Gentile followed. And because all the elect, whether those who were able to be in Judea or those who now exist in the Church, believed and believe in the Mediator of God and men, those who go before and those who follow cry out Hosanna. But Hosanna in the Latin tongue is said to mean ”save us. For from Him both the earlier ones sought salvation and those present seek it; and they confess blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, since there is one hope, one faith of the peoples who precede and follow. For just as they were healed by His awaited passion and resurrection, so we are saved by His past passion and resurrection continuing through the ages.

For He whom our forebears from the Jewish people believed and loved as coming, we both believe has come and love, and we are kindled with desire for Him, that we may contemplate Him face to face. Therefore His chambers are on this side and on that, because the hearts of those who love embrace the faith that is in Him both from the earlier part of the age and from the last. There follows: And he measured the gate from the roof of one chamber to the roof of the other, a width of twenty-five cubits. We have often said already that the gate can signify faith, and through that same faith our Lord and Redeemer himself, the Mediator of God and men, Jesus Christ, because through the faith that is in him the entrance to life lies open. But we also not undeservedly take sacred Scripture, which opens for us that same faith into the understanding of our Redeemer, as the gate, because when it is known as it ought to be, we enter into understanding invisible things. If therefore in this place, as

we have said before, the gate is understood as Scripture, we must ask what is signified by the roof of the bedchamber, what by the roof of the gate. But the bedchamber has a roof, because the mind of lovers is hidden, and the fervor of love is still in secret.

The gate also has a roof, because all of Scripture indeed was written for our sake, but not all of it is understood by us. For many things in it are written so openly that they feed the little ones; but certain things are veiled with more obscure meanings, so that they may exercise the strong, inasmuch as things understood with effort are more pleasing. Some things, however, are so closed in it that while we do not understand them, recognizing the weakness of our blindness, we advance more toward humility than toward understanding. For there are certain things that speak so of heavenly matters that they lie open only to those supernal citizens remaining in their homeland, and are not yet revealed to us who are pilgrims. For if someone journeying to an unknown city should hear many things about it along the way, some things indeed he gathers by reason, but other things, because he does not yet see them, he in no way knows; but the citizens themselves who are in that city both see what is left unsaid about it and understand what is said about it. We therefore are still on the way; we hear many things about that heavenly homeland; some we already understand through spirit and reason, but certain things not understood we venerate. Whence also it is written concerning that same sacred Scripture: Stretching out the heaven like a skin, who covers its upper parts in the waters.

For heaven is stretched out like a skin, because through the mouths of mortals Sacred Scripture is unfolded to us in expositions. But there are waters in heaven, namely the higher multitudes, that is, the hosts of angels, in whom the upper parts of that same heaven are covered, because those things which are higher and more obscure in sacred Scripture lie open only to angelic spirits, and remain as yet unknown to us. Therefore the bridal chamber has a roof, because the neighbor does not yet know how much he is loved by his neighbor. The gate also, that is, sacred Scripture, has a roof, because we cannot yet penetrate with our understanding all the things we hear concerning heavenly matters. It remains therefore that in those things which we understand, we should walk in daily progress of charity. And although our neighbors do not see in us how much they are loved by us, and although we humbly venerate in sacred Scripture those things which we do not yet understand, nevertheless in those things which we have attained by understanding, we ought to be enlarged through good works. Hence it is also said: ”And he measured the gate from the roof of one chamber to the roof of the other, a width of twenty-five cubits. For we are endowed with five senses of the flesh, namely sight, taste, smell, hearing, and touch. This same number five, multiplied by itself, rises to twenty-five. Moreover, we cannot perform anything outwardly from the heavenly commandments without these five bodily senses.

For the mind as judge presides inwardly over these its functions, and recognizes what it can do outwardly in justice or mercy, as if these functions were reporting and serving it. When therefore the mind is filled with fear of the Almighty Lord, it is necessary that our five senses serve us as subordinate functions in good works. When through them we begin

to do something mercifully, mercy itself opens wider daily, and expands as a kind of bosom of good work. Therefore the five senses are multiplied in themselves, when what is done through them in good work is multiplied daily through progress. Hence the width is said to be twenty-five cubits, because fear, stinginess, and sloth are narrowness. For whoever fears to give bread to the needy lest he himself lack it, is still in the narrowness of fear. Whoever does not extend a garment to one who is cold, because he desires to have it for himself alone, is still constrained by the narrowness of his own stinginess. Whoever does not do good because he grows lazy through lukewarmness of spirit, his very torpor is narrowness for him. But to look upon the needy, to hear their prayer, to bestow alms, to provide defense, and not to fear the enmities of any adversary for the sake of defending that poor person—this is great breadth of mind.

Let therefore that width which lies between the chamber and the gate be measured at twenty-five cubits, because in the operation of the external senses it is proved and known what generosity of goodness is held within. For what you have already learned from Sacred Scripture and how much you silently love your neighbor, you show in the breadth of good work. Let the width between the chamber and the gate be twenty-five cubits, because between charity and knowledge good work is the witness. If perhaps this should be lacking, it is certainly established that you have neither known God nor loved your neighbor; that is, you have neither the gate of sacred eloquence nor the chamber of love. And it should be noted that it is said to have been measured from the roof of the chamber to the roof of the gate. For through those things which are covered from us in sacred Scripture, our humility is proven, because whatever we do not understand in it, we ought not proudly to criticize but humbly to venerate. Hence it is also written of the Lord: His eyelids question the sons of men. For his eyelids are judgments which close something to us and open something. By opening they question us whether we are not exalted by understanding. By closing they question us whether we do not despise what we are unable to understand. Moreover, through those things which we do not speak to our neighbors concerning our charity, we are more truly proven in the sight of God.

For in the mouth of some charity is feigned, but in the hearts of others it is true. And often concerning charity what is not is displayed, and what is is not demonstrated. Therefore good work speaks our love toward our neighbor more than the tongue, so that in the good work itself our neighbor may see himself loved. And when we cannot accomplish as much as we wish, let the hidden things of our love suffice for almighty God. Therefore let there be great width from the roof of the chamber to the roof of the gate, so that from the hidden things of our charity on account of our neighbor up to the humility of knowledge and on account of God, insofar as we understand and are able, we may always do good works. The gate itself can also be understood as the entrance to the heavenly kingdom. Now the chamber has a roof, and the gate also has a roof, because both how great our charity is toward God and neighbor is not known, and when we shall be led from this world to the rest of eternal life is unknown. For our Creator willed the day of our death to be unknown to us, so that, while

it is always unknown, it may always be believed to be near; and each person may be all the more fervent in action, the more uncertain he is about his calling.

Hence also a width of twenty-five cubits extends from the chamber to the gate, because through the charity which we have once conceived toward God and neighbor, we ought to work manifoldly and unceasingly in every way we can until we enter the kingdom. Therefore from the roof of the chamber to the roof of the gate there is great width, because from the grace by which we begin to love God, up to that very love which opens for us the entrance to the heavenly kingdom, we ought to expand ourselves in the great performance of good works: to suffer adversities patiently, to bestow good things willingly, to love even those whom we suffer, to give away what we have, not to covet what we do not have, to love our neighbors as ourselves, to consider their goods as our own, to weep over their evils as if they were our own. In such a mind, therefore, there is great width, in which there is no narrowness of hatreds. This width we have indeed conceived from love of God and neighbor, and we have learned it through the sacred commandments. For we understand those twenty-five cubits of width not unfittingly, if we wish to examine them according to sacred Scripture. For he had said that the chambers were measured at six cubits, and on the sixth day man was created; on that day also the Lord is described as having completed His works. Hence the number six is customarily used to signify perfection.

And because we have learned every good work through the four books of the holy Gospel, if we multiply six by four, we arrive at twenty-four. To this a unit is added, because there is One through whom all do good works. Therefore this width ought to be expressed as twenty-five cubits, because every good work is known, as we said, through the four books of the holy Gospel, and is completed in the knowledge and confession of the one God. There follows: And door against door. In this place, ”contra” (against/opposite) is not placed in opposition to adversity, but to rectitude. For a door is opposite a door when one arrives by a straight path from the outer entrance to the inner one. In the knowledge of almighty God, our first door is faith, while the second is the vision of Him, to which we arrive by walking through faith. For in this life we enter through the former, so that we may afterward be led to the latter. Therefore a door is opposite a door, because through the entrance of faith the entrance to the vision of God is opened. But if anyone wishes to understand both of these doors as pertaining to this life, neither does this conflict with a sound understanding. For often we wish to consider the invisible nature of almighty God, but we are by no means able to do so;

and the soul, wearied by these very difficulties, returns to itself, and makes for itself steps of ascent from itself, so that it may first consider itself, if it is able, and then investigate, as far as it can, that nature which is above it. But if our mind has been scattered among carnal images, it is by no means able to consider either itself or the nature of the soul, because by however many thoughts it is led, it is blinded as if by that many obstacles. The first step, therefore, is for the soul to gather itself to itself; the second is to see what it is like when gathered; the third is to rise above itself and subject itself by directing its attention

to the contemplation of the invisible Creator. But it can by no means gather itself to itself unless it has first learned to banish from the eyes of the mind the phantasms of earthly and heavenly images, to reject and trample underfoot whatever from sight, whatever from hearing, whatever from smell, whatever from touch and bodily taste presents itself to its thought, so that it may seek itself within as it is without these things. For when it thinks about these things, it turns over within itself, as it were, certain shadows of bodies.

All things must therefore be driven away by the hand of discernment from the eyes of the mind, so that the soul may consider itself as it was created under God and above the body, so that, vivified by what is above, it may vivify the lower realm which it administers. The soul has been infused into the body in such a way that it is not divided into parts according to the parts of the limbs. For if any part of the body is struck in any place, the whole soul feels pain. In a wondrous manner, while presiding over the limbs with one and the same vivification, though it is not diverse in its nature, it nevertheless performs diverse functions through the body. For it is the soul that sees through the eyes, hears through the ears, smells through the nostrils, tastes through the mouth, touches through all the limbs, and by touching distinguishes smooth from rough. And although it performs such diverse operations through the senses, it arranges these not as diverse things but by that one reason in which it was created. Therefore, when the soul thinks about itself without images of the body, it has already entered the first door. But from this door it stretches toward another, so that it may contemplate something of the nature of almighty God. The soul in the body is the life of the flesh; but God, who vivifies all things, is the life of souls.

If, therefore, the vivified life is of such magnitude that it cannot be comprehended, who can comprehend with the intellect how great is the majesty of the vivifying life? But to consider and discern this very thing is already in some measure to enter, because from its own estimation the soul gathers what it may perceive concerning the uncircumscribed Spirit, who incomprehensibly governs those things which he incomprehensibly created. For our Creator presides over His creation in a manner far beyond comparison, and He makes certain things to exist, yet not to live; certain things indeed to exist and live, yet not to be able to discern anything about life; and certain things to exist, live, and discern. And He who is one works all things, but is not divided in all things. For He is truly supreme, and never unlike Himself. But the soul, although by nature it is not different from itself, nevertheless is different through thought. For in that very moment and instant when it thinks about sight, it forgets to think about hearing; and in that moment and instant when it thinks about hearing or taste, it cannot think about smell or touch, because through attention and forgetfulness it always becomes unlike itself, so that now it holds this in thought, now that. But Almighty God, because He is not unlike Himself, sees by the same power by which He hears all things, creates by the same power by which He judges what is created.

Therefore His seeing is at the same time to administer all things, and His administering is to behold. Nor does He help the just by one thought and condemn the unjust by another, but by one and the same force of His singular nature, always unchanging in Himself, He disposes

dissimilar things. But why should we marvel at this concerning the power of the Creator, when we behold traces of His power even in creatures? For the nature of clay and wax is different. But the ray of the sun is not different, and yet although it is not different, what it works in clay and wax is different, because by one and the same heat of its fire it hardens clay and melts wax. But perhaps this is in the nature of the clay or wax, not in the substance of the sun itself, which seems to work different effects in different natures. But Almighty God has it in Himself to dispose changeable things without change, to do different things without diversity in Himself, to form dissimilar things without alternation of thoughts. Therefore God, who is never unlike Himself, works dissimilar things in a manner far dissimilar, He who both is everywhere and is wholly everywhere. For He says: Heaven is my throne, and earth is the footstool of my feet. And of Him it is written: Who measures heaven with a span, and encloses the earth in His fist.

From which matter it is necessary to consider that He who presides over heaven as His seat is both above and within. And He who encloses heaven in His palm and the earth in His fist is also outside, above, and below. Therefore, to indicate that Almighty God is interior and superior to all things, He declared that heaven itself is His seat. But to show that He surrounds all things, He asserts that He measures heaven with His palm and encloses the earth in His fist. He Himself therefore is interior and exterior, He Himself is lower and higher: higher by ruling, lower by bearing; interior by filling, exterior by surrounding. And He is so within that He is also without; He so surrounds that He penetrates; He so presides that He bears; He so bears that He presides. Therefore, when the soul, lifted up to itself, understands its own measure, and recognizes that it transcends all corporeal things, and stretches from its own understanding toward the understanding of its Author, what else does it behold now but the door which is opposite the door? Whence the Prophet also says to the Author of all: Your knowledge has become wonderful from me, because however much the soul may strive, it cannot suffice to penetrate itself perfectly, how much less the magnitude of Him who was able to create the soul as well? And when he labored in understanding the knowledge of God, growing weary and failing he added:

It is strengthened, and I shall not be able to reach it. But when we strive and stretch forward, desiring to perceive something of the invisible nature, we grow weary, are beaten back, are repelled; and if we cannot penetrate the interior things, nevertheless from the outer door we already see the inner door. For the very labor of contemplation is a door, because it shows something of what is within, even if there is not yet the power of entering. There follows: And he made fronts of sixty cubits, and to the front of the gate was the court on every side round about. We have often said that perfection of good work is signified by the number six, not following what the wise men of this age have striven to establish, saying that the number six is perfect because it is completed when counted in its own order, as when one, two, three are said, the number six is filled up; or because it is divided into three parts, that is, a sixth, a third, and a half, namely into one, two, and three; but we say that the number six is perfect because, as was said a little before, God completed all His works on the sixth

day. Since indeed He gave the law to sinful man, which is written in ten precepts, and six times ten makes sixty, rightly through sixty cubits the perfection of good works is signified.

This the Lord also clearly indicates in the Gospel, who, when He was explaining the parable of the sower, said: "Other seed fell on good ground, and yielded fruit that sprang up and increased, and brought forth one thirty, and one sixty, and one a hundred. For the fruit of good ground brings forth thirty when the mind has conceived the perfection of faith, which is in the Trinity. It brings forth sixty when it has produced perfect works of a good life. But it brings forth a hundred when it has advanced to the contemplation of eternal life. For our left hand is the present life, but the right hand is the life to come. And rightly through the number one hundred the contemplation of eternal life is signified, because when after thirty and sixty we arrive by counting at the number one hundred, that same hundredth number passes to the right hand. Faith and works are still on the left hand, because while we are still placed here, we both believe what we do not see, and we work so that we may see. But when the soul has already raised itself to the contemplation of eternal life, the counting, as it were, reaches the right hand. Therefore he made the fronts sixty cubits long. For since perfection is signified by the number sixty, what is signified by the fronts of the building but the very works that are seen outwardly?

For to give the word of preaching, to give food to the hungry, clothing to those who are cold, and to endure adversities patiently for the sake of good work—what else are these but the fronts of the heavenly building? Because the beauty of outward works adorns the dwelling place of God, which still lies hidden within. But these fronts have a court all around on every side, because works are great in this regard, if the breadth of charity enlarges them in the mind. Concerning charity it is written: "Your commandment is exceedingly broad. Concerning this the Psalmist again says: "You have set my feet in a spacious place. But behold, while I speak, it occurs to my mind how broad charity is. If God is reached through charity, and Truth says of itself: Enter through the narrow gate. And again I hear the Psalmist saying: Because of the words of your lips I have kept hard ways. And in the Gospel the Lord says: For my yoke is sweet, and my burden is light. How then is charity broad, if the gate is narrow? Or how is the yoke sweet and the burden light, if in God's precepts the ways that are kept are hard? But charity itself quickly resolves this question for us, because the way of God is narrow for those beginning, and broad for those already living perfectly.

And the things we spiritually propose to our mind against habit are hard, and yet God's burden is light, after we have begun to bear it, so that for love of him even persecution is pleasing, and all affliction for his sake comes with sweetness of mind, just as the holy apostles also rejoiced when they endured scourges for the Lord. Therefore that narrow gate becomes broad for those who love, those hard ways become soft and level for those running spiritually; for when the mind knows it will receive eternal joys for temporal pains, it begins to love even that by which it is afflicted. Therefore the court before its front is the breadth of love in perfection of work. And it should be noted that it says "on every side round about," so that a man through everything he does may always expand himself in the breadth of

charity, lest either fear or hatred constrain him. If therefore someone speaks the word of God, and does not keep in his mind the charity which he preaches, he has the front of the building, but does not have the court before the front. If someone bestows alms upon the needy, and through this perhaps is lifted up in heart, and does not relieve the want of his neighbor out of charity, but exalts himself with silent pride, he indeed shows the front in the building, but has not made a court beside the front.

If someone endures insults inflicted by a neighbor, and silently bears the evils cast at him, great is the patience which he demonstrates, but only if he does not hold pain in his heart, if he seeks to win even the one who had offended him to the tranquility of meekness. For if while outwardly showing patience he inwardly holds pain, and does not love him whom he endures, he indeed has the front in the building, but does not have the court before the front, because he who has subjected himself to the constraint of hatreds has surely lost the breadth of charity. For as we have already said in the earlier part, that patience is true which also loves the one whom it bears. For to tolerate but to hate is not the virtue of meekness, but a veil for fury. And it should be noted that this same court is called the court of the gate. For our gate is the entrance to the kingdom. And to love God and neighbor perfectly is already to stretch toward the entrance of the kingdom. For insofar as anyone loves, to that extent he draws near to the entrance. But insofar as he neglects to love, to that extent he refuses to enter, because he does not strive to see what he desires. Therefore we have the court of the gate when from the breadth of charity we already enter through desire into the heavenly life which we are not yet able to attain.

And so when a good work is done toward a neighbor, it remains that the intention of that same good work be discerned: whether it does not seek the repayment of present favor, but the soul directs its hope toward the future promise, so that from temporal things it may hope for eternal, from earthly things heavenly. For the hope of heavenly things makes the mind firm, lest it be shaken by the waves of earthly tumults. Concerning which it is also said through Paul: ”Which we have as an anchor of the soul, safe and firm, and entering into the interior of the veil. Concerning which interior things it is here also added: ”And before the face of the gate which extended to the face of the vestibule of the inner gate, fifty cubits. That which is said in this place, ”Before the face of the gate,” describes not the exterior, but the interior place before the gate, since it is reported to extend up to the face of the vestibule of the inner gate. Hence that same place is said to have been measured at fifty cubits. For by the number fifty, eternal rest is signified. For the number seven has its own perfection, because on that day the number of days was completed. And through the law the Sabbath was given for rest.

Moreover, that same number seven multiplied by itself yields forty-nine, and if a monad is added to it, one arrives at fifty, because all our perfection will be in the contemplation of that One, in whose vision there will no longer be anything lacking of salvation and joy for us. Hence also the jubilee, that is, the fiftieth year, was given for rest, because whoever has arrived at the eternal joys of almighty God will no longer have labor and groaning. It should

be noted that the place which is described as extending for fifty cubits is said to reach to the face of the vestibule of the inner gate. Therefore in this place the prophet is not describing the vestibule of the inner gate itself, but the place within which extends to the vestibule of the inner gate. By which place, of course, as we have said, our hope is signified, which while it seeks eternal rest, leads the mind to the vestibule of the inner gate. For in this very fact that we desire heavenly things, that we sigh for the promised joys, that we seek the rest of eternal life, we are already approaching the face of the inner vestibule. Therefore let faith be signified by the gate, charity by the court, and by the place which approaches the face of the vestibule of the inner gate let hope be figured, without which three virtues whoever can now use reason cannot enter into the heavenly building.

Therefore let faith be held in the gate, which introduces to understanding; charity in the court, which expands the mind in love; hope in the place which is described as fifty cubits, because through desires and sighs it introduces the soul to the secret joys of rest. Concerning which rest, even if we do not yet perceive the light of truth as it is, nevertheless we already see something through the cracks of understanding. Whence it is also added here: And oblique windows in the chambers. In slanted windows, the part through which light enters is narrow, but the interior part which receives the light is wide, because the minds of those who contemplate, although they may see something slight of the true light, are nevertheless expanded within themselves with great amplitude. And indeed these minds can scarcely grasp even a few of the things they behold. For truly what those contemplating see of eternity is exceedingly small, yet from this small amount the bosom of their minds is enlarged into an increase of fervor and love; and hence they become spacious within themselves, from whence they admit the light of truth to themselves as if through narrow openings. Because this greatness of contemplation can be granted only to those who love, slanted windows are said to be in the chambers, or in those things which are said to be near the chambers, no longer on the outside but on the inside. For concerning these same windows it is added:

"And in their fronts which were within the gate on every side round about. For there were windows in the chambers, and there were also windows in their fronts, which had been constructed within the gate on every side all around, because he who has a heart within also receives the light of contemplation. For those who still think immoderately about external things do not know what the openings of contemplation concerning eternal light may be. For that infusion of incorporeal light is not grasped together with images of corporeal things, because while only visible things are thought about, invisible light is not admitted to the mind. But whoever now attends to the light of contemplation must take great care to always guard the mind in humility, never to exalt himself because of the grace with which he is filled, and to consider what the oblique windows that mark the minds of contemplatives are like. For through oblique windows light enters, and a thief does not enter, because those who are true watchmen always keep their understanding pressed down in humility, and the understanding of contemplation enters their minds, but the boasting of pride does not enter. And so the windows are both open and fortified, because the grace with which they are filled is open in their minds, and yet they do not permit the adversary to enter through

pride. It should be noted that within the gate, windows slanting inward are mentioned on every side throughout the circuit.

For the grace of contemplation is not given only to the highest and denied to the lowly, but often the highest receive it, often the lowly, more frequently those who have withdrawn from the world, and sometimes even the married. If therefore there is no office among the faithful from which the grace of contemplation can be excluded, whoever has a heart within can also be illuminated by the light of contemplation, because within the gate windows slanting inward are constructed on every side throughout the circuit, so that no one may boast of this grace as though it were something singular to himself. Let no one think he possesses the gift of true light as his own private possession, because in that which he thinks he has as something special, often another is richer—one whom he did not think possessed any good within himself. Hence here too it is fittingly added: ”And likewise there were windows round about within in the vestibules. After he said there were windows in the fronts, he adds windows in the vestibules round about on the inside, because not only do the lofty members of holy Church who stand out have the grace of contemplation, but often even those members receive this gift who, although they already spring up toward the highest things through desire, nevertheless still lie low through their office. For unless almighty God poured the light of contemplation even into those who seem despised, there would not have been windows in the vestibules.

And so we see some who are placed in the highest positions of holy Church speaking lofty things about heavenly matters, searching out with wondrous zeal, insofar as the illuminated mind suffices, the secrets of the heavenly fatherland: these are windows in the fronts. But others are contained within the bosom of holy Church and seem despised in human eyes, yet within themselves they are occupied with the pursuits of wisdom, they yearn for heavenly things, and insofar as they are able, they consider what the eternal joys may be: these therefore are oblique windows, but in the vestibules. It is well said ”round about,” because all inquiry into hidden things involves a circuit, since in its cogitation the mind says: ”Do you suppose it is this? Do you suppose it is that? It goes around, as it were, in order to find what it seeks. When the uncircumscribed light begins to break forth into knowledge, it is as though a ray of truth comes through an oblique window. For thus in our contemplation we make progress by circling around many things in our thoughts, just as we often seek examples of good people in order to make progress in our conduct. For when the mind is already thinking of passing on to better things, it seeks out whatever better thing it can hear about from others; it examines now the life of this holy person, now of another.

Hence a certain chosen one, who had cast the eyes of his mind throughout the whole world in the broad embrace of Holy Church, seeking the life of good people for imitation, said: ”I will go about and sacrifice in the tabernacle of God a sacrifice of jubilation. Behold, in order to sacrifice a sacrifice of jubilation, he was going about, because unless he sent his mind here and there to seek out the life of good people, he himself would not arrive at the sacrifice of jubilation. But when holy men are brought to the highest places within Holy

Church, their life is set as if in a mirror, so that all may see the good things they ought to imitate. Hence what follows is also fittingly added: ”And before the fronts was a picture of palm trees. What is designated by palms, if not the rewards of victory? For these are customarily given to victors. Hence also concerning those who in the contest of martyrdom had conquered the ancient enemy, and were now rejoicing as victors in their homeland, it is written: ”And palms in their hands, and they cried out with a loud voice, saying: Salvation to our God, who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb. For to have palms in their hands is to have held fast to victories in their deeds. The palm of this deed is repaid there, where one now rejoices without struggle. Hence also here it does not say:

”Palms before the fronts,” but ”a picture of palms before the fronts. For there the palm of victory will be seen, where one will now rejoice without end. For here we often observe holy men doing wondrous things, performing many miracles, cleansing lepers, casting out demons, driving away bodily illnesses by touch, predicting future things by the spirit of prophecy. All these things are not yet palms, but still a picture of palms, for these are sometimes given even to the reprobate. Hence also through the Gospel, Truth says: ”Many will say to me on that day: Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and perform many miracles in your name? And then I will confess to them: I never knew you; depart from me, you who work iniquity. But the one true sign of election is the steadfastness of charity, as it is written: ”By this it shall be known that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. Moreover, when the elect perform these miracles, they do so in a manner far different from the reprobate, because what the elect do from charity, the reprobate strive to do through pride. But even for those same elect, the very wonders they perform through charity are not yet palms, but still a picture of palms, because through these things it is shown outwardly what sort of people they are held to be inwardly before the almighty Lord.

But there the palm will be theirs, where there will no longer be any struggle with death. For the outstanding preacher then beheld the true palm being given to victors, when he foresaw the resurrection of the dead taking place, as he says: ”For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this mortal has put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? Then therefore there will be perfect victory, when death shall have been fully swallowed up. But in everything that we now observe being done wondrously through signs, we see not yet victory itself, but still images of victory. Therefore, because virtues and signs are often given even to saints placed in more exalted positions, so that others may be stirred to good works, a picture of palms is shown before the fronts of the inner building. Let what has been treated today suffice, so that we may come, with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, more vigorous to those things that follow—he who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY VI.

After the prophet, introducing oblique windows concerning the grace of contemplation, spoke many things, he says he was led outside, and recalls having seen treasuries. In these treasuries, what else is designated but the knowledge of teachers? But rightly in this matter it can be asked, since holy teachers teach spiritual and internal things, why does the prophet say he was led outside, and saw treasuries outside? But it must be known that contemplation is one thing, which sees only as much as it is unable to speak, while knowledge and doctrine are another thing, which sees only as much as it can express through the tongue. For in comparison with that light which cannot be expressed by voice, almost all that can be expressed by voice is as if outside. Therefore he says: And he led me out to the outer court, and behold treasuries, and a pavement laid with stone in the court round about. Because in the Greek language φυλάττειν means "to keep," and in the Persian language treasures are called gazae, the place where riches are kept is customarily called a treasury. What therefore is designated by treasuries, except, as we said before, the hearts of teachers filled with the riches of wisdom and knowledge? Because, according to Paul's words: "To one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge in the same Spirit. For there are some who through the gift of grace understand even those things which they have not heard expounded by teachers;

these clearly have received the word of wisdom. And there are some who cannot understand by themselves what they have heard, but retain those things which they have read in commentators, and knowledgeably bring forth what they have learned by reading. From what then are these filled except with the word of knowledge? Although this can also be understood in another way, because wisdom pertains to life, while knowledge pertains to teaching. Therefore whoever lives well and preaches prudently is rightly called a treasury of spiritual building, because heavenly riches are dispensed from his mouth. The same teacher of the Gentiles had seen that the disciples abounded in these riches when he said: "You have been made rich in Him, in all speech and all knowledge. Therefore treasuries have been built in the edifice of the holy Church, because the tongue of teachers abounds with the riches of knowledge. That these are true riches, Truth Himself declares on His own authority, when He says of transitory riches: "The deceitfulness of riches chokes the word. For wisdom and knowledge of spiritual teaching are true riches, in comparison with which those that can pass away are called false. Concerning these riches it is said through Solomon: "A desirable treasure rests in the mouth of the wise. But apart from the fact that spiritual riches lead to the eternal homeland, there is a great difference between them and earthly riches, because spiritual riches increase when distributed, while earthly riches either are distributed and diminish, or are retained and are not useful.

Therefore those who contain these true riches within themselves are rightly called treasuries. And these treasuries have a pavement all around, because the humility of the hearers clings to and lies beneath them. This pavement is rightly said to be paved with stone in the court, because in the breadth of charity the souls of the faithful are joined to one another. They are called stones in the strength of faith, and they are laid in the pavement in the bond of humility. The apostle Peter had beheld these minds of the faithful as strong in faith when

he said: ”And you, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house. Concerning these stones of the holy Church, the Lord says through Isaiah: ”I will make your ramparts of jasper, and your gates of carved stones, all your borders of desirable stones, all your children taught by the Lord. For Almighty God placed jasper, which is a green-colored stone, as the ramparts of the holy Church, because He strengthened the minds of her preachers with the love of inner greenness, so that they might despise all transitory things, desire nothing in this world which is enclosed by an end, and scorn all its joys as withered. Hence also the shepherd of the Church himself, calling his hearers to the pastures of eternal greenness, speaks of God, saying:

”According to His great mercy, He has regenerated us into a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, into an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven. The gates of this holy Church are set upon carved stones, because those through whose voice we enter into eternal life, while they displayed in themselves the holy works that are divinely commanded, held them as if carved within themselves. For the gates would be uncarved but plain if they merely uttered words but did not demonstrate holy works in themselves. But when they show themselves to live according to what they speak, they are both gates, because they lead within, and carved, because by living they preserve what they speak to others. We see all the borders of this holy Church set in precious stones, when we behold in it all the faithful who are strong in faith and charity. To demonstrate what stones he meant, he added: ”All your children taught by the Lord. Therefore what Isaiah saw—that all the borders of the Church were precious stones—this Ezekiel declared to be a pavement paved with stone round about, because he further adds concerning the treasuries: ”Thirty treasuries in the circuit of the pavement. The number ten is always taken for perfection, because observance is contained in the ten precepts of the law. For the active and contemplative life are joined together in the commandments of the Decalogue, because in it both love of God and love of neighbor are commanded to be kept.

Indeed, love of God pertains to the contemplative life, while love of neighbor pertains to the active. But every teacher, in order to extend himself fully into the active life and rise vigilantly into the contemplative, ought to be perfect in faith in the Holy Trinity. Hence these same treasuries are also mentioned as being thirty, so that when ten is multiplied by three, the life and tongue of the teacher may be established in the Trinity. But in this matter we must vigilantly observe that the prophet, after he had described the treasury chambers, added: ”The pavement round about. And below he added: ”The treasury chambers round about the pavement. So that both the treasury chambers appear to be round about the pavement, and the pavement round about the treasury chambers. Indeed the pavement and the treasury chambers are distinguished in such an order that the treasury chambers were laid between the pavement and the pavement between the treasury chambers. This is not without great mystery, brothers, that the pavement is said to be round about the treasury chambers, and the treasury chambers are said to be round about the pavement. For the pavement has treasury chambers round about, because the tongue of teachers daily

instructs and guards the life of the hearers. For good teachers keep watch in the words of holy instruction, now with the encouragements of sweetness, now with the harshness of rebuke, so that they may defend the life of their hearers from vices.

But those same treasury chambers also have the pavement round about, because often the heart of teachers is also touched by temptations of vices, so that now it is lifted up by the pride of boasting, now it is inflamed by the goads of anger. But when they consider the life of their good hearers and reflect that it has made progress through their exhortations, they are ashamed not to be such as they see others have become through themselves with God as author, and they establish themselves in their mind before they fall completely into fault. For when their own words return to the memory of teachers, they are ashamed not to keep what they say. Hence it is also said through Solomon: "The soul of one who labors labors for himself, because his mouth compelled him. For our mouth compels us to labor, when through what we say we are restrained from vices, because it is too shameful for us to fall by negligence there, from where by preaching we have endeavored to lift others. Therefore the treasury chambers have the pavement round about, because the venerable life of hearers is a great safeguard for teachers. And their own speech becomes a help to them, because they are ashamed not to resist the assaults of vices, who have armed others against vices. For as long as we live in this life, what else do we do against malignant spirits but stand in battle array?

As we have said before, the mind of a teacher is perhaps struck by some pride. But whether lest he himself perish, or lest through his example he drag others to perdition, he vigilantly and swiftly looks around himself, he gnaws at himself in his thoughts; bringing the life of his hearers to memory, he humbles himself, and in whatever ways he is able he acts lest pride rule in his mind, lest it dominate in his work. For it is written: The beginning of all sin is pride. What then will be the fruit of good work before the eyes of God, if it has rotted from the root of pride? Often, as has been said, his mind is tempted by anger; but more quickly he collects himself by looking around at himself, and pressing himself down with the weight of discipline he acts lest the motion of his mind pass into speech, lest it burst forth in voice. And it happens that the anger of a disturbed mind, where it arises through negligence, there being suffocated by judgment it dies. From this it is brought about that from conceived fault the mind brings forth virtue, because even if it was unwilling to guard itself strongly lest it rise to motion, nevertheless it strongly conquered itself in the commotion. Hence it is well said by Solomon: The patient man is better than the strong man, and he who rules his spirit than the conqueror of cities.

Rightly, however, the patient man is preferred to the conqueror of cities, because in that action of victory a man is victor over men, but in this gentleness of patience the mind is victor over itself. There follows: And the pavement in front of the gates according to the length of the gates was below. If we refer the length of the gates to the place in which the gates had been constructed, according to the length of the gates the pavement was lower, because however much the place of the gates could hold, so much did the pavement which

was lower extend. Therefore the length of the pavement from the gates was not dissimilar, but nevertheless the level of the pavement was not equal with the gates. What then does it mean that the pavement was similarly long with the gates, but was not equal, except that the life of the people is far distant from the life of the teachers? Because even if those tending toward the heavenly kingdoms have the same longsuffering of hope, they do not have the same pursuits of living. Let the pavement therefore extend similarly in length, because the hearers retain in themselves the same faith, the same hope, which it is certain the preachers have. But let the pavement lie lower, so that all hearers may recognize that their preachers far excel their own merits.

But if we ought to understand the length of the gates as their height, as we said above, since, as was written a little later, one ascended to the gates by steps, the pavement lies as much lower as each gate rises in height. Because the holier the life of the teacher is, the humbler the understanding of the hearer becomes. And he despises himself, while he perceives that the life of his preacher rises to a great height. For he can perhaps imitate some of his good qualities, others he cannot. In those where he prevails, he advances; in those where he least prevails, he grows in humility. And this very thing therefore is for his advancement, which is not imitable for his advancement. For behold, if we weigh the words and deeds of our preachers that we read, we recognize to what great height the gates have risen. For to say nothing of the display of signs, let us speak of the virtues of their hearts. Certainly Paul, who says he died to the law through the law, because in order that he might believe in Christ, the law itself also proclaimed this to him, inflamed with great ardor of faith, refused to hold the precepts of the law carnally and forbade circumcision to be performed among the Gentiles. And when Peter the apostle wished the custom of the law to still be observed in circumcision, he resisted him to his face, and says that he was reprehensible in this matter.

And speaking to disciples, he calls this zeal of his not only a fault, but what is greater, hypocrisy, that is, pretense, saying: ”When Peter had come to Antioch, I resisted him to his face, because he was reprehensible. And a little later: ”And the other Jews consented to his pretense. But the same first of the apostles, when he was admonishing his disciples about many things and recognized that some were disparaging Paul’s writings, says: ”Just as our most dear brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him, speaking in them about these matters in which there are certain things difficult to understand, which the unlearned and unstable distort, as they do the other scriptures, to their own destruction. Behold, Paul wrote in his Epistles that Peter was reprehensible, and behold, Peter asserts in his Epistles that Paul was to be admired in what he had written. For certainly unless Peter had read Paul’s Epistles, he would not have praised them. But if he read them, he found that he himself was called reprehensible there. Therefore the friend of truth praised even that by which he was reproved, and this very thing pleased him, because in those matters he had not pleased in which he had thought otherwise than he ought.

And he gave his consent even to his lesser brother, and in that same matter became a follower of his inferior, so that he might also lead the way in this, inasmuch as he who was first in

the summit of apostleship would also be first in humility. Consider therefore, most beloved brothers, on what peak of mind he stood who praised those Epistles in which he found himself written as blameworthy. What such great meekness could there have been, what tranquility of spirit, what solidity of mind, and what imperturbability of thought? Behold, he is reproved by his inferior, and he does not disdain to be reproved. He does not recall to memory that he was the first called to the apostolate, not that he received the keys of the heavenly kingdom, not that whatever sins he loosed on earth would be loosed also in heaven, not that he walked on the sea with his feet, not that he raised up paralytics by commanding in the name of Jesus, not that he healed the sick by the shadow of his body, not that he killed liars by a word, not that he raised the dead by prayer. Therefore, lest he should disdain to hear words of rebuke, he drove away from memory, as it were, all the gifts he had received, so that he might firmly hold the one gift of humility. Who of us, I ask, if he had performed even some least sign, would patiently hear words of rebuke when rebuked by a lesser brother?

For we have performed no sign, and if anyone perhaps reproves us for our conduct, we immediately swell up, we silently think ourselves to be great, we bring to mind virtues, even those we do not have. But on the contrary, Peter remained humble with his virtues under reproof, but the gate rose up in height. However, we cannot imitate such great meekness; but because we are the pavement, we lie far below. There are indeed some who understand that it was not Peter the prince of the apostles, but some other person of that name who was rebuked by Paul. If they had read Paul's words more carefully, they would not say this. For Paul, about to say: "When Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him to his face," in order to show which Peter he was speaking of, prefaced at the very beginning of his narrative, saying: "The gospel of the uncircumcision was entrusted to me, just as that of the circumcision was to Peter. For he who worked in Peter for the apostleship of the circumcision also worked in me among the Gentiles. It is clear, therefore, which Peter Paul is speaking of, whom he both names an apostle and relates was set over the gospel of the circumcision. And there were certain ones who said that the second Epistle of Peter, in which the Epistles of Paul are praised, was not his. But if they had been willing to weigh the words of that Epistle, they could have thought far otherwise. For in it is written:

"A voice came down to him of this kind from the magnificent glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And it is added: "And we heard this voice when we were with him on the holy mountain. Let them therefore read the Gospel, and they will immediately recognize that when that voice came from heaven, the Apostle Peter stood on the mountain with the Lord. Therefore he himself wrote this Epistle who heard this voice concerning the Lord on the mountain. But since we have said a few things about Peter, let us now, if you please, turn to the gentleness of Paul, and let us consider, if we can, how great was the gentleness in the pursuit of longsuffering of him who was of such ardor in the zeal of preaching that he did not spare even the first of the apostles. Let us pass over in silence that he was beaten with rods three times, that he was stoned once, that he was shipwrecked three times, that he was a night and a day in the deep of the sea, that from the Jews five

times he received forty lashes minus one. For those evils which are inflicted upon us by open adversaries stir the mind to anger less: what we suffer from our own people usually causes more pain. Hence also through the Psalmist Truth itself speaks against its betrayer, saying: ”For if my enemy had cursed me, I would surely have borne it.

But you, my close companion and my acquaintance, who together with me took sweet food. Let us consider therefore, if we can, how patient the apostle Paul was among persecutors, how gentle among disciples. Certainly when he came to Corinth, he drew the Corinthians back from the service of idols, made known who the true God was, and preached to them the joys of eternal life. And when he had gathered a great multitude of people in the faith, he endured such poverty there that he labored under the grave necessity of his own sustenance. And he did not accept the bread of earth from the disciples to whom he preached the bread of heaven. He devoted himself to the word for the life of his hearers; he devoted himself to the labor of his hands for the life of his body. From other lands also stipends were sent to him by disciples, so that he might be sufficient to preach to the Corinthians. For he himself speaks afterward to those same Corinthians through his Epistle, saying: ”When I was with you and was in need, I was burdensome to no one; for what I lacked, the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. To which he also prefaced as a great reproach, saying: ”I robbed other churches, receiving wages for my ministry to you. Let us consider therefore, if we can, what gentleness this was: to preach the bread of the spirit and not receive the bread of the flesh;

to instruct the hearts of hearers concerning eternal riches, and among those same faithful and abundant disciples to labor with hunger; to suffer want among the satisfied, and yet not speak of what he suffered; not to speak of what he suffered, and yet not grieve; to see the hard hearts of his stingy hearers toward him, and not cease from preaching. For as the Acts of the Apostles testify, he preached continuously in that same city for a year and six months. And when he had departed from those same Corinthians, he afterward wrote to them what he had endured while among them. But why did he never say this to them while he lived among them? Evidently so that what had not been done toward him from good will would not be done from command; and when their mercy became known, their intention would remain unknown. But why does he write this afterward when positioned far away? So that the disciples would not remain entirely uncorrected, and so that they would not be the same toward other brethren as they had been toward their teacher in their stinginess. Truly in this Paul, truly the teacher of the Gentiles, neglecting his own concerns, caring for those of others, fulfilled what he had preached: ”Let no one seek his own, but that which is another’s. And ”not each one considering their own things, but those of others. How great therefore is this virtue of gentleness? How great the tranquility of spirit?

But who among us, if he had converted one rich man of this world to the service of almighty God, and saw himself in need while that man did not provide him the necessities of life, would not immediately have despaired of his life? Who would not say he had labored in vain? Who would not fall silent from exhorting him whom he did not see bearing the fruit of good

work first toward himself? But Paul, firmly established through meekness at the summit of the virtues, persisted, preached, loved, and completed the good work he had begun, and by bearing with them and persisting he led the hearts of his disciples to mercy. For indicating afterward that he knew of their progress, he writes in the same Epistle: ”Concerning the ministry that is done for the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you. For I know your ready spirit, on account of which I boast of you among the Macedonians, that Achaia has been prepared since the year before, and your zeal has provoked very many. Concerning whom he says again: ”You who began not only to do, but also to will, from the year before. For in those from whom he was seeking not so much works as pious intentions, in them without doubt he praises pious intentions more than works. Yet it should be noted that this very consolation contains a reproach, when it is said: ”From the year before.

They had done good indeed, but tardily, and therefore the master praised this not without reproof. For he is a physician; he applies medicine to the wound, which both soothes what has been cleansed and stings what is found to be rotten. But by tolerating and preaching, he completed what he had begun. And by the wondrous virtue of longsuffering he softened the hardness of his disciples to the bowels of mercy, because the length of the gate rose up into height. But we who are weak are not fit to imitate the longsuffering of such great meekness, because clearly we are the pavement, and we lie despised in our own conduct. Behold, while I speak of the two leaders of the heavenly army, the martyr Stephen also comes to mind, who, when seized for the name of his Creator and brought into the midst of his persecutors, stood undaunted, taught with confidence, and from zeal for truth strongly rebuked his persecutors, saying: ”You have always resisted the Holy Spirit. And when they ran to get stones and killed him with stones, kneeling down he prayed for those same persecutors, saying: ”Lord, do not hold this sin against them. What virtue is this, then, to burn so with zeal that he would confidently speak reproaches of their faithlessness to those by whom he was held; and to love so much that even in death he would pray for those by whom he was being killed? Indeed, he so burned with zeal as if he had no meekness at all;

and he so persisted in meekness in love for them as if he had no fervor against them at all. Let us consider amid these things where the guilt of our conscience lies. For who among us, if he has received even a verbal insult from a neighbor, does not immediately return the insult, is not thoroughly disturbed, does not burst forth into hatred, does not forget the commandment of love? But blessed Stephen was able to do this through the grace of almighty God, because rising to the height he was a gate. We wretched ones cannot imitate this by our own strength, because we lie far below like pavement. But what do we say of our admiration in the life of the saints, when even the ancient fathers themselves, considering the life of the holy Church’s preachers, greatly admired them? Did not the Psalmist admire their life when he said: ”But to me Your friends are exceedingly honored, O God, their principality is exceedingly strengthened”? Ask the Gospel about which of His friends he speaks this, in which the Truth says to the preachers: ”You are My friends. Isaiah also, looking upon their life, said: ”Who are these who fly as clouds, and as doves to their windows? Rightly indeed are the holy preachers called clouds, because they rain

with words and flash with miracles. They are also said to fly like clouds, because even while living on earth they were beyond the earth through everything they did. Whence also it is said through a certain cloud:

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the earlier fathers used marriages, begot children, possessed property, and attended to the cares of family affairs. But foreseeing these men already through the spirit of prophecy—that they would abandon possessions, not desire marriages, not beget children, seek nothing on earth, possess nothing—they name them not as men walking upon the earth, but as clouds flying. For they fly because in their mind they contemplate the things that are heavenly. They almost do not touch the earth because they desire nothing in it. And they are like doves at their windows because through the spirit of their gentleness they covet nothing in this world through their eyes. Let us therefore consider how great is the height of these gates of the spiritual building, which even the spiritual fathers admire. How much therefore is it necessary for us to be humbled in admiration of them, we who are the pavement? But since under the designation of length we have heard of the height of the gates, now let us learn something of their width. There follows: "And he measured the width from the face of the lower gate to the front of the inner court on the outside, a hundred cubits to the East and to the North. In these words, if we understand the gate as the entrance by which we enter into the knowledge of the Lord, the lower gate is faith, while the inner court is contemplation.

Moreover, the lower gate has width in its face, because clearly faith through the amplitude of its charity has that operation which is seen by neighbors. When we observe this being carried out strongly by those who are more perfect, we who are constrained in good actions receive through them examples of great operation. And each holy action becomes for us, as it were, a certain width of the journey, which previously was a narrowness of difficulty. The inner court also has a front, because the contemplative life through certain signs of desires and groans shows how much it sees within, which it loves so greatly. Moreover, the number ten multiplied by itself rises to one hundred. Hence rightly through one hundred great perfection is designated, just as the Truth says of the elect: Everyone who leaves house, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or fields for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall possess eternal life. For no holy person abandons earthly things in order to be able to possess them more abundantly in this world, because whoever leaves earth with earthly eagerness does not leave earth but seeks it. Nor will one who abandons one wife receive a hundred;

but through the number one hundred perfection is designated, after which eternal life is also promised, because whoever despises temporal and earthly things for God's name both receives here perfection of mind, so that he no longer desires what he despises, and in the age to come arrives at the glory of eternal life. Therefore he receives a hundredfold what he gave, who receiving the spirit of perfection, does not need earthly things, even if he does not have them. For he is poor who lacks what he does not have. For he who not having does not desire to have, is rich. For poverty is in the want of the mind, not in the quantity of possession. For

one who gets along well with poverty is not poor. Therefore the man measured the width from the face of the lower gate to the front of the inner court on the outside, one hundred cubits, because our Redeemer daily through masters and teachers measures the life of the faithful in the measure of perfection, either in the appearance of good work through faith, or in holy desires through contemplation. For many seem to be established in faith and to work great things, but they are not measured at a hundred cubits, because through the very things they do they seek earthly glory. And some seem to be afflicted through abstinence, to persist in groaning; but their measure is by no means extended to a hundred cubits, because in those things which they do they seek favors from human judgment.

Who therefore is the one who is measured by a hundred cubits, except he whose good work employs a right intention, so that in what he does he is not turned back toward desiring earthly gains or toward transitory praises? Behold, for to show mercy to neighbors, to give away possessions, to bestow upon the needy with swiftness, is breadth in the face of the lower gate. But if in giving your own things you do not covet what belongs to others, if you do not seek earthly glory from that good work itself, you are rightly measured in the number one hundred, that is, in perfection. For he who seems to give his own things mercifully, and yet perhaps seizes the things of others violently, still does not know what the way of perfection is, nor has he understood from where one reaches toward perfection, because he has not found even its beginning. For he ought first to have plucked out desire from his mind, and afterward to give away what he rightfully possesses. Hence it is written: Turn away from evil and do good. For what good can there be in what he does, who has not yet turned away from evil? And there are some who, as has been said, abstain from food, mortify the flesh, yet if they are struck, they are recognized as panting after worldly glory. These show the front of the inner court, but they are not measured at one hundred cubits.

These therefore are in the number of perfection, of whom it is said by Paul: ”Who have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences. And it should be noted that it is not said that these things are measured from within, but from without, because clearly our Redeemer, when through us He either approves or judges the deeds of men, measures not from within but from without. Hence He also says through the Gospel: ”By their fruits you shall know them. For when through what we see we recognize the spirit of the worker which we do not see, we measure from without either the breadth which is in the face of the lower gate, or the front of the inner court. For when we observe others giving alms, hastening to the afflicted, coming to the aid of the oppressed, seeking nothing of glory in this world, gaping after no gains of this world, and we see others subduing the flesh, persisting in tears, occupied with heavenly words, desiring nothing of transitory honor, what else ought we to do but believe them to be perfect, esteem them holy? Therefore, because through what we behold we see them to be perfect, we measure their life from without by a hundred cubits. And because many in Judea, and indeed most among the Gentiles, arrived at this summit of perfection, rightly it is added: ”To the East and to the North.

For the Jewish people is rightly called the East, from whose flesh He was born who is called the Sun of justice. Of whom it is said through the prophet: ”But to you who fear the Lord, the Sun of justice shall rise. By the North, however, the Gentiles are figured, who long lay torpid in the cold of their unbelief, and in whose heart he reigned who, as the prophet attests, said within himself: ”I will set my throne in the North. Therefore, since almighty God incarnate made some perfect ones from Judea and other perfect ones from the Gentiles within the holy Church, He measured a hundred cubits not only to the East, but also to the North. But because under the name of the North a discourse about the Gentiles has arisen, it is pleasing to consider how greatly the tender mercies of our Creator have been poured out upon us. For we all came from the Gentiles. Our ancient ancestors served wood and stones, and, abandoning God by whom they were made, they venerated gods whom they themselves made. But we, through the grace of almighty God, have been led forth from darkness into light. Let us therefore recall from what darkness we came, that we may give thanks for the light we have received. For he does not understand divine mercy who is not mindful of his own misery. Hence also it is said to God through the Psalmist: ”Make your mercies wonderful, O Lord, you who save those who hope in you.

For then the mercies of God become wonderful to us, when our miseries are recalled to our memory, because, remembering what we were, we understand to whom we owe what we are. Let us therefore sing with joy to our Creator, because we have shaken off the yoke of servitude to creation from the neck of our mind. Let us rejoice that what was said through Isaiah has been fulfilled in us: ”And the bridle of error that was in the jaws of the peoples shall be a song for you, like the voice of a sanctified solemnity. For the bridle of error had bound the jaws of the peoples, when the Gentiles, bound by the error of idols, knew not how to give the praise of confession to the true God. But this very bridle of error has now been turned into a song for us, since rejoicing we sing psalms and chant: ”All the gods of the nations are demons, but the Lord made the heavens. And again: ”The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the works of human hands: they have mouths, and shall not speak; they have eyes, and shall not see; they have ears, and shall not hear; they have nostrils, and shall not smell; they have hands, and shall not feel; they have feet, and shall not walk.

We therefore who say these things in psalm to the almighty Lord have made the very bridle of our error, which had bound our mouths from the praise of God, a song to the true Lord. And well is it said: ”Like the night of a sanctified solemnity,” because while we render the praise of confession to God, we rejoice in a sanctified solemnity. Let us therefore respond in our conduct to the so great mercy of our Redeemer, and we who have known the light, let us turn away from the darkness of wicked works. I ask, what is there now in this world that gives pleasure? Everywhere we see grief, from all sides we hear groans. Cities have been destroyed, fortifications have been overthrown, fields have been depopulated, the land has been reduced to solitude. No inhabitant remains in the fields, almost no dweller remains in the cities; and yet even these small remnants of the human race are still struck daily and without cease. And the scourges of heavenly justice have no end, because even amid the scourges the sins of conduct have not been corrected. We see some led into captivity,

some mutilated, some killed. What is there, therefore, that gives pleasure in this life, my brothers? If we still love such a world, we love not joys but wounds. And we see what Rome herself has become, she who once seemed to be the mistress of the world.

Worn down manifold by immense sorrows, by the desolation of citizens, by the assault of enemies, by the frequency of ruins; so that in her we see fulfilled what was said against the city of Samaria through this same prophet long before: Set on the pot, set it on, I say, and pour water into it, and gather its pieces into it. And a little later: Its cooking has boiled over, and its bones have been thoroughly cooked in its midst. And again: Heap up the bones, which I will burn with fire: the flesh will be consumed, and the whole composition will be cooked, and the bones will waste away. Also set it empty upon the coals, that it may grow hot and its bronze may melt. For the pot was set on for us when this city was established. Then water was poured into it and its pieces were gathered together, when peoples flowed together to her from all sides, who like boiling water would seethe with the activities of the world, and like pieces of flesh would melt in that very heat. Of which it is well said: Its cooking has boiled over, and its bones have been thoroughly cooked in its midst, because first indeed the pursuit of worldly glory burned intensely hot in her, but afterward that very glory failed along with its followers.

For by the bones the powerful of the world are signified, while by the flesh the common people are designated, because just as flesh is supported by bones, so the weakness of the peoples is governed by the powerful of the world. But behold, now all the powerful of this age have been taken away from her; therefore the bones have been cooked out. Behold, the peoples have failed, her flesh has melted away. Let it be said therefore: Heap up the bones, which I will burn with fire; the flesh will be consumed, and her whole composition will be cooked, and the bones will waste away. For where is the senate? Where now is the people? The bones have wasted away, the flesh has been consumed, all the pride of worldly dignities in her has been extinguished. Her whole composition has been cooked out. And yet even we few who remain are still pressed daily by swords, still by innumerable tribulations daily. Let it be said therefore: Also set it empty upon the coals. For since the senate is gone, the people have perished, and yet in the few who remain sorrows and groans are multiplied daily, Rome now burns empty. But why do we say these things about people, when, as ruins multiply, we see even the buildings themselves being destroyed? Hence it is fittingly added concerning the city now empty: Let it grow hot and let its bronze melt.

For now even the pot itself is being consumed, in which previously both flesh and bones were consumed, because after the people have failed, even the walls are falling. But where are those who once rejoiced in her glory? Where is their pomp? Where is their pride? Where is their frequent and immoderate joy? In her was fulfilled what is said through the prophet against destroyed Nineveh: Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions? Were not her leaders and princes lions, who, running through the various provinces of the world, seized plunder by raging and killing? Here the young lions found their feeding place, because boys, adolescents, worldly youths, and the sons of worldly men

rushed together here from everywhere, when they wished to advance in this world. But now behold, she is desolated, behold, she is crushed, behold, she is oppressed with groans. Now no one runs to her in order to advance in this world; now no powerful and violent man remains who might seize plunder by oppressing. Let us therefore say: Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions? What happened to her we know was said through the prophet concerning Judea: Enlarge your baldness like the eagle. For the baldness of a man usually occurs only on the head, but the baldness of an eagle occurs over the whole body, because when it has grown very old, its feathers and plumes fall from all its limbs.

Therefore she enlarges her baldness like an eagle, because she has lost her feathers, she who has lost her people. The feathers of her wings also fell, with which she was accustomed to fly to prey, because all her powerful men have perished, through whom she seized the things of others. But these things which we say concerning the destruction of the city of Rome, we know to have been done in all the cities of the world. For some places have been desolated by plague, others consumed by the sword, others tortured by famine, others swallowed up by gaping chasms of the earth. Let us therefore despise with our whole soul this present age, whether extinguished or not; let us end our desires for the world at least with the end of the world: let us imitate the deeds of the good as much as we can. For in the East and the North there are many who are measured at a hundred cubits for the perfection of their life. For from Judea and from the Gentiles, as has been said, they have grown to the summit of holiness. Although by the East and the North the just and sinners can also be understood. For the just are not undeservedly called the East, who, as they were born in the light of faith, have persisted in innocence. But by the North we rightly understand sinners, who, having fallen away through coldness of mind, have grown numb under the shadow of their sin.

But because the mercy of almighty God recalls even such persons to repentance, washes them with compunction and tears, enriches them with virtues, and raises them up even to the glory of perfection, a hundred cubits are measured not only toward the East, but also toward the North, since together with the just, sinners also come to perfection through gifts and repentance, by the bounty of our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns as God through all ages of ages. Amen.

HOMILY VII

Readers must exercise great discernment, so that when any single word is used in sacred Scripture, it is not believed to always signify one and the same thing—just as sometimes ”sun” is taken in a good sense, and sometimes in a bad sense. For by the name of sun, sometimes our Redeemer Himself is signified, and sometimes persecution. For as the Book of Wisdom attests, the impious in hell will say: ”We have erred from the way of truth, and the sun of justice has not shone upon us. And concerning the seeds that were cast, the Lord says: ”When the sun rose, they withered”—because, that is, when persecution arose, the words of preaching dried up in the hearts of the reprobate. Likewise, ”lion” signifies the Lord.

Hence it is written: ”The lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered. Yet by the name of lion, the likeness of the devil is also expressed, as is said by the first pastor: ”Your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour. Likewise, by the name of ox, a wise person is designated. Hence it is written: ”You shall not yoke together an ox and a donkey”—that is, you shall not join a wise person with a fool in preaching. Yet by ”ox” a fool is also figured, as is said of one who has been captured in shameful love: ”Immediately he follows her, like an ox led to slaughter”—that is, like a fool being dragged to death.

I have said these things, therefore, lest—because I have explained that a gate can signify the Lord, or preachers, or sacred Scripture, or faith—wherever ”gate” is read henceforth in this prophet, it be believed that it cannot signify something else. For when the prophet was speaking of one gate, faith was rightly understood, because there is one faith of all the elect. But when other gates are named, the mouths of preachers can be understood, through which true life is known, and through which one ascends to the knowledge of spiritual sacraments. For regarding the gate by which we said faith is signified, we should note that it is called ”lower. For while we are in this life, we are held as if placed in the depths, still kept below. And rightly is the lower gate faith, because it opens to us, placed on earth, the knowledge of God. And so now it is said: ”He also measured the gate which looked toward the way of the North in the outer court, both in its length and in its breadth. And its chambers were three on this side and three on that side; and its fronts and its vestibule according to the measure of the first gate: fifty cubits its length, and its breadth twenty-five cubits. And its windows and vestibule and carvings were according to the measure of the gate which looked toward the East; and its ascent was of seven steps, and the vestibule before it.

Of the gate which looked toward the way of the North of the outer court, those same things are repeated which were already said above concerning the other gate, and other things are added which the prophet had passed over in silence concerning the aforesaid gate. Therefore, in order that we may discuss more fully those things which have not yet been examined, we ought to repeat briefly what has already been said. For the gate looks toward the way of the North when any preacher recognizes the life of a sinner and opens to him the interior things of life through the word of preaching. This gate is called the gate of the outer court. For the outer court is the present life, in which everything that is done bodily is also seen bodily. This gate is measured both in length and in breadth, because when a sinner is led to the faith, it is necessary that his teacher consider how much he advances in the length of hope or how much in the breadth of charity from his admonition. For he who is converted to God, if he still hopes for the good things of the present life, does not have length, because the life in which he has placed his hope is short. If he is confined by the desire for earthly things and still by hatred of his neighbor, he does not have breadth, because he does not know how to despise passing things or to expand himself in love of neighbor.

But when anyone who has been converted hopes with longsuffering for the joys of eternal life, bears the troubles of his neighbors with charity, and despises coveting what he does not have—the gate has length and breadth, because the glory of the preacher is the progress

of the hearer. Whence it is said to certain ones through the great preacher: My joy and my crown. And again: Behold, now I live, if you stand in the Lord. And again: What is our hope or joy? Is it not you before the Lord? Therefore the length and breadth of the gate is that which looks toward the North, because when a preacher has converted to the faith any unbeliever who was torpid in the coldness of his sin, through the fact that he stretches him out in the length of hope and expands him in the amplitude of charity, he makes his glory his own. And because in the knowledge of the Holy Trinity hearers advance from the word of preaching in love of the same Trinity, this same gate has three chambers on one side and three on the other, because everything that the Creator speaks concerning the Trinity through the New Testament, He also shows from the Old Testament. And the heart of hearers advances in love of the heavenly fatherland, so that the soul clinging to God may sit as a bride with the bridegroom in a certain chamber already, and turn itself completely away from earthly desires.

Vel certe, ut longe superius dictum est, quia tres sunt ordines bene viventium, bonorum scilicet coniugatorum, continentium, atque praedicatorum, et quia alii etiam in coniugiis positi amore coelestis patriae anhelant, alii autem spe aeterni gaudii etiam carnem macerant, omnesque actus terrenos refugiunt, et in cura huius saeculi implicari contemnunt, alii vero et terrena bona despiciunt, et coelestia gaudia praedicant, quae cognoverunt, quid isti nisi in spiritali aedificio thalami sunt in quorum cogitatione et meditatione anima coelesti sponso sociatur? Or certainly, as was said far above, because there are three orders of those living well, namely of the good married, the continent, and the preachers, and because some even placed in marriages long for the heavenly fatherland with love, while others through hope of eternal joy even mortify the flesh, and flee all earthly activities, and scorn to be entangled in the care of this world, while others both despise earthly goods and preach the heavenly joys which they have come to know, what are these if not chambers in the spiritual building, in whose thought and meditation the soul is joined to the heavenly spouse? Quos tres bonorum ordines, quia non solum Ecclesia ex gentibus habet, sed aliquando etiam Synagoga habuit, dum magna multitudo spiritalium Redemptoris gratiam ardenter exspectavit, porta aedificii coelestis tres hinc, et tres inde thalamos habet, quia praedicator quisque, cum ad supernam patriam auditorem provocat, et novos patres et veteres anhelasse coelesti desiderio demonstrat.

Because the Church from the Gentiles not only has these three orders of the good, but also the Synagogue once had them, while a great multitude of spiritual persons ardently awaited the grace of the Redeemer, the gate of the heavenly building has three chambers on this side and three on that side, because every preacher, when he summons his hearer to the heavenly fatherland, demonstrates that both new and old fathers longed with heavenly desire. Plus enim plerumque exempla quam ratiocinationis verba compungunt; et cum praedicator dicit quales alii in coniugio, vel in continentia, vel in praedicatione erga omnipotentis Dei amorem in novo testamento fuerint, vel alii quales in veteri, porta quae loquitur ternos ex utroque latere habere se thalamos ostendit. For examples often pierce more than words of reasoning; and when the preacher says what kind of persons others were in marriage, or in

continence, or in preaching regarding love of almighty God in the New Testament, or what kind others were in the Old, the gate which speaks shows that it has three chambers on each side. Quae porta habet et frontem, quia sunt in praedicatoris vita aperta opera quae videntur. This gate also has a front, because there are in the preacher's life open works which are seen. Habet et ante frontem vestibulum, quia priusquam bona opera insinuet, praedicat fidem, per quam anima humiliter veniens ad bonorum actuum altitudinem sublevetur.

It also has a vestibule before the front, because before he introduces good works, he preaches faith, through which the soul coming humbly may be lifted up to the height of good actions. Quae cuncta secundum mensuram portae prioris sunt, iuxta hoc quod subditur: Quia mensus est quinquaginta cubitorum longitudinem eius, et latitudinem viginti quinque cubitorum. All of which are according to the measure of the former gate, according to what is added: "That he measured its length at fifty cubits, and its width at twenty-five cubits. You remember that I have said these things more extensively above. For we said that rest is signified by the number fifty, because the fiftieth year was given to the ancient people for rest, since it was called the jubilee; and the number seven, through which this entire time unfolds, multiplied seven times leads to forty-nine. To this a unit is added, because eternal rest is perfected in the contemplation of the One. Therefore the same number fifty is for us in length, because one cannot arrive at that rest unless one can now patiently extend one's hope toward it. For since we are called to eternal rest through the number fifty, this also instructs us completely: that in the tabernacle ten curtains were commanded to be made, which would have fifty loops each, and fifty golden rings on the side and at the top. For the curtains of the tabernacle are all the saints who advance in the adornment of Holy Church from the diverse colors of virtues.

They both veil the interior things and adorn the exterior things in every way, because their life, insofar as it is seen, is an ornament; and their understanding is hidden within, while the heavenly things which they keep in mind and cannot express are in some way veiled in them. Rightly there are ten curtains, because through the keeping of the Decalogue the very hearts of the saints have progressed. The hyacinth-colored loops of the curtains were commanded to be made fifty in number. Hyacinth has the appearance of the sky. Therefore the loops of the curtains are the heavenly precepts, by which souls are bound, so that lifted up from lower things they may hang above. These loops indeed have golden rings, namely understanding shining with true wisdom. This understanding, because it ought to be circumspect in all things and fortified by the vigilance of cautious solicitude, is rightly designated by rings. And it should be noted that loops or rings are commanded to be made on the side and at the top of the curtains, because heavenly precepts and spiritual understanding ought not only to suspend us upward in the love of God, but also to unite us with our neighbor in charity. For in that we love our Creator, we hang in the air, as it were, by the upper loops.

But in that we love our neighbors as ourselves, we have loops and rings on the side, so that the curtains of the tabernacle, that is, the souls of the faithful, may be joined together

through charity and not divided through discord. Hence here also, after the length of fifty cubits, the width of twenty-five cubits is immediately added, which width indeed pertains to love of neighbor. For it expands itself into love of the brethren and exercises toward them every good work that it can. Moreover, all the good works that are done bodily are performed through the five senses of the body, namely through sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. The number five multiplied by itself arrives at twenty-five, because good works, when they have begun to be done, stir up the mind through fervor to increase, and are multiplied through themselves. Hence they also create breadth for the mind, so that it may not be narrow through lukewarmness, but expanded in good actions through charity. For all sluggishness of lukewarmness is narrowness, but all kindness of charity is great breadth. For even if resources are lacking that might perhaps be offered to a needy neighbor, the substance of good will is ample, which suffices for the reward of the kingdom, as it is written: On earth peace to men of good will. There follows: And its windows, and its vestibule, and its carvings were according to the measure of the gate that looked toward the East.

All these things have already been discussed more extensively above, and therefore the discourse should not be delayed with a lengthy exposition. However, this must be especially noted: that the gate toward the North is said to have all the same things that the gate toward the East has, namely the windows of contemplation, the vestibule of humility, and the carving of good works. For all who have persevered in innocence because they were born to God in their conversion have the gate toward the East, because the entrance to the heavenly kingdom lies open to them from the light they received. And all who, having later fallen into sins, were weighed down by the coldness of their torpor, but who, when they return through penance, grow warm again toward love of the heavenly homeland, have the gate toward the North, because for them also, after the coldness of their sin, the entrance to the heavenly kingdom lies open through mercy. Therefore the gate toward the North is said to have the same things that the gate toward the East has, because converted sinners are enriched with virtues just as those are rich who avoided falling into sin. Hence also by the voice of the Psalmist it is said through the Lord: ”I ate ashes like bread,” because He receives the penitent just as He does the righteous. For it is written concerning sinners: ”They would have done penance long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Therefore ashes are eaten like bread when a sinner is recalled through penance to the grace of his Creator just like an innocent person. Therefore the gate toward the North has windows, has a vestibule, has carvings, because when a sinner is led back to life after his faults, he often receives the light of contemplation, and from the very memory of his iniquity he gains the grace of great humility and also the efficacy of good works, so that everything that is commanded to be done appears as if carved in his life. Its ascent was of seven steps, and a vestibule was before it. The gate is ascended by seven steps, because through the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit the entrance to heavenly life is opened to us. Isaiah, enumerating this sevenfold grace in our very Head, or in His body, which we are, says: ”The spirit of wisdom and understanding shall rest upon Him, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and piety, and the spirit of the fear of the Lord shall fill Him. Speaking of

heavenly things, he numbered these steps by descending rather than ascending, namely: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, fear. And since it is written, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," it is without doubt established that one ascends from fear to wisdom, but does not return from wisdom to fear, because indeed wisdom possesses perfect charity. And it is written: "Perfect charity casts out fear.

Therefore the prophet, because he was speaking from heavenly things down to the lowest, began rather from wisdom and descended to fear. But we who strive from earthly things toward heavenly things, let us enumerate those same steps by ascending, that we may be able to arrive from fear to wisdom. For in our mind the first step of ascent is the fear of the Lord; the second, piety; the third, knowledge; the fourth, fortitude; the fifth, counsel; the sixth, understanding; the seventh, wisdom. For the fear of the Lord exists in the mind. But what kind of fear is this, if piety is not with it? For he who knows not how to show mercy to his neighbor, who pretends not to share in his tribulations, his fear is nothing before the eyes of almighty God, because it is not raised up to piety. But often piety is accustomed to err through disordered mercy, if perchance it spares what ought not to be spared. For sins that can be struck by the fires of hell must be corrected by the rod of discipline. But disordered piety, when it spares temporally, drags one down to eternal punishment. Therefore, that piety may be true and ordered, it must be raised to another step, that is, to knowledge, so that it may know what to punish by judgment and what to forgive by mercy. But what if someone knows what he ought to do, yet lacks the strength to do it?

Therefore let our knowledge grow to fortitude, so that when it sees what must be done, it can do this through strength of mind, lest it tremble with fear and, collapsed by dread, be unable to defend the good things it perceives. But often fortitude, if it is improvident and less circumspect against vices, falls into ruin by its very presumption. Therefore let it ascend to counsel, so that by foreseeing it may fortify everything it can do boldly. But there cannot be counsel if understanding is lacking, because he who does not understand the evil that burdens the doer, how can he strengthen the good that helps? And so let us ascend from counsel to understanding. But what if understanding watches with great sharpness, yet knows not how to moderate itself through maturity? Therefore let one ascend from understanding to wisdom, so that what understanding discovers keenly, wisdom may arrange with maturity. Because therefore through fear we rise to piety, through piety we are led to knowledge, through knowledge we are strengthened to fortitude, through fortitude we strive toward counsel, through counsel we advance into understanding, through understanding we arrive at the maturity of wisdom, we ascend to the gate by seven steps, through which the entrance to spiritual life is opened to us. But it is well said that the vestibule was before it, because unless one first has humility, he does not ascend to these steps of spiritual gifts, as it is written:

Upon whom shall my spirit rest, if not upon the humble and quiet one, and the one trembling at my words. Concerning which it is said through the Psalmist: He disposed ascents in his heart in the valley of tears. For a valley is a low place, and every sinner, while he humbly

afflicts himself in tears in his heart, advances through the ascent of virtues. Who again says: He sends forth springs in the valleys, because almighty God bestows the gifts of spiritual grace upon the humble. The vestibule can also be understood as faith. For faith itself comes before the steps and the gate, because we first come to faith so that afterward we may enter the access to heavenly life through the steps of spiritual gifts. For one does not come to faith through virtues, but through faith one attains to virtues. For Cornelius the centurion, whose alms before baptism were praised by the testimony of an angel, did not come to faith through works, but came to works through faith. For to him also it is said through the angel: "Your prayers and alms have ascended in the sight of God. For if he had not believed in the true God even before baptism, whom was he praying to? Or how had almighty God heard him, if he was not asking to be perfected in good things by Him? Therefore he knew God the Creator of all things, but he did not know that His almighty Son had become incarnate.

For he could not have done good things unless he had first believed. For it is written: "Without faith it is impossible to please God. Therefore he had faith, whose prayers and alms were able to please God. But through good action he merited to know God perfectly and to believe the mystery of His incarnation, so that he might arrive at the sacraments of baptism. Therefore through faith he came to works, but through works he was strengthened in faith. And so the vestibule is before the steps, because he who first believed, he himself afterward ascends by the steps of the virtues to the access of the gate. There follows: "And the gate of the inner court opposite the gate to the North and to the East. In this place "contra" [against/opposite] is placed not for opposition, but for straightness; for the gate of the inner court was shown to be positioned such that the gate of the North and of the East extended to it by a straight approach. What therefore does it mean that the inner gate is shown positioned in a straight path opposite the gate of the East and of the North, except that it is openly given to understand that whether to the Jewish or Gentile people, or to the righteous and to sinners, but those converted after sins, the entrance to the heavenly kingdom is equally opened? For the mercy of our Creator is abundant.

And the inner gate looks not only upon the gate of the East, but also of the North, because the joys of the inner court are opened not only to those who remain in innocence, but also to sinners condemning their sins through penance, so that they may recognize the ineffable mysteries of the heavenly homeland, thirsting by recognizing, running by thirsting, arriving by running. He who said knew these secrets of inner joy: "My soul has thirsted for the living God, when shall I come and appear before the face of God? The preacher of the Gentiles was yearning for this entrance to the heavenly kingdom when he said: "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ. The bride who said knew these secrets of hidden exultation: "My beloved put his hand through the opening, and my belly trembled at his touch. For the beloved puts his hand through the opening when our Lord strikes our soul by his power through subtle understanding. And the belly trembles at his touch, because our weakness, through being touched by the understanding of heavenly joy, is disturbed by its very exultation, and there arises fear with gladness in the mind, because it now senses what it loves concerning heavenly joy, and yet fears lest it not receive what it barely and faintly

senses. What therefore remains except that all who recognize those joys of the heavenly homeland should direct themselves to the course of the life of perfection? Whence here also is fittingly added:

"And he measured from gate to gate one hundred cubits. The number one hundred, because it is produced by ten times ten, we have already said above is perfect. Therefore, he who sees the entrance of the inner court must necessarily run through the life of perfection, and arrive from the gate of beginning to the entrance of consummation. Let the inner court therefore be measured, which extends from the outer gates to the inner gate, at one hundred cubits, so that he who has begun to enter by loving may have the breadth of perfection in mind, so that in him whom he loves neither adversities may constrain him nor prosperities exalt him, but, despising all transitory things, until he arrives at the secret joys, he may run through the court of perfection. For there are many who have already entered the entrance of the outer gate by seven steps, according to a certain manner of heavenly dispensation: humble through the fear of God, merciful through the pursuit of piety, discerning through knowledge, free through strength of mind, cautious through counsel, prudent through understanding, mature through wisdom; but, still bound by certain necessities, they serve the cares of this world, and where they have already for the most part shaken off their mind, there they are still held unwillingly. And while they bear the burdens of earthly occupation imposed upon them, they are less exercised in the heavenly precepts. There is no leisure to yearn from the depths of their heart for the eternal homeland;

their very desires in some way grow weak in them, because indeed, hindered by temporal cares, it is not permitted to love the true joys that they have come to know as much as they would wish. These often shake off the yoke of the world from the neck of their mind, abandon all things, lay down the burdens of earthly care, and in order to open more widely the bosom of their soul to heavenly desire, they seek a secluded life, and intent on holy prayers, devoted to sacred meditations, they afflict themselves with daily weeping, and melt the oldness of their heart in the fire of love, and renew themselves by kindling themselves toward heavenly joy. These often, enkindled in their very desire, now long to depart from the flesh, and do not wish to return to the present life after weeping. But nevertheless they are delayed, so that their deferred love may profit from its very deferral, and may grow with ardent desire as if for what is denied. Thus in the region of the Gerasenes, he who had been freed from the legion of demons already wished to go with the Lord, but nevertheless it is said to him: "Return to your house, and tell how great things the Lord has done for you. Thus the bride in the Song of Songs, anxious with holy desires, speaks, saying: "In my little bed through the nights I sought him whom my soul loves. I sought him, and did not find him.

For she seeks the beloved in her little bed, when in that very rest and leisure which she desires, the soul now longs to see the Lord, now desires to go out to him, now yearns to be free of the darkness of the present life. But she seeks him and does not find him, because although she desires with great love, it is still not granted to her to see him whom she loves.

Such minds of the saints, therefore, what else do they do in this desire except run from the outer gates through the inner court to the gate? It often happens to them that when they have seen themselves pierced with the great gift of heavenly grace, they now consider themselves perfect and think themselves obedient; but because there is no one who commands hard things, they believe themselves to be patient, but because no one strikes them through insults and adversities. And it frequently happens that they undertake spiritual ministry even unwillingly, and are led to the governance of the faithful. When they have been struck on all sides by great tribulations, troubled in mind, they find themselves imperfect, who when not struck believed themselves to be perfect. From this matter it comes about that they gather themselves to themselves, and silently blush at the reproach of their own weakness before themselves, and, strengthened from their very confusion, they set patience against adversities, and profit from tribulation, who previously in leisure grew sluggish from their very security.

And they truly begin to be such as they previously thought themselves to be in vain. Therefore when these are carried from the outer gates all the way to the inner gate through the court of good zeal, this same court is measured in them at a hundred cubits, because by holy delay and exercise they daily advance toward perfection. For to advance daily in the mind through desires is, as it were, to measure the inner court at a hundred cubits. Therefore from the gates to the gate there are a hundred cubits, so that the very delay of living may be, as it were, a certain pause of going, through which one daily grows in virtues, so that one may arrive more perfectly at the inner entrance. There follows: And he led me out to the way of the South, and behold a gate which looked toward the South; and he measured its front and its vestibule according to the measures above; and its windows, and the vestibules round about, like the other windows, fifty cubits in length and twenty-five cubits in width. And by seven steps one ascended to it, and a vestibule before its doors. All these things have already been said regarding the gate of the East and the North, and it is not fitting that we should repeatedly go over what we have already explained once and twice. Nevertheless, we must note that in the spiritual building one entrance opens to the East, another to the North, and another to the South.

For just as sinners are designated by the cold of the North, so those who are fervent in spirit are designated by the Southern way, who, kindled by the heat of the Holy Spirit, grow in virtues as if in the noonday light. Let the gate to the East therefore stand open, so that those who have well begun the sacraments of faith, and have not afterward been submerged in any depth of vices, may arrive at the secret joys. Let the gate to the North stand open, so that those who after the beginning of warmth and light have fallen away into the cold and darkness of their sins may return to pardon through the compunction of repentance, and may know what is the true gladness of internal reward. Let the gate to the South stand open, so that those who are fervent in virtues through holy desires may daily penetrate the mysteries of internal joy through spiritual understanding. Among these matters, however, it can be asked, since there are four parts of this world, why in this building of the outer court are not four but three gates mentioned? This would rightly have needed to be asked

if the Prophet had seen a corporeal rather than a spiritual building. For the holy Church, that is, the spiritual building, has only three gates to reach the secret joys, namely faith, hope, and charity: one to the East, another to the North, a third to the South.

For the gate to the East is faith, because through it the true light is born in the mind. The gate to the North is hope, because anyone placed in sins, if he has despaired of pardon, utterly loses mercy. Whence it is necessary that he who has been extinguished through his own iniquity may revive through hope of mercy. The gate to the South is charity, because it burns with the fire of love. For in the southern region the sun is raised on high, because through charity the light of faith is elevated in the love of God and neighbor. Therefore through three gates one proceeds to the inner court, because through faith, hope, and charity one arrives at the secret joys. Another question also arises, why the gate of the inner court is said to be placed opposite the gate of the East and the North, while the fact that it opens toward the Southern gate is left unspoken. But because we have said that beginners are designated by the East and the fallen by the North, it was fitting that it be openly stated regarding either the beginners, for whom the sun is still in lukewarmness, or even regarding the fallen but returning through conversion, that the gate of the inner court lies open for them, so that he might make us certain about those concerning whom there could have been doubt.

But this did not need to be said about the Southern gate, because no one is unaware that those who remain in virtues through fervor of spirit attain to the internal joys. For Aaron, at the people's demand, had made an idol, and rightly there could be doubt about his life. Therefore Moses is not called holy, because he is known by all to be holy; and he calls Aaron the holy one of the Lord, so that he might remove from us doubt about his life. There follows: And palms were carved, one on this side, and another on that side on its front. What is the meaning of this, that earlier a painting of palms was on the fronts, but now carved palms are mentioned as being on the front? In the carving of stones, indeed, the works appear to be external. But, as we have already said above, the painting of palms is a display of signs. Now, however, carving of palms is spoken of, so that a demonstration of good works may be designated. For to those highest preachers themselves it is said: Let them see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Therefore those who demonstrate that holy works have been impressed upon their life have carved palms on the front, because they already now show in their holy works how great a victory follows them in the future.

Or certainly because we have said that faith is designated through the Eastern gate, hope through the Northern gate, but charity through the Southern gate, we must note that in the Eastern gate a painting of palms is reported, but in the Northern and Southern gates, carving is said to be, because it often happens that those who are still beginners do not yet exercise themselves in solid and great works; but those who return from iniquities to virtues are frequently exercised in great works, so that they may be able to cover their faults before the eyes of almighty God. And those who have already grown in virtues by the fervor of the spirit burn as it were like the South in holy actions. In the Eastern gate, therefore,

there is painting, but in the Northern and Southern gates there is carving, because the sign of victory which is shown in beginners is already held more solidly and more firmly in those who are returning and in those who are fervent. It must also be noted with great importance what is said: ”on this side and that. For all of us who strive toward the entrance of life must have the palm both on the right and on the left side. For what is said ”on this side and that” signifies each side. Therefore, he has the palm on the right whom prosperity does not exalt; he has the palm on the left whom adversity does not cast down.

Paul carried the palm as if from each side when he said: ”Through the weapons of righteousness on the right and on the left, through glory and dishonor, through ill repute and good repute, as deceivers yet true. Adversity did not break him, prosperity did not lift him up into swelling of mind. Therefore he bore the palm on this side and that, because he remained both strong in adversity and humble in prosperity. For whoever is exalted by prosperity does not know how to have the palm on the right side. Whoever is broken in adversities does not know how to carry the palm on the left side. Therefore, in order that the palm may be borne on the forehead on this side and that, there must always be present in our minds both confidence in adversity and fear in prosperity, lest either adversity drag us into despair or prosperity lift up the soul into self-confidence. Hence it is that the same outstanding preacher said: ”I know both how to be humbled, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I have been instructed. Both to be satisfied and to hunger, and to abound and to suffer want—I can do all things in Him who strengthens me. Is it then, brethren, some skill to be humbled and to abound, to be filled and to hunger, to abound and to suffer want, that so great a preacher would suggest he knows these things as something great?

It is entirely a skill, and a wonderful knowledge of discipline, which must be learned by us with the whole effort of our heart. For he who is not broken by his want, who is not drawn back from the giving of thanks, who is not kindled into desire for temporal things, knows how to be humbled. For in this place the Apostle calls being humbled suffering want. For immediately he adds the contrary: I know also how to abound. For he who is not puffed up by things received, who does not twist them to the use of vain glory, who does not possess alone what he has received, but mercifully divides it with the needy, knows how to abound. He who does not use food received for the gorging of the belly, but for the restoration of strength, nor gives more to the flesh than necessity demands, knows how to be filled. He who tolerates lack of food without murmuring, nor for the necessity of sustenance does anything by which the soul might incur the snare of sin, knows how to hunger. He therefore whom neither pride lifts up in abundance, nor desire provokes in necessity, knows how to abound, knows how to suffer want. When he immediately added, I can do all things, lest we should believe these to be words of boasting, he added in what, In him who strengthens me. Behold, a branch has gone forth on high, but because it held itself in the root, it remained in greenness.

For rising on high it would have withered, if it had separated itself from the root. For he attributes nothing to himself, because he confesses that he can do all things not in himself, but in him who strengthens him. Therefore on this side and on that the outstanding preacher has the palm, whom neither abundance draws to pride, nor want drags to avarice. Let us learn, therefore, brothers, to give thanks not only in prosperity but also in adversity. For out of his loving-kindness our Father has become our creator, and he nourishes us as adopted sons for the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom. And he not only refreshes us with gifts but also instructs us with chastisements. Let us learn, therefore, to abound, so that we may share with the needy all that we have received from him. And let not abundance lift up the mind, lest perhaps one rejoice because what is lacking to another is present to oneself, and no longer rejoice in the common good but in one's own private good. Truth calls the disciples back from private joy to common joy, when he admonishes those returning from preaching and rejoicing over the subjection of demons, saying: "Do not rejoice over this, but rather rejoice and exult because your names are written in heaven. For not all the elect cast out demons, yet nevertheless the names of all the elect are held inscribed in heaven. The disciples are therefore admonished to lay aside private joy and to rejoice in common and perpetual happiness.

Whoever, therefore, rejoices in what another does not have, made worse by his very abundance, has private joy. Against this craving for abundance John admonishes us, saying: "Do not love the world, nor the things that are in the world. He immediately added the reason why: "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For no one can serve two masters, because one cannot love both transitory and eternal things at the same time. For if we love eternity, we possess all temporal things in use, not in affection. He immediately added this same reason, saying: "Because all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. For this reason people desire to have something even beyond what is necessary, so that they may be proud in having it, and because another does not have this, they exalt themselves in their thoughts. Whoever therefore is of this sort has not yet learned to bear abundance. Often, however, what avarice suggests from desire, one thinks to be necessity, and when lesser things would suffice, one grieves that greater things are lacking, and the incautious mind suffers a kind of quasi-necessity which it begets. And when the things it desires are excessive, it somehow excuses its own avarice to itself. Abundance therefore is close to pride. And if at some point desire has also seized it, this has invaded it, so to speak, like a foreign captivity.

If therefore we wish to know the art of abounding, it is necessary that we flee not only those vices which are near, but also those which come from afar. Let us learn to suffer want, lest we seek even with fault to have those things which we do not have, nor let us think happy those whom we see burdened with possessions. The things which they prepare for themselves as if for the expenses of the present life are exceedingly excessive. They carry much, but on a short road; poverty is a great companion to us on this journey, which does not constrict the soul when earthly substance is lacking, for which we must render accounts to the eternal Judge. We proceed more freely toward our homeland, because we are, as it

were, without burden on the way. Let us learn to be satisfied, lest in taking nourishment for the body we serve gluttony rather than necessity. For desire seeks more than necessity requires. And often while we take care to satisfy the want of the flesh, pleasure creeps in and exceeds the measure of refreshment. Hence it happens that fault passes into fault, because frequently another temptation of the flesh arises from the very fact that the flesh is served immoderately in refreshment. For from the sin of the first man, with nature weakened, we are born into this world with our temptations. And the flesh is sometimes our helper in good work, but sometimes a seductress in evil.

If therefore we give it more than we ought, we nourish an enemy. And if we do not render to its necessity what we owe, we kill a citizen. The flesh therefore must be satisfied, but only to the point that it may suffice to serve us in good work. For whoever gives it so much that it grows proud utterly knows not how to be satisfied. It is therefore a great art to be satisfied, lest anyone through the satiety of the flesh burst forth into the wickedness of shameful conduct. Let us learn to hunger, so that our want here may please us on account of the abundance to follow, lest the necessity of the belly drag us into fault, lest need suggest sin to the mind itself; and while the flesh is afflicted with hunger, the spirit be provoked to covetousness, and seek with fault to provide whence it might satisfy the flesh in necessity, lest the heart leap forth into indignation and kindle the tongue into the bitterness of murmuring. He therefore who in the want of his flesh looks around himself on every side and guards himself from the snare of sin, knows how to hunger. Therefore, brothers most dear, fleeing wrath and avarice in adversity, and avoiding elation and immoderate joys in prosperity, because through faith, hope, and charity we desire to enter the court of the interior life by three gates, let us hold palms on this side and on that.

It is fitting still to bring to mind another citizen of the heavenly fatherland, and to demonstrate how he holds a palm on this side and on that. For blessed Job, when he was richer than all the men of the East, and all prosperous things abounded for him, his sons flourished, his household grew, his flocks overflowed, he persisted in such great fear of almighty God that amid the keeping of discipline, amid acts of justice, amid many services of humility, intent upon works of mercy, devoted to offering sacrifices, he immolated burnt offerings to the Lord for each of his sons, lest any of them had sinned even in his heart. Let us consider therefore how great was the keeping of good work in him who expiated in his sons the sins of the heart through sacrifices. But how just he was had become known in prosperity; yet it was very much unknown whether he could persevere as just also amid afflictions. Therefore he had to be touched by the rod, so that holy man might be tested in prosperity through adversity, so that he who was known to the almighty Lord might become known through afflictions to us and to himself. Thus with the Lord disposing, the flocks were consumed, the keepers slain, the house overthrown, the sons destroyed, his flesh struck from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. His wife remained unharmed, who might increase his wounds with the javelins of words.

But the holy man wisely teaches her in temptation, sound amid his wounds, and responds to her, saying: If we have received good things from the hand of the Lord, why should we not accept evil things? Friends also come to console him, but break forth into insults, and to the pain of his wounds they add still more wounds of words. They call him merciless, they name him a plunderer, they denounce him as violent, they declare him an oppressor of the poor. What therefore would the soldier of God do, caught between painful wounds and bitter words? Behold, the scourges of God and the words of men together press his afflicted soul toward despair; but, filled with the power of the spirit, lying down with wounds of the flesh, standing with strength of mind, against the impulse of despair he brought back to memory the good things he had done. Because he had been merciful, he says: I was an eye to the blind, and a foot to the lame. And again: I was a father to the poor. Because he was both a guardian of discipline and kind, he says: And when I sat as a king, with the army standing around me, I was nevertheless a consoler of those who mourned. Because he had been humble, he says: If I refused to undergo judgment with my servant and my maidservant, when they disputed against me. Because he had been hospitable, he confesses: If I despised one passing by, because he had no garment.

Because he was generous in gifts, he says: If his sides have not blessed me, and he was warmed from the fleeces of my sheep. Because he was not violent, he testifies, saying: If I raised my hand against the orphan, when I saw myself superior at the gate. Because he never exulted at the peril of an enemy, he says: If I rejoiced at the ruin of him who hated me. Because he was patient, and also bore the malice of his own people with equanimity, he says: If the men of my tent have not said, Who will give us of his flesh that we may be satisfied? What is it therefore that the holy man enumerates so many of his virtues amid afflictions? What is it that he praises with his own mouth the works he had done, except that amid wounds and words which could drag him to despair, they reform his soul to hope? And he who was humble in prosperity, having recalled his good deeds to memory, remained unbroken in adversity. For whose soul would those words not drive to despair amid so many afflictions, unless he had recalled to memory the good things he had done? The holy man therefore saw his mind being shaken toward despair upon hearing so many evils, and he wonderfully strove to be strengthened in certain hope from his good actions. Thus is fulfilled what is written:

In the day of good things be not unmindful of evil things, and in the day of evil things be not unmindful of good things. For if when we have good things we remember the evil things which we have either already suffered or can still suffer, the good things received do not elevate the mind, because the fear from the memory of evil things suppresses their joy. And if when we have evil things we remember the good things which we have either already received or hope we can still receive, the weight of evil things does not press the soul down into despair, because the memory of good things lifts it to hope. If therefore, brothers most dear, we so walk through the Lord's precepts and through the examples of the saints, that neither prosperity elevates us nor adversity breaks us, we show that we hold palms on this

side and on that before the eyes of almighty God. To whom is honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY VIII

The words of the Prophet which, by the Lord's generosity, are to be spoken today to your charity require reading more than exposition. For those things are repeated in the three inner gates which have already been said a second or third time concerning the outer gates. But a few things are changed in their description. Hence it is necessary for us to run through by reading those things which have already been said, so that we may more freely explain those things which have not yet been said. And so now it is said: "And the gate of the inner court toward the South way, and he measured from gate to gate in the South way, one hundred cubits. And he brought me into the inner court by the South gate, and he measured the gate according to the former measures, its chamber, and its front, and its vestibule with the same measures, and its windows, and its vestibule round about, fifty cubits in length, and twenty-five cubits in width, and the vestibule all around. You remember that all these things were said and explained above (especially in the previous homily). But what is added concerning the same vestibule has not yet been said: "Twenty-five cubits in length, and five cubits in width, and its vestibule toward the outer court. And again what had already been said above is repeated, when it says: "And its palm trees on the front. And immediately what had not yet been said is added:

"And there were eight steps by which one ascended to it. This also which is written concerning the South gate is narrated in the same order concerning the East gate as well. For it is immediately added: "And he brought me into the inner court by the East gate, and he measured the gate according to the former measures, its chamber, and its front, and its vestibule as above, and its windows, and its vestibules round about, fifty cubits in length, and twenty-five cubits in width. And its vestibule, that is, of the inner court, and palm trees carved on its front on this side and on that, and its ascent was by eight steps. Those things also which were said concerning the South gate and the East gate are repeated in the same words also concerning the gate which looks toward the North. For it is added: "And he brought me to the gate which looked toward the North, and he measured according to the former measures, its chamber, and its front, and its vestibule, and its windows round about, fifty cubits in length, and twenty-five cubits in width. And its vestibule looked toward the outer court, and carved palm trees on its front on this side and on that, and its ascent was by eight steps.

What, therefore, is signified by the inner court, by the chamber, by the fronts, by the vestibule, by the windows, by the length and width, by the carving of palms, we have already spoken of extensively above, and it is not fitting that we should occupy ourselves again with the same things, but only with those which have not yet been said. Now, therefore, we must inquire what these three inner gates are, or what it means that the vestibules of these same gates are measured at twenty-five cubits in length and five cubits in width; or why one ascends to them not by seven steps, as was said of the outer gates, but by eight.

For the gate of the inner court which was mentioned above is not among these three inner gates, because that one is said to face toward the gate of the East and North, whereas these are recorded as being positioned individually within toward the South or East and North. Hence through that one the inner entrance is rightly designated, because, as was already said in the preceding discussion, it lies open either to Jews and Gentiles, or to those beginning and those persevering in good, or to those falling from good but rising after their faults through repentance. But now, after individual gates have been described in the East and North and South, why are individual gates of the inner court again described in the South and East and North?

With the Lord breathing inspiration, great effort is needed to search out the depth of so great a mystery. For if by the name of gates we understand the holy preachers, we should know that the Church is one in the preachers of the Old and New Testament. The gates have seven or eight steps because they harmoniously preach the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit, and by the eighth step they announce the reward of eternal retribution. Whence it is written: ”Give a portion to seven, and also to eight. What, therefore, can we say the outer gates were, except the ancient fathers, who through the precepts of the law knew how to guard the works of the people rather than their hearts? So that we ought to understand the inner gates as the preachers of holy Church, who by spiritual counsels guard the hearts of their disciples, lest they take delight even in thoughts in the evil things they do not do. For through those gates one is said to ascend by seven steps, but the ascent of these is declared to be of eight steps, because both in the veneration of the law the seventh day was kept, and in the New Testament the eighth day is held in sacrament, namely that which is called the Lord’s Day, which is the third from the Passion but the eighth from creation, because it also follows the seventh.

But if by the name of gates we understand only the holy apostles to be designated, who are indeed the first preachers of holy Church to us, and who taught us to hold most firmly to faith, hope, and charity, they therefore are gates for us in these virtues, who lead us through the same virtues to the interior understanding of eternal wisdom. But if they are the outer gates, whom do we accept as the inner ones? And if they are the inner ones, whom do we understand as the outer ones? In this matter it can be usefully understood that they are simultaneously both outer and inner gates for us. For when they preach to those who are still beginners not lofty and mystical things, but certain things that can be grasped, they are outer gates; but when they speak profound and mystical things to the perfect, they are inner gates. Let us see how the outer gate opens: ”I could not speak to you as to spiritual persons, but as to carnal ones, as to little ones in Christ I gave you milk to drink, not solid food. Let us see how the inner gate opens: ”We speak wisdom among the perfect. Let us see whether the same gate is both inner and outer: ”I am a debtor to the wise and to the unwise. He who again says: ”Whether we are beside ourselves, it is for God; whether we are sober, it is for you.

For in this, that by contemplating and speaking to the wise he is beside himself, he is an inner gate; but in this, that he tempers himself soberly in preaching to little ones, and does not show how much intoxication of the Spirit is poured into his mind when he preaches, he manifests himself to be an outer gate. Therefore they are both outer and inner gates for us, who both establish us in the first entrance of faith, hope, and charity, and when they preach the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom to those already progressing, they lead us to interior things through a more subtle sense. Hence their ascent is first described through seven steps, and afterward through eight. For by the eighth step are signified the mysteries of that life which the perfect understand in their secret places, who have already learned to transcend all temporal things in mind, who fully despise the present life which unfolds in the course of seven days, who are nourished by intimate contemplation. Therefore the gates of the spiritual building have seven steps, because they preach to their hearers the fear of the Lord, piety and knowledge, fortitude and counsel, understanding and wisdom. But when they now command all things to be relinquished, when they admonish that nothing in this world be loved, nothing be held by affection, when they urge that one attend to the contemplation of the heavenly fatherland and delight in its mysteries, they add a step and bring them across to interior things.

This step, as Truth teaches, was shown to a certain man, who when the precepts of the law were spoken to him, responded: All these things have I kept from my youth. For he was standing as it were already on seven steps, when he said he had kept all things from his youth. But immediately it is said to him: Yet one thing is lacking to you: If you wish to be perfect, go, sell all that you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come follow me. In these words he indeed saw the eighth step, but he refused to ascend, because he went away sad. Therefore whoever, having despised temporal things, is nourished by the contemplation of eternity, searches out the joys of the heavenly kingdom, after the seven steps which he held by fearing and working and growing in the understanding of wisdom, has entered by the eighth step the entrance of the interior gate. Through the number eight both the day of eternal judgment and the resurrection of the flesh are signified. Hence also the Psalm which is written ”for the eighth” begins with fear of judgment, when it says: ”Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor chasten me in your fury. For now is the time of mercy, but in that judgment is the day of wrath. On which day, indeed, all this time which revolves through seven days comes to an end. Because it follows after seven days, it is rightly called the eighth.

On which day our flesh also will rise from the dust, so that it may receive from the Truth whether good or evil it has done. Hence also by the law circumcision is commanded to be performed on the eighth day. For through the member that is circumcised mortal propagation is generated, and the number of those dying and succeeding is increased. But because in the resurrection of the dead neither is propagation of the flesh any longer performed, and there will be no passing away and succession, because as it is written: ”They will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but will be like angels in heaven,” on the eighth day the foreskin is commanded to be cut off. For there the propagation of the flesh no longer has

a place, where the rising flesh has the permanence of eternity. Through this member descended the virgin mother, who conceived God in her womb without union with a man, who first showed us the glory of the eternal homeland in his resurrection. Who rising from the dead, dies no more, and death will no longer have dominion over him. And he gave us an example, so that we may believe those things will happen on the last day concerning our flesh which we have recognized happened concerning his flesh on the day of resurrection.

But because our discourse has led us to the resurrection of the flesh, it is exceedingly sad and greatly lamentable that we know some stand in the Church and yet doubt the resurrection of the flesh. The ancient fathers most certainly believed this would come, even when they held no example yet of that same resurrection. With what condemnation, therefore, are those worthy who have already received the example of the Lord's resurrection, and yet still distrust their own resurrection? They hold the pledge, and have not faith. They fill the Church, but because they doubt their own resurrection, they stand with empty minds. Concerning this resurrection it is said through blessed Job: ”I know that my Redeemer lives, and on the last day I shall rise from the earth, and again I shall be clothed with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see God; whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. Hence also through the Psalmist it is said: ”In his sight all who descend into the earth fall prostrate. For the dead descend into the earth not in spirit, but in body. Therefore those who descend into the earth fall prostrate in the sight of the Lord, because those who now rot in dust come to judgment by rising again. Hence again he says: ”My soul has thirsted for you, how greatly also my flesh. The soul thirsts to see God; for what does the flesh thirst, except to rise again? Hence again he says:

”Take away their spirit, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust. And immediately concerning the resurrection of the flesh he adds: ”Send forth your spirit, and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. Hence again he says: ”Arise, O Lord, into your rest, you and the ark of your sanctification. For the Lord arose into his rest when he raised his flesh from the tomb. After him also the ark arises, because the Church rises again. Hence through the same prophet of whom we speak it is written: ”Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will send spirit into you, and you shall live. And I will put sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to grow upon you, and will stretch skin over you, and I will give you spirit, and you shall live. Hence it is that another prophet through the Lord's resurrection saw the human race raised up at the end, and said: ”He will revive us after two days, on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Hence it is that when the Lord spoke of himself, he added: ”Do not marvel at this, because the hour comes in which all who are in the tombs shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And those who have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life;

but those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment. Hence Paul says: ”From where also we await the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our lowliness, configured to the body of his glory. Hence again he says: ”For if we believe that

Jesus died and rose again, so also God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. Who again says: "Christ the firstfruits of those who sleep. For if we do not rise from the sleep of death, how do we have the Lord's resurrection as firstfruits? Behold, the ancient and new Fathers agree with one another in one spirit concerning the resurrection of the flesh. Behold, Truth itself first taught by word what it afterward demonstrated by deed concerning the resurrection of the flesh, and yet still the weakness of some does not have faith while standing in the house of faith. But they are accustomed to wonder how flesh can come back to life from dust. Let them wonder, therefore, at the height of heaven, the mass of the earth, the depths of the waters, all things that are in the world, and the angels themselves created from nothing. It is far less to make something from something than to have made all things from nothing. The elements themselves, the very forms of things, proclaim to us an image of the resurrection. For the sun dies daily to our eyes, and daily rises again.

The stars set for us in the morning hours, and rise again in the evening. We see trees full of leaves, flowers, and fruits in summer times, which in winter time remain bare of leaves, flowers, and fruits, and as if dried up, but when the spring sun returns, when moisture has risen from the root, they are clothed again in their beauty. Why then is there distrust concerning human beings, when what is seen to happen in trees is observed? But often they look upon the dust of rotting flesh and say: Whence will bones and marrow, whence will flesh or hair be able to be restored in the resurrection? Therefore, let those who ask such things look at the small seeds of immense trees, and if they can, let them say: Where in them lies hidden such a mass of strength, such diversity of branches, such multitude and greenness of leaves, such beauty of flowers, such abundance, flavor, and fragrance of fruits? Do the seeds of trees have the fragrance or flavor which the trees themselves afterward bring forth in their fruits? If therefore from the seed of trees what cannot be seen can be produced, why is there distrust concerning the dust of human flesh, that from it a form which is not seen can be restored? But they are accustomed often to raise a vain little question, by which they say: A wolf ate the flesh of a man, a lion devoured the wolf, the lion dying returned to dust;

when that dust is raised up, how is the flesh of the man separated from the flesh of the wolf and the lion? To these what else ought we to respond, except that they should first consider how they came into this world, and then they will discover how they rise again? Certainly you, O man, who say this, were once a foam of blood in your mother's womb; for there you were a small and liquid mass from your father's seed and your mother's blood. Tell me, I ask, if you know, how that moisture of seed hardened into bones, how it remained liquid in the marrow, how it was solidified into sinews, how it grew into flesh, how it was stretched out into skin, how it was distinguished into hair and nails, so that the hair would be softer than flesh, and the nails more tender than bones, harder than flesh? If therefore so many and such great things from one seed were distinguished into different forms, and yet remain joined in one shape, what wonder is it if Almighty God in that resurrection of the dead can distinguish the flesh of a man from the flesh of beasts, so that one and the same dust both does not rise again insofar as it is the dust of a wolf and lion, and yet does rise again insofar

as it is the dust of a man? See therefore, O man, how you came to life, and do not at all doubt how you may return to life.

But why do you wish to comprehend by reason how you return, you who do not know how you came? Grant to the power of your Creator what you cannot comprehend about yourself. For certainly because you were made from earth, and earth from nothing, you were created from nothing. Therefore, lest you despair about the resurrection of your flesh, consider prudently that it is less for God to restore what existed than to have made what did not exist. But if you cannot comprehend the effect of the resurrection by reason, consider how many things there are that you do not understand how they exist, and yet you do not doubt that they exist. Tell me, I ask, if you know the circuits of heaven, the hinges of the earth, the abysses of the waters—where they end, where they are suspended? We know, however, that what was made from nothing hangs upon nothing. But if there is something that is called nothing, it is no longer nothing. If, however, nothing is nothing, the mass of the world hangs nowhere, and there is no place where that which was created to exist might be. How then is that which we know exists nowhere? But perhaps these things are too many for you; return, O man, to yourself. Certainly you were created from spirit and clay—one invisible, the other visible; one sensible, the other insensible.

How then could spirit and clay be mingled in you, and from diverse things something not diverse be made, so that in such great harmony spirit and clay were mixed that when the flesh is worn down the spirit languishes, and when the spirit is afflicted the flesh wastes away? But perhaps you are not yet able to examine yourself. Consider, I ask, if you can, how the Red Sea was divided by a rod, how the hardness of rock poured forth waves when struck by a rod, how Aaron's dry rod blossomed, how a Virgin coming from his lineage conceived, how she remained a virgin even in giving birth; how a man dead four days, raised by a command, came forth from the tomb with hands and feet bound, whom the Lord afterward commanded to be loosed by the disciples; how our same Redeemer, rising in true flesh and bones, entered to the disciples through closed doors. Behold, you are unable to investigate these things, and yet you believe. Why then do you doubt concerning the glory of the resurrection by disputing and examining, you who have believed so many mysteries without examination? Yet if you do not believe in the resurrection of the flesh, you have believed all things without cause, because in this spectacle of angels you appear indeed to run swiftly, but after you have completed your course, you turn away so as not to receive the prize. Hence it is said through Paul: So run that you may comprehend. Who again says:

If in this life we are hoping in Christ only, we are more miserable than all men. But the mysteries of divine power which cannot be comprehended are not to be examined by understanding, but to be venerated by faith. Therefore we must know that whatever can be comprehended by human reason can no longer be wondrous, but in miracles the only reason is the power of the one who performs them. Behold, while we speak concerning the resurrection of the flesh, we have digressed a little from the order of exposition. Let us therefore return to those things which we have begun. The interior gates have vestibules that are

measured as twenty-five cubits in length. For if we multiply eight by three, we arrive at twenty-four. To this one is added, so that we have twenty-five. For good hearers, who are like certain vestibules of the gates, hold the longsuffering of eternal hope; they await the eighth day in faith in the Trinity. Because this Trinity is one God, they indeed multiply eight by three, but they are made firm in the confession of one God. The vestibules are level because the hearts of good hearers are humble. They have length because they persevere in the longsuffering of hope. Their length is measured at twenty-five cubits because they believe in the resurrection of the flesh on the eighth day through the Trinity, and they confess that the same holy Trinity is one God.

They also have five cubits in width because through the simple life that is led by the five senses they are enlarged in love of neighbor. And it should be noted that after the vestibules of the gates were described above as one thing, afterward the vestibule that has five cubits in width is said to look outward, because indeed there are some hearers who penetrate the understanding of the interior life more by advancing in virtues, and there are certain simple ones who live well indeed but according to the bodily senses. Hence they are also said to look outward. For they look outward, as it were, because they live according to the bodily senses. But nevertheless even those looking outward are within, because even if they do not know how to transcend the bodily senses by understanding, they still humbly hold faith and charity. And so they are within in the spiritual building through love, and they look outward, as it were, through simplicity. The vestibule that looks outward can designate the faith of beginners, and the vestibule that is interior can designate the faith of the perfect, who already shine forth through it in signs and virtues. The higher precepts can also be represented by the interior vestibule, while the still lesser precepts can be represented by the vestibule that looks outward. For through the vestibule one goes to the steps and to the gate, because through the precepts of preaching one attains to virtues and to the entrance of heavenly grace.

But when some are commanded to meditate on eternal things in their thoughts, to be wise about heavenly things, and when they are told to live in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, the interior vestibule is shown, as it were, which is measured at fifty cubits in length and twenty-five in width. About these numbers we are now silent, because we have already said much about them above. But when others are commanded, "Let the husband render to his wife what is due, and likewise also the wife to her husband," the vestibule that looks outward is designated, as it were. Though it looks outward, nevertheless it is inside, because the unlearned hearer both still does what is of the flesh and yet is not excluded from the number of the good. However, the Lord can also be designated by the gate of the East, Judea by the South, and the converted Gentile world by the North. We call the gate the Lord because through Him we enter to Him. We not inappropriately call the gates Judea and the Gentile world, because we have recognized that first to the Hebrews, and afterward to the fathers coming from the Gentile world, the entrance to the heavenly building was given. But in this matter a question strikes the mind: why in the earlier narration of the

prophet was the Eastern gate described first, then that of the North, and afterward that of the South?

And when he was narrating about the same gates in the inner court, he described first the gate of the South, then of the East, and in the third place that of the North. Why did he not maintain the same order he had begun, but changed it in the description of the gates, so that first he spoke of the gate of the East, of the North and of the South, and afterward of the South, of the East and of the North? But if the Gentile world is designated by the name of the North, it is clear to all who read carefully that the Gentile world existed before the Synagogue. For Heber himself, from whom the Hebrews are named, was chosen from among the Gentiles. Let the Eastern gate therefore be mentioned before the gate of the North and of the South, because in His divinity the Lord was born before the Gentile world and Judea, He who also exists before all ages. But in the subsequent narration let the gate of the South, of the East and of the North be mentioned, because our Redeemer deigned to be born in human nature between Judea and the Gentile world, because He came both at the end of the Synagogue and before the beginning of the Church, which He gathered from the Gentiles. In the first description, therefore, let the Eastern gate be before the gate of the North and of the South;

but in the second, let the gate of the East be named between the gate of the South and of the North, because both from His divinity He preceded all things, and from His humanity He came among all things, He who became both the end of the departing Judea and the beginning of the succeeding Gentile world. Therefore, since we have searched out as we could, with the Lord's generosity, those things which had not yet been said, and we have passed over those things which have been repeated more often, let us now come to those things which are now said in order in such a way that in them almost nothing of what has been said is repeated: And for each treasury chamber there was a door in the fronts of the gates. We said above that the treasuries are the hearts of teachers, which preserve the riches of knowledge. The fronts of the gates are the words and works of preachers, by which we recognize outwardly what kind of persons they are who live within themselves. There is a door through each treasury in the fronts of the gates, because each teacher opens understanding in the heart of the hearer through the sayings and works of the fathers.

For when we examine the preaching of the apostle Peter, when we search out the words of Paul, when we investigate the Gospel of John, and from their words draw our hearers to interior understanding, what else do we do but open a door in the fronts of the gates? Let it therefore be said: Through each treasury a door in the fronts of the gates, because if a teacher does not confirm what he says by the sayings of the apostles, he does not have a door in the fronts of the gates. And if he does not have a door, it can no longer be called a treasury of the spiritual building, because if he does not open understanding, he is not a teacher. But when good hearers learn the sayings and works of the apostles through the mouths of those who teach, they silently reprove their own faults within themselves, and pursue with tears everything they remember having done unjustly. Hence here too it is added concerning the

door that is in the fronts of the gates: There they washed the burnt offering. For those who have devoted themselves to the Lord through faith in holy conduct have become a holocaust to the Lord. But because they still suffer many things in themselves from their corruptible flesh, because purity of heart is still defiled in them by sordid thoughts, they return daily to tears, they are afflicted by constant weeping.

For they consider the words and deeds of the holy fathers, and when they judge themselves unworthy, they wash the holocaust at the entrance of the gates. Behold, for example, someone has vowed out of fear of the almighty Lord to be patient, to render no insult for insult, to tolerate all things with equanimity, and yet when an insult hurled from a neighbor's mouth suddenly strikes him, disturbed he perhaps says something he should not have said. Certainly this man is already a holocaust, but still unclean. Perhaps he showed patience against the insults hurled at him, he remained silent; but nevertheless he is touched by grief at those same insults which he bears, and his soul is wounded in its charity. For true patience is that which loves even the one whom it bears. For to tolerate but to hate is not the virtue of gentleness, but a covering for rage. And so this man often judges himself in his thought, reproaches himself because he grieves, yet cannot prevail upon himself not to grieve. Therefore through good devotion he is already a holocaust, but still unclean through the grief by which he is touched. Another has resolved within himself to give all that he possesses to the needy, to reserve nothing for himself, to commit his life to heavenly governance alone; but while he gives to the poor what he has, perhaps a thought creeps into his mind which says: How will you live if you give everything away?

Yet he does not cease to give, but what he had begun to give joyfully he afterward gives sadly. What is this man's mind but a holocaust of mercy? Yet still unclean through the sadness of thought. For either he should not have resolved upon the highest things, or after resolving he should in no way have doubted. Another, having despised worldly pride, has resolved to avoid the honors and dignities of this age, he seeks to hold the lowest place among men, so that he may be found more exalted in lasting glory the more humble he appears in passing life. When this man suddenly recognizes that he is despised by his neighbor, perhaps he is indignant at being despised. He wishes indeed to be in a humble place, but yet he does not wish to be seen as contemptible. Devotion now lifts him up, but weakness still weighs him down. Therefore through devotion he is already a holocaust, but still unclean from weakness. And so those who in the things they have excellently vowed are touched by some fault of their weakness, when through the words of teachers they understand the sayings of the fathers, and recognize how great a fault they lie in, and afflict themselves with the laments of penance, they wash the holocaust at the entrance of the gates. It must be known that this is the difference between a sacrifice and a holocaust: every holocaust is a sacrifice, but not every sacrifice is a holocaust.

For in a sacrifice a part of the animal was customarily offered, but in a holocaust the whole animal. Hence holocaust is called in the Latin language "totally burned. Let us consider, therefore, what a sacrifice is and what a holocaust is. For when someone vows something

of his own to God, and does not vow something else, it is a sacrifice. But when he has vowed to almighty God everything that he has, everything that he lives, everything that he understands, it is a holocaust. For there are some who are still held in mind to this world, and yet from their possessions they minister aid to the needy and hasten to defend the oppressed. These, in the good things they do, offer a sacrifice, because they both immolate something of their activity to God and reserve something for themselves. And there are some who reserve nothing for themselves, but immolate to the almighty Lord their sense, tongue, life, and substance which they have received. What do these offer except a holocaust; indeed, do they not rather become a holocaust? For the Israelite people first offered sacrifice in Egypt, but the second in the wilderness. Therefore, whoever still has his mind in the world, but already does some good, has offered sacrifice to God in Egypt.

But whoever abandons the present world and does what good he can, as if having already left Egypt behind, offers sacrifice in the wilderness, because, having repelled the noise of carnal desires, he immolates to God in the quiet and solitude of his mind whatever he does. Therefore, although, as has been said, a holocaust is also a sacrifice, nevertheless a holocaust is greater than a sacrifice, because the mind that is not weighed down by the delight of this world burns totally in sacrifice to almighty God whatever it has. But we must know that there are some who, even while leaving the world, offer indeed all that they have, yet are in no way moved to compunction in the good deeds they do; and while the good they do is indeed a holocaust, yet because they do not know how to weep and judge themselves, and do not kindle themselves from love to tears, their holocaust is not perfect. Hence it is said through the Psalmist: ”May the Lord remember all your sacrifice, and may your holocaust be made fat. For a holocaust is dry when the good work is not suffused with the tears of prayer. But a holocaust is fat when what is done well is also watered with tears from a humble heart. Hence again it is said: ”I will offer you fat holocausts with marrow.

For whoever does a good work but does not know how to weep from love and desire of almighty God has a holocaust, but does not have marrow in his holocaust. But whoever does good works and now longs for the vision of his Creator, and hastens to arrive at the joys of eternal contemplation, and slays himself in weeping from the love by which he is kindled, has given the Lord holocausts with marrow. Therefore we must strive both to abandon evils completely and to do the good works we are able to do, and in those very good deeds we do to be moved to compunction by love of the eternal light. For love of the light itself dispels the darkness of the heart, so that we may be able to see more subtly lest anything perverse be mixed with the good deeds we do. For we must consider what our work is like, what thought is in the work, what intention is in the thought. And when we recognize that something of malice or perverse delight is mixed with our good work, let us return to tears, let us wash the holocaust. There are, however, certain people who have devoted themselves to the Lord in great undertakings and have attained such perfection that they are never bent by any difficulty, so that in their resolve for chastity the flesh never prostrates the mind with delight in wicked thought.

For even if it sometimes knocks through suggestion, it is not permitted to rise, because it is trampled down by the vigor of judgment. Likewise in their resolve for patience, no disorderly word proceeds from their mouth, nor does silent grief press upon the mind; in their generosity of almsgiving, no suspicion of want generates sadness; in their resolve for humility, no contempt gnaws at the mind. But although they now show themselves strong in those things which they have rightly vowed, nevertheless they bring back to memory the former sins that were committed by them before their good resolve, and they lament whatever they remember having done unlawfully. These therefore are a holocaust through the life they hold, but defiled through the life they held before. Therefore they wash the holocaust at the entrance of the gates, because in the understanding they have received from the sayings of the fathers, they afflict themselves with daily lamentations, and cleanse with tears the life they once defiled with wicked deeds. Let us therefore among these things bring back the eyes of our mind to our past life, let us remember what we were when we were following the desires of this world. And if we now serve the Lord with our whole heart, because we remember that we have sinned, let us weep, let us wash the holocaust in weeping. Behold, we have vowed our chastity to almighty God; but if impure thought still defiles the mind, let us return to tears, let us wash the burnt offering.

Behold, we have resolved to preserve patience. But if anger still disturbs us, if silent grief torments the mind, let us return to tears, let us wash the burnt offering. Behold, we have now learned to give away our possessions and to hold a humble place in this world; if any suspicion of poverty still weighs down the soul, if contempt from our neighbor confounds us with some indignation, let us return to tears, let us wash the burnt offering. For great is the bosom of mercy of our Creator for receiving the tears of the humble. For where the tears of innumerable people have been received, there our tears too will find their place. Let us consider what is said through another prophet: And whoever among them stumbles on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the Lord in his sight. This is the day of mercy which was promised to us from the coming of our Redeemer. Therefore whoever stumbles shall be like David, because the sinner returns to repentance; but the house of David shall be like God, because everyone who returns to righteousness becomes a dwelling place of his Creator, so that he may be like an angel in his sight, because he offers to others by proclaiming the bowels of mercy which he himself has experienced. Hence also a little later it is said there:

On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and for those dwelling in Jerusalem, for the washing of the sinner and of her who is menstruating. For the hidden fountain is the only-begotten of the Father, the invisible God. But the open fountain is the same God incarnate. This open fountain is rightly called the house of David, because our Redeemer came forth to us from the lineage of David. Jerusalem is interpreted as the vision of peace. Those who dwell in Jerusalem are they who fix their minds on the vision of inner peace. The sinner and the menstruous woman is either one who transgresses in deed, or the mind that slips into wicked thought. For this pollution is that of the menstruous woman, because she is not touched by another's flesh, yet is defiled by her own flesh. So it is, so it

is with every soul that, even if it does not commit an evil deed, nevertheless becomes filthy through polluted thought. Hence also through another prophet, under the figure of Judea, it is said of the soul occupied with unclean desires: All who seek her will not fail; they will find her in her menstrual periods. For malign spirits seeking do not fail when they desire to bring destruction, and are repelled by no rectitude of good thought. And they find the soul in her menstrual periods when, finding her placed in polluted thoughts, they easily drag her to perverse action. Let it therefore be said:

In that day there shall be an open fountain for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for the washing of the sinner and the menstruous woman, because the fountain of mercy, our Redeemer, is now opened to us, who deigned to become incarnate in the house of David, so that he might wash the sinner from perverse deed, and cleanse the menstruous mind from unclean thought. The fountain therefore lies open; let us run with tears, let us be washed in this fountain of loving-kindness. In this fountain David himself also was washed when he returned to the lamentations of repentance after the stains of grievous sin. For he was seeking to find this very fountain when he said: ”Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and strengthen me with your principal spirit. For ”Jesus” in Hebrew is called ”Savior” in Latin. And what was it that he was asking—that the joy of Jesus be restored to him—except that before his sin he had been accustomed to contemplate him, and in his sin had lost the joys of that contemplation? Hence rightly after his repentance he was seeking that the joy of that vision be restored to him. In this fountain of mercy Mary Magdalene was washed, who was first a notorious sinner, but afterwards washed away her stains with tears and wiped away her stains by correcting her ways. In this fountain of mercy Peter washed before all what he had denied, because he wept bitterly.

In this fountain of mercy the thief was washed at his end, who, reproaching himself in death, was cleansed from his sin by confession of the truth. Why then are we sluggish? Why do we remain torpid and cold, we who have known that so many have already washed themselves in this fountain of mercy? Shall we then despair of our own cleansing, we who hold so many examples of mercy as a pledge? And do we cease to seek pardon and to have confidence with tears, we who have received the cleansing of so many as a pledge of our hope? For we ought to seek the fountain of mercy even if it were closed. Now it lies open, and we neglect it. Let us cast the eyes of faith upon the whole world, let us consider how many sinners day and night are washed through lamentations in this fountain of mercy, how many return from darkness to light, how many from stains to purity. Let us therefore run with such people after the darkness of death to the water of life; let us consider how much we have sinned, how much we sin daily, and, that we may appear clean after our faults, let us wash the burnt offering. For accomplishing these things the grace of our Redeemer is present, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY IX

What are we to say about the mystical meanings of the prophet Ezekiel, when we can scarcely grasp the very words of his narrative? For behold he says: ”And in the vestibule of the

gate were two tables on this side, and two tables on that side, that the holocaust might be immolated upon them, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering. And at the outer side, which goes up to the entrance of the gate that looks toward the north, were two tables; and at the other side before the vestibule of the gate, two tables. Four tables on this side, and four tables on that side, by the sides of the gate. There were eight tables, upon which they immolated. In these words, indeed, a great fog of uncertainty arises, whether these things are said about any one gate, or about two, or about each of the gates. But since four tables are described on each side, and afterward it is said in the sum of the conclusion: "There were eight tables upon which they immolated," it is clear that the Spirit does not say this about each of the gates he had described above, because if the six gates enumerated above had four tables on each side, all together they would be called not eight, but forty-eight.

Again, if this is said about one gate, our understanding is struck back by a great obstacle, because after the description of the vestibule of the gate, where two tables on this side and two tables on that side are narrated to be, still at the outer side, which goes up to the entrance of the gate that looks toward the north, two tables are mentioned, and it is added: "And at the other side before the vestibule of the gate, two tables. For if within the vestibule of the gate there were two tables on each side, when it is added: "And at the outer side two tables," and "at the other side before the vestibule two tables," among which the gate that looks toward the way of the north is also mentioned, it is certainly clear that there was one vestibule on the inside and another on the outside, because both the inner gate is described first, and afterward in this place the outer gate of the north is described. For when he had described three gates above, he also mentioned that three others belonged to the inner court, the last of which he had narrated as the north gate, but, as was said, of the inner court.

Now therefore, when two tables on this side in the vestibule of the gate and two tables on that side are described, the discourse is still being woven about the same inner gate, since it is immediately added that at the outer side, which goes up to the entrance of the gate that looks toward the north, were two tables; and at the other side before the vestibule of the gate, two tables. Therefore the inner gate has been described as having two tables on each side in the vestibule, and the outer gate likewise two. But four on this side and four on that side are made together, since two on each side in the vestibule of the inner gate and two on this side and that side outside in the north gate are described, which all together are eight, upon which they immolate. Therefore, having discussed these matters concerning the outward narrative, let our discourse return to the spiritual understanding, which ought now to be easier, with the Lord granting it, inasmuch as ignorance of the outward description does not constrain us. For by the name of gates, as was said above, the holy preachers can be understood, so that the vestibule of the gate is the people. When they receive the words of preaching with a humble mind, tables for sacrifice are constructed in them from virtues.

Again, nothing prevents us from understanding the gate as that which is opened to us through the mouths of preachers—the understanding of sacred eloquence—so that the vestibule of the gate may be for us those words of preaching which we first humbly receive,

so that afterward we may come to the understanding of sacred eloquence. Let the interior gate therefore be for us the New Testament, and the exterior gate the Old Testament, because the former opens spiritual understanding, while the latter preserved for minds still unlearned the letter in the history of sacred eloquence. Now the interior gate has, in the already great multitude of faithful peoples, two sides, namely the love of God and the love of neighbor. And there are two tables on each side, because in the love of God faith and life must necessarily be maintained, while in the love of neighbor patience and kindness must be especially guarded. For in the love of God faith and life are necessary, because it is written: ”Without faith it is impossible to please God. And again it is written: ”Faith without works is dead. But in the love of neighbor patience and kindness must be preserved by us, because concerning that same love it is written: ”Charity is patient, is kind. Patient, that is, so as to bear with equanimity the evils inflicted by neighbors, and kind, so as to bestow its own goods upon neighbors with eager desire. The exterior gate also, namely the law, has two sides: the spiritual fathers and the carnal people.

In each of these there are two tables, because it has in the spiritual fathers doctrine and prophecy, and has in the carnal people circumcision and sacrifice. On these eight tables, therefore, immolation takes place, because whatever faith believes, whatever life shows in the example of good work, whatever patience humbly endures, whatever kindness generously ministers, whatever doctrine healthfully teaches, whatever prophecy forewarns concerning the future, whatever circumcision bound to external commandment, whatever sacrifice accomplished through the devotion of the one offering—all this is shown to be a victim in the eyes of almighty God. For in the law, even through carnal sacrifice, what else did the people immolate but the devotion of their heart? But it should be noted that only four tables are mentioned as having been for the holocaust, which we understand as belonging to the vestibule of the interior gate, so that we may understand concerning the remaining four that they were constructed for sacrifice, not for holocaust. For holocaust, as I stated in the preceding discourse, means ”entirely burned. And indeed the law commands that God and neighbor be loved, that divine commandments be kept, and restrains from the desire for others’ possessions; yet it does not command that all things be given up. But in the New Testament the Truth testifies to us, saying: ”Unless one renounces all that he possesses, he cannot be my disciple. And again he says: ”Whoever wishes to come after me, let him deny himself.

The tables of the interior gate therefore have holocaust, because in the virtues of the New Testament we burn all things as through a holocaust, when we renounce all things that belong to this world. But the tables of the exterior gate have sacrifice, yet do not have holocaust, because the legal precepts command that tithes be offered, but do not command that all things be given up. Concerning the four tables of the inner vestibule it is said: ”That the holocaust might be slain upon them, and for sin, and for trespass. For there is this difference between sin and trespass: sin is to do evil things, while trespass is to abandon good things which ought especially to be maintained. Or certainly sin is in deed, trespass in thought. Rightly therefore upon the four tables of the inner gate the holocaust is slain,

both for sin and for trespass, because whoever is able to fully despise this present age, and, leaving all things behind, give himself as a holocaust to the Lord, he already knows perfectly how to lament both the sins of deed and the trespasses of thought—either the evil he did, or the good he ought to have done but did not do. For he who has left behind everything now more freely perceives his faults in weeping. And when earthly care does not hinder his mind, by lamenting for both deed and thought together, what else has he given to the almighty Lord than a holocaust of his mind?

Nor does it seem foreign to reason that the prophet, when he was speaking of the outer side and naming the door of the gate, added: Which goes toward the North. For in the outer custody the law given in the letter was kept. But the door of the gate is the historical understanding itself of the law, which leads to the fear of the Lord. This gate is said to go toward the North, because the same law under the fear of death constrained the cold hearts of the Jewish people. For that people would have run as if through heat, if they had kept the Lord's commandments out of love. But because they kept the letter under the fear of proposed death, they remained as if in the torpor of cold. Hence to the new peoples loving eternal rewards, not fearing temporal torments, and already being warm, it is said: You have not received the spirit of servitude again in fear, but the spirit of adoption, in which we cry out, Abba, Father. But let it be said: Four tables on this side, and four tables on that side by the sides of the gate. For while faith and life, doctrine and prophecy are kept in the minds of the good, our gate, that is the understanding of sacred speech, has four tables on its side. And when holy preaching maintains patience and kindness in progressing peoples, which previously kept circumcision and sacrifice in carnal ones, four tables are shown as if from the other side as well.

All of which together make eight for immolation, namely four interior ones for the holocaust, but four exterior ones for the sacrifice, because both those who in the holy Church keep faith, life, patience and kindness, undoubtedly now excel in the highest virtues; and those who in the synagogue knew doctrine and prophecy, circumcision and sacrifice, by offering some things and retaining other things for themselves, gave the victim of their devotion to the almighty Lord. But because it was said above that four tables of the inner vestibule were constructed so that the holocaust might be immolated upon them and for sin and for transgression, from what the tables themselves were constructed is revealed below, when it is added: But four tables for the holocaust were built from squared stones. For whom do we understand by squared stones in this place, if not any holy ones whose life has known how to stand firmly in prosperity and adversity? For a squared stone stands equally on whichever side it has been turned. Therefore whoever is not lifted up in prosperity, is not broken in adversity, is not drawn by persuasions to evil, is not called back from good work by reproaches, is a squared stone. And he has stability as if from every side, because he does not have a fall in any change.

Certainly when the prophet recognized that the Jewish people were perishing from the faith, and foresaw holy apostles rising in the Church, through whom many from the gentiles were

strengthened in the fortitude of faith and life, he spoke in great consolation, saying: ”The stones have fallen, but we shall build with squared stones. For seeing apostles, martyrs, and teachers rising in the holy Church, he grieved less at the fall of stones, that is, at the perdition of the Jews, because he beheld the building of almighty God, that is, the holy Church being built from squared stones. Therefore four tables are constructed from squared stones, because faith and life, patience and kindness have been given from the life of the saints as an example to following peoples, so that now the vestibule may have tables, that is, the people may hold the virtues of life, in which they may kindle the sacrifice of prayer to almighty God on the altar of their heart. For whatever good the faithful peoples of the holy Church have done or do, they have received this as an example from the life of their preachers. For whence would this vestibule have tables, unless it had found squared stones? So that we may briefly bring forward one example from the squared stones, do you wish, dearest brothers, to see faith? ”For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Do you wish to know life? ”The world is crucified to me, and I to the world. Do you wish to hear patience?

”Even unto this hour we both hunger and are struck with fists, and are without stable dwelling, and we labor working with our own hands; we are cursed and we bless, we suffer persecution and we endure; we are blasphemed and we entreat. Do you wish to know kindness? ”But I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls. And lest perhaps we believe that he was a debtor to the love of those for whom he desired to be spent, he soon adds to those same disciples, saying: ”Though loving you more, I am loved less. When therefore the life of holy preachers is known by the faithful people for imitating their virtues, assuredly tables are constructed from squared stones in the vestibule. Indeed the Synagogue also had spiritual fathers in teaching and prophecy, from whom it might draw an example of life in virtues. But its unlearned people, serving more through fear than following through love, refused to imitate the life of the fathers which it saw, and therefore the outer gate which proceeds toward the north does not have tables for the holocaust. But because we have said these things morally, it still remains for us to examine these same tables through typological understanding. For our gate has four tables in the inner vestibule, because the holy Church has been instructed by the preaching of the four evangelists, through whose teaching it learned to raise the heart in love of almighty God and to sacrifice its thoughts to Him as an offering.

Of these, two are reported to be on one side and two on the other, because two evangelists attested to what they saw concerning the Lord, and two narrated those things which they learned by hearing from their predecessors. Or certainly there are four tables of the inner vestibule, as we plainly perceive, because the holy Church receives four orders of rulers for the instruction of faithful peoples, which Paul enumerates from the gift of almighty God, saying: ”He gave some indeed as apostles, some as prophets, others as evangelists, and others as pastors and teachers. But he names pastors and teachers as one order of rulers, because he truly feeds the flock of God who teaches. The outer gate also had four tables, because clearly the Synagogue maintained the observance of external service through the

chief priests and elders of the people, through the Scribes and Pharisees. These Pharisees were also called teachers of the law. Whether of the outer or inner gate, two tables are on one side and two on the other, because in her beginnings the holy Church had apostles and prophets. By prophets, however, we mean not those who were among the ancient people, but those who arose in the holy Church after the apostles. In later time also, which is now, she has evangelists and teachers. Since indeed "Gospel" means good news, we certainly call evangelists those who announce to unlearned peoples the good things of the heavenly homeland.

These evangelists and teachers indeed existed in earlier time, but even until now, by the Lord's generosity, they remain, because we recognize that still daily both unbelieving peoples are drawn to faith, and all the faithful are instructed in good morals through teachers. But the apostles and prophets have been taken away from this present time, and therefore we say that these tables of our gate, that is, of the holy Church, were as it were on another side. The gate that leads to the north also has two tables on one side and two on the other—the same chief priests and elders of the people we mentioned who held greater authority in governance, as well as the scribes and Pharisees who presided over that unlearned people in a lesser position. But these tables are beside the gate that leads to the north, because when these four orders presided over the people, the Synagogue, raging in the persecution of our Redeemer, rushed headlong into the torpor of unbelief. Nevertheless, these tables had sacrifice, which they held according to the letter alone; hence they also slipped into the torpor of cold, because they were not kindled by the flame of the Spirit. But the interior tables have a holocaust, because whether in the hearts of the apostles and prophets, or in the minds of the evangelists and teachers, the fire of the Spirit both burned and burns.

Because it consumes their every thought in good work, the flame of the love of God, like a holocaust, sets ablaze all at once whatever it finds. For they offer a holocaust who are kindled to the very marrow, whether in good work or in holy meditation. These tables were made from squared stones, because while they meditate daily on the words of sacred eloquence in their hearts, they are constructed as if from squared stones for offering the holocaust of prayer to the Lord. For the words of Sacred Scripture are squared stones, because they stand everywhere, because they are found reprehensible from no side. For in everything they narrate about the past, in everything they announce about the future, in everything they preach morally, in everything they sound forth spiritually, they have stability as if on different sides, because they have no fault. Therefore the hearts of the saints are tables of God constructed from squared stones for the holocaust, because those who always meditate on the words of God sacrifice themselves to the Lord from carnal life in their thought. Hence it is written: The law of his God is in his heart, and his steps shall not be supplanted. And hence it is said again: In my heart I have hidden your words, that I may not sin against you. But since we have learned from what these tables are constructed, let us also hear what their measurements are. It follows:

In length one and a half cubits, and in width one and a half cubits, and in height one cubit. A certain person explained this passage, saying: The tables have in length and width one and a half cubits, that is, as a square, which joined together make three cubits. These three cubits have in height one cubit, so that the mysteries of the Trinity may preserve the measure of one cubit, that is, of the divine majesty. This interpretation cannot stand, because in that supreme Trinity which created all things and contains all things, there is no half, nor is anything one made from two halves. For that substance has nothing of diminution or division, which always remaining unchangeable, receives neither decrease nor increase. But we have often said that length pertains to the longsuffering of hope, while width pertains to the amplitude of charity. Therefore the tables which were constructed for the holocaust are measured with a length of one and a half cubits, because the holy fathers and teachers, who extend themselves with longsuffering toward the secrets of inner hope, through the fact that they live in virtues, are indeed very perfect as far as human measure is concerned, but as far as those divine mysteries which cannot be fully grasped by man, as long as they remain in this mortal flesh, they are not perfect.

Therefore in themselves they already have a cubit, but in God they do not yet have a cubit, because indeed they already advance fully in virtues, but nevertheless they still know something about God only in part. Behold, again Paul comes to mind as testimony regarding the measure of the table. Let us see whether his life is measured by a complete cubit. For he says: Let us, as many as are perfect, think this. Let us see if in those things which he perceives about God he has already perfectly extended himself to perceive the mysteries: I do not consider myself to have comprehended. Who again says: We know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect has come, that which is in part will be done away. Who again says: Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. If therefore he is perfect, and knows in part, he has a cubit, as far as concerns himself, but nevertheless a half above himself. Let the hearts of the saints therefore be extended in the longsuffering of hope, let them be extended in the perfection which they have, by one cubit. But because they cannot yet see fully, where they direct the eye of hope, that which they have above one cubit is cut back to a half cubit, so that in this life they may always see themselves as imperfect, and run more ardently toward perfection.

The tables also have a width of one and a half cubits, because the hearts of the saints, expanded in the breadth of charity, have a cubit according to the neighbor whom they love and see. For they can perfectly love those whom they are able to know perfectly in some measure. But Almighty God they love from the depths of their being, they follow from the depths of their being, yet they cannot love Him as much as they ought, because they are not yet able to see Him whom they love; and the measure of love is less where the measure of knowledge is still less. Therefore they have one cubit and a half, because what is much less is already complete in their soul, that is, charity toward their neighbor; but what is much greater in them, that is, the love of God whom they do not see, is not yet complete. Concerning this love, which begins here so that it may be perfected by the vision of the Lord in the eternal homeland, Isaiah rightly speaks, saying: ”The Lord lives, whose fire is in

Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem. Now it is more to be a furnace than a fire, because a fire can also be small, but in a furnace a vaster flame is kindled. Zion indeed means contemplation, while Jerusalem is called the vision of peace. We contemplate our peace here in the meantime, so that we may fully see it there afterward.

From the love of the Lord, therefore, there is a fire in Zion, a furnace in Jerusalem, because here we burn to some degree with the flames of His love, where we contemplate something of Him; but there we shall fully burn, where we shall fully see Him whom we love. The height of the tables is one cubit. For what is the height of the saints, if not faith in invisible things? For through faith what is not seen is believed, and therefore through this the mind of the righteous is led to height, so that it may despise all visible things on earth and follow in heaven those invisible things which it hears. But the height of the tables has one cubit, because there is unity of faith in the heart of all the saints. That God is one Trinity both the fathers of the Old Testament and the preachers of the New Testament have professed. Therefore the height of the tables has nothing more than one cubit, nothing less, because the faith of all the fathers agrees with itself in great unity. But those who, already advancing to the patience of hope through the highest virtues, have one and a half cubits, and are measured by one and a half cubits in the breadth of charity, but grow to one cubit in the height of faith—these are great and worthy of being venerated with the highest admiration.

Therefore they ought to receive the souls of the little ones in the bosom of their way of life, and offer them in the sight of the Lord as a kind of holocaust and sacrifice. Whence it openly follows: Upon which they place the vessels in which the holocaust and victim are immolated. For what are the souls of the faithful, if not holy vessels that receive words of piety, so that from their minds a holocaust of life and prayer may be offered? Hence it is that Paul, when he was still unlearned in the calling of faith, because he had already received the words of the Lord and was full of heavenly grace, is called a vessel, when it is said: He is a vessel of election to me. Hence the prophet admonishes pastors and teachers, saying: Be cleansed, you who bear the vessels of the Lord. For they carry the vessels of the Lord as if upon a table, who by instructing support the life of the faithful, so that at some time they may lead them to the Lord for holocaust and sacrifice. But neither should this be regarded carelessly, that in these same vessels holocaust and victim are said to be offered. For a holocaust, as we also said above, is a victim, yet a victim is not always a holocaust, because when something is offered in part and retained in part, it is indeed a sacrifice, but it is not a holocaust.

But truly in the great multitude of the faithful there are some who leave all things that are of the world, bestow all that they possess, reserve nothing for themselves, yearn from their inmost being for the eternal homeland, and slay themselves wholly in tears. These evidently are vessels upon the table, in which a holocaust is offered. And there are others who bear care for their own household, think of their children, and preserve an inheritance for them, who nevertheless, mindful of the eternal judgment, bestow mercy upon the poor, and give them food and clothing from whatever portion they have determined. These indeed are vessels upon the table, in which a victim is offered, not a holocaust. Because indeed the

patience and teaching of the saints, by admonishing and sustaining, by persuading and frightening, instruct the hearts of some to such a degree that they abandon all things and kindle themselves wholly in the love of the Lord, while they instruct others to this degree, that because they are not able to leave all things, they may at least become merciful in whatever part they are able, and divide the care of the flesh with the care of the soul, the tables of the Lord constructed of squared stones bear vessels in which holocaust and victim are offered, because both the perfect, as has been said, when they abandon all things, kindle their whole heart in the love of the Lord, and the imperfect offer a sacrifice, which they have devoted in part. There follows:

And their edges were of one palm, turned inward all around. What does it mean that the borders of the tables are measured by a palm-span, except that in a palm-span the hand is stretched out, and the holy fathers and teachers preach those things in which the works of their hearers are stretched forth? For we stretch out the hand, as it were, when we extend our works. Therefore let every teacher speak, let him exercise the heart of his hearer, let him shake off the torpor of the idle. When he has stretched them toward good works, let him show that he has a palm-span on his lips. It must also be considered that in a palm-span the greatest and smallest fingers are stretched out. What is signified by the greater and smaller finger, except the greatest and smallest action? Therefore let the tables have a palm-span on their borders, so that in the preaching of their teachers one may do great works, yet not omit to do even the smallest things. Let one be so attentive to the smallest things that one is not sluggish in doing the greater. Hence Truth says through the Gospel: ”Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: judgment, mercy, and faith; these things you ought to have done, and not to have omitted those. For through judgment, mercy, and faith, the greater finger of action is shown.

But through mint, dill, and cumin, without doubt the smallest finger is represented. Therefore these things ought to have been done, and those not omitted, because if we wish to measure our work by a palm-span, it is necessary that the smallest finger be stretched out in such a way that the greater finger is not drawn back. But well, when the edges of the tables are measured, and the measure is said to be a palm, ”one” is added, so that from the preaching of the teachers, just as unity is held in faith, so also unity of minds may be preserved in work, lest through the good work which one does, another break forth into the evil of discord. For we ought to do good works in such a way that through these also we preserve unanimity with those with whom we live, insofar as we rightly can—that is, not abandoning what we do, but forestalling with good persuasions the evil of discord that we fear. Thus Paul, preserving the unity of the palm in his works, was forbidding discord from being generated, when he saw that the Corinthians now wanted to receive back a certain one who had fallen and been cast out from the Church, saying: ”If you have forgiven anyone anything, so have I. For what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, was for your sake in the person of Christ, lest we be outwitted by Satan.

Who indeed is accustomed to generate evils from goods, and to drag what is done in charity toward discord. Whence he also immediately added concerning him, saying: ”For we are not ignorant of his designs. But a teacher who through the good things he preaches forms right action in his hearers, if he does not bind the minds of those working to unanimity, has a palm in the edges, but does not have that unity of the palm which has been spoken of. It must be carefully considered what is said, that the lips of these same tables are turned inward. For the lips of the tables are turned inward when teachers recall to their conscience by silent thought what they say, when they subtly examine themselves whether they do what they speak. Rightly, moreover, when the lips of the tables are said to be turned inward, it is also added ”all around,” so that they do not consider themselves in just one part and neglect to weigh themselves in another, but inspect themselves everywhere, and, insofar as they are able, strive to fulfill in deed each thing they teach, lest if those who preach pretend not to do good, they become destroyers of themselves while cultivating others. O teacher, behold you are now a table, you now carry vessels, you now sustain in faithful vessels the weight of holocaust and sacrifice, but turn the lip inward, that is, recall your speech to your heart. Hear what you say, do what you preach.

For if you neglect to fulfill what you preach, you sow a harvest for others, and you yourself fast from participation in the grain. Hence it is written: ”Whose harvest the hungry shall eat. For the hungry eats the harvest of the teacher who speaks good things but does not do them, because he who hungers for the bread of justice performs the commands he hears, and he himself who labored in sowing has no fruit. Hence Solomon says: ”The sluggard hides his hand under his armpit and does not bring it to his mouth. No one is so lazy as to think it labor to bring his hand back to his mouth even for eating. But the sluggard does not bring his hand to his mouth, who does not want to do what he says. Hence again it is said of those who teach well and act badly: ”The sons of Ephraim, bending the bow and shooting arrows, were turned back on the day of battle. They bend the bow and shoot arrows, who set forth the sentences of Sacred Scripture and strike the vices of their hearers with right words; but they are turned back on the day of battle, because they retreat after themselves in the temptation of vices, and do not want to oppose their breast, because they do not resist in the struggle of temptations. Hence again it is said: ”You have turned back the help of his sword, and you have not assisted him in war.

For the sword of the teacher is the word of God. Hence it is said through Paul: ”And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Therefore Almighty God, when He sees that a teacher does not want to do what he says, turns back the sword of his help on the day of battle, because in the struggle of temptations He does not permit the words of doctrine that He gave to be a help to him. He has therefore a sword, but it does not help him in war, because when the adversity of temptation has broken forth, he forgets the word he was teaching. For behold, perhaps the teacher has a sermon about patience; by the mastery of his teaching he is compelled to say how patience should be maintained against losses inflicted, against insults heard. But when he himself has been provoked by either loss or insult, forgetting what he had taught, he exceeds measure either in injuring his neighbor

or in returning insult more heavily. In these matters, therefore, let him consider that he is a table of God, let him turn his lip inward, let him keep what he preaches. For it is written: "In your patience you shall possess your souls. And again it is written: "The learning of a man is known through patience. If therefore patience is the indicator of learning, each one is shown to be learned to the degree that he has been patient.

Hence it is that that good disciple who saw his master taken up into the air, through the affection of great charity cried out, saying: "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its driver. What is it, dearest brothers, that Elijah is called the chariot of Israel and its driver, unless because the driver urges on, the chariot carries? Therefore the teacher who both sustains the morals of the people through patience and teaches with the words of sacred eloquence is called both chariot and driver. Chariot, because by tolerating he carries; driver, because by exhorting he urges on. Chariot, because he endures evils; driver, because he exercises the people with good admonitions. But perhaps the teacher's discourse is against vainglory, and while wonderfully insinuating how it ought to be avoided, he seeks vainglory by those very words with which he argues against that same vainglory. If therefore he desires to obtain what he forbids, the table does not turn its lip inward. But the table of the Lord, constructed from squared stones, will have its lip turned inward if one strives to hear what he says. For it is written: "Do nothing through contention, nor through vainglory. And again the excellent preacher says the same: "Nor seeking glory from men, neither from you, nor from others. For to seek passing praise from the labor of preaching, what else is it than to sell a great thing for a cheap price?

But there is grave danger in the words of teaching, because often the favors of hearers follow the speech of teachers, and when teachers, from that good reputation they have gained, are unwilling to appear lesser in their sayings, the word of teaching which they began out of love for almighty God for the purpose of gaining the souls of hearers, they afterward labor at for the purpose of gaining praises. And those who first sought spiritual profits in the words of God afterward pursue temporal favors. Whence it happens that whether any right works or holy words of teaching perish in the judgment of almighty God, when through these anyone pants after passing favors. Hence indeed through the prophet it is said to Judea what the incautious mind discovers in itself, if at least after fault it carefully examines its thoughts: "The Lord called your name a fruitful olive, beautiful, fruit-bearing, splendid. At the sound of great speech a fire blazed in it, and its branches were burned. For the Lord calls a fruitful and beautiful, fruit-bearing and splendid olive one whose either efficacy in work or holy endeavors in words of knowledge He approves. But at the sound of great speech a fire blazed in it, because when someone begins to be praised, he perhaps blushes to appear lesser than he is called, and strives to be what may be said of him. For the sound of great speech is the favor of the flatterer. Whence it is written:

"He who blesses his neighbor with a loud voice, rising in the night, is like one who curses. At the sound of great speech therefore a fire blazed in it, because in the greatness of favor a flame is kindled in the heart from love of praise. But all the branches of the olive are

burned, because before the eyes of almighty God, both the things well done and the things knowingly spoken perish, when they are no longer done from love of the Lord, but from the intention of passing praise. For thus often a sinister thought is joined to a good thought, so that scarcely does the mind itself that generates those thoughts recognize it. Whence the excellent preacher, when speaking subtly he said: "The word of God is living and effective, and more piercing than any two-edged sword, and reaching even to the division of soul and spirit," immediately added: "of joints also and marrows, and a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart. For the word of God distinguishes joints and marrow, because it discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart. By joints, indeed, bones are joined to bones. And often while we do something with right thinking, we suddenly turn aside to the love of praise, and we do for praise what we had first begun to do for truth, because thoughts are joined to thoughts, as if certain joints are made in the spirit. But the bones that are joined in the joint also have marrow.

The holy preacher brought this out more clearly when he added: "The discerner of thoughts and intentions of the heart. For our joints are our thoughts, but the marrow is our intentions. And often we think one thing, yet what we intend through our thinking is another. For if someone, with a reward of money proposed, defends the case of an orphan or widow, and perhaps entering the Church says to God in his prayers: "You see that I defend the case of the orphan and widow," this person without doubt knows what he thinks, but is ignorant of where his thought is directed. For he thinks one thing and intends another. For he seeks not the defense of the orphan or widow, but the reward of money. For take away the temporal reward, and he does not defend the orphan and widow. Therefore the word of God is the discerner of thoughts and intentions of the heart, because it does not look at what you think within yourself, but through the marrow of the joint, that is, through the intention of the thought, it sees what you seek to receive. It remains therefore that when a teacher speaks, as if at God's table he should always turn his lip inward, lest he either begin to speak with evil intention, or when he has begun well, seduced by favors, he turn aside to another desire. Perhaps, however, the discourse concerns the teacher's guardianship of discipline.

And it often happens that one who knows how to speak the rule of discipline does not know how to maintain it, because either, moved by excessive zeal, he moderates himself too little through gentleness; or, calm with excessive gentleness, he inflames himself too little against vices with the spur of zeal. For with great consideration we must weigh what is written, that on the vessels of the temple, among the crowns and interwoven bands, oxen and lions and cherubim were carved, and beneath the oxen and lions hung straps. Indeed, crowns signify the mark of victory, while interwoven bands signify the unanimity of concord; but the cherubim are called the fullness of knowledge. For priests and teachers, among the crowns and interwoven bands, that is, among the strength of good work by which they run toward victory, and the concord of charity, by which they do not differ from one another, are designated by oxen and lions and cherubim, because in the fullness of knowledge which they have, it is necessary that they hold both the gentleness of oxen and the fervor of lions, so that

in the discipline which they preach, they may be both kindled by holy zeal and tranquil from paternal sweetness. Let straps hang down beneath them, so that the reins of their discipline by which they themselves are bound they may also carefully extend to their subjects. For straps to hang down beneath them is to hold the bonds of guardianship over subjects.

These are rightly maintained when neither the gentleness of oxen is lost in the fervor of zeal, nor the terror of lions is diminished in gentleness. Indeed, there ought to be such discretion that discipline is neither excessive nor mercy lax, lest if fault is forgiven in a disorderly manner, he who is culpable be bound more gravely in guilt; and again, lest if fault is retained immoderately, he who is being corrected become so much the worse, inasmuch as he considers that nothing is being done toward him from the grace of kindness. Therefore, harshness must be shown to the wicked in outward display, charity in the mind; so that both the harsh display may restrain the offender, and the keeping of charity may not lose the reward of gentleness. Behold, while I speak, Joseph stirs the mind to come forth himself as a witness to demonstrate what I am saying. Certainly, when he narrated to his brothers the dream he had seen about his advancement, through what he innocently related, he aroused the stings of malice against himself. By those same brothers he was sold to the Ishmaelites, led into Egypt, and by the wondrous dispensation of the almighty Lord was set over that same Egypt. And when famine arose in the land of Canaan, the brothers came to Egypt, found Joseph set over Egypt, and worshipped him with their necks bowed to the ground. And because they could not change God's counsel, they worshipped because they sold him whom they had sold lest they should worship.

Then that man of God himself, full of the spirit of discernment, recognized his brothers without being recognized. But mindful of their fault and forgiving of the injury, he neither strove to repay the evils of his brothers nor to release them without purification. For with suspicious voice he immediately said: "You are spies; you have come to see the weaker parts of the land. Now I shall take trial of you. By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go out from here. O what a lance in the heart! They had come as strangers, they were fleeing the danger of famine, they had not received the grain they sought, and they saw themselves besides being struck by the hurling of accusation. Amid these things they are led to prison, and, brought out after three days, they are still terrified in the same harshness. Now they return to their heart, now the memory of fault strikes the mind, and they speak among themselves: "Rightly do we suffer these things, because we sinned against our brother, seeing the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we did not listen; therefore this tribulation has come upon us. In these things, however, Joseph's heart is conquered by love; he seeks a private place, he releases in weeping what he owed to piety. He returns severe to his brothers, so that their tormented soul might be freed from fault.

After this, one is bound in chains, the others are dismissed with grain, so that one brother might come, whom they had said they had as the youngest. Afterward the brother came. Piety conquered his mind when the innocent brother was seen; but harshness remained in outward show, so that the guilty brothers might be purged. Grain is given, a cup is

hidden in the sack of the younger brother, an accusation of theft is raised against them. A messenger is sent to bring them back; it is decreed that he with whom the cup was found be consigned to slavery. It is found in the sack of the youngest brother. Then Benjamin is brought back, all the afflicted brothers follow. O torments of mercy! He tortures, and he loves. Therefore having returned, prostrate on the ground with tears, they beg pardon. For remembering what they had promised the father concerning him, they were wasting away with unbearable grief. Then piety, enclosed and no longer able to restrain itself, burst forth into the open, and shook out the tears of charity from the countenance of severity. The anger that appeared and was not was wiped away; the mercy that was and did not appear was shown. Thus the holy man both forgave and avenged the crime of his brothers. Thus he held clemency in vigor, so that to his offending brothers he was neither merciful without punishment, nor strict without compassion. Behold, this is the teaching of discipline:

to know how to pardon faults with discernment, and to cut them away with compassion. But those who do not have the spirit of discernment either dismiss sins in such a way that they do not correct them, or strike as if correcting in such a way that they do not forgive. Therefore, the teacher who must speak about the moderation of discipline should know himself to be a table of God, and should bend back the basin within, so that what he speaks in teaching, he vigilantly performs under the spirit of discernment. Nor, if he considers that certain things are lacking in himself, ought he to fall silent from preaching about them. For his position demands that he speak. Therefore, let him challenge himself with his own words; and if he does not speak because he does not practice, let him practice because he is compelled to speak. Therefore, where he sees himself fulfilling in deed what he says, there let him admonish his hearers, and kindle their minds to the pursuit of good work. But where he does not yet see himself having fulfilled what he speaks, let him likewise inflame himself to the good things about which he admonishes his hearers, so that he himself may also learn at the same time in practice what truth speaks through him in preaching. For often what we do not know by living, when compelled by the duty of teaching, we learn by speaking;

and while the guilt of our laziness is born in the mind through reflection, a compunction suddenly arising pierces that same mind, and aroused by its own voice, it awakens in action, which previously lay torpid in idleness without a voice. Behold, moreover, when the rim of the table is extended by a palm's breadth—that is, when through the teacher's mouth there is disputation against vices, and the heart of the hearers is kindled to good works—many who hear his words recognize how great and what kind of evils they have committed; and they come to him confessing, and with tears they ask him to become an intercessor for their sins, so that he himself by praying may wipe away the faults which he has made manifest by preaching. Whence it is also added: "But upon the tables, the flesh of the offering. For when the holy teachers pour out prayers to the Almighty Lord on behalf of penitent and confessing sinners, by the very fact that they seek pardon for their carnal life, they carry the flesh of the offering to the Lord's table. Therefore, in order that there may be converted and weeping souls for whom they may intercede, it is necessary that they first preach to those same persons while they are still in sin;

and when they have already begun to abandon their sins and hasten toward innocence, the growth of preaching must increase in the mouth of the teacher toward them, and he must press upon certain ones with the word of his teaching all the more vehemently as he considers them to have fallen more grievously, knowing indeed that he himself will receive the reward of great recompense in proportion to how much he raises others from deeper sins through his words. Let it be permitted amid these things to bring forward the words of the holy Gospel to our midst, whose sacred history through the miracle it narrates announces the wondrous things that are done daily. For when the weary and fasting crowds had come together to the Lord, the Lord said to His disciples: I have compassion on the multitude, because behold they have now persevered with me three days and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away fasting to their homes, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from far away. The crowd perseveres with the Lord for three days when the multitude of the faithful, turning away through penance from the sins they have committed, converts itself to God in work, in speech, and in thought.

The Lord does not wish to send them away fasting to their home, lest they faint on the way, because indeed converted sinners faint on the way of the present life if they are dismissed into their own conscience without the nourishment of holy teaching. Therefore, lest they grow weary on the journey of this pilgrimage, they must be fed with holy admonition. But the pious sentiment which proceeded from the mouth of Truth must be carefully considered, in which it is said: For some of them have come from far away. There is one who, having experienced nothing of fraud and nothing of carnal corruption, hastened to the service of almighty God. This one did not come from far away, because through incorruption and innocence he was near. Another, stained by no immodesty, defiled by no shameful acts, but having experienced only marriage, was converted to spiritual ministry. Neither did this one come from far away, because having used the permitted union, he did not stray through unlawful things. But others after carnal shameful acts, others after false testimonies, others after committed thefts, others after inflicted violence, others after perpetrated homicides return to penance and are converted to the service of almighty God: these indeed come to the Lord from far away. For the more anyone has strayed in wicked deeds, the farther he has departed from the almighty Lord. For also the prodigal son, who abandoned his father, went away into a far country, in which he fed swine, because he nourished vices.

Let nourishment therefore be given even to those who come from far away, because to converted sinners the foods of holy doctrine must be offered, so that they may restore in God the strength they lost in shameful acts. These often need to be satisfied by teachers with more abundant foods of doctrine, the more they came exhausted by greater vices. And when they have now begun to confess the evils they committed, and by confessing to abandon them and punish them with weeping, it is necessary that holy teachers earnestly pray for their sins, so that they may bring the flesh of offering to the Lord's table. As often as they do this, in that they intercede for the sins of others, they wipe away their own more fully before the eyes of God, because by that very charity they justify themselves, by which with wondrous piety they sacrifice themselves in lamentations for the iniquities of others. Nor should it be

burdensome for teachers to pour out tears for converted sinners, when even He Himself who created all things, having become man, poured out His blood on the cross for our iniquities, who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY X

The Prophet, wisely understanding the mystical senses of sacred Scripture through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says: "Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore my soul hath searched them out. He also says again: "Open thou mine eyes, and I shall consider the wondrous things of thy law. For he who does not yet understand hidden things from what is plain has veiled eyes. But he who already understands considers the wondrous things of God's law with unveiled eyes, because, discussing the words of the letter spiritually, he weighs what greatness lies hidden within. Is it not wonderful when one thing sounds in the ears, and another thing that did not sound comes forth to the understanding? To what then shall I liken the word of sacred Scripture if not to a stone, in which fire lies hidden? It is indeed held cold in the hand, but when struck with iron, it flashes forth sparks, and that which the hand previously held cold now sends forth fire that burns afterward. For so indeed, so are the words of sacred Scripture, which are indeed held cold through the narration of the letter; but if anyone, with the Lord inspiring, strikes them with attentive understanding, he draws forth fire from their mystical senses, so that the soul afterward burns spiritually with those words which he himself, being cold, previously heard only according to the letter. For behold the prophet says:

"And outside the inner gate were the chambers of the singers in the inner court, which was at the side of the gate looking toward the North; and their front was toward the way of the South, one at the side of the Eastern gate which looked toward the way of the North. In these words of the letter, therefore, whose mind grows inflamed toward the love of God, or rather is not made lukewarm by the very reading of them? But if the hidden spiritual marrow in the letter is examined, through this sparks of understanding go forth and kindle what previously sounded cold to the ears of the heart. Nevertheless, for us, so that the interior understanding may open itself as the Lord breathes upon us, let the narrative itself first be made clear according to the letter. For he says that there was an interior gate, and outside this a court, which is called the inner court; and then other gates are described, namely of the North, the South, and the East, so that he might show that the very court which he had said was outside the interior gate was inner in relation to the exterior gates. Therefore this court is both outside and inside: outside, because it is outside the interior gate; but inside, because it is within the exterior gates. The treasuries of the singers are also narrated to be in this same court, which are said to be placed at the side of the gate looking toward the North.

But those same treasuries look toward the Southern way. And it is added: From the side of the Eastern gate, which looked toward the way of the North. In which words it is clearly understood that the treasuries of the singers had been placed between the side of the gate

looking toward the North, and the side of the Eastern gate, which gate, namely, looked toward the way of the North. Therefore the face of the treasuries was toward the Southern way, but their position was between the Eastern gate and the Northern gate. Therefore the interior gate had on one side the Northern gate, and on the other side the Southern gate. But in front of the vestibule the Eastern gate had risen, and thus the gates surrounded the exterior so that the court which was outside the interior gate might also be interior. These things we have run through briefly from the words of the letter, so that we may seek out the mystical senses in them not briefly. In the upper part, moreover, three gates have been described, that is, of the East, North, and South; and soon three others of the inner court were narrated, that is, of the South, East, and North, and then the gate of the inner court was mentioned, in which tables constructed of squared stones are recorded; and the gate that looked toward the North, in which there would be tables for sacrifice, not for holocaust.

Whence we said that in the inner the Church is signified, in the outer the Synagogue. But, with these completed, the prophet again begins to describe the inner gate, and three others, that is, of the North, South, and East, and he declares that in their inner court, which was outside the inner gate, there are treasuries, singers, priests, the temple, the altar, sacrifices. In which words, because he began to narrate other things about the institution of the holy Church than those which he had said before, it is clear that he changed the understanding of the inner gate. For if he were saying all things under one understanding, he would not repeat the same things and others in a new order. For how can we speak of a court, treasuries, singers, priests, the temple, the altar, sacrifices outside the inner gate, if by that same inner gate in this place the holy Church is designated? For since all these things are within her, how are they outside the inner gate, if they are not outside the Church?

The inner gate therefore can be understood as that of which we spoke already long before, which is said to be placed opposite the gate of the North and the Eastern one, through which we said is figured the entrance that is opened to us to the inner joys of the heavenly homeland, so that here also through the gates that are narrated around the vestibule the holy Church is figured, but through the inner gate the entrance of the heavenly kingdom is figured. But lest anyone think that I violently bend the words of the Holy Spirit to my understanding, and say that I should not have changed the signification of the holy Church which I once gave concerning the inner gate, by the shining grace of almighty God, let us hold to those things which we have begun, so that both the inner gate signifies the Church, which leads us to inner joys; and the treasuries, singers, priests, the temple, the altar, sacrifices are in the court which is outside the gate, and yet are not outside the Church. For if we search with subtle investigation, nothing prevents it being understood that we perceive the inner gate, as was said, to be the holy Church. Of which it is now said: And outside the inner gate, treasuries of singers in the inner court. For there are two things that are mentioned:

the inner gate, and outside this the inner court, so that this same court is both outer and inner, outer from the gate, but inner, as we said before, from the gates which he added in

narrating. The holy Church has two lives: one which it leads temporally, another which it receives in eternity; one in which it labors on earth, another in which it is rewarded in heaven; one in which it gathers wages, another in which it now rejoices over the wages received, and in both lives it offers sacrifice. Here, namely, the sacrifice of compunction, and there the sacrifice of praise. Of this sacrifice it is said: "A sacrifice to God is a broken spirit. But of that one it is written: "Then you will accept the sacrifice of justice, offerings and holocausts. Of which again it says: "That my glory may sing to you, and I may not be pierced with compunction. In both sacrifices, however, flesh is offered, because here the offering of flesh is the mortification of the body, there the offering of flesh is the glory of resurrection in praise of God. For then flesh will be offered there as in a holocaust, when, transformed into eternal incorruption, it will have nothing of contradiction, nothing of mortality, because entirely kindled at once by the fires of his love, it will remain in praise without end. Therefore let this inner gate, that is, in the holy Church, have its interior parts, namely that life which is still hidden from our eyes.

Let it have outside it an outer court, that is, the present life, in which every good is done so that the good without end may be reached. Let there be therefore in the interior court, which is nevertheless outside the gate, treasuries of singers, because all the elect and perfect, who still subsist in mortal flesh, are both within the bosom of holy Church and still outside the secret joys of the interior life. Let there be treasuries of singers within and without, because the hearts of the saints, which sing their desire to almighty God through the love of great ardor, both are already within and are not yet within, because placed in the bosom of holy Church, they already see through the spirit what they might love strongly within, and yet they do not yet perfectly see what they love. Let there be therefore treasuries in the interior court, but outside the gate, so that they may already be within through desire, and not yet be within through full attainment. But what are the treasuries of singers, except the holy desires of those who love? They guard the divine precepts like certain riches in the mind, which they preserve by singing, because they fulfill the commandments of God not from fear but from love; and for them the instructions of sacred speech become singable, because they always work not from sadness but from desire. Do you wish to hear the heart of the just man as the treasury of a certain singer?

Your statutes were my songs in the place of my sojourning. We call the statutes of God the divine precepts, which make us just if they are fulfilled. These become singable to us in the place of our sojourning when in this pilgrimage of the present life we love those same commandments and fulfill them from desire. Hence it is that the same Psalmist again presents himself from the treasury of singers, who says: Mercy and judgment I will sing to you, O Lord. The mercy of the Lord, by which sins are forgiven, even the sinner ought to sing—that is, to speak of it with joy and to hope in it. But who is so righteous that he can call before the eyes of his mind the eternal judgment and not tremble, and rather presume, hasten, and rejoice to come to that examination before so great a Judge? Whoever he is, he is great, because, already singing of the Lord's mercy and judgment, he loves with the whole affection of his mind the almighty God who mercifully forgives his sins, and therefore

does not fear His judgment. For perfect love, as the apostle John says, casts out fear. He sings indeed of the judgment which he does not dread to enter. Therefore let his mind be a treasury of singers, so that through the riches of mercy which he receives, he may proceed joyfully to the judgment which he no longer fears. Let us see, if you please, dearest brothers, another treasury of the singer as well.

Perhaps he too sings of judgment. For what does he say? "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith; for the rest, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will render to me on that day. He who, conscious of his labors, mindful of the struggle he waged, mindful of the faith he kept, says that a crown is laid up for him at the judgment, and hopes rather than expects it to be granted to him as a gift on that day—it is clearly evident that he sings of the judgment which he desires to come. Hence he also adds: "And not only to me, but also to those who love His appearing. For no one loves the coming of the Judge unless he knows that he has a good case in the judgment. Therefore the hearts of those who love the coming of the Judge are treasuries of singers, because through the confidence of grace and life, through the virtues of holy desire, they sing of the righteous judgment which all the unrighteous fear. But your charity remembers that in our previous discourse we said that faith is designated by the Eastern gate, hope by the Northern, and charity by the Southern.

Therefore these treasuries are mentioned as being between the Eastern and Northern gates, and as looking toward the Southern way, because the hearts of the saints, positioned between faith and hope, look toward the Southern way, since they burn with the fires of holy charity. The Eastern gate itself is also said to look toward the Northern way, because although all sins are forgiven us through faith in baptism, nevertheless while we still live here, even after faith we frequently decline toward sins. And the Eastern gate, as it were, looks toward the Northern way, when our life after receiving faith still grows somewhat numb in the coldness of fault. For who in this life is able to live without fault after faith, since John says: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"? Agreeing with whose words, James says: "For in many things we all offend. But if past sins were forgiven in the reception of faith, and we still decline toward sins after faith, what presumption of righteousness will there be for us, what hope of enduring life, unless now, while we are still between the Eastern and Northern gates, we lift the eyes of our mind toward the Southern way, so that, burning with holy charity, the heat of love may free us from the fault of numbness and coldness? Therefore let the treasuries be between the Eastern and Northern gates;

but, as was said, let their faces look toward the Southern way, so that between this—that we were born in faith—and this—that afterward, having fallen into sins, we presume upon the hope of divine mercy—we may exercise ourselves in the ardor of charity, and direct the eyes of our heart there, where we are kindled by the fires of love. The North gate can signify the Gentiles, the South way Judea, and the East gate the Lord Himself. For not without reason

is the Gentile world represented by the North, which he possessed in the coldness of torpor who said: ”I will sit on the mount of the covenant, on the sides of the North. Judea is also rightly understood by the South gate, in which the spiritual fathers burned with heavenly love. One of them speaks, saying: ”Turn again, O Lord, our captivity, like a torrent in the South. Although it had a carnal people in whom it bore, as it were, the cold of the North, nevertheless in its holy teachers and Prophets it burned with the heat of charity toward God and neighbor. The East gate not without reason signifies Him of whom it is written: ”Behold the man, Rising is his name. And of whom Zechariah says: ”The Rising from on high has visited us.

Therefore let the treasuries of the singers be on the side of the North gate, because not only in Judea were the hearts of the saints spiritually kindled, but also in the multitude of the Gentiles converted to the sacraments of the holy faith, the hearts of the saints burn with love of the heavenly fatherland, they yearn for eternal joys, they sigh for the fellowship of their fellow citizens in heaven; yet they take examples of this ardor, which they received by the gift of the Holy Spirit, from the spiritual fathers of the Synagogue. Hence those same treasuries, though placed on the side of the North, turn their eyes toward the South way. For behold, we come from among the Gentiles; but in this, that we are warmed by the love of the Holy Spirit, we look to the fathers of Judea, who daily provide us examples of holy desire in their words. Was he not burning as if with the heat of midday fervor, who was inflamed, saying: ”As the deer longs for the springs of water, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul has thirsted for the living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God? Who again said: ”I will sing and understand in the immaculate way, when will you come to me? He who said this was also kindled with this ardor: ”Now you dismiss, Lord, your servant according to your word in peace, because my eyes have seen your salvation.

Therefore, because we come from the Gentiles, but we set before ourselves the holy fathers of Judea for imitation in divine love, we are like certain treasury chambers of the singers on the side of the gate that looks toward the way of the North, but we keep our faces toward the way of the South. And it should be noted that these same treasuries are said to be between the gate of the North and the East, because evidently after the Lord’s incarnation a multitude of nations came to the faith, and among those faithful peoples themselves and the sacraments of the Lord’s incarnation which they love from the depths of their hearts, the hearts of those who love rise up. Therefore let the holy treasuries have the gate of the East on one side and of the North on the other, because among those very mysteries of their redemption which they follow, and certain carnal people whom they also tolerate within the holy Church, many advance in strong love toward God, grow in virtues, seek the coming of the eternal Judge, and between those things which they love and those which they tolerate, like certain treasuries, they preserve the riches of the spirit in their mind. Nor do they fail between the sacraments which they love and certain contrary things which they bear, because they direct their faces toward the Southern way. For what do we suffer that our fathers did not previously endure for love of the Lord?

It should be noted that the Eastern gate is described as being between the gate of the South and of the North, because our Lord and Redeemer was born from Judea, and soon afterward drew the Church from the Gentiles to His faith. For He appeared as it were between the southern gate and that of the North, because He came from the former and converted the latter to His service. Hence it is well said that the same Eastern gate looks toward the way of the North, because the Lord when born abandoned the Synagogue and gathered the multitude of the Gentiles. It should also be noted that when it was being said concerning the treasury chambers: "And their faces toward the way of the South," "one" was added, so that we might clearly understand that the way to the heavenly homeland is not one for us who come from the Gentiles, and another for those fathers who were in Judea; but this same one way is for us and for them, which leads us to eternal joys, which says to us through the Gospel: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. Concerning which the Psalmist says: "That we may know Your way on earth, Your salvation among all nations. For what is called Jesus in Hebrew is called Savior in Latin. Therefore the way is known on earth, because Jesus, God before the ages, and made man at the end of the ages, was manifested to the Gentiles.

Therefore there is one way both for those who are from the South and for those who are from the North. And He said to me: "This treasury chamber which looks toward the way of the south belongs to the priests who keep watch in the guardianship of the temple. And soon it is added: "Moreover the treasury chamber which looks toward the way of the North shall belong to the priests who keep watch at the ministry of the altar. In these words of the prophet we must first inquire who are the priests of the greater order, whether those who keep watch in the guardianships of the temple, or those who serve at the ministry of the altar. But because shortly afterward it is added: "The altar was before the face of the temple," it is clearly shown that those are priests of the greater order who keep watch in the guardianships of the temple, because indeed they minister at the altar which is within. But those who keep watch at the altar which is before the face of the temple are inferior by as much as they minister in the outer areas. Therefore we must inquire who the priests are who guard the temple, and who are said to keep watch for the ministry of the altar. The teacher of the Gentiles, writing to the faithful, says: "The temple of God is holy, which you are.

Who then are the priests who guard the temple of God, if not those who by praying, by preaching, by keeping watch in spiritual activities, defend the holy Church from the assaults of malignant spirits, from the persuasions of the wicked, from the errors of heretics? Was he not a guardian of the temple who, enumerating the labors of his suffering, says: "In labor and hardship, in many watchings, in hunger and thirst, in many fastings, in cold and nakedness"? And immediately he adds: "Besides those things which are from without, my daily urgency, the care of all the churches. Consider, I ask, with how great solicitude the guardian of the temple keeps watch. For behold, he suffers inestimable things in himself, and he shares the solicitude of his heart with others. Of what virtue, I ask, is it to think more about the welfare of one's neighbors than about one's own affliction? Who can worthily estimate this? Who can worthily weigh it? He labors, he grieves, he hungers, he thirsts, he

is cold, he fasts, he keeps watch, and yet while keeping watch he thinks about the care of all the churches. Behold, a most diligent guardian of the temple is set forth as an example. Let whoever is able imitate him.

For to suffer adversities for the truth, to bestow good things upon neighbors, to keep watch concerning the care of souls, to seek out and restrain anyone from falling into faithlessness, into pride, into plundering, or into impurity—this is to guard the temple of God, that is, the holy Church. There are moreover priests of a lesser order who keep watch for the ministry of the altar, who namely investigate carefully the sins of those who transgress in aid of their superiors, and correct the life of carnal men, and bring them to the point where through the laments of penance they set ablaze, as it were, the flesh in sacrifice which they had previously permitted to live in sin. For those who preside over the holy Churches are not able to do all things by themselves. But while they themselves are occupied with spiritual matters, if any wicked and carnal deeds are committed, they entrust these to others to be examined and corrected. Through whom, when the carnal life is corrected and those making progress arrive at the pursuit of abstinence and prayer, the flesh is now set ablaze, as it were, upon the altar, so that in the sight of the almighty Lord a sacrifice may give forth fragrance from that very source whence formerly sin was displeasing.

But in this matter a question arises, since it was said above that the treasury chambers had their fronts toward the Southern way, by what reasoning is it now said that the treasury chamber which looks toward the southern way belongs to the priests who keep watch in the guardianship of the temple, and the treasury chamber which looks toward the way of the North belongs to the priests who keep watch at the ministry of the altar. For if both fronts extended toward the Southern way, how is it now said that one looks toward the southern and the other toward the way of the North? But in these words we recognize that the treasury chamber of the priests who keep watch in the guardianship of the temple had been positioned so that it looked only toward the southern way; but the treasury chamber of the priests who keep watch at the ministry of the altar was so situated in the court that it extended both toward the Southern way and toward the face of the North, so that it might both look toward the southern way together with the treasury chamber of the priests who keep watch in the guardianship of the temple, and yet the treasury chamber of the priests who keep watch at the ministry of the altar, apart from the treasury chamber of those same priests, might see the way of the North. But what is this, dearest brothers?

What mystical meaning can we perceive in these words, except what the spiritual hearer already understands according to the things that have been set forth above: that the priests of the greater order, who keep watch in the guardianship of the temple, look only toward the southern way, because, occupied solely with spiritual pursuits, they always attend carefully to those things that pertain to the love of God; but the priests of the lesser order, who preside over examining the sins of those who transgress, also turn their eyes toward the way of the North, so that they may see what cold of torpor exists in the mind of sinners, and by bringing these through words of correction all the way to the groans of repentance,

they may, as it were, burn flesh upon the altar of the Lord? Let them also look toward the southern way together with the great priests, because, as far as concerns themselves, they burn with the fire of charity and are kindled with the flames of the love of God. But because they frequently correct the sins of transgressors, they also turn their eyes back toward the way of the North. But concerning both orders of priests it is added: These are the sons of Zadok, who approach from the sons of Levi to the Lord to minister to Him. Zadok in Latin means just. But who is just, except Him to whom it is said: You are just, Lord, and Your judgment is right?

And who are the sons of the just, except those of whom it is written: But as many as believed in Him, He gave them power to become sons of God? Now Levi is interpreted as taken up. But who has been taken up by the Lord, except the faithful people, who through the sacraments of faith have been separated from the faithless? Therefore all who perseveringly devote themselves to spiritual activities are sons of the just. And from the sons of the people taken up they approach the Lord to minister to Him, because from those same faithful ones are chosen those who come to the ministry of almighty God and devote themselves to heavenly studies for the instruction of the people. But we must carefully inquire who those are who minister to the Lord. For not all who read, not all who preach, not all who give of their own possessions, not all who chastise the body through abstinence of the flesh, minister to the Lord. For those who by reading and preaching seek their own glory, by giving away what they have and wasting the body in abstinence, desire to receive praises from men, minister to themselves, not to the Lord. Against which the Lord says through the Psalmist: ”He who walks in the immaculate way, he ministered to me.

For he has a stain on the way who in the good work he does sets before himself the reward of earthly glory, who seeks to receive his reward in this world, and defiles in the sight of God the appearance of the good work with the stain of depraved intention. For perhaps someone intent on the pursuit of discipline burns with zeal, cuts off the faults of offenders, yet if he is led to do these things not from love of almighty God but by his own zeal, in these matters he ministers to himself, not to the Lord. Another, lest he seem harsh, tolerates gently many things that are wickedly perpetrated. This one therefore, because he does not wish to be seen as severe for the Lord, through his pursuit of leniency ministers to himself, not to the Lord. It remains therefore that whether we labor in the ministry of the word, or give our goods to the needy, or tame the flesh through abstinence, or are moved by zeal, or sometimes gently tolerate evil things through patience, we must most carefully examine our intention, so that everything we do, we do not with our own zeal but the Lord’s, lest in those things we do we minister rather to ourselves than to the Lord. For they did not minister to the Lord but to themselves, of whom Paul said: ”All seek the things that are their own, not the things that are of Jesus Christ.

But the same Paul with his chosen brothers hastened not to minister to himself but to the Lord, both in living and dying, saying: ”None of us lives for himself, and none dies for himself. For whether we live, we live for the Lord; whether we die, we are the Lord’s.

For the saints neither live nor die for themselves. They do not live for themselves, because through everything they do, they pant after spiritual gains, and by praying, preaching, and persisting in holy works, they desire to multiply the citizens of the heavenly fatherland. They do not at all die for themselves, because in the sight of men they glorify God by their death, to whom they hasten to arrive even by dying. Let us therefore consider in the death of the saints not how great was their reproach from unbelievers, but how great praise of the Lord grew in the hearts of the faithful. If they had sought their own praise, they would certainly have feared to suffer so many reproaches in death. But ”none of us lives for himself, and none dies for himself,” because they sought their own glory neither in living nor in dying. Let us see if that first shepherd of the Church himself, who did not live for himself, died for himself. Let his companion John be consulted, and let him speak from the Lord’s words about the death of that same shepherd: ”This he said signifying by what death he would glorify God.

Therefore he did not die for himself who glorified God in his death. Let us learn therefore, my brothers, to examine our intention in everything we do with careful inquiry, and not to seek our own things, if we wish to minister to almighty God. But because we have said that from the faithful people sons of Zadok are taken for the ministry of almighty God, are there not many in that same people who are found to live perfectly in God’s commandments? There certainly are; for it is added: ”And he measured the court, one hundred cubits in length and one hundred cubits in width, foursquare. We have often said that length signifies the longsuffering of hope, while breadth signifies the amplitude of charity. Moreover, it has been fully stated above that the number one hundred, in which ten is multiplied by ten, signifies the sum of perfection. What then is the court of the spiritual building, if not the amplitude of the faithful peoples? This very longsuffering of hope and breadth of charity is not empty in the hearts of the faithful, for through faith it accomplishes whatever it is able. Hence it is said through Paul: In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which works through love.

If therefore in the life of the faithful, according to a certain measure, the longsuffering of hope is perfect in each one, the breadth of charity is perfect, the certainty of faith is perfect, the zeal for work is perfect, the court of the temple measures one hundred cubits square. In the measurement of a square, one side is not greater and another smaller, but all four sides together extend to an equal length, because we find that these same virtues which we have mentioned—namely faith, hope, charity, and work—are equal to one another within ourselves as long as we live in this life. Charity is said to be greater than hope and faith because after we arrive at the vision of our Creator, hope and faith indeed pass away, but charity remains. For now we love as much as we believe, and we presume from hope as much as we love. Concerning faith and work as well, the apostle John declares, saying: He who says that he knows God, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar. For knowledge of God pertains to faith, keeping of the commandments to work. Therefore, when virtue, time, and place for working are at hand, one works as much as one knows God; and one shows that one knows God as much as one does good works for God.

Let therefore the virtues of the faithful people be measured as a square, because each one who is engaged in the exercise of the active life believes as much as he hopes, loves, and works; hopes as much as he believes, works, and loves; loves as much as he believes, hopes, and works; works as much as he believes, loves, and hopes. Since therefore in the people of holy Church there are many who are strong through faith, longsuffering through hope, expansive through charity, and effective through work, the court of the temple is measured at one hundred cubits square. For that we may also say something about their virtues, we often see some among them prudent through understanding, strong in adversity, just in deed, temperate from pleasures, and moderating themselves by the measure of discretion in all zeal. Those who hold prudence, fortitude, justice, and temperance, or, as some prefer to enumerate them, prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice, have the measure of the spiritual court in a square. For behold, those very virtues which we said the good and faithful possess are so arranged in a square that one does not exceed another. Great indeed is prudence; but if it is less temperate from pleasures, less strong in dangers, less just in deeds, it is assuredly less prudent. Great is temperance;

but if it less understands whence it should temper itself, if it is less able to endure adversities through fortitude and casts down the spirit in fear, if through its own haste it sometimes rushes forth to works of injustice, it is less temperate. Great is fortitude; but if it less understands what good things it should guard, what evils it should resist, if it less tempers itself from the appetite for pleasure but is conquered by delight, if it less maintains the works of justice and is sometimes overcome by the dominion of injustice, it is less strong. Great is justice; but if it less discerns as it ought between just and unjust works, if it less tempers the heart from the delight of the world, if it less strengthens itself against adversities, it is less just. Let the life of the perfect faithful therefore be measured by a square, and let one side of the spiritual court have as much as each of the individual sides, because each person is as prudent as he is temperate, strong, and just; as temperate as he is prudent, strong, and just; as strong as he is prudent, temperate, and just; as just as he is prudent, temperate, and strong. Yet there are very many among them who still live carnally. Even if they perhaps do not know letters and are unable to read the precepts of God, certainly in the company of many faithful they see good things which they may imitate.

Behold, in the Church the words of the holy Gospel and of the apostles resound; behold, the examples of those living well are daily set before the eyes of all. Nor will they be able to say in excuse: We did not see what we ought to imitate. Whence it is also added: And the altar before the face of the temple. What is a temple, if not the faithful people? As it is said to the disciples through the Apostle Paul: ”For the temple of God is holy, which you are. And what is the altar of God, if not the mind of those living well? Who, mindful of their sins, wash away their stains with tears, mortify the flesh through abstinence, do not entangle themselves in any affairs of this world, give to the needy what they have, and do not covet having what they do not have. Rightly, therefore, the heart of such people is called the altar of God, where the fire burns from the sorrow of compunction, and the flesh is consumed. And do we not see such people daily, dearest brothers, among this holy faithful people as if

in the court of a temple? Do we not constantly behold their life set before us as an example? The altar, therefore, is before the face of the temple when many are placed in the sight of holy Church who, mindful of eternal judgment, daily slay themselves as a sacrifice to God in the lamentation of compunction.

Who, as has been said, chastise their bodies so that they may fulfill what is said through the Teacher of the Gentiles: "That you may present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God. For a victim is slain in order to be offered. But a living victim is a body afflicted for the Lord. It is called both a victim and living, because it lives in virtues and is slain from vices. A victim, indeed, because it is already dead to this world from wicked deeds; but living, because it works all the good it is able to accomplish. But because under the name of the altar a discourse on the flame of compunction has presented itself, I think it necessary to show what the diversity of that same compunction is. For one compunction is that which is born through fear, another which is born through love, because it is one thing to flee punishments, another to desire rewards. Hence also in the tabernacle two altars are commanded by the law to be made, one namely exterior, the other interior; one in the court, the other before the ark; one which is covered with bronze, the other which is clothed with gold. And on the bronze altar flesh is burned, but on the golden altar incense is kindled.

What is this, dearest brothers, that outside flesh is burned, inside incense, except this which we see daily, that there are two kinds of compunction, that some still weep through fear, but others already afflict themselves in lamentations through love? For many, mindful of their sins, while they dread eternal punishments, afflict themselves with daily tears. They bewail the evils they have done, and burn their vices with the fire of compunction, whose suggestions they still suffer in their heart. What are these but a bronze altar on which flesh burns, because carnal works are still bewailed by them? But others, free from carnal vices, now secure through long weeping, burn with the flame of love in tears of compunction; they set before the eyes of their heart the rewards of the heavenly fatherland, they long to be present among the citizens above. The servitude seems hard to them, the length of their pilgrimage. They desire to see the King in his beauty, and they do not cease to weep daily from love of him. What are these if not a golden altar, in whose heart incense of spices has been kindled, because virtues burn? And rightly it is said of that same altar that it is placed before the veil of the ark in the holy of holies. For the ark of the testament has become for us he of whom we know it is written: "In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The ark within the veil is our Redeemer in heaven.

But the golden altar on which incense is burned before the veil is the hearts of the saints, which, kindled with great virtues in the love of God, burn through holy desire for him whom they cannot yet see with unveiled face. For between the ark and the altar there is a veil, because that which still separates us from the vision of God—the obstacle of our corruption—has not been removed. But as long as we are before the veil, we must burn with the flame of love like kindled incense. Through tears of compunction we ought to seek nothing earthly, nothing transitory. May he alone who made all things suffice for us. Let us transcend

all things through desire, so that we may gather our mind into one. No longer by fear of punishments, no longer by the memory of vices, but kindled by the flame of love, let us burn in tears with the fragrance of virtues. That prayer of the elect was already foreseen when it was said in praise of the bride: ”Who is this that ascends through the desert like a column of smoke from the aromatics of myrrh and frankincense, and all the powder of the perfumer? For the holy Church of the elect, when she raises herself from this world in holy prayers with burning love, ascends through the desert that she abandons. But how she ascends is added: ”Like a column of smoke from aromatics. Smoke is born from incense, just as it is said through the Psalmist:

”Let my prayer be directed like incense in your sight. Smoke usually draws forth tears. Therefore the smoke from aromatics is the compunction of prayer conceived from the virtues of love. Yet this prayer is called a column of smoke because, while it seeks only heavenly things, it proceeds so directly that it is not at all bent back to seeking earthly and temporal things. And it should be noted that it is called not a rod but a small rod, because sometimes in the ardor of compunction the force of love is of such subtlety that even the mind itself, which when illuminated merited to have it, cannot comprehend it. And it is well said, of myrrh and frankincense. For frankincense according to the law is burned to the Lord in sacrifice. But through myrrh dead bodies are preserved, lest they be corrupted by worms. Therefore they offer a sacrifice of myrrh and frankincense who both afflict the flesh, lest the vices of corruption dominate them, and burn a fragrant offering of their love in the sight of the Lord, and present themselves to God in holy virtues. Whence it is also added there: And of all the powders of the perfumer. The powder of the perfumer is the virtue of one who works well. And it should be noted that the virtues of those who work well are called not spices but powders. For when we do any good deeds, we offer spices.

But when we also examine the very good deeds that we do, and by the judgment of examination take care lest anything sinister be in them, we make as it were powder from spices, so that we may burn our prayer more finely to the Lord through discernment and love. Behold, these things, as we were able by God’s bounty, we have examined before you, most beloved brethren. But let no one reproach me if after this discourse I shall cease, because, as you all perceive, our tribulations have increased: on every side we are surrounded by swords, on every side we fear the imminent danger of death. Some return to us with their hands cut off, others are reported captured, others slain. Now I am compelled to restrain my tongue from exposition, because my soul is weary of my life. Let no one now require of me the study of sacred eloquence, because my harp is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of those who weep. Now the eye of the heart does not keep watch in the discussion of mysteries, because my soul has slumbered from weariness. Now reading is less sweet to my mind, because I have forgotten to eat my bread from the voice of my groaning. But for one who is not permitted to live, how is it pleasing to speak mystical things concerning the meanings of sacred Scripture? And I who am compelled daily to drink bitter things, when am I able to offer sweet things?

What therefore remains, except that amid the scourges which we suffer on account of our iniquities we give thanks with tears? For He Himself who created us has also become a father to us through the spirit of adoption which He gave. And sometimes He nourishes His children with bread, sometimes He corrects them with the scourge, because through sorrows and gifts He trains them for the perpetual inheritance. Therefore let there be glory to our almighty Lord Jesus Christ, 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.