Homilies on Jeremiah

Origen of Alexandria (c. AD 240–250)

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Homily 1

God is quick to do good, but slow to punish those who deserve punishment. He could bring punishment on those he has condemned in silence, without giving any warning beforehand. But he never does this. Even when he condemns, he speaks, so that the one who is about to be condemned may turn back from the sentence. We could take many examples of this from the Scriptures, but a few that lie close at hand are enough, so that we may come to the purpose of the passages that have been read. The Ninevites had become sinners and had been condemned by God. In three more days Nineveh was to [be overthrown]. God did not want to condemn it in silence. He gave them room for repentance and conversion and sent a prophet, so that when he said, "Three more days, and Nineveh will be overthrown," those who had been condemned might not be condemned after all, but might repent and receive God's mercy. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah were also condemned, as is clear from God's words to Abraham. Yet the angels still did their part. They wanted to save people who did not want to be saved, and said to Lot, "Do you have anyone here, sons-in-law, or sons, or daughters?" They were not ignorant that those people would not follow Lot. They were acting out of their own kindness and love for humanity, and at the same time that of the one who sent them.

You will find the same thing in the case of Jeremiah. The time of his prophecy has been recorded: when he began and how long he prophesied. Now a reader who does not pay attention to the reading, and does not examine the intention of the passages written down, will say, "This is just history. It is recorded when Jeremiah began to prophesy, and for how long he prophesied before he stopped. What is that to me?" I read it and learned that he began to prophesy "in the days of Josiah son of Amos, king of Judah, until the thirteenth year of his reign." Then "it came to pass in the days of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah," that he was prophesying, "until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah son of Josiah, king of Judah." And I learned that his prophecy extended through three kings, "until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month." So what are we taught by these things, if we pay attention to the reading?

God had condemned Jerusalem because of her sins, and the people had been judged to be abandoned to captivity. Even so, God, who loves humanity, when the time was at hand, sent this prophet too, well before the third reign, the one in which the captivity came, so

that those who were willing might understand and repent because of the prophetic words. He sent a prophet to prophesy under the second king after the first, and under the third, right up to the time of the captivity itself. For the patient God was granting forbearance even one day, so to speak, before the captivity, urging those who heard to repent so that the gloom of captivity might cease. This is why it is written that "Jeremiah prophesied until the captivity of Jerusalem, until the fifth month." He began, and was still prophesying, as if to say: "You have become captives. Even so, repent! If you repent, the captivity will make no further progress, but God's mercy will come upon you." So we gain something useful from the record that gives the times of the prophecy: God, in his love for humanity, urges those who hear not to suffer the captivity. The same kind of thing applies to us. If we sin, we too are going to become captives. For "to hand such a person over to Satan" is no different from handing over the people of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar. As they were handed over to him because of their sins, so we are handed over to Satan because of our sins, since Satan is Nebuchadnezzar. And the apostle says of other sinners, "whom I have handed over to Satan, that they may be taught not to blaspheme."

So consider how great an evil it is to sin. Those who sin are handed over to Satan, who takes captive the souls of those whom God has abandoned. Yet God does not abandon without cause or without judgment those he has abandoned. When he sends rain on a vineyard, and the vineyard bears thorns instead of grapes, what will God do but "command the clouds not to rain" on that vineyard? Because of our sins, captivity hangs over us too. Unless we repent, we are going to be handed over to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians, so that the Babylonians of the mind may tear us apart. While this threatens us, the words of the prophets, the words of the law, the words of the apostles, and the words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ speak to us about repentance and urge us to turn back. If we listen, let us believe the one who said: "I too will repent of all the evils that I spoke of doing to them." That is enough for the introduction.

After the introduction it is written that "the word of the Lord came to him" — clearly, to Jeremiah. And what does the word of the Lord say to him? Something set apart from what was said to the other prophets. We have found this said to none of the prophets. Abraham was called a prophet in the words "he is a prophet and will pray for you," and yet God did not say to him, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you came out of the womb I sanctified you." Rather, Abraham was sanctified at some later time, when he went out from his land, from his kindred, and from his father's house. He was born by promise, and we did not find this word spoken even to him. And why do I need to list the others in turn? Jeremiah received a distinctive gift: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you came out of the womb I sanctified you."

We are not unaware that some people apply these words to our Savior and Lord, as being too great for Jeremiah. We should know that many of them fit him well and can be applied to the Savior, and I will set them out. But a few of the things said to Jeremiah put pressure on that interpretation, because they cannot be fitted to the Savior in the same way as the many.

Which ones, then, fit the Savior? "You shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak according to all that I command you. Do not be afraid before their face, for I am with you to rescue you, says the Lord." These words perhaps would not yet seem to apply to the Savior. But what follows puts pressure on the interpretation concerning Jeremiah: "And the Lord stretched out his hand to me and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: Behold, I have given my words into your mouth. Behold, I have appointed you today over nations and kingdoms, to uproot and to tear down." What nations did Jeremiah uproot? What kingdoms did he overthrow? For it is written: "Behold, I have appointed you today over nations and kingdoms, to uproot and to tear down." And what authority did Jeremiah have "to destroy," which is said to Jeremiah in the words "and to destroy"? Whom did Jeremiah build up, so many that it could be said "and to build"? Jeremiah says: "I have not benefited anyone, and no one has benefited me." So how was "to build and to plant" given to him? How will "to plant" fit Jeremiah?

The passages that refer to the Savior do not trouble the interpreter, because in these Jeremiah is a symbol of the Savior. But the passages I have set beside them trouble even the wisest person who wants to show how they too could fit the Savior. "And I said: O Lord, Master, you who are, behold, I do not know how to speak." He who is wisdom and power brought us [the fullness of the deity, which dwelt in him bodily]. So how can "I do not [know how to speak]" fit the Savior? And "I am younger" is something the Savior is forbidden to say, as though he were speaking wrongly. For if the Lord says to him, "Do not say this," it is clear that he forbids it because it is not well said. So these words do not fit the Savior. The others, however, do not seem to be an obstacle with regard to the Savior. It would not be hard to say that these words refer to Jeremiah and those to the Savior. But the fair-minded person will be greatly troubled at this passage. He sees that it is the mark of unreasonable people to cut up a connected sequence of words that were spoken either to Jeremiah or to the Savior. They say of some: "Since these are lesser things, they fit Jeremiah and not Christ." And of others: "Since these are greater than Jeremiah, they fit not Jeremiah but Christ." So should the whole passage be referred to Jeremiah? Then let those words that seem greater than Jeremiah be interpreted [in that light].

Everyone who has received words from God and has the grace of heavenly words has received them for this: "to uproot and tear down nations and kingdoms." But if "nations and kingdoms" are said to be "uprooted" by everyone who has received words from God, do not understand the nations and kingdoms in a bodily way. Understand instead human souls ruled by sin, as the apostle says: "Let sin not reign in our mortal body." Look also at the many kinds of sins, and read the nations and kingdoms figuratively as the evil things in human souls. These are uprooted and torn down by the words of God given to Jeremiah or to anyone at all. So the first set of sayings, the ones that trouble us when applied to the Savior, can fit Jeremiah. And the second set, for someone who knows how to read figuratively, can also fit Jeremiah. Someone among the hearers will say to me: "Work out the other part of the argument too, and try to show that everything that is written fits the Savior." About the second set, do not worry. It is plain that the Savior uprooted the kingdoms of the devil and

tore down the nations, by demolishing the pagan way of life. But here is the part that seems to speak ill of the Savior. Work out somehow how the Savior can say, "I do not know how to speak, because I am younger." Do you see how the argument is cramped? We know the Savior as Lord. We are seeking to apply these words to the Savior in a way that is worthy of the word and true to the truth.

We must take the Scriptures as witnesses. Our own proposals without witnesses, and our interpretations, are not to be trusted. The saying "At the mouth of two and three witnesses every word will be established" fits interpretations better than it fits people. So I will establish the words of my interpretation by taking two witnesses, from the New and the Old Testament, and three witnesses, from gospel, prophet and apostle. For in this way every word will be established. How then can we apply these words to the Savior? Bring a witness from the Old Testament: "For before the child knows good or evil, he refuses to obey wickedness, so as to choose the good." This was said plainly about the Savior in Isaiah: "Behold, the virgin will conceive in the womb and bear a son, and they will call his name Emmanuel." And there the words "before the child knows" are added. And if we must also take an example from the gospel: Jesus did not become a grown man at once but was still a child, since "he emptied himself," and he was advancing. For no one who has been made perfect advances; only someone who needs to advance does so. So he advanced in stature, advanced in wisdom, and in favor with God and people, coming down here. Having emptied himself, he received again from the very things from which "he emptied himself." Since he emptied himself willingly, what is absurd about his also advancing "in wisdom and stature and favor with God and people"? What is absurd about its being truly said of him, "Before he knows good or evil, he will choose the good and refuses to obey wickedness," and about what I quoted from Isaiah?

But someone will say: "Even if you can bring yourself to apply the words 'he does not know' to the Savior, does it not trouble you to say this about the only-begotten, about the firstborn of all creation, about the one announced before his conception in the words, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you'? And you say, 'He does not know how to speak'?" See whether you can discern something worthy and great about the Savior in this passage: when someone does not know certain things, he can be greater in not knowing them than in knowing them. And I use his own voice as witness that there are things he does not know. He says, for instance, to those who say to him, "Did we not eat in your name, and drink in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" "Depart from me; I never knew you." Does the "I never knew you" spoken there by the Savior show his power to be less, or greater and more wonderful, because he did not know those who were worse and were perishing? For he knew what is better and excellent, and "the Lord knew those who are his," and "if anyone is ignorant, he is not known." So the sinner is not known by God. One of the hearers will say to me: "You have shown that he does not know sinners, that he does not know those who work lawlessness, for they are not worthy of his knowledge. But how will you show that it is something great and glorious when the Savior says, 'I do not know how to speak'? Speaking

is a human thing. To speak is to use a language, so as to utter, say, a Hebrew voice, or a Greek one, or that of some other people."

If you go up to the Savior and see him as the Word who was "in the beginning with God," you will see that he does not know how to speak, since speaking is a human thing. But the reason he does not know is that what he does know is greater than speaking. And if you compare the tongues of angels with the tongues of human beings, and recognize that he is greater even than the angels, as the apostle testified in the letter to the Hebrews, you will say that he was greater even than the tongue of angels when he was God, the Word with the Father. So he learns, and as it were takes up a knowledge not of great things but of lesser and smaller ones. It is like my own case: I force myself to learn to stammer when I talk with little children. Since I do not really know how to speak the way children do, so to say, I compel myself, though I am mature, to converse with children. In the same way the Savior, while he is "in the Father" and in the majesty of God's glory, does not speak human things and does not know how to utter sounds to those below. But when he comes into a human body, he says at the beginning, "I do not know how to speak, for I am younger." He is younger because of his bodily birth, but older according to the title "firstborn of all creation." He is younger because he came to live among us at the consummation of the ages, later in time. So when he says "I do not know how to speak," he means: I know something greater than speaking, I know something greater than this human sound. Do you want me to speak to human beings? I have not yet taken up a human language. I have your language, Father; I am your Word, God's Word; I know how to converse with you, but I do not know how to speak to human beings. "I am younger."

"Do not say, 'I am younger,' for you shall go to everyone to whom I send you." In this way he stretches out his hand, touches his mouth, and gives him words. He gives him words because of the kingdoms, so that he may uproot them. But when he was "in the Father," he had no need of words that uproot; he had no words that tear down and demolish the worse things. For nothing there was worthy of being torn down, nothing worthy of being uprooted. It is a great thing, as in "I do not know you; you are workers of lawlessness." So when the Savior says it because of the surpassing greatness of his glory, "I do not know how to speak" carries the same force as "I do not know how to speak human things."

Whether this is said to Jeremiah or to the Savior, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you," read Genesis and pay attention to what it says about the creation of the world. You will find that Scripture, with great precision, did not say, "Before I made you in the womb I knew you." When the one "in the image" was created, "God said, Let us make man according to our image and likeness." He did not say, "Let us form." But when he took "dust from the earth," he did not "make" the man; rather he "formed the man," and "he put in the garden the man whom he had formed." [The text is badly damaged here and cannot be restored with confidence.] So the Lord, whether speaking to Jeremiah or to the Savior, did not say, "Before I made you in the womb"; he said "formed," because this one, from the dust of the earth, is created in the womb. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you." If the Lord

knew everyone in this way [the text is corrupt here], he would not have said "and I know you" to Jeremiah as something special.

So God knows those who stand out. God knows those who are worthy of his knowledge, and "the Lord knew those who are his." But the unworthy God does not know, just as the Savior said, "I never knew you." We too, being human, judge according to our progress that some things are worthy of our knowing them. Some things we do not even want to hear, so that we may not come to know them or be acquainted with them, while others we want to know. What of the God of all? He wants to know Pharaoh, he wants to know the Egyptians, yet they are not worthy of God's knowledge. Moses is worthy, and so is each of the prophets of such a stature. You must set right many things before God begins to know you. Jeremiah he knew before he formed him in the womb. Another he begins to know at thirty years of age, another at forty. These are hidden matters. Concerning the Savior they are not in question, but concerning Jeremiah they call for careful attention from those who have ears.

How does he say it? "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you came out of the womb I sanctified you." God sanctifies certain people for himself. He did not wait for this man to come into being and then sanctify him; before he came out of the womb he had already sanctified him. If you refer this to the Savior, it is not hard to say that he was sanctified before coming out of the womb. If you refer it to the Savior, he was sanctified not only before he came out, but even earlier still. But this Jeremiah was sanctified before he came out of the womb.

"I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." If you look into this "I have appointed you a prophet to the nations" as said of Jeremiah, notice in what follows that he is commanded to prophesy "against all the nations," and there is a heading: "What Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations," to "Elam," "Damascus," "Moab." And so we have it that he "prophesied against all the nations," as the literal fulfillment of "I have appointed you a prophet to the nations," said to him. But if the words are taken in a higher sense: for Jeremiah we have already said what is needed; for the Savior, what need is there to say anything? He truly prophesied against all the nations. For just as he is countless other things, so he is also a prophet. As he is high priest, as he is Savior, as he is physician, so he is also prophet. Moses, at any rate, prophesying about him, spoke of him not simply as a prophet but in a special way, saying: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet from among your brothers, like me; to him you shall listen, and whoever does not listen to that prophet will be utterly destroyed from his people." So this is the one who has been appointed a prophet "to the nations." He received grace from God poured out on his lips, so that not only when he was present in the body, but now also, when he is present in power and in the Spirit, he prophesies "to all the nations," so that his prophecy is carried out among all the nations and draws people to salvation.

"And I said: O Being, Master and Lord, see, I do not know how to speak, because I am younger." "And the Lord said to me: Do not say, 'I am younger,' because you shall go to all those to whom I send you." We have often said that a person can be a child in the inner man

even if he is of an old man's age in the body. And sometimes a person can be a child in the outer man while being a grown man in the inner man. Jeremiah was like this: he already had grace from God while still a child in bodily age. That is why the Lord says to him, "Do not say, 'I am younger.'" The sign that he was not younger, but a "perfect man," is this: "You shall go to all those to whom I send you, and you shall speak according to everything I command you. Do not be afraid of their faces." The word of God knows that those who carry out its embassy are in danger from those who hear. When they are rebuked, they hate the messengers; when they are reproved, they persecute them. The prophets suffer absolutely anything: "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house."

We mentioned this verse not long ago. So God, when he sends the prophet, knows how many dangers he will take on, and he says to him: "Do not be afraid of their faces, because I am with you to rescue you, says the Lord." What Jeremiah suffered is on record. He was thrown into a pit of mud and stayed there, "eating one loaf a day" and drinking only water. His prophecy has made known countless other things he suffered. "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?" That was said to the Jews. And it is necessary that "those who want to live godly in Christ Jesus" be persecuted, by the opposing powers, through whatever instruments they find. So let those who are persecuted not be surprised, but let them do everything they should, only praying that they be persecuted unjustly and not justly: not for wrongdoing, not for sin, not for greed. But if someone is ever persecuted for righteousness' sake, let him hear: "Blessed are you when they reproach you and persecute you and say every evil word against you, lying, on my account. Rejoice and be glad, because your reward is great in heaven. For in this way they persecuted the prophets before you."

"Because I am with you to rescue you, says the Lord. And the Lord stretched out his hand to me and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me." Notice the differences between Jeremiah and Isaiah. Isaiah says: "I have unclean lips, and I live among a people who have unclean lips, and with my eyes I have seen the King, the Lord Sabaoth." Since he confessed that what was unclean in him was not deeds but only little words (up to this point he was a sinner), "the Lord" did not "stretch out his hand." Instead, "one of the Seraphim touched his lips with his hand and said: See, I have taken away your lawless acts." But this man, Jeremiah, was sanctified "from the womb." So no tongs are sent to him, nor a coal "from the altar" (he had nothing in him that deserved the fire). Rather, the Lord's own hand touched him. That is why he says: "The Lord stretched out his hand to me and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: See, I have given my words into your mouth. See, I have appointed you today over nations and kingdoms, to uproot." Who is so blessed as to uproot, by the words God gives, the many kingdoms that "the devil shows"? These are kingdoms of the opposing powers, kingdoms that rest on sins. For it is written: "See, I have given my words into your mouth. See, I have appointed you today over nations and kingdoms, to uproot." Just as there are kingdoms, so there are nations. And nothing can be called a kingdom unless it has nations under it. For example, there is a kingdom of fornication, and each particular fornication is a nation of fornication. The general sin of greed and of

defrauding is one kingdom, and there are many kingdoms among those who commit many kinds of sins.

Next, think of the nations under each kingdom as belonging to each sinner. One person, we might say, has many nations belonging to the kingdom of fornication. Another has many nations belonging to the kingdom of defrauding, or of slander, or of anger. When God's words are sent out "over nations and kingdoms," their work is "to uproot and to dig down." Uproot what? The Savior taught us when he said, "Every planting which my heavenly Father did not plant will be uprooted." There are things inside our souls which "the heavenly Father did not plant." All the "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnessings, blasphemies" are plantings, and the heavenly Father did not plant them. If you want to know whose plantings such thoughts are, hear this: "An enemy man did this," the one who sowed the "weeds in the middle of the wheat." So God stands there with his seeds, and the devil stands there with his. If we give "place to the devil," "the enemy" sows a planting [which the Father did not plant, but the devil did], and it will certainly be uprooted. If we do not give "place to the devil," but give place to God, God gladly sows his seeds on the ruling part of our soul. So do not suppose that Jeremiah received a gloomy gift from God because he was appointed "over nations and over kingdoms, to uproot." God is good, because through his words he uproots what is worthless: the kingdoms hostile to the kingdom of the heavens, and the warring nations hostile to the nation of God. "To uproot and to dig down."

There is a building of the devil, and there is a building of God. The building "on the sand" is the devil's, because it is fixed on nothing firm, solid or united. The building "on the rock" is God's. See what is said to those who belong to God: "You are God's field, God's building." So God's words are "over nations and kingdoms, to uproot and to dig down and to destroy." Suppose something is uprooted, but the thing uprooted is not destroyed. Then it still exists. Suppose something is dug down, but the stones of what was dug down are not destroyed. Then it still exists. So it belongs to God's goodness, after uprooting, to destroy what has been uprooted, and after pulling down, to destroy what has been pulled down. Read carefully how such things are destroyed in the case of what is destroyed and uprooted: "Burn the chaff with unquenchable fire," and "Bind the weeds in bundles and hand them over to fire." So after being uprooted, they are destroyed. If you want to see what is destroyed even after a demolition, take the building made of worthless material. That house which was pulled down because of leprosy becomes dust, and once it has become dust it is thrown out "outside the city," so that not even a stone remains. This is like "I will grind them fine like the mud of the streets." For the worse things must not hold together in any way. If something has been dug down, the stones must not be useful for another building, which the evil one could build. If something has been uprooted, he must not [again] find seeds among the uprooted things, so that he could sow weeds over them again. For surely, since he had the seeds of the weeds, he sowed them. For this reason: "Bind the weeds and burn them with fire." Then, after being uprooted, the devil's planting is destroyed, and after being dug down, the devil's building is destroyed.

But the words of God do not stop at "uprooting, tearing down and destroying." Suppose the evil things have been uprooted from me and the worse things torn down. What good is that to me, unless better things are planted in place of what was uprooted? What good is it, unless something of greater worth is built in place of what was torn down? For this reason the words of God of necessity first do the "uprooting, tearing down and destroying," and after these the "building and planting." In Scripture we have always observed that the grim-looking things, if I may call them that, are named first, and then the things that seem cheerful are spoken of second. "I will kill and I will make alive." He did not say, "I will make alive," and after that, "I will kill." For it is impossible for what God has made alive to be killed, either by him or by anyone else. But he says, "I will kill and I will make alive." Whom will I kill? Paul the betrayer, Paul the persecutor. "And I will make alive," so that he becomes "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ." If the wretched people from the heresies had understood these things, they would not keep throwing such words at us and saying: "Do you see how savage and inhuman the God of the law is? He says, 'I will kill and I will make alive.'" Do you not see in the Scriptures a promise of the resurrection of the dead? Or do you not see the resurrection of the dead already being previewed in each one of us? "We were buried together" with Christ "through baptism," and we have been raised together with him. So he begins with sterner words, yet necessary ones, such as "I will kill," and then, having killed, "I will also make alive. I will strike, and I will heal." For "the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and scourges every son whom he receives." First he strikes, and after this he heals. For "he himself causes pain, and he restores again."

So it is here too: "I have appointed you today over nations and kingdoms, to uproot and to tear down and to destroy and to build and to plant." Still, the first thing is for those evil things to be taken away from us. God cannot build on the site of an evil building. "For what share does righteousness have with lawlessness? What fellowship does light have with darkness?" Evil must be uprooted from its foundations. The building of evil must be consumed and removed from our soul, so that afterward the words of God may build and plant. I cannot understand what is written in any other way: "See, I have put my words in your mouth." What do the words do? "Uproot, tear down and destroy." Words uproot "nations"; words tear down kingdoms. [The text here is damaged; the sense seems to be that these are not only the worldly nations and kingdoms.] Think of what is uprooted by words, and what is torn down by words, in a way worthy of words that tear down and uproot. Is there not power even now in what is being said, if God gives it, according to the saying, "The Lord will give a word to those who proclaim the good news with great power"? Is it not a power that uproots any unbelief, any hypocrisy, any wickedness, any self-indulgence? Is it not a power that tears down any idol-temple that has been built in the heart? Then, when that has been torn down, a temple of God may be built, and the glory of God may be found in the rebuilt temple. And it will become not a sacred grove but a planting, a paradise of God, where the temple of God is in Christ Jesus. To him belong the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen.

Homily 2

"God did not make death, and he takes no pleasure in the destruction of the living. For he created all things so that they might exist, and the generations of the world are saving, and there is no deadly poison in them, nor a kingdom of Hades on earth." Then, skipping ahead a little in the passage, I will say where death came in: "But through the envy of the devil death entered the world." So whatever is best for us, God has made; but we ourselves have built evil and sins for ourselves. For this reason the opening of the reading here in the prophet speaks as if in perplexity to those who have in the soul a bitterness opposed to the sweetness God prepared for it: "How have you turned into bitterness, foreign vine?" It is as if he were saying: God did not make lameness, but made everyone sound of foot. So what has been the cause of those who are lame? God first of all made all the limbs healthy. So what has been the cause of someone's suffering harm? In the same way the soul was made "in the image" not only in the first man but in every human being. For "Let us make man in our image and according to our likeness" reaches to all human beings.

And just as in Adam there is something older, namely what most people understand as the "according to the image" that was later taken on by him, when through sin he put on "the image of the man of dust," so in everyone the "according to the image of God" is older than the worse image. "Being sinners, we put on the image of the man of dust; let us put on," by repenting, "the image of the heavenly man." Still, creation came about in the image of the heavenly one. So here the word is perplexed and speaks to sinners in rebuke: "How have you turned into bitterness, you foreign vine? For I planted you a fruit-bearing vine, wholly true." This was said in the passages before these, and I will repeat it briefly to persuade you that God planted the soul of man as a good vine, but each person, having turned, has become opposed to the purpose of the one who made him. "But I planted you a fruit-bearing vine, wholly" – not partly – "true." It is not that one part is true and another false, but "I planted you a fruit-bearing vine, wholly true. How have you turned?" That is: I made you a wholly true vine; how have you turned into bitterness and become a foreign vine?

After this, let us look at the words: "If you wash with soda and multiply herb for yourself, you are stained in your iniquities before me, says the Lord." Did someone think that a soul which had sinned, by taking soda and washing with ordinary, physical soda, would be rid of the stain and rid of sin? Did someone suppose that by taking this herb that springs up

from the earth, and washing and scrubbing with it, the soul would be cleansed? For here the word speaks to the vine that had turned to bitterness and become foreign: "If you wash with soda and multiply herb for yourself, you are stained in your iniquities before me, says the Lord." But we must know that the word has every power. Just as it has the power of all Scripture, so the word has the power of every medicine, and it is the power of everything that cleanses, and it scrubs most thoroughly. "For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword." Whatever you may say is needed, that is in the power of the word. So there is a certain word that is soda, and a certain word that is herb, which cleanses such filth when it is spoken. But not every sin is healed by such a word, whether the one that is soda or the one that is herb. There are sins that need neither soda nor herb. So to the soul that thinks its sins can be got rid of with soda and herb it is said: "If you wash with soda and multiply herb for yourself, you are stained before me in your iniquities, says the Lord."

Consider wounds. Some are healed by a salve, others by oil, others need a bandage and are healed that way. But there are other wounds about which it is said: "There is no salve to apply, nor oil, nor bandages; but your land is desolate, your cities burned with fire." So it is with sins. Some sins make the soul filthy, and for these sins a person needs a word that is soda, a word that is herb. But there are other sins that are not healed this way, for they are not even compared to dirt. Because the Lord knows the differences between sins, see how he speaks in Isaiah: "The Lord will wash away the filth of the sons and daughters of Zion, and will cleanse the blood from their midst by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of burning." Filth and blood: the filth by a spirit of judgment, the blood by a spirit of burning. If you have sinned, but not "to death," you have been made filthy. "So the Lord will wash away the filth of the sons and daughters of Zion, and will cleanse the blood from their midst." Then there is the matching response: for "the filth," a "spirit of judgment," and for "the blood," a "spirit of burning." And many of us, having sinned worse sins, need neither soda nor the multiplying of herb, but the spirit of burning.

This is why Jesus baptizes "in the Holy Spirit and fire." (Perhaps I have only now found the explanation.) He does not baptize the same person "in the Holy Spirit and fire." Rather, he baptizes the holy person "in the Holy Spirit." But the person who, after believing and after being counted worthy of the Holy Spirit, has sinned again, he washes in "fire." So the one baptized by Jesus "in the Holy Spirit and fire" is not the same person in both cases. Blessed, then, is the one baptized in the Holy Spirit who has no need of the baptism of fire. But three times wretched is the one who needs to be baptized with fire. Still, Jesus has both. For "a rod will come out of the root of Jesse, and a flower will rise from the root." The "rod" is for those who are being punished, the "flower" for the righteous. In the same way "God is a consuming fire," and "God is light": a consuming fire for sinners, light for the righteous and holy. And "blessed is the one who has a share in the first resurrection," the one who has kept the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Who, then, is the one saved in another resurrection? It is the one who needs the baptism of fire. When he comes to that fire, the fire tests him. If it finds wood, hay, [and stubble], it burns them up. So, since these things are being said, let

us gather up as best we can the words of the Scriptures, store them in our heart, and try to live by them. Perhaps we may be able to become clean before our departure. Having made our works ready for the departure, we may go out with those good works, be received, and be saved in Christ Jesus. To him belong glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

Homily 3

At the beginning of the passage that was read, the Lord says about Israel that he had not been a "desert" to them, nor "a land left unploughed." Now who, coming to this place, would not stop to look into it and examine what the writing means? Granted: God has not become a desert in Israel, and he has not become an unploughed land in Israel. But has the Lord then become a desert to Israel today? Or is he now an unploughed land to them? And what of this: when he was not a desert or an unploughed land to Israel, was he a desert and an unploughed land to the nations? For if he is never a desert to anyone, and is never an unploughed land to anyone, what need was there for it to be said specially and particularly to Israel: "Have I been a desert to the house of Israel, or a land left unploughed?" But we can go first to God's general benefits, and then, after his general benefits, to his particular ones.

To no one is God a desert. He makes his sun rise on the evil and [the good]. To no one is he an unploughed land. He sends rain on [the righteous] and the unrighteous. How is he a desert, when he brings up the day and makes the night for rest? How is he a desert, when he makes the earth bear fruit? How is he a desert, when he orders each person's life according to the soul, so that he may be rational, so that he may take up knowledge, so that his understanding may be exercised, and, as to the body, so that he may have "the senses" in good health? So, as regards the general account, God is a desert to no one. But as regards the particular account, I come to the affairs of Israel, and I say: he was neither a desert nor an unploughed land when he did the signs and wonders for the people in Egypt. And if there was ever a time when they were abandoned, it was as though he were a desert to them. He became that, though he himself was not a desert. Yet when he was not a desert or an unploughed land to Israel, then, according to the particular account, he was a desert and an unploughed land to the nations. But when he turned away from Israel and became a desert and an unploughed land to that Israel, then grace was poured out on the nations. And now Christ Jesus has become to us not a desert but fullness, not an unploughed land but one that bears fruit. For "many are the children of the desert, more than of the woman who has the husband." And he threatens those to whom he has not become a desert or an unploughed land, saying: I have not been to you a "desert" or "an unploughed land," but you have said: "We will not be ruled; we will not come to you any more." Did the sons of Israel say, in a desperate frame of mind, as the words suggest: "We will not be ruled"?

Homily 4

The wording of the passage that was read has something obscure in it. Let us first work out what it means. After that, if God allows, we will learn his hidden purpose in it. He wants us to know, then, that, as it is written in the books of Kingdoms, in the days of Rehoboam the people were divided into two kingdoms. Ten tribes came under Jeroboam, and two tribes under Rehoboam. Those under Jeroboam were called Israel, and those under Rehoboam were called Judah. As far as the history goes, this division of the people has lasted until now. We know of no history in which Israel and Judah were brought together again as one. Israel sinned first, and sinned more: the Israel under Jeroboam and his successors. They sinned so much more than Judah that Providence condemned them to be taken captive to the Assyrians, and, as the Scripture says, "until today." After this the sons of Judah also sinned, and they were condemned to captivity in Babylon. That was not "until today," as with Israel, but for "seventy years." Jeremiah prophesied about those years, and Daniel also recalled them. If we understand these things as applying to the people of that time, see whether the prophet's words do not show something like this. He accuses Israel of its sins, in a manner of speaking. He says that although Israel had committed so many sins, the assembly of Judah heard of their failures, and how I made them go into captivity, [and was not instructed, but added to its sins.]

So because of this addition of sins, when Judah's sins were compared with those of Israel, righteousness was found in Israel rather than in Judah. Then, after this, the prophet is commanded to prophesy, as though Judah were worse than Israel, so that after their sins Judah might turn back. After the prophecy to Israel, which commanded it to turn back, the prophet prophesies that Israel and Judah will one day come together, and that there will someday be one kingdom of both. Let anyone who cares about the readings take the words of today's whole reading, and then he will see that these meanings are made plain. "And the Lord said to me in the days of Josiah the king: Have you seen what the dwelling of Israel did to me?" Notice: not Judah, but Israel first. "It went up on every high mountain and under every leafy tree, and played the prostitute there. And after it had done all this, I said: Turn back to me. And it did not turn back. And she saw its faithlessness", that is, the assembly of Israel, "the faithless Judah. And I saw", those from Judah, "that in all the things in which the dwelling of Israel committed adultery, I also sent her away and gave her a certificate of divorce." Judah ought to have been instructed by this. For I sent Israel

away, the assembly of Israel; I cast them out to the Assyrians, "and I gave her a certificate of divorce into her hands." "And faithless Judah was not afraid."

After all that I did to Israel, sending it away and giving it a certificate of divorce, the assembly of Judah ought to have been instructed by what those others suffered. But they not only were not instructed; they added to their sins. So the sins of the assembly of Israel, compared with the sins of the assembly of Judah, seem to be righteousness. "And I gave her a certificate of divorce into her hands. And faithless Judah, her sister, was not afraid, and she went and played the prostitute, she too. And her prostitution came to nothing, and she committed adultery with the wood and the stone. And in all this faithless Judah did not turn back to me with her whole heart, but in falsehood." She was not ashamed before me because of what I had done to Israel, so that she might turn back completely. She ought to have turned back in truth, but she turned back in falsehood. "And in all this faithless Judah did not turn back to me with her whole heart, but in falsehood. And the Lord said to me: Israel has justified her soul compared with faithless Judah." The sins of Israel, compared with the failures of Judah, became a justification of the soul of the assembly of Israel.

"Go, then, and read these words toward the north." If the saying is understood, let us see what it means to show by this. The calling of the nations began from the fall of Israel. When the apostles preached in the synagogues of the Jews, they said, "The word of salvation was sent out to you. Since you judge yourselves unworthy, see, we turn to the [nations]." The apostle also, knowing what he knows about these people, says, "By their transgression salvation has come to the nations, to make them jealous." So the many sins of that people caused them to be abandoned. They also brought us to the hope of the [promise], we who were [strangers to] the covenants and aliens from the [commonwealth]. For how could I, a foreigner, wherever I came from, to the so-called holy land, now be discussing the promises of God? How could I believe in the God of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and by God's grace receive Jesus Christ, [announced] by the prophets? If you understand these two peoples, the one from Israel and the one from the nations, then consider with me the exile of Israel, and understand that it was written about that people of Israel: "I sent her away and gave her a certificate of divorce." For God sent that people away and gave them a certificate of divorce.

This is like the case of married people. The law of Moses says that if a wife was displeasing to her husband, a "certificate of divorce" was drawn up by the husband and the wife was sent away. The man who had sent away his first wife because she seemed to have behaved shamefully was then permitted to marry another woman. In the same way, see those people receiving a certificate of divorce. And because they received the certificate of divorce, they were completely abandoned. For where are prophets among them any longer? Where are signs among them any longer? Where is the appearing of God? Where is the worship, the temple, the sacrifices? They were thrown out of their own place. So he gave Israel "a certificate of divorce." Then we are Judah. (We are called Judah because of the Savior who rose from Judah, for it is plain that our Lord has risen from Judah.) We turned to the Lord.

Yet our latter end, [if] it is not already so, seems about to become like theirs, if not indeed worse.

That our own affairs will be like this at the close of this age is clear from what the Savior said in the gospel. There he says, "Because lawlessness is multiplied, the love of the many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved." And he says, "[The deceiver] will do signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." Our situation will be such that the Savior says of his own coming, as though a faithful person would hardly be found among so many churches, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he indeed find faith on the earth?" And truly, if we judge matters by the truth and not by crowds, and judge them by the choice of the heart and not by seeing many gathered together, we will see that we are not faithful now. But they were faithful then, when the noble martyrdoms were taking place. We would escort the martyrs from the burial grounds and come to the assemblies, and the whole church came without being distressed. The catechumens were taught at the martyrdoms and at the deaths of those who confessed the truth "to death," "not frightened" or shaken before "the living God." We know that in those days people also saw extraordinary signs and wonders. Then the faithful were few, but they were truly faithful, walking the narrow and hard road that leads "to life." But now we have become many. Yet it is impossible for many to be elect, for Jesus who said it does not lie: "Many are called, but few are chosen." Out of the multitude of those who [profess] reverence for God, very few reach God's election and blessedness.

So when he says, "First I sent Israel away because of their sins, and I sent them off into exile, but Judah heard what happened to Israel and did not turn back," he is speaking about our sins. The things that happened to Israel are read aloud, and the failures of that people, and we ought to be afraid. "If he did not spare the natural branches, how much less will he spare you?" If the kind and loving God did not spare those who boasted of being the "good olive tree," those rooted in "the root" of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but cut them off, how much less will he spare us! For God is not kind without also being severe, nor severe without also being kind. If he were only kind and not severe, we would despise "his kindness" all the more. If he were severe and not kind, we might perhaps despair over our sins. As it is, he is God, and so he is both kind and severe. We human beings need his kindness when we repent, but we need his severity when we stay in our sins. So he speaks to us through the prophets and says, "Have you seen what the dwelling of Israel did to me?" Understand by Israel that people of old. "She went up on every high mountain and under every shady tree."

Suppose you see the Pharisee going up into the temple in his arrogance. He does not beat his breast and does not grieve over his own evils. Instead he says, "I thank you that I am not like the rest of men, robbers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give a tenth of all I have." You will see that he has gone up "on every high mountain" in a blameworthy way. He loved loftiness of mind, and in his boasting and pride he loved every high hill. And he has come to be "under every tree" that is not fruitful but

"shady like a grove." A grove tree is one thing, and a fruit tree is another. When people plant trees for groves, they do not plant the ones that bear fruit, not a fig tree or a vine, but only trees without fruit, for the sake of enjoyment. You will find the teachings of those who hold other doctrines to be like that: the beauty of their persuasive arguments does not turn their hearers back to God. So when someone gives himself over to such teachings, he has gone "under every grove-like tree." The text did not say "every tree" and then stop. Nor did it add "every fruit-bearing tree." It said, "under every shady, grove-like tree." For this reason you will understand why the lawgiver says, "You shall not plant any tree beside the altar of the Lord your God, and you shall not make a grove." You see, even the very name of the grove has been forbidden.

"And she committed fornication there. And after she had committed all this fornication, I said: Return to me. But she did not return, and unfaithful Judah saw her unfaithfulness." We too are rebuked, I mean we who sin and do not keep God's covenants. We do not see that those people lost the covenant, though they were well born, descended from Abraham, and had received the promise. We ought therefore to reckon that they fell away from the blessings and the promises, and that being descended from the fathers did them no good. How much more shall we be abandoned if we sin! The Savior says to them, "If you were children of Abraham, you would be doing the works of Abraham." And John says again, "Do not begin to say among yourselves, We have Abraham as our father; for I tell you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones." By stones he hints at us, who have a heart of stone and are hardened against the truth. And truly God has raised up children to Abraham from the stones, if we remain in that childbearing and keep the spirit of [the adoption?]. So "her unfaithfulness" is that of the dwelling of Israel, and "unfaithful Judah" is the one who did not keep the covenants with God. And Judah saw, concerning everything for which that people was abandoned (for we, who are Judah, see all this if we read the Scripture), that for the things in which the dwelling of Israel committed adultery, God sent her away and gave her a certificate of divorce. This was so that we might be instructed by what he did to them. He judged them according to their sins, abandoned them, and handed them over to captivity, to slaughter, and to their enemies. From these things we ought to turn back, and each of us ought to reckon that if God did not spare the natural branches, how much more will he not spare us. If he thus cast out those who came from the fathers when they became sinners, what shall we suffer, we who were called from the nations? We have reckoned none of this, though we were called so that that people might be provoked to jealousy when they see the slave honored and see the low-born one come forward.

But if they suffered so much, how much more shall we be abandoned if we sin? "For the things in which the dwelling of Israel committed adultery, I sent her away and gave her a certificate of divorce into her hands. And unfaithful Judah was not afraid." God means what he has done to the dwelling of Israel, that "I sent her away and gave her a certificate of divorce." Judah "was not afraid" because of what had happened to them. Consider someone who enters the house of a master and has only recently been bought. He asks which of the earlier servants the master honored and why, and which of the servants he dishonored

and why. When he has understood this, if he wants to stay in the master's house, he takes care not to fall into what the earlier servants did, who sinned, were thrown out, and were handed over to punishment. Then, having learned what the earlier servants did who won approval, and for what kind of conduct they obtained freedom, he strives to imitate them. So it is with us. We were not servants of God but of idols and demons, Gentiles, and only yesterday and the day before we came to God. Let us read the Scripture. Let us see who was justified and who was condemned. Let us imitate those who were justified. Let us take care not to fall into the things that those who were taken captive fell into, those who were cast out from God.

"And unfaithful Judah was not afraid, but went and played the harlot, even she herself." Israel had played the harlot first; afterward Judah played the harlot too. "And her harlotry came to nothing, and she committed adultery with the wood and the stone." When we sin, we do nothing other than become stone-hearted and commit adultery with "the stone." When we sin and play the harlot "under every shady tree," we too commit adultery with the wood. "And unfaithful Judah did not turn to me with her whole heart, but in falsehood." If we have turned to God, but only in part, we are charged with not having turned "with the whole heart." So "unfaithful Judah did not turn to me with her whole heart." He did not say, "Unfaithful Judah turned, and stood firm." He said, "Unfaithful Judah did not turn to me with her whole heart, but" turned "in falsehood." What, then, is true turning? It is to read the ancient writings, to know those who were justified, and to imitate them. It is to read those writings and see those who were blamed, and to guard ourselves against falling under the same blame. It is to read the books of the new covenant, the words of the apostles, and after reading, to write all these things on the heart and to live by them. Then no bill of divorce will be given to us as well, but we shall be able to come to the holy inheritance. And when the fullness of the Gentiles has been saved, Israel will then be able to enter. For if the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, then all Israel will be saved, "and there will be one flock, one shepherd," teaching us to glorify the almighty God in Christ Jesus himself, to whom be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

Homily 5

It is written plainly in the Acts of the Apostles that the apostles first went into the Jewish synagogue. They announced to the Jews, as to kinsmen through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, what was written about the coming of Jesus Christ. But when those people did not accept what was said, and others had to become the hearers of the message, then the apostles made their defense to the Jews and left them. For it is written: "It was necessary that the word of God be announced to you first; but since you judge yourselves unworthy, look, we turn to the Gentiles." What is said plainly in the Acts of the Apostles has been said in effect in many places by the prophets too. The Holy Spirit speaks first and foremost to those from that people. But if at some point, after saying much, he is not listened to, he prophesies the word that is proclaimed to the Gentiles. This has also happened at the beginning of today's reading. Before it, these words are spoken to those from Israel: "Even if you call me Father, you will not turn away from me. Yet as a woman is faithless to the man who lives with her, so the house of Israel has been faithless to me, says the Lord." When these things had first been said about Israel, and the sons of Israel had heard that "they had done wrong in their ways and forgotten their holy God," then the Holy Spirit moves the word on to us who are from the Gentiles and says: "Turn back, sons who turn back, and I will heal your fractures."

For we are the ones full of fractures, each one of us might say, even if now he has been cleansed and healed of the fractures. "For we too were foolish, foolish, going astray, slaves to desires and many varied pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness and love for humanity of our Savior God appeared, through the washing of rebirth he poured out his mercy upon us." I will try to make that apostolic saying clearer, though I have mentioned it once already. For he did not say, "We were once foolish, disobedient," as though speaking of others. Paul, the apostle, who was from Israel, who had become "blameless in the righteousness that is in the law," says: "For we too were once (those from Israel) disobedient, foolish." Not only were those from the Gentiles foolish, and not only were those from the Gentiles disobedient, and not only were they sinners. We too, who had been taught the law, were like that before the coming of Christ. So after what has been said to Israel, these words are spoken to us who are from the Gentiles: "Turn back, sons who turn back, and I will heal your fractures."

But someone will object: "This was said to Israel, and you are dragging it over to the Gentiles." We want to show that when God wishes to speak to Israel about repentance, he does not wait a long while but adds the name of Israel at once. So the very next words are: "If Israel turns back to me, says the Lord, he will indeed turn back; and if he removes his abominations from his mouth, and is reverent before my face, and swears, 'As the Lord lives,' in truth and in judgment and in righteousness, then the nations will bless themselves in him." So the earlier words were spoken to those from the Gentiles. For when the full number of the Gentiles has come in, then all Israel will be saved, according to what the apostle says in the letter to the Romans. Notice how God urges us who are turning to turn completely. He promises that if we turn to him, "turning back," he will heal our "fractures" through Jesus Christ. And we answer, as people who do not hesitate or delay over our salvation the way that Israel did: "Here we are; we shall be yours." God said, "Turn back, sons who are turning back, and I will heal your fractures." And those from the Gentiles say, "We shall be your servants." Yet we were not yours before. We belonged to demons, and we found ourselves under opposing powers. For when the Most High divided the nations, we did not become your portion, nor the measured share of your inheritance with the people of Jacob. We became the portions of others. Even so, we who were once those portions hear you say to us, "Turn back, sons who are turning back, and I will heal your fractures," and we answer, "Here we are." This is what we were waiting for, the calling. We do not decline when we are called, as those others were called and declined.

For we have it in the parables of the gospel that when some were invited first, one said, "Hold me excused, I have married a wife," and another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen and I am going to try them out; hold me excused." We from the Gentiles are not like that: we are called, and we do not decline. Why? What field would we need to be busy with? What wise woman? What else should we be occupied with? So God has said to us, "Turn back, sons who are turning back, and I will heal your fractures." And when we see our own fractures and the promise of healing, we answer at once and say, "Here we are; we shall be yours, because you are the Lord our God." Having heard, then, and having said "We shall be yours," let us remember that we made a promise to God when we said to him, "We shall be yours." And having said "We shall be yours," let us not become anyone else's. Let us not belong to a spirit of anger, or a spirit of grief, or a spirit of desire. Let us not belong to the devil or to his angels. Rather, having been called and having said, "Here we are; we shall be yours," let us show by our works that we have become his and have given ourselves to no one but him. And we say, "Because you are the Lord our God." For we confess no other god. It is not the belly, as the gluttons do, "whose god is the belly." It is not silver, as the lovers of money do, and not greed, which is idolatry. We do not deify or make gods of anything else that the many make gods of. For us the God over all, the one who is over all and through all and in all, is God. And since we are bound to God by love, for love glues us to God, we say, "Here we are; we shall be yours, because you are the Lord our God."

Then, having condemned our former evils, we speak as people who are turning back. There was a time when we thought the idols great and lofty. We bowed down to them and thought

the things we served were wonderful. Now we have judged that all of that was false and was nothing at all. So we say as we turn: "Truly the hills were for a lie." We say it because we have condemned the lofty things we once held and the wonders we once admired. Perhaps, if we take the trouble, we will find a difference between the hills and the mountains among the nations. Those who said, "Behold, here we are, we will be yours, for you are the Lord our God," have left them behind and accuse them of being false, both hills and mountains. What, then, is the difference between the mountains and the hills among the nations? Having condemned them, we say, "Truly the hills were for a lie, and so was the power of the mountains." This is what we say when we condemn our former ways. Among the nations, some of the things they worship are worshipped as gods and some as heroes. For they themselves admit that some of them were once human beings and were made gods. They worship Heracles, not as a god who was born a god, but as one changed from a man into a god. They worship Asclepius as one who was changed from a man into a god because of his virtue. But when they worship the fathers of these, whom they call gods, they do not worship them as men who were changed into gods. As those people suppose, these have been gods from the beginning.

So the mountains, and "the power of the mountains," will be those the nations have thought to be gods from the beginning. Those they now think to be gods, but who were formerly human beings, are "the hills." Having come to know both ranks of the things worshipped, we say, "Truly the hills were for a lie, and so was the power of the mountains." For those who serve them do not suppose that these things are false. So they think the oracles and the healings are true healings. They do not see the difference in "all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, with every deceit of wickedness for those who are perishing." [The text is corrupt at this point; a few words are lost or garbled in the Greek, and the Greek then runs on into a reference to "the fullness of the nations" coming in and "all Israel" being saved, and to Christ Jesus.] The things Christ Jesus did were signs of truth. Before him, what Moses did was a power of truth. But what the Egyptians did were signs and wonders too, yet of falsehood. So also with what Simon the magician did after Jesus' time. He led the nation of Samaria astray, and he was thought to be the power of God. These too were signs and wonders of falsehood. So when we condemn those things, we who have condemned them say, "Truly the hills were for a lie, and so was the power of the mountains."

Next, we who are from the Gentiles know that "by their transgression we received the way of salvation," and that Israel has been thrown out until our fullness comes in. We also know that if "the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, after this all Israel will be saved." That is why we say first, "Truly the hills were for a lie, and the power of the mountains." Second, we speak about Israel after the fullness of the [Gentiles]: "Yet the salvation of Israel is through the Lord our God." Since we have now mentioned the apostle's saying, that salvation has come to the Gentiles through the transgression by which Israel fell, let us unfold what these passages say. The saying goes on: when "the fullness of the Gentiles comes in," Israel remains outside, and after that fullness has come in, "then all Israel will be saved." There was an Israel that was being saved. The great mass of Israel fell away, but "a remnant

according to the election of grace came to be." It was about this remnant that the saying was spoken in a hidden way "in Elijah": "I have left for myself seven thousand men, who did not bend the knee to Baal." The apostle explains this remnant when he says, "So then, in the present time also, a remnant according to the election of grace has come to be." So there is an Israel being saved, even if only a remnant, while the rest of Israel is left behind. If you are able, carry these two groups over for me to those from the Gentiles. He did not say, "When all the Gentiles are saved, then all Israel will be saved." He said, "When the fullness of the Gentiles comes in." So [the saved Israel] comes after "the fullness of the Gentiles," not after all the Gentiles without exception. If anyone is able, let him go further. Just as he found Israel being saved after the fullness of the Gentiles, let him consider when all will serve God under one yoke, as it is said [in the prophet], with sacrifices coming from the ends of Ethiopia. That is the time when, as the sixty-seventh Psalm says, "Ethiopia will hasten to stretch out her hand to God." And the word commands the kingdoms "of the earth," saying, "Sing to the Lord, sing psalms to the God of Jacob."

So we who are from the Gentiles speak about ourselves, repenting of the falsehoods we used to think were true: "Truly the hills were for a lie, and the power of the mountains." About the Israel that will be saved after us we say: "Yet the salvation of the house of Israel is through the Lord our God." Then we confess the sins in which our fathers lived, and we ourselves too, serving idols, and we say: "But shame has consumed the labors of our fathers from their youth, their sheep and their oxen, their sons and their daughters." "Shame has consumed the labors of our fathers," and the words that follow. So if the wretched labor and false work of the fathers is going to be consumed, shame must come. Before shame, the labor of the fathers is not consumed, nor are the things that follow. Therefore let us consider the differences among sinners. There are people who sin and are not ashamed. They feel no embarrassment over their sins and do not blush. Such are those who have become callous and have handed themselves over to every kind of licentiousness and uncleanness. [The text here is unclear.] Among the Gentiles, for example, people sometimes list their fornications and adulteries as if they were heroic achievements. They are not even embarrassed to admit that they have done such things, and they do not call them sins. As long as they are not ashamed, their labors are not consumed, and their sins are not consumed. The beginning of good things is for someone to be ashamed of what he was not ashamed of before. For this reason I do not take it as a curse when the prophets say, "Let all who hate Zion be ashamed and turned back." The prophet is praying that those who feel nothing about their shameful deeds will come to a sense of them. Then, having been ashamed, they will be able to consume their labors and their sins.

The irrational impulses of our fathers he called "sheep" and "calves." For not everything irrational is praiseworthy. Some of it is blameworthy, like the sheep of the fathers who sinned. But some irrational things are praiseworthy, for example: "My sheep hear my voice." These too were sheep, but sheep to whom we have a counterpart in reason, since we have the good shepherd in our souls. For when the Savior says, "I am the good shepherd," I do not hear it only as everyone hears it, that he is the shepherd of those who believe (and that

is sound and true). I must also have Christ within me, in my own soul: the good shepherd within me. He shepherds the irrational impulses in me, so that they no longer go out to pasture wherever they happen to go. Led by the shepherd, those that were once strangers to him become his own. For this reason, if the shepherd is in me, he now rules over my senses. They are no longer under an alien mind, or under Pharaoh, or under Nebuchadnezzar, but under the good shepherd.

"Shame, then, consumed the labors of our fathers from their youth, their sheep and their oxen." There is something in us that works the land, and it works it either badly or well; we speak of "badly" or "well" for the one who farms. If it farms badly, there is a labor of the fathers that is consumed by their shame. But if it farms well, it is not the fathers' labor [in that sense]; it is a labor from which the firstborn are brought up to the altar of God. "Their sons and their daughters," these people say. Whose sons and daughters? "Of the fathers." The sons are consumed by their shame. As we have often said, these are the offspring of the soul: thoughts are the sons, and the works and actions done through the body are the daughters. Since there are some wretched thoughts, such as the Gentiles thought, and also wretched deeds, therefore sons and daughters are consumed by those who made them, if shame comes upon them over their sins. May we never produce sons and daughters for that kind of consuming by shame.

After this, those who are confessing say, "We lay down in our shame." And after that they say, "and our dishonor covered us." We have often spoken about the veil that lies over the face of those who do not turn to the Lord. Because of that veil, "whenever Moses is read," the sinner does not understand him, for "a veil lies over his heart." Because of that veil, when the old covenant is read, the hearer will not understand. Because of that veil the gospel too is hidden for those who are perishing. So we were saying about the veil that shame is the veil. As long as we have "the works of shame," clearly we have the veil, according to what is said somewhere in the forty-third Psalm: "and the shame of my face covered me." I put this beside it because the person who has no works of shame has no veil. Paul was like that when he said, "But we all, with unveiled face, behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord." So Paul has an unveiled face, for he has no works of shame. Whoever is not like Paul has a veiled face. So just as it is said there, in the forty-third Psalm, "the shame of my face covered me," in the same way it is said here: "our dishonor covered us." As long as we do works of dishonor, we have a veil lying on our heart. If we want to put away the veil that comes from dishonor, let us come to the works of honor. Let us understand what was said by the Savior, "that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father," and let us also understand what is said in the apostle: "Through the breaking of the law you dishonor God."

The righteous person, as he honors the Father, honors the Son. Dishonor, when I dishonor the Son (this is the very thing by which I dishonor the Father or the Son), becomes a covering over my face, and I say, "And our dishonor covered us." So then, now that we understand the veil that lies on us from works of shame, from our deeds, let us take the veil away, let

us take it away. It is up to us to have the veil removed; it is up to no one else. For "when Moses turned to the Lord, the veil was taken away." Do you see how Moses is sometimes taken to stand for the people? As long as he did not turn to the Lord, being a symbol of the people who do not turn to the Lord, he had a veil lying over his face. But when he turned to the Lord, becoming a symbol of those who turn to the Lord, then "the veil was taken away." And it was not as though God commanded him, "Put on the veil" (for the Lord did not say to Moses, "Put on the veil"). Rather, Moses saw that the people could not look at his glory, and then he put "the veil over his face." And he did not wait for God to say, "Take off the veil," whenever he turned to the Lord.

This has been written so that you also, when you put the veil on your face through works of dishonor and shame, may yourself bring about the removal of the veil. If you turn to the Lord, then you take the veil away, and you will no longer say, "Our dishonor covered us." For example, when anger against someone lies on our soul, a veil lies over our face. For this reason, if we want to say in prayer, "The light of your face has been marked upon us, Lord," let us take away the veil and do what the apostle says: "I want the men, then, to pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without anger and disputing." If we remove anger, we have removed the veil, and so too if we remove all the passions. But as long as these things are in our mind, in our reasoning, the veil and the dishonor lie over the inner face, our governing faculty, so that we do not see the glory of God shining. It is not God who hides his glory from us; it is we who, because of wickedness, put the veil on the governing faculty.

"Because we have sinned before our God, we and our fathers." I wish that we too would speak as these people do, in the person the prophet takes on for them. "We have sinned." "We have sinned" is not the same as "we are sinning." Let the one who is still in sin not say "we have sinned." Let the one who has sinned before, and has repented thoroughly, say "we have sinned." So it is written in Daniel, a confession of people who no longer sin, saying, "We have sinned, we have acted lawlessly." And in the Psalms the prophet says, "Do not remember our ancient lawless deeds." So let us also confess our sins. I wish they were not those of yesterday or of three days ago. I wish that our confession would be about sins committed fifteen years before, because we have had no sin since then for fifteen years. But if we sinned yesterday, we are not yet trustworthy when we confess our sins, and there is no room yet for these sins of ours to be wiped out. "Because we have sinned, we and our fathers, from our youth until this day." Let the earlier remarks be taken otherwise, as teaching about the best way of confessing. But these words are an accusation of having sinned for a long time. "From our youth," he says, "until this day, and we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God." We have sinned, and we have not obeyed up to the present. Then, having turned and having the beginning of conversion, they say, "We have sinned, and we have not obeyed." For we do not obey immediately, the moment we wish to obey. Time is still needed. As with wounds there is time needed for healing, so with conversion there is time needed to turn to God completely and purely.

After this God says about Israel: "If Israel turns back to me, says the Lord, he will indeed be turned back." That is, if he turns back completely, he will be turned back in earnest, and not merely if he has, so to speak, begun to turn. Then he says: "And if he removes his abominations from his mouth, and takes care before my face, and swears, 'As the Lord lives,' in truth and in judgment and in righteousness, then the nations will bless themselves in him." If they do these things, "the nations will bless themselves in him." And what must they do, so that the nations will bless themselves in him? "If he removes his abominations from his mouth." What does it mean to remove abominations from the mouth? Whatever evil we speak is an abomination in our mouth. So let us remove the abominations from our mouth: let us take away slander, empty words, idle words, the kind that will bring charges against us "in the day of judgment; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." If, then, we want this to come true for us, "and the nations will bless themselves in him, and in him they will praise God in Jerusalem," let us do what was said at the beginning. And what is the first thing? To remove "the abominations from our mouth." Next comes "you will take care before my face." Let us do this second thing, and not carelessly, merely to be cautious. For there can be a caution that does not come from the face of God. Those who fear without understanding, who simply set themselves to be afraid, are not taking care before the face of God. But those who take care with understanding are those who always look at, and picture to themselves, "the face of God set against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth." These are the ones who take care before the face of God.

"If he removes his abominations from his mouth, and takes care before my face, and swears, 'As the Lord lives,' in truth and in judgment and in righteousness." Let us who swear oaths examine ourselves, and see how we swear not in judgment but without judgment, so that our oaths come from habit rather than from judgment. We get carried away, and the word exposes this when it says: "And if he swears, 'As the Lord lives,' in truth and in judgment and in righteousness." We know that in the Gospel the Lord said to the disciples: "But I say to you, do not swear at all." Let us look at this saying of Jeremiah as well, and if God grants it, we will examine the two together. For perhaps a person must first swear "in truth and in judgment and in righteousness," so that afterward, having made progress, he may become worthy not to swear at all, but to have a "yes" that needs no witnesses to show that it is yes, and a "no" that needs no witnesses to show that it is truly no. "And if he swears, 'As the Lord lives,' in truth." In the one who swears I look first for no falsehood but truth, so that he swears with truth. But we, wretched as we are, even swear falsely. Yet suppose it is "with truth": even so the oath is not rightly made unless it is also "in judgment." Grant that I swear out of habit: then I am not swearing "in judgment." If it were necessary to bring the God of the universe, and his Christ, into such an oath for this matter, how great would the matter have to be before I would bend my knees and swear? Perhaps I might do it at some time, to cure the unbelief that has arisen in some people about my word. But if I swear just as it happens, I would sin. "If he swears, then, 'As the Lord lives,' with truth and in judgment," not without judgment, "and in righteousness," not unjustly, "then the

nations will bless themselves in him." He has joined both together, those from the nations and Israel. He has spoken about the nations, and he has spoken about Israel too.

The prophet goes on: "And the nations will bless themselves in him, and in him they will praise God in Jerusalem. For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and to those who live in Jerusalem." He has spoken to those from the nations, and he has spoken to those from Israel; now he speaks to those from Judah. I remember what was said earlier about the figurative meanings of Judah and of those who live in Jerusalem. For we live in Jerusalem, if God grants it. "Where the treasure is, there the heart is also." If we store up treasure in heaven, we have our heart in the Jerusalem above, of which the apostle says, "But the Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother, as it is written," and so on. "Thus," then, "says the Lord to the men of Judah and to those who live in Jerusalem: Break up fresh ground for yourselves, and do not sow among thorns." This word is spoken above all to teachers, so that they do not entrust what they say to their hearers before they have made fresh ground in their souls. For when people "put their hand to the plow" and make fresh ground in their souls, and those who hear them are "good and fine soil," then they sow, and not among thorns. But suppose someone takes the holy seeds before the plow, before fresh ground has been made in the ruling part of the hearers. The seeds are the word about the Father, the word about the Son, the word about the Holy Spirit, the word about the resurrection, the word about punishment, the word about rest, the word about the law, about the prophets, and in short about each of the things written. If he sows them, he breaks the commandment that says first, "Break up fresh ground for yourselves," and second, "do not sow among thorns." But one of the hearers will say: "I am not a teacher; I am not subject to this commandment." You too must become a farmer of yourself, and not sow among thorns. Make fresh ground for me of the field that the God of the universe has entrusted to you. Look carefully at the field. See where the thorns are: where "the cares of life and the deceitfulness of wealth and the love of pleasure" are.

When you have seen the thorns in your soul, look for the rational plow, of which Jesus says, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." Seek it and find it. Then gather from the Scriptures the clean working oxen, plow, and break up the ground. So that it may no longer be old, make it new. "Having put off the old man with his practices and put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge," you will make fresh ground for yourself. When you have made the fresh ground, take seeds from those who teach. Take seeds from the law, take them from the prophets, from the writings of the gospels, and from the words of the apostles. Having taken these seeds, sow your soul through remembering and meditation. These seeds will seem to spring up on their own. But in truth they will not spring up of themselves after you have remembered them; God will make them grow. "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." And if anyone has been able to understand the Scriptures, he has made fresh ground, and having made fresh ground he has sown, and not among thorns. God arranges that these seeds do not suddenly become an ear of grain. Rather, as in the Gospel according to Mark, "first the blade, then the ear, then" the full grain. When it is ready for harvest, those who are sent

out to reap will come. When it is ready for harvest, they will come to those to whom the word says, "Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, that they are already white for harvest." So he says to us: "Break up fresh ground for yourselves, and do not sow among thorns." But suppose that before you have cleansed your soul, while you still have thorns, you approach a teacher, whether he is truly able or only thought to be, or you ask for lessons and spiritual seeds. Then you break the commandment that says, "Do not sow among thorns."

Next it says: "Be circumcised to your God; circumcise the foreskin of your heart." "Be circumcised to your God." The words "to your God" are added of necessity. You will understand it from the example we can see with our senses. I mean that not only those of the circumcision under the law of Moses are circumcised, but many others as well. The priests of the Egyptians are circumcised to idols. But that circumcision belongs to idols, and it is not a circumcision done to God. The circumcision of the Jews, perhaps, but certainly at that time, was done to God. So if the word says, "Be circumcised to your God," once you have grasped the plain sense, go on to the figurative meaning. There you will find how, among those who are circumcised in the figurative sense (so that some of them might even say, "We are the circumcision"), some are circumcised to God, while others are circumcised, but not to God. For there are other teachings besides the teaching of the truth, besides the teaching of the church. Those who practice philosophy have their habits and their heart circumcised, so to speak; they discipline themselves. So do those from the heresies, and a circumcision comes about for them. But it is a circumcision, and not to God. For among them the circumcision comes about by a false teaching.

But when you share in the rule of the church and in the purpose of sound teaching, you are not merely circumcised, you are circumcised "to God." "Be circumcised," then, to your God, and circumcise the foreskin of your heart. Who would not pass over this as plain? So there is such a thing as a foreskin of the heart, and it must be circumcised. Whoever examines the word carefully will look into this passage for questions like these: the foreskin is born with a person, while circumcision is acquired, and circumcision removes what came with birth. If, then, the word commands us to remove "the foreskin of the heart," something must have been born together with the heart, which it calls a foreskin, and which must be removed so that someone is circumcised in "the foreskin of the heart." Suppose someone understands the saying, "We were by nature children of wrath, like the rest." Suppose someone understands "the body of humiliation" in which we were born. Suppose someone understands the saying, "No one is clean from filth, not even if his life were one day; his months are numbered." He will see how we were born with uncleanness and with a foreskin of our heart.

To put it by a simpler example, one that can lead you to see "the foreskin of the heart," I will point out that in the earliest stage of life false opinions inevitably arise in the soul. For it is not possible for a person to receive true doctrines from the beginning. The divine Word made provision for history and for the Scripture according to the letter, so that it might first nourish the one born to Abraham according to the flesh with words that belong to the flesh.

[The text is corrupt here: it seems to say that he might first be born of the slave woman] so that after him the son of the free woman, the one born through the promise, might be able to be born. [Corrupt: "why this was taken up"] The foreskin of the heart can be understood as what comes before circumcision. We therefore need to receive the word that cleanses our doctrines and removes everything that has arisen in us through false opinion. This is what it means to put off the foreskin of our heart. For if the heart, in our case, is the ruling part, where thoughts are, from which "the evil reasonings" come out, then the one who removes the evil reasonings removes "the foreskin of the heart." The one who puts away false opinion has been circumcised in "the foreskin of his heart." He becomes a man of Judah and a dweller in Jerusalem, being circumcised.

But if someone does not put away "the foreskin of his heart," let us see what the word threatens him with: "Lest my anger go out like fire and burn, and there be no one to quench it." So the anger of the Lord goes out like fire against those who have not been circumcised to God, against those who have not put away "the foreskin of their heart." "And there will be no one to quench it, because of the wickedness of their practices." That fire has as its fuel the wickedness of our practices. Where there is no wickedness of practices, the fire has nothing to feed on. And that the fuel of that fire is the wickedness of our practices, hear the prophet say: "And there will be no one to quench it, because of the wickedness of your practices." "Announce it in Judah, and let it be heard in Jerusalem. Speak, announce, sound the trumpet over the land, and cry out loudly." He means: say these things that are being announced to those of the tribe of Judah, the tribe of Christ. "For it is plain that our Saviour has risen from Judah."

"Sound the trumpet over the land." The trumpet stands for the lofty word that wakes up the hearer. It prepares him for the struggle against the passions and against the working of the opposing powers. It also prepares him for the heavenly feasts. (The trumpet is mentioned for both of these purposes.) In the book of Numbers, a word of this kind is a trumpet. For example, the word commands me, and anyone else to whom it is given (it is given to the one who wishes and who searches out the mind of the Scriptures), to make "silver trumpets, hammered out." So the word says: "Sound the trumpet over the land, and cry out loudly. Say: Gather together, and let us go into the fortified cities." The word of God does not want us to enter an unwalled city, but [the city] of the living God, the church, fortified by the [power] of the word. (For he is the wall.) It is in the seventeenth Psalm, that God is also a wall. "Gather your things and flee to Zion." All of you who are outside Zion, "gather your things and flee to Zion. Hurry, do not stand still." You who are making progress, hurry to the Watchtower, "for I am bringing evils from the north, and a great destruction." These evils are brought "from the north," the north of the adversary, as has often been said. If anyone is found not to have hurried and not to have entered "into the fortified cities," not to have come to be "in the churches of God," but standing outside, he will be caught by the enemies and destroyed.

Who is the enemy? Let us see from what follows how he is described: "A lion has come up from his lair; he has set out to destroy nations." This is the enemy we must flee. A lion is hunting us down. Who is this? Peter teaches us, saying: "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to swallow. Resist him, firm in the faith." And according to the ninth Psalm: "He lies in ambush in secret; he lies in ambush like a lion in his lair." And this lion lies in ambush not by day, but when night comes. For according to the hundred and third Psalm: "You appointed darkness, and it became night. In it all the beasts of the forest will prowl, young lions roaring to seize their prey and to seek their food from God."

"A lion has come up from his lair." Where from? When? He is down below, fallen; he has gone down into the lowest parts of the earth. "A lion has come up from his lair." You are a human being, and you are higher than the devil. You are stronger than he is, whatever kind of person you are, because he is down below on account of his wickedness. "A lion has come up from his lair; he has destroyed nations and carried them off." He has come up "from his lair," the place that fits his own punishment. "He has destroyed nations and carried them off. He has gone out from his place to turn your land into a desolation." He wants to get into your land, of which we were speaking a little while ago. He wants to graze on each one of us. So he comes "to turn your land into a desolation," so that the lion may trample down the seeds and make your land a wilderness. "And your cities will be pulled down, so that no one lives in them. Because of this, gird yourselves with sackcloth." Since a lion has come up, and a lion threatens you and wants to wipe out your land, put on sackcloth. Weep and mourn. Through your prayers call upon God to destroy this lion away from you, so that you do not fall into his mouth. For it says, "As when the shepherd snatches from the lion's mouth two legs or the lobe of an ear." This lion is trying to seize you by the ears, so that through your itching appetite he can set false words before you and drive you away from the truth. He wants to seize your feet from the truth and devour you. But you, gird yourself with sackcloth, beat your breast, weep and wail, seeing the enemy standing over you, so that "the fury of the Lord's anger" may turn away from you. And when that fury has turned away, may you be free from anxiety, with the lion no longer creeping up on you because you have entered the walled city, and may you be able to glorify God, who rescues you in Christ Jesus, to whom be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

Homily 6

"Lord," he says, "your eyes are upon faith." Just as "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous" (for he turns them away from the unrighteous), so the eyes of the Lord are upon faith, for he turns them away from unbelief. So it was well said by the one who understood what he is saying in the prayer: "Lord, your eyes are upon faith." What is written here, then, is: "Lord, your eyes are upon faith." But "if a man of understanding hears a wise word, he will praise it and add to it." So see how much can be drawn out from "Lord, your eyes are upon faith." Paul says, "But now these three remain: faith, hope, love; and the greatest of these is love." Just as the eyes of the Lord are upon faith, so the eyes of the Lord are upon hope, and the eyes of the Lord are upon love. And since there is "a spirit of power and of love and of self-control," as the eyes of the Lord are upon love, so the eyes of the Lord are upon power, and so the eyes of the Lord are upon self-control. [The text seems to have a gap here.] The eyes of the Lord are upon righteousness. So the eyes of the Lord are upon all the virtues. If, then, you also want the rays of God's intelligible eyes to reach you, take up the virtues. And just as it says, "Lord, your eyes are upon faith," so it will be "Lord, your eyes" are upon each of the good things you acquire. And if you become such a person that the eyes of the Lord shine upon you, you will say, "The light of your face, Lord, has been marked upon us."

Next, let us look at what is said about sinners: "You scourged them, and they did not suffer." These perceptible scourges, when they are laid on living bodies, cause pain whether the people scourged want it or not. God's scourges are of a different kind. Some of those who are scourged feel pain, and some do not. Let us see whether we can explain what it is to feel pain from God's scourges and what it is not to feel it. Those who feel no pain from God's scourges are wretched, and those who do feel pain from them are blessed. For Wisdom says: "Who will set scourges over my mind, and over my lips a seal of cunning, so that they may not spare me for my ignorances, and my sins may not destroy me?" Notice the words "Who will set scourges over my mind?" So there are scourges that scourge the mind. The scourges of God scourge the mind. A word that takes hold of the soul and brings it to a sense of what it has done wrong scourges it. It scourges the blessed person, who feels pain under the scourges, because what is said strikes home and he does not despise the one who rebukes him. But when someone is found, so to speak, past feeling, it will be said of him: "You scourged them, and they did not suffer." Take the same word spoken in rebuke, for example,

aimed at the mind of a person whose conscience has been defiled by some sin. If one of the hearers is pained, so that it is said of him, "Did you see how he was cut to the heart?", and another of the hearers feels no pain but is numb to those who rebuke him, then clearly it will be said of the one who feels nothing: "You scourged them, and they did not suffer." That is one explanation of "they did not suffer" or "they suffered." Let us see whether we can find another. In bodies, some parts become dead and dried up, and often the dead limbs behave differently from the living ones. When things able to cause pain are applied to a living limb, the person to whom they are applied feels pain. But when the same things are applied to the insensible limb, he does not feel it, since deadness is in it.

If you have seen this in the body, transfer it to the soul, and see that there is also a soul whose members are deadened, so that it does not feel the scourges, even if painful things are brought to it. Terrible things are brought to it, but this particular soul will not feel them, while another soul will. And perhaps the one who feels nothing under the pains brought to him grieves more over not feeling than over feeling. He would rather suffer pain if painful things were applied, since that is a sign that he is alive. He is distressed at feeling nothing under painful things. Just as this happens with bodies, so I think that in the words "they would wish they had been burned by fire" something like this is shown. When fire is applied to someone and the one being burned does not feel it, those people, having understood the contrast between those who feel nothing under their pains and those who do feel, would wish to feel the fire rather than not feel it. And when that fire which has been appointed for sinners is applied to them, a person might pray to feel it rather than not feel it. All this is on account of "You scourged them, and they did not suffer." "You consumed them, and they were not willing to accept instruction." When God, who provides for all things, applies cleansing remedies for the salvation of the soul, he has, for his part, finished the work. You will understand "You consumed them, and they were not willing to accept instruction" from the example of one who hands on knowledge and one who is unwilling to receive knowledge from the one handing it on. Let the teacher do everything on his side and spend himself wholly on handing on knowledge, and let the pupil refuse to accept what is said. I could say to the teacher about such a pupil: "You have finished your work with this man, and he was not willing to accept instruction." So if everything from providence is directed toward us so that we may be brought to completion and made perfect, and we do not accept what providence does, which draws us toward perfection, then someone who understands might say to God: "Lord, you have consumed them, and they were not willing to accept instruction."

"They made their faces harder than rock." You can understand this too from more bodily things. Among those who sin, some hear words of rebuke for their sin and blush, shrink back, and bow down when the word of rebuke touches them. Others are such that they are shameless. They feel no shame over what they are rebuked for, over what they have done wrong. Of these who feel no shame you could say, "They made their faces harder than rock." If you have understood this about the body, then let my argument carry you over to the soul, and think of a face of which it is said, "but then face to face." Picture a hard soul, like the hardened heart of Pharaoh. In the face of what is announced to it, it stands resistant.

It throws off what is said, as it were, and is not shaped by what is proclaimed. For there you will find that the words fit: "They made their faces harder than rock, and they were unwilling to turn back. And I said, Perhaps they are poor, because they were unwilling to know the way of the Lord and the judgment of God. I will go to the great ones and speak to them." The prophet has thought about those who are unwilling to be disciplined and who take no notice of God's scourges, and he says that he has understood the cause. Their soul is poor. "And I said, Perhaps they are poor, because they were not able, because they did not know the way of the Lord and the judgment of God."

"I will go to the great ones and speak to them." Those who are "great" in their souls are spoken of in praise. Among the Greeks too the word "great-hearted" is constantly used, along with the greatness of the rational soul. When someone takes on great matters, has worthy purposes, and always looks to what is needed, namely how to live according to right reason, wanting and seeing nothing low or petty, such a person has this greatness and largeness in the soul. So the first group, whom the word rebuked, did not listen, says the prophet, because they were poor. That is why they did not listen: they are poor. "I will go to the great ones and speak to them." And if there is a blessing in speaking "into the ears of those who listen," then it is a blessing when a speaker finds a great-souled hearer. Since this is so, and since we know that the loss is not so much the speakers' as the hearers', when they do not accept what is proclaimed (and the prophet accuses them of poverty of mind and understanding), let us ask God to receive, as the word grows in us, greatness and largeness of soul in Christ Jesus. Then we will be able to hear the holy and sacred words. To him belong glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

Homily 7

God, who judges [according to . . .], gives those he punishes room. He does not, the moment a person sins, bring the full end of punishment down on the sinner. That is why he punishes "by little and little" as he judges. There is an example of this in Leviticus. In the curses on those who transgress the law, after the earlier punishments it is written: "And it shall be, if after these things you do not turn back, says the Lord, I will add to you seven plagues as well." And again it describes another punishment: "And it shall be, if after these things you do not turn back, but walk toward me crookedly, I also will walk with you in crooked anger." You will find God measuring out punishments sparingly, because he wants to bring the sinner to repentance, and not paying back all of them at once. So this is what happened to the people, as far as the letter of the text goes. And after the word threatens them with what they will suffer after those things, it says: "And it shall be in those days, says the Lord your God, I will not strike you to the point of complete destruction." [But if this reaches especially to the punishments to come, ...] If not, let whoever is able move on from what happened to the people in this life to those coming punishments as well. For I would say, being persuaded of it, that just as they "serve a copy and shadow of heavenly things," so that people was punished for their own sins as a copy and shadow of the true punishments. So the whole punishment in the law and the prophets that touches the people contains a shadow of true punishments.

If, then, there was no final destruction for those people because of their sins, but only an end at some point, and if it will not be that there is never any punishment on sinners even after death, [the text is unclear here], then final destruction came on Jerusalem when the captivity under Nebuchadnezzar took place. Yet someone will say that even then it was not a final destruction, nor was it in the time of the Maccabees. But the final destruction of the people came at the coming of my Lord Jesus Christ. For as long as the Savior had not said to them, "Look, your house is left to you," it was not left. But when he wept over Jerusalem and said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing! Look, your house is left to you desolate," the house was left. "Jerusalem is surrounded by armies," as though the house had been abandoned, and "her desolation has drawn near." Then, after their fall, salvation came to us, [who were of

the nations]. So they were being punished, and the final destruction did not reach them until the coming of my Lord Jesus.

I wonder whether the same kind of thing happens with us too, and some punishments come in such a way that some people never experience a second punishment but are satisfied with the first ones. Others come to the second, though not to the third, and others will come even to the fourth. For the words "I will add seven plagues" point to some mystery: first one plague happens, then a second, then a third, up to the seven mentioned, in the case of some people. But not everyone is struck with seven plagues. I think some will be struck with six, others with five, others with four, others with three or two. And the one who is lowest of all in punishments, I think, will be struck with a single plague. God, then, knows what concerns the plagues. That is why it is written here, at the beginning of the reading, "And it shall be in those days," the days concerning the things mentioned, "I will not make an end of you." But the final destruction does not come in those days. For there are certain days when he will bring to final destruction those whom he will bring.

"And it shall be, when you say, 'Why has the Lord our God done all these evils to us?' you shall say to them, 'Because you forsook me and served other gods in your own land, so you will serve them in a land that is not yours.'" Let the plain wording be understood; for now it is enough to bring the reminder, drawn from the wording, to those who are able to hear. The sons of Israel, then, had the holy land and the temple, the house of prayer. They ought to have served God. But they transgressed the divine commandments, worshiped idols, and took over the idols of Damascus, as it is written in the books of Kings, and took up other idols of the nations into the holy land. By taking in the idols of the nations they made themselves deserving of being thrown down into the land of the idols, to end up there, where they bowed down to the idols. So the word says to them, according to the plain text: "Because you forsook me and served foreign gods in your own land, so you will serve foreign gods in a land that is not yours." But everyone who makes a god of something serves foreign gods. Do you treat food and drink as divine? Your god is "the belly." Do you honor silver as a great good, and the wealth of this earth below? Your god and lord is Mammon. Jesus himself named it, calling it the lord of those who love money, when he said, "You cannot serve God and Mammon," and "No one can serve two lords." So whoever honors silver, admires wealth, thinks it a good thing, welcomes the rich as though they were gods, and despises the poor as though they had no god of their own, that person makes silver into a god.

If someone who is in the church of God worships foreign gods, making gods of things that do not deserve to be made gods, he will be thrown out into a foreign land. Let him worship there the gods he worshiped while he was inside. Let the lover of money be outside the church, thrown out. Let the glutton be outside the church. This is one figurative reading. I do not want to pry now into things beyond me, such as the land about which the Savior said, "Who will give you what is ours?" God also arranged it so that when worship was given to idols in a certain land, some were cast out of their own land and came to the land about which it is written: "Hear, Israel: why are you in the land of your enemies? You were

counted with those going down to Hades. You forsook the fountain of life, the Lord. If you had walked in the way of God, you would have lived in peace for all time." Now, then, we are in a foreign land, and we pray to do the opposite of what the sons of Israel did in the holy land. They worshiped foreign things in the holy land. We, in a foreign land, worship the God who is foreign to the land, foreign to the affairs of earth. For the ruler of this age rules here, and God is foreign to his sons. But when I say "foreign," I do not mean this: I do not mean that God did not create the world. I mean that he is foreign to the lord of wickedness, foreign to the sins now present.

And yet, even when we want to worship in this land of affliction the God who is foreign to the works of sin, let us see what we do. We do not say, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" Rather we say, "How shall we sing the Lord's song, [not] in a foreign land?" We are looking for a place to sing the Lord's song, a place to worship the Lord our God, on foreign ground. What, then, is that place? I have found it. He came to this land wearing the body that saves. He took "the body of sin" "in the likeness of sinful flesh," so that in this place, through Christ Jesus who came to live here and brought to nothing the ruler of this age and brought sin to nothing, I might be able to worship God here, and after this worship him in the holy land. For if someone who worshiped idols in the holy land has gone away into the foreign land, then someone who has worshiped God in the foreign land will go away to the holy land in Christ Jesus. To him be glory and power forever. Amen.

Homily 8

The prophet takes up three virtues of God, as it were: his strength, his wisdom, and his understanding. To each of them he assigns its own work: to strength, the earth; to wisdom, the inhabited world; to understanding, the heaven. Listen to what the text says: "The Lord who made the earth by his strength, who set the inhabited world upright by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heaven." Let us apply this to our own earth too, for it was said to Adam, "Earth you are." We need God's strength. Without the power of God we cannot accomplish the things that are not "according to the mind of the flesh." But when the members that are upon the earth have been put to death, what accords with the wish of the Spirit will come about, since, as the apostle says, the deeds of the flesh are put to death by the Spirit. So "the Lord is the one who made the earth by his strength." And if you come to this earth as well, and are able to see what is written in Job (as we found it in the more accurate copies), that he set it "upon nothing," you will see that by God's strength it lies at the very center. I come now to the inhabited world. I know a soul that is inhabited, and I know a soul that is desolate. If a soul does not have God, if it does not have Christ who said, "I and my Father will come to him and make our dwelling with him," if it does not have the Holy Spirit, it is desolate. It is inhabited when it has been filled with God, when it has Christ, when the Holy Spirit is in it. The Scriptures speak of this in various and different ways: that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are in the soul of a human being. David, for example, in the psalm of confession, asks the Father for these very spirits, saying, "Establish me with a guiding spirit," "Renew an upright spirit within my inward parts," "and do not take your Holy Spirit away from me."

What are these three spirits? The guiding spirit is the Father, the upright spirit is Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit. [The Greek of the next clause is damaged; the sense is that] these serve to establish the inhabited world, which stands in no other way than in the wisdom of God. For "wisdom will help the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city." And "whoever despises wisdom and instruction is wretched; his hope is empty, his labors are profitless, and his works are useless," says the book entitled the Wisdom of Solomon. For this reason, as far as we are able, since the inhabited world is set upright by the wisdom of God, let us ourselves also wish to have our own inhabited world set upright, since it has perhaps fallen. For this inhabited world fell when we came into the place of affliction. It fell when "we sinned, we acted impiously, we did wrong," and it needs to be

set upright. So it is God who set the inhabited world upright. But if you do not take "set the inhabited world upright" in this way, and understand the inhabited world in a more ordinary sense, then ask from what he set the inhabited world upright. Ask about the fall of the world, so that when you find its fall you may see its restoration. If anyone, then, is in this inhabited world, if you understand the world in this way, he is [still] before the setting upright. If it has fallen, it clearly needs to be set upright, yet no one who has not fallen needs to be set upright. And if it has been set upright, let us see who it is; clearly each one of those in the world has fallen through sin. It is the Lord who sets upright "those who have been broken down," and who "upholds all who fall." "In Adam all die," and so the world has fallen and needs to be set upright, so that "in Christ all" may be made alive. So I have explained what concerns the inhabited world in two ways: in one, showing in the case of each individual how every soul is either inhabited or desolate; in the other, fixing the discussion on the world itself.

"And by his understanding he stretched out the heaven." It was not by accident that the prophet took "understanding" in connection with heaven. You will find it said in Proverbs: "God by wisdom founded the earth, and by understanding he prepared the heavens." So there is a certain understanding of God, and you should look for it nowhere except in Christ Jesus. Everything of this kind that belongs to God is Christ. He himself is the wisdom of God, he himself is the [power] of God, he himself is the righteousness of God, he himself is sanctification, he himself is redemption. In the same way he himself is the understanding of God. The subject underneath is one, but by our different ways of thinking about him the many names apply to different things. You do not think the same thing about Christ when you think of him as wisdom as when you think of him as righteousness. When you think of wisdom, you take it as knowledge of divine and human things. When you think of righteousness, you take it as the power that gives to each in the universe what he deserves. When you think of sanctification, you take it as the power that brings it about that those who believe and are dedicated to God become holy. So also you will think of him as understanding when you take it as knowledge of good things, bad things, and things that are neither. [The next lines are corrupt in the Greek, and this is my best reading:] Now evil is separated from good for those who dwell in heaven, or who wear the heavenly man, so that that heaven may no longer be defiled, because heaven was stretched out by the understanding of God. Neither is the righteous man defiled, who is himself heaven. For the righteous man also is heaven, as has been said: "And he stretched out the heaven by his understanding."

How then is heaven stretched out? By wisdom stretching it out. That wisdom does the stretching is shown in the words "Since I stretched out words and you paid no attention." There he speaks of a kind of stretching out of words, and that is how heaven is stretched out. In the hundred and third psalm it is also said, "stretching out the heaven like a skin." Our soul too, which was drawn in before, is stretched out, so that it can take in the wisdom of God. But let us return to what we have before us. We were speaking of heaven having been made by understanding. And we say that those who wear the heavenly man are themselves heaven. For if it is said to the sinner, "You are earth, and to earth you will go," could it

not be said to the righteous man, to whom the kingdom of the heavens belongs, "You are heaven, and to heaven you will go"? Or is it rather that, on account of the earthly man, "You are earth, and to earth you will go" is said to the one who wears "the image of the earthly," but on account of the heavenly man, once you wear "the image of the heavenly," it will no longer be fitting to say, "You are heaven, and to heaven you will go"? Each of us has heavenly works and earthly works. Earthly works are those that bring down to the earth, which is akin to them, the one who stores them up on earth and does not store up [treasure in heaven]. Again, heavenly works lead up to the places in heaven that are akin to the works the one who stores up [treasure in heaven], the one who has worn "the image of the heavenly," the things done according to virtue.

"And he brought up clouds from the end of the earth." This saying came up recently in the psalm as well, and we were saying how God "brought up clouds from the end of the earth." It is necessary to go over these things again. For those who know them, it serves as clarification and a reminder of what was said. For those who have forgotten, or who were not present, it serves to make this clear, whether it is revealed and made plain or understood in some other way. We said that the saints are clouds. For the words "Your truth reaches to the clouds" cannot refer to lifeless clouds. Rather, the truth of God reaches to the clouds that hear God's command and know where to send rain and from whom to hold it back. Since there are clouds which God commands to rain or not to rain, it is written, "I will command the clouds not to rain rain upon it." Now with these clouds in the sky, if there is no rain, God has not commanded the clouds not to rain on the vineyard or the land. Rather, no cloud appears at all, as it is written in the third book of Kingdoms. There, in the time of drought, no cloud appeared. But when, according to the word of Elijah's prophecy, the rain was about to come, a trace of a cloud appeared, "like a man's footprint," and it became a cloud producing rain.

But when the clouds exist and are commanded not to rain, because the soul is unworthy of the rain, then it is said, "I will command the clouds not to rain rain upon it." So each of the saints is a cloud. Moses was a cloud, and he spoke as a cloud: "Give heed, heaven, and I will speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth. Let my utterance be awaited like rain, and let my words come down like dew." If he had not been a cloud, he would never have said, "Let my utterance be like rain, and let my words come down like dew." He speaks as a cloud: "like a shower on the grass, and like snow on the hay, for I called on the name of the Lord." In the same way Isaiah also speaks as a cloud: "Hear, heaven, and give ear, earth, for the Lord has spoken." And since he himself was a cloud, and was calling the ones who prophesied alongside him clouds, he says in his prophecy: "I will command the clouds not to rain rain upon it."

Now that we have understood who the clouds are, let us see how God is the one who "brings up clouds from the end of the earth." How is it "from the end of the earth"? The Savior says: "Whoever wants to be first among you will be last of all." Paul kept this commandment, and in this world he was last. So he says: "For I think that God has displayed us apostles last,

as men condemned to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men." If anyone, then, keeps the Savior's commandment and becomes last as far as this life is concerned, that person becomes a cloud. God does not bring up clouds from the first men of the earth. He does not bring up clouds from consuls, or from rulers, or from the rich. For "blessed are the poor, because yours is the kingdom of God." Do you see how God brings up from the last, and gives bodily form to the clouds? Therefore, if we want to become clouds, ones that the truth of God reaches, let us become last of all. Let us say in our works and in our disposition, "For I think that God has displayed us apostles last." Even if I am not an apostle, I am free to become last, so that God, who brings up clouds from "the end of the earth," may bring me up. "And he made lightnings for the rain." Those who are skilled in these matters say that lightning comes about when clouds rub against one another. What happens on earth with flint stones, when two stones strike together and fire is produced, they say happens also with the clouds. When clouds collide in the winter, lightning is produced. That is why lightning generally comes together with thunder: the thunder gives the sound of the clouds colliding, and the lightning produces the light.

If you have understood the illustration, now look at the spiritual cloud as well. Moses was a cloud; Joshua son of Nun was a cloud. These speak with one another, and from their words lightning comes. Jeremiah was a cloud; Baruch was a cloud. They converse with each other, and the lightning came from the words of Jeremiah and the words of Baruch. In the same way, if you can, gather from the Scriptures how lightning comes. And in the New Testament, Paul and Silvanus were two clouds. They came together, and the lightning of the letter came to be. So God "made lightnings for the rain, and brought out winds from his treasuries." Are these winds, then, really in treasuries? Or is it not plain that the nature of these winds, as they blow over the earth, is of another kind? No, there are certain treasuries of winds, treasuries of spirits: "a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and godliness," "a spirit of the fear of God," "a spirit of power and love and self-control." And you can gather these winds yourself from the Scriptures. These spirits are in treasuries. What are the treasuries? "In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." These treasures are in Christ. From there, then, come these winds, these spirits, so that one person is wise, another faithful, another has knowledge, and another receives some other gift of God whatever it may be. "For to one is given through the Spirit a word of wisdom, to another a word of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit."

So God "brought up clouds from the end of the earth, and made lightning for the rain, and brought out winds from his storehouses." By God's grace, we too hope to arrive at these storehouses. And since there are many storehouses, perhaps there will be different resting places in God's storehouses for those who rise again. What I mean is this. The resurrection of the dead takes place in certain ranks. The apostle says, "each in his own rank." And since the ranks are not mixed together at random, this rank will be in one storehouse of God, that rank in another storehouse of God, and a third rank in yet another storehouse. All these storehouses, however, have one storehouse in which they dwell. That is why Paul said, "in

whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Just as I acquire the "one precious pearl" through the many pearls, so I come to the storehouse of storehouses, the Lord of lords, the King of kings, when I have become worthy of the spirits that come from God's storehouses. For "he brought out winds from his storehouses."

"Every man has been made foolish by knowledge." If every man has been made foolish by knowledge, and Paul is a man, then Paul too was made foolish by knowledge. He knew "in part," and in part he was made foolish by knowledge. He saw "through a mirror," seeing only a very small fraction of things, and, if one may say so, an infinitely small fraction of what he grasped. You will understand "every man has been made foolish by knowledge" from the opposite side. There are sins of Jerusalem, and there are sins of Sodom too. But compared with the worse sins of Jerusalem, the sins of Sodom are righteousness. For it says, "Sodom was justified by you." Now the sins of Sodom are not really righteousness. They are righteousness only in comparison with the greater injustice. In the same way, what Paul knew, compared with that knowledge which is in the heavens, compared with perfect knowledge, is foolishness. This is why "every man has been made foolish by knowledge." I think the Preacher grasped something like this when he said, "I said, I will become wise; but wisdom was far removed from me, farther than it was, and it is a deep depth. Who will find it?"

The argument is about to venture something bold: it will say that the one who came to live among us in this life emptied himself, so that the world might be filled by his emptying. But if that one who came to live in this life emptied himself, that emptying was wisdom. "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men." If I had said "the foolishness of God," how the fault-finders would have accused me! How they would have blamed me! Other things are said which they themselves consider good, but for this, which they think was not well said, I would have been condemned because I said "the foolishness of God." But now Paul, as a wise man with apostolic authority, dared to say that all the wisdom that has come to earth, both the wisdom in himself and in Peter and the apostles, all the wisdom that has come to live in the world, is "the foolishness of God." For compared with that wisdom, which no place on earth can contain, compared with that wisdom above the heavens and above the world, this wisdom that came among us is the foolishness of God. Yet this "foolishness of God is wiser than men." Which men? I do not mean the foolish ones. It is wiser even than wise men. And even if you speak of the wise of this age, whether rulers or prophets, still the "foolishness of God" that I have described "is wiser than" the rulers of this age.

The word is about to say something startling: "the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God," and "God made the wisdom of the world foolish." Did he make the wisdom of the world foolish by wisdom? Can the wisdom of the world even take in wisdom, so that it is shown to be foolish? Does the wisdom of God have to struggle against the wisdom of the world in order to prove it wrong? No. Only a little is needed, and that little is the "foolish thing of God." By this small foolish thing of God the wisdom of this world is made foolish and exposed. For the wisdom of this world could not bear the wisdom of God. Take an

example, so that you can see how "the foolish thing of God" "made the wisdom of the world foolish." Suppose I, who seem to know many things, and more than most, had to argue with someone senseless and uneducated, who understands nothing and has never struggled over any noble arguments at all. Do I need logic against him, or deeper insights, if his thoughts are foolish? Do I not need only a single little word, a bit sharper than his own wording, so that I can expose his folly? So it is with the wisdom of this world, to make it foolish. There is no need for the wisdom of God to fight against it, for that wisdom is down below. The foolish thing of God is enough, because "the foolish thing of God is wiser than men," and "the weak thing of God is stronger than men." My Savior and Lord has taken on all these opposites, so that by opposites he might undo opposites. In this way we are made strong by the weakness of Jesus and made wise by the foolish thing of God. Once brought into these, we may be able to go up to the wisdom and the power of God, Christ Jesus, to whom be glory and might for ever. Amen.

Homily 9

As for the recorded coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, his visit in the body was universal and shone out on the whole world, when “the Word became flesh and lived among us.” For “the true light was there, which lights every person coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, and the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own did not receive him.” But we must know that he also visited earlier, though not in the body, in each of the saints. And after this visit of his which could be seen, he visits us again. If you want proof of this, pay attention to “the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying: Hear,” and so on. For who is “the word that came from the Lord,” whether to Jeremiah or to Isaiah or to Ezekiel or to anyone at all, if not the one who “in the beginning was with God”? I know of no other word of the Lord than the one of whom the evangelist said, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” We must also know this: the Word’s visit is made to each person, especially those who can be helped by it. For what good is it to me if the Word has visited the world, but I do not have him?

On the other hand, even if he has not yet come to the whole world, grant that I have become like the prophets, and then I have the Word. I would say that Christ came to Moses, to Jeremiah, to Isaiah, to each of the righteous. What he said to the disciples, “Behold, I am with you all the days until the end of the age,” was already being fulfilled in fact before his coming. For he was with Moses, he was with Isaiah, and with each of the saints. How could those men have spoken a word of God if the Word of God had not come to them? This needs to be understood above all by us who belong to the Church, who want the God of the law and the God of the gospel to be the same, and the same Christ then and now and for all ages. There will be people who cut off the older divinity, the one before the Savior’s coming, from the divinity proclaimed by Jesus Christ. That is at least their own opinion. But we know one God, then and now, and one Christ, then and now. I say this because of the words, “The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying.” So what should we hear? “Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to those living in Jerusalem.” We are the men of Judah, through Christ. For it is plain that “our Lord has risen out of Judah.” And if I show that the name of Judah, according to the Scripture, refers to Christ, then the men of Judah are not the Jews who disbelieve in Christ, but all of us who believe in Christ.

"Judah, may your brothers praise you. Your hands are on the back of your enemies." "May they praise you." His brothers did not praise that Judah, the son of Jacob. But the brothers will praise this Judah, since he says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the midst of the church I will sing hymns to you." That is not said to the other Judah. "Your hands are on the back of your enemies." Where is that Judah found laying his hands on the back of his enemies? The history records nothing of the kind about him. But if you understand the coming of the Lord Jesus, who brings the devil to nothing, who strips off "the principalities and powers," and makes a public spectacle of them, and leads them in triumph on the wood, you see how the prophecy that says, "Your hands are on the back of your enemies," has been fulfilled in this Judah. If that is so, and the word is now spoken "to the men of Judah," to whom could it be speaking if not to those who believe in Christ, who are somehow also called Judah on account of the tribe of Judah?

The word is spoken "to the men of Judah" and "to those living in Jerusalem." This is the Church. For the city of God is the Church, the "vision of peace." In her is the peace that he brought to us. If we are indeed children of peace, that peace increases and is seen. So "hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to those living in Jerusalem. And you shall say to them: Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Cursed is the man who does not listen to the words of the covenant that I commanded your fathers." Who above all listens to "the words of the covenant that God commanded the fathers"? Is it those who believe in him? Or those who are shown, by their not believing in the Lord, not even to believe Moses? For the Savior says to them, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?" So they have not believed Moses. But we, believing in Christ, believe the covenant given through Moses, and it is also spoken to us, so that we may not become accursed: "Cursed is the man who does not listen to the words of the covenant that I commanded your fathers." They, then, are the ones under the curse, for they did not listen to "the covenant that God commanded the fathers." "In the day," he says, "when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the iron furnace."

God has also brought us out "of the land of Egypt, out of the iron furnace." This is especially so for anyone who understands what is written in John's Revelation, that the place "where their Lord was crucified is called spiritually Sodom and Egypt." If it is "called spiritually Egypt," then it is not this Egypt, the one we can see, that is spiritually called Egypt. Clearly, then, if you understand the Egypt that is called so spiritually and you come out of it, you are the one who has come out "of the land of Egypt and out of the iron furnace," and the word is spoken to you: "Listen to my voice and do according to all" these things. Then there is a promise of God to those who listen, if they do what has been commanded: "And you shall be my people, and I will be your God." Not everyone who says he is God's people is God's people. So the one who promised to be God's people heard the words "you are not my people," in the saying "because you are not my people." That people was told "not my people," and then this other people was in turn called a people. For "they made me jealous with what is no god." He says this about those others: "They provoked me to anger with their idols. And I

will make them jealous with what is no nation; with a senseless nation I will provoke them to anger."

So we have become a people for God, and "the righteousness of God" belongs to the people who come from the nations. For this people is born all at once. It is also said in the prophet: "If a nation was born at one time." A nation was born at one time when the Savior came to live among us, and five thousand believed in a single day, and on another day three thousand more were added. We can see a whole people being born by the word of God, and the barren woman, who had not borne children before, giving birth all at once. To her it is said: "Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear; break forth and cry out, you who are not in labor, because the children of the desolate one are more than those of the woman who has a husband." The church is "desolate" of the law; she was desolate of God. The synagogue is the one called the woman who has a husband, the law. What, then, does God promise me? "You shall be my people, and I will be your God." He is not God of everyone, but only of those to whom he gives himself, just as he gave himself to that patriarch to whom he said, "I am your God," and again to another, "I will be your God," and about others, "I will be their God." When, then, do we attain, each one of us individually, to having God be our God? And if you want to learn whose God he is and to whom he grants his own name, he says: "I am the God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God [of Jacob]."

Explaining this, the Savior says: "God is not the God of the dead but of the living." Who is the dead person? The sinner, the one who does not have the one who said, "I am the [life]"; the one who has dead works, who has not yet repented from dead works. Of these the apostle says: "not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works." If, then, "God is not the God of the dead but of the living," and we know who the living person is, namely the one who lives as a citizen according to Christ and remains with him, then if we want God to be the God of each one of us, let us renounce the works of death. Then he will fulfill his promise, which says: "And I will be your God, so that I may establish my oath which I swore to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey." Notice that he says, "I will establish my oath which I swore to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey," as though he had not yet given them "the land flowing with milk and honey." For this is not the land that God called "flowing with milk and honey." It is the land the Savior taught about when he said: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

Next the prophet answers what the Lord had said before. The Lord had said, "Cursed is the man who will not listen to the words of this covenant." And the prophet says, "I answered and said, 'So be it, Lord.'" What does "So be it, Lord" mean? Cursed is the one who will not remain in the words of this covenant. "And the Lord said to me: Read these words in the cities of Judah and outside Jerusalem." We too read the words of God to those outside, calling them to salvation. "Hear the words of this covenant and do them." And they did not do them. "And the Lord said to me: A conspiracy was found among the men of Judah and among those living in Jerusalem." Or are we going to repent over the sins spoken of

concerning the men of Judah, knowing that we are the men of Judah, since Christ was prophesied and spoken of as Judah? Perhaps, because there are some among us who are sinners and act contrary to the right word, the prophet says for this reason, "A conspiracy was found among the men of Judah and among those living in Jerusalem." For when a bond of injustice and a bond of sins is found in some who are called by the name of the church, so that what is said of the sinner fits them, "each man is held fast by the cords of his own sins," then God might say, "A bond was found among the men of Judah." May no such bond be found among us! But how is no bond found among us, if even to this day there is a bond in some? "Loosen every bond of injustice, undo the knots of violent contracts, tear up every unjust written agreement. Break your bread for the hungry." So "a bond was found among the men of Judah and among those living in Jerusalem. They turned back to the injustices of their fathers, those of earlier times."

"They turned back to the injustices." Whose? He does not simply say "of the fathers." What is the addition? "They turned back to the injustices of their fathers, those of earlier times." We were saying that these things are said to us, and to those among us who sin. How then did those among us who sin turn back not simply to "the injustices of the fathers," but to those "of their fathers of earlier times"? Perhaps our fathers are of two kinds, and there is among us a worse kind of fathers. Before we believed, we were, let us say, sons of the devil, as the word of the Gospel shows when it says, "You are of your father the devil." But when we believed, we became sons of God. So whenever we sin, we turn back to the injustices not simply of the fathers, but of our earlier fathers. To show that we have two fathers, I will use words from the forty-fourth Psalm, which read: "Listen, daughter, and see, and incline your ear, and forget your people and the house of your father." He says "forget the house of your father" as a father himself, for as a father he says, "Listen, daughter." So then we have two fathers. But "forget the house of your father" means the earlier one. If you forget your earlier house and then turn back again to sins, you have committed the sins spoken of here. "They turned back to the injustices of their fathers, those of earlier times." I was saying that the devil was once our father, before God became our Father, since now the devil is not our father. We will show this also from the catholic letter of John, where it is written, "Everyone who practices sin has been born of the devil."

If "everyone who practices sin has been born of the devil," then in a sense we are born of the devil as many times as we sin. So the one who is always being born of the devil is wretched, just as, on the other side, the one who is always being born of God is blessed. For I will not say that the righteous person was born of God once for all. He is always being born, with each good deed, in which God begets the righteous person. Now suppose I bring you to the Savior and show that the Father did not beget the Son once and then release him from his begetting, but always begets him. Then I will show that something similar holds for the righteous person. Let us see who our Savior is. He is "the radiance of glory." The radiance of glory was not begotten once and then ceased to be begotten. Rather, as long as the light is producing the radiance, so long is the radiance of God's glory being begotten. Our Savior is the wisdom of God, and wisdom is "a radiance of eternal light." If, then, the Savior is

always being begotten, this is also why he says, “Before all the hills he begets me.” He does not say, “Before all the hills he has begotten me,” but “Before all the hills he begets me.” And so the Savior is always being begotten by the Father. In the same way, you also, if you have the Spirit of adoption, are always being begotten by God in him, in each work and in each thought. Being begotten in this way, you become one who is always being begotten as a son of God in Christ Jesus. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Homily 10

If the oracles of God are in the Law and the Prophets, in the Gospels and the Apostles, then the one who is learning from the oracles of God must have God as his teacher. For "the one who teaches man knowledge" is God, as it is written in the Psalms. And the Savior also testifies that no one should be given the title of teacher on earth, saying, "And do not call anyone teacher on earth, for you have one teacher, the Father in heaven." The Father in heaven teaches either by himself, or through Christ, or in the Holy Spirit, or through Paul, say, or through Peter, or through some other of the saints. Only let the Spirit of God and the Word of God come to dwell among us and teach. Why have I said this? Because the prophet says, "Make it known to me, Lord, and I shall know." For I shall not know unless you make it known to me. But if I come to know because you make it known to me, "then I shall see their practices," and I shall understand what each one is doing and what his purpose is. That is what the prophet says. Next, let us see what the Savior says in the prophet: "I, like an innocent lamb being led to be sacrificed, did not know.

They devised a plan against me, saying: Come, let us put wood into his bread, and wipe him out from the land of the living, so that his name will be remembered no more." As the prophet Isaiah also says, Christ "was led like a sheep to slaughter, and like a lamb silent before the one who shears it, so he does not open his mouth." There, then, Isaiah speaks about him. Here Christ speaks about himself: "I, like an innocent lamb led to slaughter to be sacrificed, did not know." He did not say what he did not know. He did not say, "I did not know evil things," nor "I did not know good things," nor "I did not know sin." He said simply, "I did not know." So he has left it to you to investigate what he did not know. And learn what he did not know from the words, "He made him who did not know sin to be sin for us." For to know sin is to commit sin, just as to know righteousness is to practice righteousness. So the one who proclaims what concerns righteousness but does not practice righteousness has not known righteousness.

"They devised a plan against me, saying: Come, let us put wood into his bread." That the Jews crucified him is plain, and we proclaim it openly. But how you are to fit this to the words "they devised a plan against me, saying: Come, let us put wood into his bread" takes some effort to understand. The bread of Jesus is the word, on which we are fed. So when he was teaching among the people, they wanted to attach a stumbling block to his teaching

by crucifying him, and they said, "Let us put wood into his bread." For whenever the fact that the teacher was crucified is attached to the word of Jesus' teaching, wood has been put into his bread. Let them, then, speak as men who plotted with malice: "Come, let us put wood into his bread." But I will say something even more surprising: the wood put into his bread has made the bread better. I take an example from the law of Moses: the wood thrown into the bitter water made it [sweet]. In the same way the wood of the suffering of Jesus Christ, coming into the word, has made his bread sweeter. Before the wood came into his bread, when it was only bread and there was no wood in his teaching, "his voice did not go out into all the earth." But since the bread received power through the wood put into it, the word of his teaching has been distributed over the whole inhabited world. And the wood then was a symbol of the suffering of Jesus, through which the bitter water becomes sweet. For I say that the law, when it is not understood, is bitter water. But if the wood of Jesus comes, and the teaching of my Savior takes up residence, the law of Moses becomes sweet and most pleasant when it is read and understood. So they said, "Come, let us put wood into his bread."

They also say, "Let us wipe him out from the land of the living, and let his name be remembered no more." That was how they killed him: as though they were erasing his name. But Jesus knows how he dies and why. So he says, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." So the death of Jesus becomes an ear of wheat, making what was sown many times over and abundant in yield. Suppose, for the sake of argument, he had not been crucified and had not died: the grain of wheat would have remained alone, and many would not have come from it. Consider his words, then, to see whether he did not mean this: "If the grain of wheat does not fall into the earth and die, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." The death of Jesus bore fruit in all these people. And if his death bore fruit in so many, in how many will the resurrection bear fruit?

"Lord of hosts, who judge justly, who test the kidneys and hearts, may I see your vengeance on them." He prays this prophetically: to see God's vengeance on them. For Jerusalem has been surrounded by armies, and its desolation has drawn near, and it has been told, "See, your house is left to you." So: "May I see your vengeance on them, for to you I have revealed my cause. Therefore the Lord says this concerning the men of Anathoth who seek my life, who say: Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord, or you will die at our hands. See, I will visit them: their young men will die by the sword, and their sons and daughters will perish by famine. And there will be no remnant of them, for I will bring evil on the inhabitants of Anathoth in the year of their visitation." The name of Anathoth is taken here for the sake of a pretext. But the whole Jewish mystery is spoken of in it figuratively, for Anathoth is interpreted "Obedience [of hearing]" (or "Answering"). Since there was a hearing of God among that people, as there was also the kingdom of God, and the saying came true about the kingdom, "The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation producing its fruits," so too it came about that "the men of Anathoth," those who were in the place

of Hearing, sought the life, not of Jeremiah (for the history does not say that the men of Anathoth sought the life of Jeremiah.

We have the books of Kings, where Scripture mentions Jeremiah, and nothing of the kind is said there, nor in Chronicles. We also have the prophet's own book, and the men of Anathoth have said nothing like this there. So these words are spoken about Christ. "Those who seek my soul, who say: You shall not prophesy in the name of the Lord." The Jews forbade Jesus to teach. "Otherwise you will die at our hands. See, I will visit them. Their young men will die by the sword, and their sons and daughters will die by famine." They did not die by the sword at that time. But after his coming, famine has now come upon them: "not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but a famine of the word of the Lord." For among them it is no longer said, "Thus says the Lord Almighty." This is the famine: that there is no longer any prophecy among them. And why do I say prophecy? There is not even teaching. Though they may be called wise ten thousand times over, the word of the Lord is no longer in them. For this has been fulfilled: "The Lord will take away from Judea and from Jerusalem the strong man and the strong woman, the giant and the mighty man, the warrior and the judge and the prophet and the diviner and the elder and the captain of fifty and the wonderful counselor and the wise master builder and the understanding hearer." There is no longer anyone among them who can say, "As a wise master builder I have laid a foundation." The master builders have moved over; they came to the church and laid the foundation, Jesus Christ. Those who come after them build on this.

So that people have been left behind in famine. For he will bring "evils upon those who live in Anathoth, in the year of their visitation." "You are righteous, Lord, so I will plead my case before you. Yet I will speak my judgments to you. Why does the way of the ungodly prosper? Those who deal treacherously have flourished." We still ask whether the God who gave the law and the prophets is good, when we see that "the way of the ungodly prospers" and he does not punish the ungodly. "All who deal treacherously have flourished." These are the very people who speak against the Creator and slander him: "They have flourished, they have been planted and have taken root, they have produced children and borne fruit." How great was the fruit when Marcion produced children, or Basilides, or Valentinus! For this is what is prophesied about the ungodly and said in the words, "They have produced children and borne fruit." "You are near in their mouth, but far from their inward parts." They name the name of Jesus, but they do not have Jesus, for they do not confess him as they ought. "And you, Lord, know me; you have seen me; you have tested my heart before you. Purify them for the day of their slaughter." What shall I do to make this clear? He calls punishments a purification of those who are punished. For he says, "Purify them for the day of their slaughter." Purify them by their being slaughtered. "For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and scourges every son whom he receives."

"How long will the earth mourn, and the grass of the field wither because of the wickedness of those who live in it?" Here too the prophet speaks as though the earth were a living being, saying that the earth mourns because of the wickedness of those who walk upon it. So in

the case of each one of us, the earth either mourns or rejoices. For it either mourns "because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it," or it rejoices because of the virtue of those who dwell in it. In each one of us, then, this very element either rejoices or mourns. And perhaps the other elements do the same. I will say the same of water, and of the angel appointed over the water, so that I may explain what is meant by the earth mourning or not mourning. For it is not this body, "the earth," that mourns "because of those who live in it." Rather, understand with me that in the ordering of the whole, one being is appointed over the earth, another over the waters, another over the air, and a fourth over the fire. In the same way, let my argument carry you up to the whole order among living creatures, and among the heavenly stars. An angel is appointed over the sun, another over the moon, another over the stars. These angels, with whom we are, as far as we are earth, either rejoice if we act justly, or mourn over us when we sin. "The earth mourns," he says, "because of those who live in it." He gave the angel the same name as the earth itself. For it is like the saying, "The thing made by hands is accursed, and so is the one who made it." That does not mean the lifeless thing itself is accursed. What is called "made by hands" is the one who sits beside the lifeless idol and answers to that name. In the same way, I will say that the angel appointed over the earth is called "earth," and the angel appointed over the water is called "water." This is the sense of the saying: "The waters saw you, O God; the waters saw you and were afraid; the depths were troubled by the roar of many waters; the clouds gave a voice, for your arrows go forth."

"I have forsaken my house, I have abandoned my inheritance, I have given my beloved soul into the hands of her enemies." See the one who exists "in the form of God," who was in the heavens. See his house, which is above the heavens. If you want to look higher still (for he is "in the Father"), see that God himself is his house. He leaves "father and mother," the "Jerusalem above," and comes into the region around the earth, and says, "I have forsaken my house, I have abandoned my inheritance." For that was his inheritance: the places with the angels, the rank among the holy powers. "I have given my beloved soul into the hands of her enemies." He handed over his soul into the hands of the enemies of the soul: into the hands of the Jews who killed him, into the hands of rulers gathered against him, into the hands of kings, when "the kings of the earth stood by, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ."

"My inheritance has become to me like a lion in the forest." This inheritance of his on earth, the one he had inherited, turned wild against him. The Jews, enraged against him, became his inheritance "like a lion in the forest." It is no wonder that his inheritance then became "like a lion in the forest," because even now there are lions in the forest, who want to curse Jesus, who speak evil of him and plot against those who believe in him. "My inheritance has become to me like a lion in the forest. It has raised its voice against me; therefore I hated it. Is my inheritance to me a hyena's den?" He prophesies about this inheritance. Has the inheritance become a hyena's den? A hyena is the fiercest of creatures, a devourer of corpses that haunts the tombs and eats the bodies of the dead. "Is my inheritance to me a hyena's den?" "Or is there a den against it all around? Go!" Since they have become such, I

command you, the angels, to go and gather the wild beasts and hand them over to the beasts. "Go and gather all the beasts of the field, and let them come to devour it." The "beasts of the field" have come and are devouring that people. You can see their hearts being devoured by the opposing powers. If Jesus did not spare those people, but said, "Go, gather the beasts," how much more will he not spare us? If we do not keep the law of God, the word of the gospel, he will say again: Go, gather the beasts and hand it over. But we have boldness to say in our prayers, "Do not hand over to the beasts a soul that confesses you." Let us confess our offenses and repent, and we will not be handed over to the beasts. Instead we will be handed over to holy angels, who will be our nurses, carrying us in their arms and bringing us across from this age to the age to come, in Christ Jesus, to whom belong the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Homily 11

Who is the one who says, “Because of me the whole land has been laid waste with utter desolation”? It is Christ who says this. Before his coming among us, the people had committed many sins, but not such as would cause them to be abandoned completely and handed over to a long captivity. But when they filled up “the measure of their fathers,” and added to the killing of the prophets and the persecution of the righteous the murder of “the Christ of God,” then came the word, “Your house is left to you.” And they suffered these things because of him, and “the whole land was laid waste with utter desolation.”

But if you want to hear a higher meaning of “Because of me the whole land has been laid waste with utter desolation,” look at the land within you, and how it was laid waste when Jesus came. It was laid waste when the members that are on the earth were put to death, and the land no longer does its own works. In the righteous person the works of the flesh, with which the flesh used to flourish, no longer appear: no more fornication, no more uncleanness, no more licentiousness, no more idolatry, no more sorcery, and the rest. The Savior also says, “Do you think that I came to bring peace on the earth? I did not come to bring peace but a sword.” It is true: before he came there was no sword on the earth, and neither did the flesh desire against the spirit nor the spirit against the flesh. But when he came, and we were taught what belongs to the flesh and what belongs to the Spirit, the teaching became like a sword on the earth and divided the flesh, the land, from the Spirit. So “the land was laid waste” when we carry about in the body the putting to death of Jesus, and no longer live according to the flesh, but the Spirit lives. We sow nothing to the flesh but everything to the Spirit, so that we may not reap corruption from the flesh but eternal life from the Spirit.

The sinners are told, “Sow wheat and reap thorns.” Even if people busy themselves with the oracles of God, those who do not handle them well, who do not live as they should and do not believe, sow wheat and reap thorns. This is best understood of those who hold other doctrines and read the Scriptures. They reap thorns, not from the Scriptures, but from their own inventions. “Their lots will not profit them.” Others have also explained these words. Since we do not reject their explanation, we gladly bring it forward, not as though we had discovered it, but as those who have learned a good lesson. This word will profit you and us alike, if we pay attention to what is written. We seem to belong to a certain “lot,” since we

preside over you, so that some people want to come to this lot. But you know that the lot does not by any means save. Many presbyters will perish, and many lay people will prove blessed. Some in the clergy do not live in a way that profits them or adorns the clergy. For this reason, say those who explained the passage, it is written, "Their lots will not profit them." What profits is not simply sitting in the presbyters' seat, but living worthily of the place, as the word demands. The word demands that you live well, and that we do too.

But if one may put it this way, "the mighty will be mightily tested." More is required of me than of the deacon, more of the deacon than of the lay person, and still more is required of the one who has been entrusted with the leadership over all of us, the leadership of the church itself. For this reason the apostle, who was entrusted with great things, says (listen): "So let a person regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Here, moreover, it is required of stewards that someone be found faithful." And so it is rare to find a faithful and good steward. Jesus, "who knows all things before they come to be," says: "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household to give the portion of food to his servants at the proper time?" Then he blames certain stewards and says: "But if that wicked servant begins to say, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in two, and will put his portion with the unfaithful." So much for "Their lots will not profit them."

Let us look next at a necessary rebuke, which it is good to take up on the moral level: "Be ashamed of your boasting, of your reproach before the Lord." There are things in which we boast out of foolishness, though they are not worth boasting about. For instance, if someone boasts that he is rich and has acquired many possessions, it may be said to him, "Be ashamed of your boasting." If someone boasts of this outward nobility of birth, it will be said to him, "Be ashamed of your boasting." If someone boasts of expensive clothes, or of building a richly furnished house, such boasting is foreign to the boasting of the saints. So it will be said to such a person, "Be ashamed of your boasting." Listen to the word of the prophet Jeremiah, who commands us not to boast even in wisdom. "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom," he says, "nor the strong man in his strength, nor the rich man in his riches. But let the one who boasts boast in this: to understand and know that I am the Lord." If you want to boast, and not hear "Be ashamed of your boasting," boast as the apostle did and say: "But may it never happen to me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." If you want to boast so that it is not said, "Be ashamed of your boasting," listen to Paul boasting and learn when he says: "Most gladly, then, I will boast in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Listen to what kind of things he boasts of: "in labors more abundantly" (which of us can say this?), "in prisons beyond measure, in deaths often. Five times I received forty lashes less one, three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked." So we learn that there are differences among kinds of boasting. Some boasting deserves

shame, and of it that apostolic saying could be used: "and their glory is in their shame." They think they are glorified in the very things over which they ought to be ashamed.

After this, let us look at the matter of the loincloth. For "Thus says the Lord: Go and buy yourself a linen loincloth, and put it around your waist, and you will not pass through water. And I bought a loincloth according to the word of the Lord and put it around my waist. And the word of the Lord came to me, saying: Take the loincloth that is around your waist, and get up and go to the Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole in the rock." After some days he comes there and finds the loincloth rotted. Then the Lord adds, giving the starting point for explaining the loincloth: "As the loincloth clings to a man's waist, so I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to myself, says the Lord, so that they would be for me a renowned people, a boast and a glory. And they did not listen to me." So the prophet is taken to stand in the place of God. He wraps the linen loincloth around his waist, as God does with the people. For God says, "I made this people cling to myself." So the people become, as it were, the loincloth of God. But why does the people become a loincloth around God's waist? Let anyone who is able read Ezekiel, and see God, as it were, given a body in the account. In Ezekiel the parts of him from the waist down [are fire], and the parts from the waist up are electrum. Let that reader search out the reason why the lower part of God is fire. The things that belong to the waist and to birth, these are fire. For everything that exists in the realm of birth needs the cleansing that comes from fire. Everything in the realm of birth needs punishment.

But the parts above the waist, which have passed beyond birth, are made of a substance that is, as it were, the purest and most precious. For electrum is said to be more precious than gold. Scripture uses illustrations to teach that the upper part of God's body is more honorable and the lower part less so. This is why it presents God as made up of fire and electrum. [And there is a body of God † and he himself] In the realm of birth each of us is fire; we are not the electrum. But if we ascend and make progress, we shall pass through the fire and be the electrum around the higher part of God's body. (For it is possible to move from being among the lower things today to becoming the upper part of God's body.) 6. So he makes the linen loincloth cling around his waist. Why? To show that the people are, as it were, a covering for God. For against those who want to accuse God, the people stand up and, as it were, shield him, and do not allow anything improper to be said about God. But when we sin, it is as when the prophet takes off this loincloth and condemns it to the river Euphrates so that it may be ruined there. In the same way the one who sins is thrown off from God's waist. Once thrown off, he is cast into the river Euphrates, the river of Mesopotamia, where the Assyrians, Israel's enemies, are, and where the Babylonians are. And there he is ruined. For although there are so many rivers, the prophet is sent from Judea to the river Euphrates to do business there and to carry away a little linen loincloth. Why also "linen"? Because it has its origin from the earth. It is a plant that grows up from the ground. Then, after it has been farmed, it is combed, washed, and scoured, [and worked on at great length], so that it becomes fit to be a loincloth or whatever else.

So all of us, too, have our origin like the Lord's waistcloth. Since we have our origin from the earth, we need a great deal of preparation: to be combed, to be washed, to lose the color of the earth. The natural color of flax in its origin is one thing, and the color it gets from the working is another. The color of flax in its origin is rather dark, but through the working it becomes brilliantly bright. Something like this happens to us who are in the realm of birth. We are dark at the beginning of believing. That is why it is said at the beginning of the Song of Songs, "I am dark and beautiful." At the beginning we resemble Ethiopians in our soul. Then we are cleaned so that we may become brighter, as in the words, "Who is this who comes up made white?" And we become "bright and clean linen." Then we are also woven into God's waistcloth, when we are worthy to be joined to God. God does not set us aside. He set aside the first people, "the whole house of Judah" and "the house of Israel." It came to the point that they were no longer of use, for he no longer girds himself with them. In their place God has girded himself with us. He did not throw away the waistcloth and stay naked; he wove himself another waistcloth. This waistcloth is the church from the nations. Let her know that if God did not spare the former ones, how much more will he not spare her if she sins, unless she is worthy of God's waist. "But the one who is joined to the Lord is one spirit," in Christ Jesus, to whom belong glory and power forever. Amen.

Homily 12

What the prophet is commanded by God to say must be worthy of God. But if we stay with the letter, it appears not to be worthy of God, so that someone who hears the letter might say, “These writings are foolishness.” The natural person will say this: “The natural person does not receive the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him.” So look at what the text says. “And you shall say to this people: Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel.” What he says as “the Lord, the God of Israel” must be worthy of the Lord of Israel. “Every wineskin will be filled with wine. And if they say to you, ‘Shall we not indeed know that every wineskin will be filled with wine?’ ” Now if those who answer, standing on the plain wording, say this, claiming to know that “every wineskin will be filled with wine,” they are lying. For not “every wineskin will be filled with wine.” There are, at any rate, wineskins filled with oil or some other liquid. [Some, then, are lying; for not every wineskin will be filled with wine.] And the people answer, saying, “Shall we not indeed know that every wineskin will be filled with wine?” This will receive from us, as far as we are able, an explanation of the following kind. If we know the differences among wines and what is said about them, then, following these, we will see about the wineskins that it is true that “every wineskin will be filled with wine.”

For if a wineskin is good (let us name one that way, a wineskin among wineskins), it will be filled with wine according to its own goodness. And if it is worthless, when wineskins are compared and judged, it too will be filled with worthless wine according to its worthlessness. How then can we take from Scripture what it says about the different wines? About the worse ones it is written: “For their vine is from the vine of Sodom, and their branch from Gomorrah. Their grape is a grape of gall, a cluster of bitterness for them. Their wine is the rage of dragons, and the incurable rage of asps.” About the better ones: “Your cup makes me drunk, like the strongest.” And Wisdom calls people together to her own mixing bowl, saying, “Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mixed for you.” So there is wine from Sodom, and there is wine which Wisdom mixes. And again: “A vineyard was made for the beloved on a horn, in a fertile place,” planted by God, the one called the vine of Sorek, being something chosen and wonderful. And there is also a vine of the Egyptians, which God strikes, according to what is written: “God struck their vine with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost.”

Now consider with me that all human beings, figuratively speaking, are able to hold wine. In that sense I call them wineskins. I say that the wicked person has been filled with "wine from the vine of Sodom," with Egyptian wine, and with the wine of Israel's enemies. But the holy person, who has been helped, has been filled with wine from the vine of Sorek, with the wine about which it is written, "Your cup makes me drunk, as the strongest [wine] does," and again, the holy person has been filled with the wine which Wisdom mixed. Let me understand these things in terms of evil and virtue, so that the saying "every wineskin is filled with wine" may be seen to hold. But if we must also look at what comes through evil and through virtue (punishments for evil, blessings and promises for virtue), let us show from the sacred writings how punishments and promises are both called wine. "Take the cup of this unmixed wine, and you shall make all the nations drink, those to whom I send you." Jeremiah says this, and the text goes on: "And they will drink and vomit and go mad and fall." So here he has called punishments unmixed wine, which those drink who are worthy of unmixed wine, that is, of unmixed punishment. But there are others who drink a punishment that is not unmixed but mixed. For "there is a cup in the hand of the Lord, full of unmixed wine, a mixture. He tilted it from this one into that one. Yet its dregs were not emptied out; all the sinners of the [earth] will drink." If you also want to see a cup of blessing, which the righteous drink, the cup of Wisdom would be enough, about which she said, "Drink the wine which I have mixed for you." But look also at the Savior going up for the Passover into "a large upper room, furnished and prepared." He keeps the feast with his disciples and gives them a cup. About this it is not written that he mixed it. For when Jesus gladdens his disciples, he gladdens them with unmixed wine, and he says to them: "Take, drink; this is my blood, poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink, in remembrance of me." And: "Truly I tell you, I will not drink it from now on until I drink it new with you in the kingdom of God."

Do you see that the promise is the cup of the new covenant? Do you see that punishments are a cup of unmixed wine, and that another kind of punishment is a mixed cup? So for each person the cup is mixed according to the worth of the good deeds mingled with the bad deeds, and that is what he will drink. Understand it this way. Those who are altogether strangers to godliness, who pay no attention to themselves at all but live however they happen to, drink the unmixed wine, about which we quoted the words of Jeremiah. But those who have not wholly fallen away and are not simply sinners, though they are unworthy of the cup "of the new covenant," and who do now better deeds and now opposite ones, drink wine "of an unmixed mixture." For God "tilted it from this one into that one." Which "this one"? I see two cups, according to what is said: "He tilted it from this one into that one; yet its dregs were not emptied out." Think of the cup of your good works in one hand of God. Or, if you want me to say it more boldly, let the cup of your good works be in God's right hand, and let the cup of your sins be in God's left hand. So when you are about to be punished for your sins, since you have also done some better works, there is a cup "in the hand of the Lord, full of unmixed wine, a mixture. And he tilted it from this one into that one," from the one in the left hand into the one in the right. For you cannot drink only the cup of good

deeds, since you have not done only good works. Nor can you drink only the cup of sins, for some good things have also been done by you.

This is why "he tipped it from this one into that one." Wrath and punishment are mixed for you in proportion to your works, so that your punishment is either more diluted or sharper and more painful. As I said before, the sins are weighed against the good deeds in proportion. The effect of the cup of wrath, which is given [in measure] for each of the sins, is somehow softened or else not softened. But if you are good and noble through and through, you say, "I will take the cup of salvation, and I will call on the name of the Lord." So "every wineskin," whether good or wicked, "will be filled with wine." According to the fitness of the skin, wine will be poured into it, following the sense of the "wineskins" named here. Oil is not poured into wineskins, nor any other liquid. Every wineskin must be filled with wine.

Next he teaches, on account of those who sinned then in Jerusalem and in Judea (as far as the plain wording goes), what kind of wine God means to fill these wineskins with, that is, the sinners. For it is written: "If they say to you, 'Will we not know for certain that every wineskin will be filled with wine?' then you shall say to them: This is what the Lord says: Look, I am filling all who live in this land, and the kings, the sons of David who sit on his throne, and the priests." The one who is about to punish spares no one. It is not the case that because someone served as a prophet, yet has sins, he will not be filled with the threats that are spoken. Nor does God spare a priest, who held the office and seemed to have a more honored name among the people, so as to keep him from being punished when he sins. The things written about those people, the apostle says, were written for our sake, "upon whom the ends of the ages have come." So if anyone sins among these priests (by which I mean us, the presbyters), or among these Levites who stand around the people (I mean the deacons), he will receive this punishment. In the same way there are certain priestly blessings. God willing, we shall learn about them not long from now, after we have worked through the prophetic word, when Numbers is read, for something is going to be said there about priests. So God says he will fill "the priests and the prophets and Judah and all who live in Jerusalem" with "drunkenness," and will scatter "them, a man and his brother, their fathers and their sons." Let us understand this as follows: God gathers the righteous together, but scatters sinners. For this reason, as long as people did not move away from the east, God did not scatter them. But when they moved "from the east" and "each man said to his neighbor, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower whose top will reach to heaven,'" God says about them, "Come, let us go down and confuse their language there." Then each one is confused and scattered to some place on the earth.

The people of Israel, too, were in Judea so long as they did not sin. But once they sinned, they were scattered from the inhabited world and spread everywhere. Think of something like this for all of us. There is a church of the firstborn, enrolled in heaven, [where there is Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem]. The blessed will be gathered there, so that they may be together. But sinners are punished in just this way: they are not with one another. I know of people in this life who, to punish and torment,

want to hand someone over to an island, and who scatter the household of one who has offended the kingdom. The wife goes here, one son there, another son somewhere else, so that even in their misfortune the mother cannot enjoy her son, or the brother his brother. Think of something like this in the case of the unjust. You, the sinner, being managed by God, must taste something more bitter, so that you may be taught and saved. You do not punish your servant or your son simply because you want to torment him, but to turn him around through hardship. In the same way God will discipline, through the pains that come from suffering, those who are not turned by the word and have not been healed. What he puts around them, he puts around them for discipline, as it has been said: "Continually you will be disciplined, Jerusalem, by hardship and the lash." So that the disciplining pain may increase, those who suffer are scattered from one another, so that this one and that one are not together. For the severity of the pain would be broken if each one found comfort in the other.

If I should add to the argument another reason for the scattering, I will set that out too. Wicked people who are together look to wicked things and increase them, just as good people together with good people think about good things. So the evil plan, which would have been strong among like-minded people, is broken up and divided when the wicked are scattered from one another. For this reason God arranges that the base are not with one another. Perhaps he is even looking out for them, so that their wickedness may not grow together, but may be diminished by being dissolved. This is the point of the words: "I will scatter them, a man and his brother, and their fathers and their sons together, says the Lord." "I will not long for them, and I will not spare, and I will not pity, because of their corruption."

Those from the heresies seize on sayings like these and say: "Do you see what the Creator is like? The God of the prophets, who says, 'I will not spare and I will not pity, because of their corruption'? How can this one be good?" But suppose I take as an example a judge who, for the good of the community, does not show pity, and a magistrate who rightly shows no mercy. From that example I will be able to persuade you that God, while sparing many, does not spare one. I will also take the example of a doctor, to show that in sparing the whole body he does not spare one limb. Suppose, for example, that the task set before a judge is to bring about peace and to establish what is beneficial for the nation under him. Suppose a murderer is brought before him, handsome in appearance and good to look at. Suppose a mother comes and offers pitiful words to the judge, so that her old age may be pitied. Suppose the wife of this man, who does not deserve pity, begs for mercy, and the children stand around and plead for him. In these circumstances, what benefits the community? Is it that he be shown mercy or not shown mercy? If he is shown mercy, he will go back to the same things. If he is not shown mercy, he himself will die, but the community will be improved. So if God spares the sinner, and has mercy and pity on him so as not to punish, who will not be ruined? Which of the base, if their sins were stopped only by the fear of punishments, will not be ruined, and will not become worse? One can see such things happening in the churches too. Someone has sinned, and after the sin has asked for communion. If he is pardoned too quickly, the community is ruined.

Then the sin of others grows. But suppose the judge reasons it out. He is not unmerciful or cruel; he cares for the one man too, but he cares more for the many than for the one. He considers the harm that will come to the community if that one man is kept in fellowship and his sin is pardoned. Plainly he will have the one cast out, so that he may save the many. Look also at a physician. Suppose he spares himself the cutting of what needs to be cut, and the burning of what needs to be burned, because of the pains that follow such treatments. In that case the disease grows and gets worse. But if he boldly goes to the knife and the cautery, he will heal by showing no pity, by seeming to have no compassion on the man who is burned and cut. So it is with God. He does not manage one human being; he manages the whole world, and governs everything in heaven and on earth everywhere. So he considers what is good for the whole world and for all that exists. As far as possible he considers also what is good for the one, but not so that the good of the one comes at the cost of the world. For this reason eternal fire has been prepared, for this reason Gehenna has been made ready, and for this reason there is an outer darkness. These are needed not only for the one who is punished, but above all for the community.

If you want Scripture as a witness that sinners are punished also for the instruction of others, even if they themselves may sometimes be past hope of cure, listen to Solomon in Proverbs: "When a scoffer is flogged, the fool will become shrewder." He did not say that the one being flogged would become shrewder and wiser because of the lashes. He says that the fool changes from folly to wisdom because of the lashes laid on the scoffer. That is what the word "shrewdness" signifies here. And the fool changes by seeing others flogged. So the punishment of others is good for us, provided we become worthy of salvation through others being punished. And just as the fall of Israel brought about the salvation of the Gentiles, so the punishment of some will bring about the salvation of others. This is why God, who is good, says: "I will not spare, and I will not have compassion, because of their corruption."

Now that we have set one main point within its limits, let us see what the other teaches us. "Hear and give ear, and do not be lifted up, for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord our God before it grows dark, and before your feet stumble on dark mountains. You will wait for light, and there will be the shadow of death, and they will be set in darkness. But if you will not hear in secret, your soul will weep before the face of insolence, and your eyes will shed tears, because the Lord's flock has been crushed." He wants the same people both to hear and to give ear. He is not satisfied with their only hearing, or only giving ear. That is why he says, "Hear and give ear." Then after this he commands them not to be lifted up, and teaches what must be done. Let us understand from the wording itself what hearing is and what giving ear is. "Give ear" means: take it in with the ears. And "hear," if it is said in contrast with "give ear," may perhaps mean: take it into the mind. Among the things said in the Scriptures, some are more hidden and mysterious, and others are useful in themselves to those who understand. I think "hear" is said about the more hidden things, and "give ear" about those that are useful in themselves and can benefit the hearer even without interpretation. So if we examine the whole of Scripture, and prove ourselves skilled money-changers, we will say: this part calls for "hear," and this part for "give ear."

Then, when we have listened and given ear, he commands us: "And do not be lifted up." For "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled." And the Savior, when he says, "Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls," teaches us not to be lifted up. Along with the other human evils, this sin is strong in us. Sometimes we are lifted up quite irrationally, over things we should not be lifted up about even in the smallest degree. At other times we are lifted up with some plausibility, because what we are proud of seems reasonable. Yet even being lifted up over that is not healthy.

What I mean will become clear like this. Some people are puffed up because they are the sons of rulers, or because they come from a family with great worldly honors. People like that are puffed up over something that is not their own choice and makes no moral difference. They don't even have a reasonable-sounding excuse to draw them toward pride. Others are puffed up because they have the power to put people to death. Others are puffed up because they have received what they call a "promotion" so high that they can cut off men's heads. The "glory" of such people "is in their shame." Others are puffed up over wealth, and not the true wealth but the wealth down here. Others, let us say, are puffed up because they own a beautiful house or many fields. None of these things is worth talking about, and no one should be puffed up over any of them. But there is a plausible case for being puffed up when someone is puffed up because he is wise. Or he is puffed up because he knows in his own conscience that for ten years now he has not touched sexual pleasure, or has not touched it since boyhood. Or another man is puffed up because he has worn chains for Christ's sake. Here there is a plausibility that suggests it is reasonable to be puffed up. Yet even over these things, measured by the true account, no one is reasonably puffed up. So it is not reasonable to be puffed up even over these. Paul had material for being puffed up: the appearances, the visions, the wonders and signs, the labors he labored for Christ, and the churches he established. He was ambitious to lay the foundation of a church where Christ had not been named.

All this was material for him, if one may speak with that plausibility about being puffed up, so that some people might have thought it right for him to be puffed up. But even so, since being puffed up over such things is not free of danger either, the good Father gave him visions and sights, and in the same way he gave him, as a kind of gift, "a messenger of Satan to strike him, so that he would not be exalted too highly. Three times he begged the Lord about this, that the messenger of Satan would leave him." That messenger was given to him precisely so that he would not be puffed up. And the Lord answered him (for Paul was worthy of an answer from the Lord) and said to him: "My grace is enough for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." So there is nothing over which one should be puffed up. A fall follows being puffed up, as it says: "Before destruction a man's heart is lifted up, and before glory it is humbled." That is what I have to say on "Hear and listen, and do not be puffed up, for the Lord has spoken."

Let us see also what he commands us to do after this. "Give," he says, "glory to the Lord our God before it grows dark, before your feet stumble on dark mountains, and you wait for

light." He wants the one who gives "glory to God" to give "glory to God" while there is light, as if God's glory could not be declared once darkness has fallen and it has become dark. So when does it grow dark, and when does the darkening not happen? "Work as though the light is in you." The light is in you if you have in you the one who said, "I am the light of the world." As long as he rises for you, glorify God. But know that some darkening can come, and that this darkness must not remain. Before it grows dark, give glory to God.

Perhaps we will understand what is written if we use a saying from the Gospel, spoken by the Savior, which goes like this: "Work while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work." There he called this present age "day." (I had to add "there," because I know that "day" is used of other things in other places.) So he called this present age "day," and he called the end of the age "darkness" and "night," because of the punishments. For the prophet Amos says, "Why do you long for the day of the Lord? It too is darkness and not light." Consider what is grim after the end of the world, what follows when almost the whole human race is being punished for its sins. You will see that then the surrounding air has grown dark, and no one can any longer glorify God. Even to the righteous the word of God gives this command: "Go, my people, enter into your chamber, shut your door, hide yourself for a little, just a little, until the fury of my anger passes by." At the same time, if anyone is able, let him pay attention to what is said here: "a little, just a little." But that "little" is little to God; it is not little to a human being. For we must see that to each creature there is something small and something great. Let me show by an example that for each one something is small or great.

For any living creature, a certain amount of food is small compared with the size of its body, and a certain amount is large compared with its build. So what is small to a human being is great to another creature. What is small to a grown man, say, is a lot to a child. In the same way, the whole span of human life, even of a long-lived man, is a short time compared with the whole age of the universe as it now stands. So too, what is small to God is a great deal to us, and God's "little" is a whole age. If it is said, then, "Go, my people, enter into your chambers, shut your door, hide yourself for a little, just a little," we must suppose that the "little" is spoken not in relation to the one who is told to go and enter his chambers, but in relation to the one who gives the command, to whom what is much for the other is small. For if some people must enter their chambers "until the fury of the anger" of God passes by, and there are some whose sins are not forgiven, not only throughout this whole age but also throughout the whole age to come, then it is clear that the "little" stretches out to cover what has been said.

"Give glory, then, to the Lord our God." How do we give glory to the Lord our God? I do not look for giving glory to the Lord our God in voices and little phrases. The one who gives glory to the Lord our God gives it to him in deeds. Glorify God in self-control, in righteousness, in doing good. Give glory to God in courage and endurance. Give glory to God in godliness, in holiness, and in the other virtues. But if this is so, and this is how someone glorifies God, then if I say the opposite, do not think that I am blaspheming, for I will bring Scripture

forward as a witness for those things too. The self-controlled person glorifies God; the one who lives without restraint dishonors God. For such a person tears down the temple of God as Nebuchadnezzar did, and "destroys the temple of God," and "through breaking the law dishonors God." (This last is also an apostolic saying.) So the sinner puts dishonor on God. Questions about providence are raised too, so that some doubt whether there is providence at all, and the cause is nothing other than wickedness. Take wickedness away, and you do not stumble over providence. Those who stumble over providence say, over and over, things like this: "Why are there so many adulterers and so many effeminate men? Why are there so many godless and ungodly people?" And it is those who sin who have produced the dishonor to providence, the stumbling blocks to God, and the blasphemy against the creator of the world. Some, then, do give glory to God, but those who by their sins do the opposite of what is for God's glory do not give him glory.

"Give glory to the Lord our God before it grows dark, before your feet stumble on dark mountains." There are dark mountains, and there are mountains full of light. Which is which? The holy angels of God are mountains of light, and so are the prophets, Moses the servant, and the apostles of Jesus Christ. All these are bright mountains, and I think the Psalms speak of them: "His foundations are in the holy mountains." What, then, are the dark mountains? They are those who raise up high things against the knowledge of God. The devil is a dark mountain. The rulers of this age, who are being brought to nothing, are dark mountains. The demon that caused the epileptic fit was also a mountain, and a dark one. The Savior said of it, "You will say to this mountain." The question was about the epileptic spirit. The disciples said, "Why could we not cast it out?" and the Savior answered, "If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain," the one you brought up, the one you asked about, "you will say to this mountain: Move from here to there, and it will move." "From here" means from the man; "to there" means to its own place. So those who stumble do not stumble on mountains of light but on dark mountains, when they come to be with the devil and his angels, the dark mountains. "And you will wait for light." This phrase can be joined with "Give glory to the Lord our God." If you give glory to the Lord our God before it grows dark, before your feet stumble on dark mountains, then clearly, even if darkness falls, "you will wait for the light," and the light will take you up. Someone else might say, though I do not know whether he understands it soundly or not, that even those who stumble on dark mountains will wait among the dark mountains, waiting for the light of mercy. For this, he thinks, would be the meaning of "and you will wait for light."

But when someone has come to the dark mountains, let us see what is there: "the shadow of death." Where the dark mountains are, the shadow of death arises from the dark mountains themselves. 13. "And they will be set in darkness." "But if you do not listen in a hidden way, your soul will weep before the face of insolence." Of those who hear, some hear in a hidden way, and others, even if they hear, do not hear in a hidden way. What is it, then, to hear in a hidden way? It is what is meant by "But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God foreordained before the ages for our glory." And elsewhere it is said again that "most of God's works are in hidden things." When I hear the law, either I

hear it in a hidden way or I do not. The Jew does not hear the law in a hidden way. That is why he is circumcised openly, not knowing that "the Jew is not the one who is so openly, nor is circumcision the outward one in the flesh." But the one who hears about circumcision in a hidden way will be circumcised in secret. The one who hears in a hidden way what is laid down about the Passover eats from the lamb, Christ, for "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed." He knows what the flesh of the Word is like, and knows that it is "true food," and he shares in it. For he heard about the Passover in a hidden way. But this great crowd of Jews killed the Lord Jesus for this reason, and is guilty even today of the murder of Jesus: they did not hear the law or the prophets in a hidden way. If you read about the unleavened bread, you can hear the commandment in a hidden way, or you can hear it openly. Those of you (for the Passover is near) who keep unleavened bread in the bodily sense do not hear the commandment that says, "If you do not listen in a hidden way, your soul will weep."

The same is true of the Sabbath. Women who have not heard the prophet "in a hidden way" do not hear in a hidden way; they hear only on the surface. They do not bathe on the Sabbath day. They go back "to the poor and weak elements," as though Christ had never come among us, he who brings us to maturity and carries us over from the elements of the law to the perfection of the gospel. So let us take care when we read the law and the prophets, so that we do not fall under the prophecy that says, "But if you do not listen in a hidden way, your soul will weep because of the insult." Some of you keep the Jewish fast, not understanding it, and observe the day of atonement even after the coming of Jesus Christ. You have not heard about the atonement in a hidden way, but only on the surface. To hear about the atonement in a hidden way is to hear how God [set forth] Jesus as an atonement for our sins, and that "he himself is the atonement for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." Even when the parables of the gospel are read, if the hearer is one of those "outside," he will not hear them in a hidden way. But if the hearer is an apostle, or one of those who go in "to the house" of Jesus, he comes to Jesus and asks about the obscurity of the parable, and Jesus explains it. Then that hearer of the gospel hears it in a hidden way, so that his soul will not weep. For the soul weeps for those who do not hear in a hidden way. Notice how wonderfully he did not say, "You will weep, if you do not hear in a hidden way," but, "Your soul will weep." There is a weeping of the soul alone, a soul weeping by itself. Perhaps that is the weeping the Savior teaches us about when he says, "There will be the weeping." And when he says, "Woe to those who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep," he speaks of that same weeping, which the prophet also threatens here when he says, "But if you do not listen in a hidden way, your soul will weep because of the insult."

For when you are insulted, then you will weep, and your eyes will pour down tears, "because the Lord's flock has been broken." Suppose someone now looks at the state of the Jews and compares it with their ancient condition. He will see how "the Lord's flock was broken." For this people was once the Lord's flock, and because they judged themselves unworthy, the word turned to the Gentiles. So if that flock of the Lord was broken, should we not fear even more, we who are the wild olive, grafted contrary to its nature into the cultivated olive of the fathers, that this "flock of the Lord" may also be broken? For it is going to be broken at

some time, according to what the Savior said, when "because lawlessness increases, the love of the many will grow cold." Of whom is this said? Is it not said of those called Christians, "the love of the many will grow cold"? Of whom is it said, "when the Son of Man comes, will he indeed find faith on the earth?" Is it not about us? Therefore let us pay attention to ourselves in everything we do, so that day by day this flock of God may be improved, healed and cared for, and every brokenness may be removed from our souls. So may we be brought to perfection in Christ Jesus, to whom belong glory and power forever. Amen.

Homily 13

We want to understand the words spoken to Jerusalem, with all their heavy threat, in this way: “Who will spare you, Jerusalem? Or who will look sorrowful over you? Or who will turn back to ask after your peace? You have turned away from me, says the Lord. You will go backward. I will stretch out my hand against you and destroy you, and I will not let you go any more. And I will scatter them in a dispersion.” Then: “I have been made childless.” I am at a loss over this, so I take an example. Suppose someone has been proved an enemy of the king who reigns on earth. It is not permitted to show mercy to such a man, so that no one may seem to offend the king who condemned him. Some go further: it is not allowed even to share in showing pity to him. They will not even look sorrowful over him, so that by looking sorrowful they may not seem to be displeased with the one the king has judged. If you have understood this, then look at the man condemned by God because of his many sins, and consider him. There are legions of angels appointed to help human nature, yet no one has mercy on him. For each of the angels sees that the one who condemned him is God. He sees that the one who was turned away from is the Creator. He sees that the nature of the sins is such that the good God was compelled, so to speak, to bring the sentence against the one who sinned. So each of those who see it does not spare him, does not look sorrowful, does not show mercy, does not come back to plead for peace with such a man. So let this Jerusalem (for it will be called so because of the letter) sin against me, and let it do such things that Jesus says of it: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I wanted to gather your children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.

Look, your house is left to you.” Let this Jerusalem be left, as it has been left. Let the angels who always helped Jerusalem, through whom even the law of Moses was ordained, “ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator,” leave Jerusalem and say: Its sins have become great. They killed Jesus. They laid their hands on Christ. If the sins had still been smaller, we could still have appealed and pleaded for them. We could have spared Jerusalem. But who will spare it over this? “If a man sins against a man, they will pray for him. But if he sins against the Lord, who will pray for him?” “Jerusalem has sinned a sin, therefore it has become an object of tossing and shaking.” And it is said to this very city first: “Who will spare you, Jerusalem? And who will look sorrowful over you?” We do not look sorrowful over Jerusalem and its misfortunes, or over what has happened to

that whole people. For through their transgression salvation has come to us, to make them jealous. Their transgression became so great a sin that the voice of the Lord said: "Who then will spare you?" And I too say to the city that killed my Jesus: "Who will spare you, Jerusalem? And who will look sorrowful over you?"

I now move on from the letter. I have trained myself [in the way the Word gave], and I turn to every soul already counted worthy to see peace. After the divine lessons you have become Jerusalem, though before you were Jebus. The history says that its name was Jebus, and that it later changed its name to Jerusalem. The children of the Hebrews say that Jebus means "Trodden Down." So Jebus, the soul trodden down by opposing powers, has been changed and has become Jerusalem, "Vision of Peace." Suppose that, after changing from Jebus into Jerusalem, you sinned. Suppose you trampled the Son of God, as that Jerusalem did, and counted the blood of the new covenant common, and lived in grievous sins. Then it will be said of you also: "Who will spare you, Jerusalem? And who will look sad over you?" That is what will be said if you become the kind of person who betrays Jesus. Each of us, when he sins, and above all when he sins greatly, sins against Jesus. And if he is also an apostate, he does to Jesus in spirit, and all the more, what Jerusalem did to him in the body. Therefore: "How much worse a punishment do you think he will be counted worthy of, who has trampled the Son of God, and counted common the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and insulted the Spirit of grace?" If you have trampled the Son of God and insulted the Spirit of grace, "who will spare you? Who will look sad over you? Who will turn back to ask about what makes for your peace?" The sinner's soul has betrayed the very Son of God, who asked about what makes for your peace. Who, then, can turn back again and plead for peace? We know that it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, who tasted the heavenly gift, who became partakers of the Holy Spirit, and who tasted the good word of God and the powers of the coming age, and then fell away, to be renewed again to repentance. They crucify the Son of God again in themselves and hold him up to public shame. So let us do everything we can so that it is not said of us: "Who will spare you, Jerusalem? And who will look sad over you? Or who will turn back to ask about peace for you?"

The next words fit either interpretation of Jerusalem: "You turned away from me, says the Lord. You will go backward." Why say more about the fact that you turned away from the Son of God, and that by turning away from the Son of God you turned away from God? The Jerusalem in Judea turned away from Christ, and by it we must understand all the Jews. That is why "you will go backward." There was a time when it did not go backward but forward. Now it goes backward: "and they turned in their hearts to Egypt," clearly so as to go backward. What does "you will go backward" mean, and what does it mean to stretch forward to what lies ahead? We will explain it this way. The righteous man stretches forward to what lies ahead, [forgetting] what lies behind. Clearly, the one who is the opposite of the righteous man remembers what lies behind and does not stretch forward. And whoever remembers what lies behind refuses to listen to Jesus when he teaches and says: "Let him not turn back to the things behind to take his cloak." He refuses to listen

to Jesus when he says: "Remember Lot's wife." He refuses to listen to Jesus when he says: "No one who puts his hand to the plough and turns back to the things behind is fit for the kingdom of God." It is also written in the Law that the angels said to Lot, who was leaving Sodom: "Do not look back at the things behind, and do not stand anywhere in all the surrounding country. Save yourself on the mountain."

"…lest you be swept away with them." This also has a meaning worthy of an angelic spirit: "Do not look back." Always stretch forward to what lies ahead. You have left Sodom; do not turn back toward Sodom. You have left wickedness and sin; do not return to them. "Do not stand anywhere in the surrounding region." Even if you keep the first command, "Do not look back," that is not enough for you to be saved unless you also obey the second command: "Do not stand anywhere in the surrounding region." Someone who has begun to make progress must not stand in the region around Sodom, even if he has passed through Sodom itself. Having passed through, he must go on from standing in the surrounding region and be saved on the mountain, as it says: "Do not look back, and do not stand anywhere in the surrounding region; escape to the mountain, lest you be swept away with them." If you do not want to be swept away with the Sodomites, never turn back, do not stand in the region around Sodom, and do not go anywhere else except to the mountain. For only there is it possible to be saved. The mountain is the Lord Jesus, to whom belong glory and power forever. Amen.

Homily 14

Doctors of the body spend their time with the sick. They give themselves constantly to caring for the sick, as the purpose of the medical art requires. They see dreadful things and touch unpleasant ones. From other people's misfortunes they harvest sorrows of their own, and their whole life is spent in difficult circumstances. They are never with the healthy, but always with the wounded, with those who have spreading ulcers, with those full of pus, fevers and every kind of disease. And if someone wants to practice medicine, he will not be vexed, nor neglect the purpose of the art he has taken up, when he is among such people as I have described. I have said this by way of introduction because the prophets too are, as it were, doctors of souls, and they always spend their time where those who need healing are. "For those who are well," it says, "have no need of a doctor, but those who are ill." What doctors suffer from undisciplined patients, the prophets and teachers suffer from those who do not want to be healed. They are hated because they give orders contrary to the sick people's chosen desires, as though they were forbidding pleasure and indulgence to people who, even in their sickness, do not want to receive what their sicknesses deserve. So the undisciplined among the sick run away from their doctors. Often they even abuse them and speak evil of them and do whatever an enemy would do to an enemy. They forget that the doctors come as friends. They look only at the hardship of the diet and at the pain of the doctor's iron instrument, not at the end that comes after the pain. They hate the doctors as though they were only fathers of pains, and not of pains that lead the patients to health.

That people was sick, then. There were all kinds of diseases among the people who bore God's name. God sent them doctors, the prophets. Jeremiah was one of these doctors. He rebuked those who were sinning, wanting to turn back those who were doing wrong. But when they ought to have listened to what he said, they accused the prophet, and they accused him before judges just like themselves. The prophet was always in lawsuits, brought by people who, as far as his prophecy went, might have been healed, but were not healed because of their own disobedience. Over these things he sometimes says: "And I said, I will not speak, and I will not name the name of the Lord. And it became like a burning fire blazing in my bones, and I am worn out on every side and cannot bear it." At other times, seeing himself always in court, abused, accused and falsely testified against, he says: "Woe is me, mother, that you bore me as what?" He called himself a man who does not judge but is judged, who does not decide but is contended against "by the whole earth." And since

the sick would not listen to his good and medical counsel, he says: "I have not helped." And since, though he lent them spiritual silver, they did not want to hear what he said, so that they might profit from what they heard, he says: "No one has owed me anything, and I have not owed anyone."

But I said these things ahead of time, before explaining the words "I have not owed, and no one has owed me." The reading comes in two forms. In most copies it is "I have not helped, and no one has helped me." But in the most accurate copies, which agree with the Hebrew, it is "I have not owed, and no one has owed me." So I must explain the reading that is well worn and in circulation in the churches, and I must not leave unexplained the reading that comes from the Hebrew Scriptures. So then, he proclaimed the word, and no one accepted what was said. It was like a physician who used up his medicines on patients who were undisciplined and kept indulging their own desires. It is as if he said, "I have not helped, and no one has helped me." Perhaps there is a kind of mutual response, owing to the kindness of the one who has been helped toward the one who helped him. So the speaker too comes to be helped, since "blessed is the one who speaks into the ears of those who listen." In this way, then, a teacher would be helped by hearers who are advancing and improving; he would be helped by having fruits among them. [Having no such help from the Jews, Jeremiah says:] "No one has helped me." For suppose the speaker ought to have fruit among his hearers, but the hearer turns aside and stays outside what is said. Then it is said, "No one has helped me." For he does not receive the help he would have received if the hearer, once helped, had become a cause of progress and blessedness to the one who helped him. And in another way, too, every teacher, in the very act of teaching, is helped in what he teaches and what he learns, the more intelligent his pupil is. Those who speak become stronger in the lessons they pass on when the hearers are intelligent and do not simply accept them, but test them in return, ask questions, and examine the meaning of what is said. [So I have not helped, and no one has helped me.]

But since another explanation is also necessary, because the more accurate copies read "I have not owed, and no one has owed me," let us explain the passage in that form as well. Consider the person who pays everyone what is owed: fear to the one due fear, tax to the one due tax, tribute to the one due tribute, honor to the one due honor. He gives everyone what is fitting, so that he owes no one the duties he should do. He honors parents as parents, so to speak, brothers as brothers, sons as sons, bishops as bishops, presbyters as presbyters, deacons as deacons, believers as believers, catechumens as catechumens. If he pays all that is fitting, he has not owed. But if he owes a fitting duty and has not done it, he cannot say, "I have not owed," for he owed and did not pay. How then shall I explain "and no one has owed me"? I was lending, and I wanted to give the spiritual money. But they turned away from what was said and did not make themselves ready to receive, so that they might owe. For this reason no one owed me. For who accepted what was said, so that by accepting it he would become a debtor for what he heard, and be required, as a debtor, to pay interest on what was said? In this respect, then, it is better for the hearer to receive rational silver

from the speaker and owe, than not to accept and not to receive, and so not to owe. For "no one has owed me" is also set down as a charge against them.

"Woe is me, mother, that you bore me as a man of lawsuit and dispute to all the earth." I do not think this fits the other prophets as it fits Jeremiah. Most of the prophets began to prophesy after some time had passed, after a change that followed their wickedness and sins. Jeremiah, though, prophesies from childhood. We can give an example from what is written. Isaiah did not hear, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you came out of the womb I sanctified you; I have made you a prophet to the nations." Nor did he say, "I do not know how to speak, because I am too young." But when he saw the vision recorded in his prophecy, he saw it and said, "Woe to me, wretched man, for I have unclean lips and I live among a people with unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Sabaoth." He says, "One of the Seraphim was sent to me, and touched my lips and said: See, I have taken away your lawless deeds, and this will cleanse your sins." So it was after the sins he had committed earlier that Isaiah was later made worthy of the Holy Spirit and prophesied. You could find something similar in the case of another prophet. Jeremiah was not like this. Adorned with the prophetic Spirit even from his swaddling clothes, he prophesied from childhood. So he said (I am explaining the plain sense first): "Woe is me, mother, that you bore me as a man of lawsuit and dispute to all the earth." One of those before me made a comment on this passage, saying that he spoke these words not to his bodily mother but to the mother who gives birth to prophets.

Who gives birth to prophets, if not the wisdom of God? So he was saying, "Woe is me, mother"; "to what sort of man did you bear me, O Wisdom?" The children of wisdom are also recorded in the Gospel: "And wisdom sends out her children." So the meaning is: "Woe is me, my mother Wisdom, that you bore me as a man of lawsuit. Who am I, that I have been born to such a destiny, to be put on trial and in dispute because of my rebukes, my reproaches and my teaching, before all who are on the earth?" If Jeremiah says this, "that you bore me as a man of lawsuit and dispute to all the earth," I cannot explain the words "to all the earth." Jeremiah was not in dispute with all the earth. Or shall we force the sense and say that "all the earth" means "all Judea"? For his prophecy, as he prophesied then, did not reach the whole earth. But perhaps, as I have shown in countless other places that the name Jeremiah was spoken in place of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall say the same here too. At the beginning I noted the words: "See, I have set you over nations and kingdoms, to uproot and to tear down and to destroy and to build and to plant." Jeremiah did not do this. But Jesus Christ uprooted the kingdoms of the [earth's] sins, tore down the buildings of wickedness, and in place of those kingdoms made righteousness and truth reign [in us], in our souls. Just as those words fit better when applied to Christ than to Jeremiah, so I think many other words do too, and these as well.

First we must ask about the cry "Woe is me." Because the words sound so ill-omened, can the Savior say it, when he himself pities others with a "woe"? I will show from words everyone accepts, words that suit no one but the Savior, how he even wept over Jerusalem. Now

"Woe is me" is the voice of someone weeping. And it is written in the Gospel that when he saw Jerusalem he wept over it and said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I wanted to gather your children together," and so on. These other words, too, were plainly spoken by the Savior in the cry: "Woe is me, for I have become like one gathering stubble at harvest, and like a gleaning at the grape harvest, when there is no cluster to eat, no first-ripened fruit. Woe, my soul, for the devout man has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among men. All of them are on trial for blood." For he came to the harvest to reap, and he finds many sinners, and says, "Woe is me, for I have become like one gathering stubble at harvest." He came to gather the fruit of life among men, and he finds many sins in us, and so he says, "and like a gleaning at the grape harvest, when there is no cluster to eat, no first-ripened fruit."

Elsewhere he says something similar to these words, speaking to the Father: "What profit is there in my blood, in my going down to corruption?" What good have I done for human beings, great as it was? What have they done that is worth the blood I poured out for them? "What profit is there in my blood, in my going down" from the heavens? I came down, I came to the earth, I gave myself up to corruption, I put on a human body. What worthwhile thing has been set right among men? "What profit is there in my blood, in my going down to corruption? Will dust confess you, or declare your truth?" So then, is the first thing the Savior says here, "Woe is me, mother, that you bore me as a man of strife," of the same kind? The Savior does not say "Woe is me, mother" as God, but as man, as in the prophet: "Woe, my soul, for the devout man has perished from the earth." His soul was a human soul; for that reason it was troubled, and for that reason it was deeply grieved. But the Word who was in the beginning with God was not troubled; he would not say "Woe." For the Word does not admit death. It is the human nature that admitted it, as we have often shown.

"Mother, why did you bear me as a man put on trial and judged in all the earth?" If you will look with me at the martyrs everywhere, brought to trial and standing before judges in every church, you will see how Jesus Christ is tried in each of the martyrs. For he is the one on trial in those who bear witness to the truth. You will be persuaded to accept this when you notice that he does not say you are in prison when you are in prison, but himself; not you who are hungry when you are hungry, but himself; not you who are thirsty, but himself. "I was in prison and you came to me. I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink." So then, even if a Christian is put on trial for no other reason, not for his own sins but because he is a Christian, it is Christ who is on trial. Christ Jesus is therefore on trial in all the earth. As often as a Christian is tried, it is Christ who is on trial. And not only in these courts. Suppose a Christian is slandered, accused falsely of something; even then Christ is unjustly tried. "Mother, why did you bear me as a man put on trial and judged in all the earth?"

And here is another way to understand how he is "judged and contended over in all the earth." Who does not put the Christian message on trial? Which of the nations does not at least examine it in some fashion? Which of the Jews does not have something to say about

Christians? Which of the Greeks? Which of the philosophers? Which of the ordinary people? Everywhere Jesus is tried and judged. Some condemn him, and others do not condemn him. If you do not condemn him, he becomes welcome: you open the windows to him, he comes in to you; you believe in him, and he dines with you. But if you hear about Christianity and refuse to accept it, you have done nothing other than condemn Jesus as a liar, as one who led people astray, as one who does not speak the truth, because you have not believed the word he teaches. "Why did you bear me, mother, as a man being judged and contended over in all the earth?" Those who are completely unbelieving condemn him. Those who do not disbelieve but are in doubt about him are divided over him. Jesus suffers two things among human beings: by the unbelieving he is condemned, and by the double-minded he is contended over. If you put on "the image of the heavenly one" and lay aside "the image of the earthly one," you are not the earth that condemns him. You are not the earth in which he is condemned. You are no longer earth, contending over him.

"My strength has failed among those who curse me." The apostle says of the Savior that "he was crucified out of weakness." And the prophet says things much like this: "Lord, who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? We proclaimed before him like a child, like a root in a thirsty land. We saw him, and he had no form or beauty, but his form was without honor, lacking beside the sons of men. He was a man in affliction and in toil, who knew how to bear weakness, because his face was turned away from dishonor; he was dishonored and not esteemed. He bears our lawless deeds and suffers pain for us, and we considered him to be in toil and in affliction and in ill-treatment. But he was wounded for our lawless deeds, and made weak for our sins. The discipline that brings our peace was upon him; by his bruise we were healed." So he took up the weakness of our sins and bore us, and he came to those who cursed him. As he came down from heaven, his strength failed among those who cursed him. For at the same time he took the form of a slave and emptied himself, as the apostle said: "he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave." So he says, "My strength has failed among those who curse me."

Let us see whether, if the Word himself grants it, we can say something clearer than what has been said on the words, "My strength has failed among those who curse me." "There was the true light, which lights every person coming into the world." The "true light" is the Son of God, "who lights every person coming into the world." Whoever is rational shares in the true light, and every human being is rational. Now among all the people who share in the Word, in some the strength of the Word has grown, and in others it fails. If you see a soul that is ruled by passions and sinful, you will see there the strength of the Word failing. But if you see a holy and righteous soul, you will see the strength of the Word bearing fruit day by day, and you will apply to the righteous what was said about Jesus. For it is not only in himself that "Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and people." In each of those who receive advancement in wisdom, stature and grace, "Jesus" also advances "in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and people." So the Word, the Son of God, who is in the one who said, "Woe is me, mother," and so on, says, "My strength has failed among those who curse me." Whoever curses the Word immediately receives punishment

for cursing the Word and finding fault with the teaching of Jesus. For the strength of Jesus fails in such a person, and there is no strength of the Word in him. Then again, from the opposite side: if you bless Jesus and receive him, his strength experiences the opposite of what it suffered among those who curse him. As it failed there among those who cursed, so here it grows among those who bless.

"May it be so, Lord, as they are set straight. Did I not stand before you in the time of their evils?" What is the meaning of "May it be so, Lord"? Let anyone who can gather this out for himself. "Master and Lord, as they are set straight," let it be so: let the strength be failing among those who curse, when, after speaking evil of me, they repent, turn to the straight way, and walk it. "May it be so, Master, as they are set straight. Did I not stand before you?" Then he defends himself concerning those who slander him, saying, "Did I not stand before you in the time of their evils?" He stood before the Father, being "the propitiation for our sins," and he pleaded for them in the very time of our evils. For he did not stand before him after the time of our evils; rather, "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." "Did I not stand before you in the time of their evils, in the time of their afflictions, for good things toward the enemy?" He says: in the time of their affliction, the affliction they suffered from the enemy, I stood before you on their behalf. Who is the enemy but "our adversary the devil," who afflicted us? And clearly, in the time of that enemy's hostility against human beings, our Savior stood before the Father and pleaded for our captivity, so that we might be ransomed and rescued from the enemy. Let the Savior, or the prophet, have said these things. For the prophet too could have said such things and prayed them on behalf of the people "in the time of their evils."

After this, what does God answer to the people who were accused by the prophet, or by Christ? He says this to them: "Your strength is iron and a bronze covering." That is, it is hard, unyielding, not to be driven. "Your strength is iron and a bronze covering" means that your strength is a kind of cutting and dividing strength, a strength that is not used for good. "And I will give your treasures for plunder, as an exchange for all your sins." Which treasures of the sinners does God give "for plunder," and give "as an exchange for all their sins"? Is it the treasures they store up for themselves on earth? Every person stores up treasure. If he is worthless, he stores it on earth. If he is good, he stores it in heaven, as we were taught from the Gospel. Or is God saying to that people, "Because of your sins I am going to give your treasures for plunder"? Then which treasures of that people were given for plunder? Look: Jeremiah was one of the treasures, Isaiah another, and Moses was a treasure too. God took these treasures from that people and gave them to us, through Christ, who said, "The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation that produces its fruits." So "because of your sins I will give your treasures for plunder." And he did give the treasures of that people to us. They were the first to be entrusted with the oracles of God. Then after them we were entrusted, when the oracles of God were taken from them and given to us. And we say that the saying "The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation that produces its fruits" was spoken by the Savior and has

been fulfilled. It is not that the Scripture was taken from them. It is that they no longer possess the law and the prophets, because they do not see the meaning in them.

For they do have the books. But how was the kingdom of God taken from them? The meaning of the Scriptures was taken from them. No longer is there kept among them any [legal] explanation or [prophetic ...] concerning the coming of Christ. "I said to that people: You will hear with your ears and never understand, and you will look and look and never see. For the heart of this people has grown fat." What Isaiah said has also been fulfilled: "The Lord will take away from Judea and from Jerusalem the strong man and the strong woman, the giant and the man of war, the judge and the prophet and the diviner, the wise master builder and the understanding listener." God took all these things away from them, and gave them to us who are from the nations, if only we will receive them. All this is because of the words, "And I will give your treasures for plunder." "An exchange for all your sins, and in all your borders." It is as if he were saying: because of your sins, which have reached to all your borders. For there is no border of that people that has not been filled with sin. And how could every border of theirs not be filled with sin, when they, as far as it lay in them, killed righteousness, if Christ is righteousness, killed wisdom, if Christ is wisdom, and killed truth, if Christ is truth? By condemning the Son of God to death, they threw away and lost all these things. And when my Lord Jesus rose from the dead, he never again appeared to those who had killed him. We do not have it in the history that he appeared to those who killed him. He appeared, risen from the dead, only to those who believed.

"And I will enslave you among all your enemies in a land you did not know." That people has been enslaved among its enemies, and has come to be in a land it did not know. "Because a fire has been kindled from my anger; it will burn against you." After this, the one who prayed earlier completes his prayer, after the threats spoken against the people, and joins these words to what came before: "You know, Lord; remember me and visit me, and clear me of those who pursue me, not in your patience." Let the prophet say this, since he was pursued by those he rebuked and hated by those who could not bear the truth. For he became an enemy to his hearers by telling them the truth. But let our Savior say the same, for he too was pursued by the people, and he says, "not in your patience." What does "not in your patience" mean? You have always been patient with the people over their sins; but over what they have dared against me, do not be patient. And truly God was not patient. If you examine the times of the suffering and fall of Jerusalem and the razing of the city, and how God abandoned that people because they killed Christ, you will see that he no longer showed the people patience. If you wish, listen: from the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar to the razing of the temple, forty-two years were completed. For a short time had to be allowed for repentance, above all for the sake of those from the people who were going to believe because of the signs and wonders that would be done by the apostles.

"Know that I have borne reproach for your sake from those who set aside your words." Let this be the prophet, speaking and despised for what he said, set aside by sinners. For he himself says, "I have continually been mocked." So he was reproached by those who set

aside the words that God spoke through him, and because of the reproach he prays to be helped by God, saying, "Know that I have borne reproach for your sake from those who set aside your words; bring them to an end." Let the prophet say it. But "bring them to an end" fits better when spoken by the Savior. For an end did come on Jerusalem and the people, because of what happened through the people's plotting against our Savior. After this it is necessary, because the prophets suffered much in rebuking, in speaking on behalf of the word, and in receiving what God commanded, to remind the hearers of their way of life, of their promises, and of our own purpose. Then, as far as we are able, if we want to have rest with the prophets, we should strive to imitate the works of the prophets. What I mean is this. We often say in our prayers: "Almighty God, give us our portion with the prophets; give us our portion with the apostles of your Christ, so that we may be found with Christ himself." But when we say this we do not realize what we are praying. For in effect we are saying: grant us to suffer what the prophets suffered; grant that we too be hated as the prophets were hated; give us such words that we will be hated for them; grant that we fall into as many trials as the apostles did. For to say "Give me a portion with the prophets," when I have not suffered what the prophets suffered and do not even want to suffer it, is unjust. To say "Give me a portion with the apostles," when I do not want to be able to say truthfully, from Paul's own disposition, "in labors far more, in beatings far more, in imprisonments beyond measure, in deaths often," and so on, is the most unjust thing of all.

So if we want to be with the prophets, look at the prophets' lives. They were brought to trial, cross-examined and condemned for rebuking, reproaching and reprimanding. "They were stoned, sawn in two, tested, they died by the slaughter of the sword, they went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, wandering in deserts." This was at a time when the Jews had many synagogues. Yet these men were "wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and the holes of the earth." Why then is it strange if someone who wants to imitate the prophetic life is slandered, hated and plotted against for rebuking and reprimanding the sinner? The same thing had to happen in the church of God in the present case. The man who was condemned was condemned; so-and-so [sitting?] was doing such-and-such things. Church discipline had to take place, and it did. The one entrusted with the task did what he had to do. Now that man goes around speaking ill of the one who upheld the truth. But let us not do this. Let us not lend our ears to those who, because they have been expelled, speak ill of the one who expelled them or of the one who voted with him. [The text is corrupt here: something like "when injustice is exposed and has been done."] The wonderful apostles were insulted countless times for the truth, and they say, "I am content in weaknesses, in insults and necessities, in persecutions and distresses, for Christ." May I only know, when I am insulted, that I am insulted for no other reason than Christ. When I am in hardship, may I know that the cause of the hardship is Christ. When I am reviled, may I know that the reason for the reviling is nothing other than this: I uphold the truth and speak on behalf of what is written, so that everything may happen according to God's word. For this I am blasphemed. So let all of us, as far as we are able, hurry toward

the prophetic life and the apostolic life, and not run away from what is troublesome. For an athlete who runs from the trouble of the contest will not receive the sweetness of the crown.

"And your word will be to me for gladness." It is not so now, but "will be." For at present your word brings me prisons, lawsuits, troubles, slander and labors. But the end of these things will be gladness. "And your word will be to me for gladness and the joy of my heart, because your name has been called upon me, Lord Almighty." Even when Christ is the speaker, the name of the Father has been called upon him. "I did not sit in the assembly of those who play." If the prophet ever saw an assembly of people who were not in earnest but playing, he avoided gathering with them rather than hurrying to the gathering of those who play. So you need to understand the difference between an assembly of those who play and an assembly of those who are in earnest. This assembly here is in earnest. It does everything with earnestness and things worthy of earnestness, and, as the saying goes, its word is earnestness and its life is earnestness. It is wholly an assembly not of those who play but of those who are in earnest. But when an assembly abandons earnestness about what is necessary and spends its leisure on the games of this age and on games that come from wickedness, it becomes an assembly of those who play. So this man says, "I did not sit in the assembly of those who play, but I stood in awe before the face of your hand." Two choices lay before him. One was to sit in an assembly of those who play, to stumble against you, God, and not please you. The other was to rise from the assembly of those who play and do what was dear to you. He says: I chose rather to get up from the assembly of those who play and be your friend, than to do the opposite and become an enemy of your blessedness. "I did not sit in the assembly of those who play, but I stood in awe before the face of your hand." Our Saviour also did not sit "in the assembly of those who play," but withdrew from them. A sign that the Saviour rose up from an assembly of those who play is his saying: "Your house is left to you desolate." For the Word of God abandoned the council of the Jews and made for himself another council and a church, the one from the nations.

"I sat alone." Here too the words are fitting. When there is a crowd of sinners who cannot bear a righteous man living righteously, it is not out of place for him to flee the council of wickedness and imitate the one who said, "I sat alone." He may also imitate Elijah, who says, "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have dug down your altars, and I am left all alone, and they seek my life to take it." Perhaps, if you examine "I sat alone" more deeply, you will find a meaning worthy of the prophet's depth. When we imitate the life of the many, so that a person is not set apart, better than the many and distinguished from them, I cannot say, "I sat alone," but rather, "I sat with many." But when my life becomes hard to imitate, so that I become such a person that no one is like me in character, in speech, in actions, in wisdom, then, because I am alone in being such and no one imitates me, I can say, "I sat alone." So even if you are not a presbyter, not a bishop, and not honored with any church office, you may say this. Strive after "I sat alone," and take up a way of life that lets you say, "I sat alone." "For I was filled with bitterness." [If] "the way is narrow and hard," is your feast kept with bitter herbs? For when you keep the feast, it says, "you shall eat unleavened bread with bitter herbs."

We must consider what the word means when it says that the one who keeps a feast to God must eat "unleavened bread with bitter herbs." The apostle has explained the unleavened bread; the interpretation is not mine. But the interpretation that follows must necessarily be like the apostle's explanation. The apostle explained the matter of the unleavened bread when he said, "Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." So we must give an account of the bitter herbs that fits with the unleavened bread being the bread of sincerity and truth. Have sincerity and truth, and there will be bitter herbs for you, and you will eat the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth with bitter herbs, as Paul did. Since he ate the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, he also ate bitter herbs. How did he eat bitter herbs? When he said, "I have become your enemy by telling you the truth." How did he eat bitter herbs? "In toil and hardship, in many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, apart from the things I leave out." Now the law said, "You shall eat unleavened bread with bitter herbs." It did not say, "Eat unleavened bread with bitter herbs until you are full," as it is said of certain other things: "You shall eat and be filled." But the prophet intensifies it, saying that he did not merely eat bitterness but "was filled with bitterness." As far as he was able, he shared in bitter experiences, so that he partook of the very fullest bitter herbs.

"Why do those who hate me prevail?" He had many troubles. He suffered from those who did not want to hear the truth, and they were stronger than he, here in this age. For the kingdom of God is not from this age but from better regions, as the Savior says: "If my kingdom were from this world, my servants would have fought, so that I would not be handed over to the Jews." So those who grieved the prophet prevailed over him in this world. That they do prevail, look at the martyrs. The judge sits in judgment and lives in luxury in the courtroom. The Christian, in whom Christ is on trial, is filled with bitterness, is overpowered by the unjust man, and is condemned.

"My wound is hard; from where shall I be healed?" Those who overpower me strike me, and my wound is hard. The words may prophesy the cross of the Lord, for the cross is a hard wound, as far as those who crucify him are concerned. Or they may be said about all the righteous, in whom he receives a hard wound. Or you may hear them as said about the prophet himself, who also suffered the things written in the prophecy. In every case the phrase "my wound is hard" carries the same sense. "From where shall I be healed?" Even if it is the Savior who says "from where shall I be healed?", he is prophesying the resurrection from the dead after the hard wound. And if it is taken of the righteous man, there is healing again after the wounds. "It has become for me like deceitful water, which has no faithfulness." For the wound does not remain; it passes away. "Therefore thus says the Lord: if you turn back, I will also restore you." This is said again to each person whom God will call to turn back to him. And it seems to me that a mystery is hidden here in the words "I will restore you." No one is restored to a place where he has never been at all; restoration is to what is one's own. For example, if a member of my body is dislocated, the physician tries to bring about the restoration of the dislocated joint. When someone is outside his homeland, whether justly or unjustly, and receives back the ability to live

again in his homeland according to its laws, he has been restored to his own homeland. Understand the same of a soldier who has been driven out of his own battle line and is restored to it. So here he is saying to us who have turned away that, if we turn back, he will restore us. For the end of the promise is of this kind, as it is written in the Acts of the Apostles in the words "until the times of the restoration of all things that God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old," in Christ Jesus, to whom belong glory and might forever and ever. Amen.

Homily 15

Those who call the prophets blessed, and by calling them blessed pray to have a share with the prophets, should gather from the prophetic words the choice qualities of their prophesying. If they seek these out and live by them (even if it will seem hard to them in this life to imitate the prophetic life), they may be persuaded that they will obtain rest and blessedness with the prophets. There are many places from which one can gather the choice qualities of the prophets: their freedom, their vigor, their watchfulness, their alertness. Because of their freedom they did not worry about the dangers they fell into. They cared only to rebuke and to turn people back. The prophets did this by speaking the word of God boldly, with sharp reproof to those who sinned, even when those under rebuke seemed to have great power. Still, even though one can do this from anywhere in the prophets, let us look at what was read today. The prophet rebuked many, and spoke to many. For he arose against people who had become sinners, as is plain from the fact that the captivity happened in his time. Having rebuked many, and been judged by many, he utters words like these.

First let us look at this from the prophetic word itself, and then, by way of a higher reading, see whether it is a prophet's foretelling. "Woe is me, mother! To what sort of life did you bear me, a man at law and in dispute with the whole earth?" O mother, why did you bring me into the world as a man who goes to court against everyone on earth and is set in dispute against everyone on earth? For this prophet, like Isaiah and the rest, had the prophet's task laid before him: to teach, to rebuke and to turn people back. So this prophet too had it laid before him to judge between people and to rebuke. He was able to contend, and to be contended against, with sinners, and to expose the sins of the people. And what the people did to them, why should I even say? One they stoned, another they sawed in two, another they killed "between the temple and the altar," and this one, because he rebuked them, they threw into a pit of mud. Our Savior did the same thing toward them all, and did it better than they, as the Lord of the prophets. For indeed, though he was himself scourged, crucified and handed over by the Jews, or by the teachers of the Jews and the ruler of the people, he said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." And he adds to each charge "Woe," and "because of this," this and that. So we too, if we are eager for the blessings pronounced on the prophets, should do the same. Then, because we speak and are put on trial before many people, we may say, "Woe is me, mother! To what sort of life did you bear me, a man at law and in dispute with the whole earth?"

This saying can apply more properly to the Savior. Suppose we grant that the prophet says it. Still he will not say it truly, but perhaps by exaggeration, for he was not in dispute with the whole earth. But if I come to my Savior and Lord, and above all because of the words "he will come into judgment" and "that you may be justified in your words, and may prevail when you are judged," I will see that my Savior and Lord is going to stand before the Father, judged along with all of us human beings. And he is judged along with all people. I say he is judged, he too is examined. He stood as one who vindicates the truth, not as an accuser. "Woe is me, mother! To what sort of life did you bear me, a man at law and in dispute with the whole earth?" A prophet cannot say "the whole earth." But some who love our Lord are indignant and say that the Savior does not say this, that the voice does not fit the Son of God. We must show, then, that "Woe is me, mother" is not foreign to the Son of God. "My soul is deeply grieved, even to death," and "my soul is troubled," and in the same way what is said in the prophets, as here: "Woe is me, mother! To what sort of life did you bear me, a man at law and in dispute with the whole earth," or when the gleaning is lost, so that no cluster can be found: "Woe, my soul, for the devout man has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among people."

Who is it that says there, "Alas, for I have become like one gathering stubble at harvest"? Did the prophet gather, and does he want to gather? Does the prophet have a field? No. Gathering everything from the harvest and from what has been sown belongs to no one except the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. There are many fallen among the nations, and among us too there are sins. So he says, "Alas for me, for I have become like one gathering stubble." Let each of us examine himself. Is he an ear of grain? Will the Son of God find in him something to gather or to reap? We will find that some of us are wind-blasted. Perhaps we have a little left in us, two or three grains, and our sins are many against us. So when he sees the churches, those that bear the name, full of sinners, he says, "Alas, for I have become like one gathering stubble at harvest and like a gleaning at the grape harvest." He came looking for fruit in the vineyard. Each of us is planted [. . .], and as a vine "in a fertile place." "He brought a vine out of Egypt." "I planted you a fruitful vine, wholly true." He comes and looks for something to gather. He finds a bit of gleaning and a few small clusters, not flourishing and not many. Which of us has clusters of virtue? Which of us has the fruits of God? "O Lord our God, how wonderful is your name in all the earth."

Let this be said by way of a digression, on the words "Alas for me, mother." My point is that it is not foreign to the divinity of our Savior, as he looks at the sins of human beings, to say "Alas" now. He says it not as God but as man, not as wisdom but as soul. That is why I set beside it that prophetic word: "Alas, my soul, for the devout man has perished from the earth, and there is none among men who acts uprightly." The blessed soul came into human life and took a body for the sake of human beings. If he sees our sins, he says to the Father, "What profit is there in my blood, in my going down into corruption? Will dust confess you?" But let him not say "Alas" over us. Let the angels of heaven not say it over us. If our Savior says "Alas," they will say "Alas" too. They are not greater than our Savior, and they also see our failings. But blessed are those over whom the angels will not say "Alas," but who are

counted blessed. For "there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, more than over ninety-nine who have no need of repentance." This is said by way of comfort. "Alas for me, mother, what kind of man did you bear me to be?" Whom does he mean by mother? Among women, could he mean the soul, and Mary? But if someone accepts the saying, "Just now my mother, the Holy Spirit, took me and carried me up to the great mountain, Tabor," and what follows, he can see his mother in that. "Alas for me, mother, what kind of man did you bear me to be, a man in dispute and in judgment in all the earth?" He is brought to trial before all the earth and is examined, and he will say to each person: "I did this and this. My dispensation accomplished this and this, and I endured for your salvation." When the Savior says these things, what shall we do? For he is going to be examined in all the earth.

Next I want to look at what follows. By one line of interpretation it can refer to the prophet, and it can also refer to the Savior. Let us look at the next words: "I have not owed, and no one has owed me." "The ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in me." And truly he did not owe. But each of us is a debtor through our sins, a debtor who holds a written bond. [The text is damaged here: after his bond was wiped out, how many bonds have they made?] "He who did no sin, and in whose mouth no deceit was found" made no bond. What does "no one has owed me" mean? How shall we explain "no one has owed me" in the case of the Savior? Even if we read it this way, we should know that most copies of the Septuagint edition do not have it so. Later we examined the other editions as well, and we recognized it as a scribe's error. [The Greek here is corrupt: "yet to me not even one"?] So no one owed him, because he forgave everyone their debts. "A certain creditor had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Since they had nothing to pay back, he forgave them both." Do you want to see the two debtors, the one who owes five hundred and the one who owes fifty? People from two peoples have believed in God. The people from the Jews, who do not believe in Christ, owe the fifty. Perhaps we from the nations, who had become the most ungodly of all, owe the five hundred. That is the point of what is said about that repentant prostitute. Someone might ask how the five hundred applies to her. It comes from the words "what sort of woman is this who is touching him," in answer to which he said to Simon, "A certain creditor had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, the other fifty," and so on. I had to explain all this to you because of the words "I have not owed, and no one has owed me." "I have not owed, and no one has owed me; my strength has failed among those who curse me." Even if he died "from weakness, yet he lives by the power of God."

After many words had passed, there was more to say about each of the things already mentioned, but time does not allow it. So let us speak on the next passage that was read: "Cursed is the man who has his hope in man." [The text is damaged here] aimed at those who think that the Savior, the Son of God, was a man. For along with their many other human evils, they have dared to say this too: that he is not God, "the only-begotten," "the firstborn of all creation." For "cursed is whoever has his hope in man." Clearly those who put their hope in a man are cursed. I would say: I do not put my hope in a man. Hoping in Christ Jesus, I know no man. Not only do I know no man, but I know wisdom, righteousness itself, the one

through whom "all things were created" [in the authorities; the Greek here is uncertain]. "Cursed is the man who has his hope in man." Even if the Savior bears witness that the one he put on was a man, then even if he was a man, he is now in no way a man. For the apostle says, "Even if we have known Christ according to the flesh, we no longer know him so." Because of him I am no longer a man, if I follow his words. For he says, "I said: you are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High."

So, just as he is "the firstborn from the dead," in the same way he became the firstborn of all human beings, having changed into God. "Cursed, then, is the man who has his hope in man, and will make the flesh of his arm firm." That means anyone who gives authority to fleshly things, who gains bodily strength and wages war according to the flesh. But the holy person is not like that. "He does not make the flesh of his arm firm," for he "always carries about the putting to death of Jesus in his body," and he puts to death "the members that are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness." Having put these to death, "he does not make the flesh of his arm firm." "Cursed is whoever has his hope in man." This is also said against those who hope in high positions. "So-and-so is my friend, he is a centurion, he is a procurator. So-and-so is my friend, and he is rich and provides for me." Then this saying is spoken to such a person as well: "Cursed is the man who has his hope in man." We hope in no man, even if they seem to be our friends. For we hope not in them but in our Lord, who is Christ Jesus, to whom be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

Homily 16

In the Gospel according to Matthew it is written that our Savior came to the Sea of Galilee and saw "Simon and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen." Then the account says that the Savior saw them and said, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." And they left their nets and followed him. Jesus made them take up fishing again, this time for people. He also found two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with their father, mending their nets. These he called to the same craft, and he made them fishers of men too. Consider those who have received from God the grace of speech. That speech is woven like nets and put together from the holy Scriptures like a casting-net, so that the woven mesh is thrown around the souls of the hearers. Consider also that this is done skillfully, according to the craft. Now our Savior sends out fishers of men, having trained them, so that we may be able to come up out of the sea and escape its bitter waves. But those lifeless fish, when they are brought up in the dragnets, the casting-nets, the nets or on the hooks, die a death that is not followed by life. The one who is caught by the fishers of Jesus and brought up out of the sea dies too. But he dies to the world and dies to sin. After he has died to the world and to sin, he is made alive by the Word of God and takes up another life. Suppose you could imagine, for the sake of argument, the soul of a fish changing after it leaves the body of the fish and becoming something better than a fish. I am only offering an illustration; let no one take occasion from it [as though he had not heard]. Think of something like this.

You have come up out of the sea, having fallen into the nets of Jesus' disciples. When you come out, your soul changes. You are no longer a fish spending your time in the salty waves of the sea. At once your soul changes and is transformed, and becomes something better and more divine than it was before. That it is transformed and changed, hear Paul saying: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord, the Spirit." And this fish that was caught by the fishers of Jesus, once transformed, leaves its former haunts in the sea and makes its home in the mountains. So it no longer needs fishers to bring it up from the sea, but a second kind of men, who are called hunters, who hunt "from every mountain and from every hill." So you, having come up from the sea and been caught in the nets of Jesus' disciples, change from the sea. Forget it. Come to the mountains, the prophets, and to the hills, the righteous, and make your dwelling there. Then afterward,

when the time [of your hunting comes, you may be taken by the hunters, just as you were first taken by the fishers]. Who might these be but those appointed to receive the souls that are on the hills, the ones not lying down below? And see whether the prophet did not cry out these things in a mystery, setting forth this very meaning in the words: "Behold, I am sending many fishers, says the Lord, and they will fish them. And after this I will send many hunters, and they will hunt them on every mountain and on every hill."

So if you want to be caught by the hunters, take care not to make your dwelling in the hollows, and do not linger down below anywhere. Seek the mountains. Go up the mountain where Jesus was transfigured. Go up the mountain to which Jesus went up when he saw the crowds, and the disciples followed him, where "he opened his mouth and taught, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and then the blessings that follow these. These hunters are not permitted to catch anyone from anywhere except from the mountains, the hills, and the holes of the rocks. For these three things are mentioned in the prophet: "For I will send many hunters, and they will hunt them on every mountain, on every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks." So where am I to find the meaning of the rocks, and of the holes in the rocks? I go to Exodus and look for a trace of an account of the holes of the rocks. There I find Moses wanting to know God, and God promising him and saying: "Look, I will put you in a hole of the rock, and you will see my back parts, but my face will not be seen by you." If you understand the rock there, and see the hole in the rock, [and the one who looks sees God through the hole of the rock], you will also see the many rocks and their holes. Then who is that rock, the one rock? "The rock was Christ." "For they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them." And in the thirty-ninth Psalm it is said: "He set my feet upon a rock." What is the hole in the rock? If you look at the coming of Jesus, understanding him as a whole to be the rock, you will see the hole in connection with his coming. Through that hole the things that come after God are seen. This is what is meant by "and you will see my back parts."

But I have found one hole of one rock. Now I move in my discourse from the "hole" to the "cleft" of the rock, and I look for the many rocks as well. If I come to the company of the prophets, or of the apostles, or even of the holy angels who have gone up higher, I say that all the imitators of Christ become rocks, just as he is a rock. And just as he has a hole through which the back parts of God are perceived, in the same way each one, giving a way for God to be understood through the things he says, makes a hole in himself, or, if you prefer another name, a cleft. Through that hole or cleft you will see the law through Moses, his prophecy through Isaiah, and other words of God through Jeremiah. And if it is an angel who is speaking, as in the saying, "the angel who speaks in me," then there too I stop at the angel. There also I see a rock and a hole of the rock, and I see God in an angelic way.

But I need an example to show how one can come to an angel and see God through the angel. It is written in Exodus: "An angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire from a bush. And Moses sees that the bush is burning with fire, and the bush is not consumed." The Scripture did not go on to say "the angel of the Lord," as it said at the beginning, "an

angel appeared." Instead it says, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." So God was there, seen in the angel, just as God is known through the rock and through the opening in it. You do not know, then, when the hunters are sent. So never come down from the mountains. Do not leave the hills. Do not be outside the holes of the rocks. For if you are found outside, you will be spoken to as one who is outside and speaks the words of those outside: "Fool, this very night they are demanding your soul from you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" These words will be said to you if you say: "I will tear down my storehouses and build bigger ones, and I will say to my soul: Soul, you have many good things laid up for many years. Rest, eat, drink, be merry." You see the man who is below the mountains, below the hills, outside the holes of the rocks. He goes astray even in his judgment about what is good, thinking that these things are good. That is why he says: "And I will say to my soul: Soul, you have many good things laid up for many years." He has supposed that grain and the abundance of earthly things are good. He did not see that the truly good things are not in the cursed earth; the truly good things are in heaven. He stored up treasure on earth because he thought the things on earth were good. But if someone, obeying Jesus, changes from storing up treasure "on earth" to storing it up "in heaven," it will not be said to him, "Fool, this very night they are demanding your soul from you." Instead the hunters will come. They are not looking for the creatures down below, but for those in the mountains, those on the hills, those sheltered in the holes of the rocks. They will catch these and carry them away from that hunt.

To where? To the rest of the holy and blessed ones in Christ Jesus. For he says, "My eyes are on all their ways." God has his eyes on such people, those who make their dwelling on the mountains, on the hills and in the holes of the rocks, and on all their ways. "And they were not hidden from my face"; that is true of such people, for it is the wicked who hide from the face of God. After the transgression, Adam heard "the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day," and he hid. But the holy person does not hide. He has a heart that is bold toward God, a boldness that comes from a holy way of life. For "if our conscience does not condemn us, we have boldness toward God, and whatever we ask we receive from him." Now Adam, though he sinned, did not sin to an extreme and grievous degree. That is why he hid "from the face of God." But what did Cain do, who was more sinful than Adam, and utterly impious, the killer of his brother? "He went out from the face of God." So, comparing evils, hiding from the face of God is the lesser one. For Adam hides not because he has lost all shame, but because he is ashamed before God. "They were not hidden, then, from my face." These people who did these things were once in sins, and they were fished out of the sins that are in the sea.

So that those who have been "fished" and afterward have come to the mountains do not suppose that all this happened to them because of their righteousness, the word reminds not only them but us also of our earlier sins. That is why, after the acts of kindness, it is said: "And their wrongdoings were not hidden from before my eyes." What follows is going to cause us a struggle. If we understand it as consistent with what came before, we will take careful thought about the repayment of sins. If it seems not to be consistent with what

was said earlier about people being fished and hunted, then it throws us into no ordinary struggle. For he says: "And I will repay first, double, their injustices and their sins, by which they defiled my land with the corpses of their abominations, and by their lawless deeds with which they filled my inheritance." Whether some people removed the word "first" from what was written because they did not understand it, or whether the Seventy arranged to remove it on purpose, God would know. But we compared the other editions and found it standing there: "And I will repay first, double, their injustices." The point is to show this: even if they are worthy of blessedness because of their later works, they are still human beings and have fallen into sins, so they must first receive back their sins. And see whether this is not true. Who will not receive back his sins, except the one who, after believing and receiving forgiveness of sins (so that he hears Jesus saying, "Your sins are forgiven you"), sins no more? But suppose we sin after the forgiveness of sins and after the dispensation of the washing of rebirth. That is what the many of us do, who have not been made perfect as the apostles were. And suppose that after sinning, and even along with sinning, we do some things as we ought. What awaits us? That needs to be considered.

Then if we depart this life having sins, but also having good and courageous deeds, will we be saved on account of the good deeds, and be acquitted of the sins we committed knowingly? Or will we be punished for the sins, and nowhere receive a reward for the good deeds? But neither alternative is in accord with God's justice. It is not just that we receive the worse things and not the better. It is also not just that we receive the better things and not the worse, since God wishes to cleanse and cut out wickedness. Suppose you have built, on the foundation, Christ Jesus, whom you have been taught, not only "gold and silver and precious stone" (if you have gold, much gold or a little; suppose you have silver and precious stone). But I do not say only these. Suppose you also have "wood and hay and straw." What do you want to happen to you after your departure? Do you want to enter the holy places with your wood and your hay and your straw, and so defile the kingdom of God? Or, on the other hand, do you want to be left behind in the fire because of the hay, the wood and the straw, and receive nothing for the gold and silver and precious stone? That is not reasonable either.

What then? First it follows that he receives, on account of the wood, the fire that consumes the wood, the hay and the straw. For our God, in his essence, is said, by those who can understand, to be a consuming fire. The prophet kept silent about what it consumes when he said, "Our God is a consuming fire," but he has left it to us to work out. Since he said, "God is a consuming fire," there is something that is consumed. What then is consumed? It is not what is according to the image and likeness that he consumes. He does not consume his own creature. He consumes the hay that was built on, the wood that was built on, the straw that was built on. The passage was very hard to explain. There were promises, and after the promises he says: "And I will repay first, double, their injustices." The word "first" is added of necessity. First the things of injustice, then the things of righteousness are paid back, for God does not repay in the opposite order. If he first paid back the good things, so that we might receive the good things, but now he pays back the evil things, then the good things would have to come to an end so that we could receive the evil things. But we will

receive the evil things first, and after that the good things. In this way the punishment of those who suffered it reaches its end through the destruction of the evils, so that after that he may pay back the good things.

This is why you will find God in the holy Scriptures saying first the things that seem harsher, and after that the better things. "I will kill and I will make alive; I will strike, and I will heal." "He himself causes pain and restores again; he struck, and his hands healed." After hearing this, the person who understands and is rightly disposed toward these words can say: "Lord, who will dwell in your tent? Or who will settle on your holy mountain? He who walks blameless and works righteousness, who speaks truth in his heart; who has not deceived with his tongue, and has done no evil to his neighbor, and has not taken up a reproach against those nearest him." (But we reproach even those who repent and turn back, though the Scripture says, "Do not reproach a man who is turning away from sin.") "He has not taken up a reproach against those nearest him; the one who does evil is despised in his sight, but those who fear the Lord we will receive [back], and our sins [with them]."

But one of you who are listening will say: "Explain the word 'double' as well. Suppose I do receive my sins back first, so that once I have received them, what the apostle said may then be fulfilled: 'If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.' Why then do I receive my sins back 'double'?" We must answer that "the servant who knew the master's will and did not act according to his will will be beaten", and not with few stripes but with "many." So it is fitting that those from the nations who sin should receive their sins back single, but that we should receive our failings back double. For "if we sin willingly after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment and a jealous fire that is about to consume the adversaries." What was prophesied concerned those who would be fished and hunted and would first receive their sins back double. After this the calling of the nations is prophesied more clearly. They are no longer being called but have been called. They are no longer ignorant of what to confess or what to give thanks for, but have already learned. For in the earlier passages we learned that they were called, fished, and hunted, and what they would suffer; in the later passages we learn what happens next. Let us see what the prophet says about us, who are now learning to pray, or rather who have already learned.

"Lord, my strength and my help and my refuge in the day of evils: to you nations will come from the end of the earth and will say, 'Our fathers possessed false idols, and there is no profit in them.'" Did the nations come to God from the end of the earth, and did the nations say, "Our fathers possessed false idols, and there is no profit in them"? How is it "from the end of the earth"? Some people on earth are first and some are last. Who are the first? "The wise of the world" are the first of the earth, and not simply first: "the wise of the world, the well-born," the rich, those of rank. Who are the last? "God chose the foolish things of the world, the lowborn, the despised, the things that are not." So "nations will come from the end of the earth" is as if he said: from the least of the people on earth, from the foolish, from the lowborn, from the despised. "And they will say: 'Our fathers possessed false idols, and

there is no profit in them.'" He does not mean that some idols are true, so that these are called false by contrast. He means idols that are false by their very nature: "and there is no profit in them."

"If a man makes gods for himself." People make gods for themselves not only out of statues. You will find people making gods for themselves out of their own inventions as well. Anyone who can invent another god, or another account of the making of the world different from the one the Spirit has written down, an arrangement of the world different from the true world [concerning the arrangement of the world], has made gods for himself and bowed down to the works of his hands. Think, for example, of those among the Greeks who first produced the teachings of this philosophy or that one, or, among the heresies, of those who first produced their doctrines. These people made idols for themselves, inventions of the soul, and they turned and bowed down to the works of their own hands, welcoming their own inventions as truth. So the Word refutes everyone who makes gods for himself, whether by the senses or by the mind, and says: "If a man makes gods for himself, are they not gods? Therefore I will show them my hand at this time, and I will make known to them my power." What time is this, if not the time of the Lord's coming? He shows us the time. "And they will know," he says, "that my name is Lord."

Then there is another prophecy, which, I do not know why, we did not find in the Septuagint. We did find it in the other editions, so it was clearly in the Hebrew. It is full of very necessary matters, able to turn our soul back if we pay attention. The words are these: "The sin of Judah is written with an iron pen, engraved with a diamond point on the tablet of their heart." One could take the easier course and say: this was written about the Jews, that their sin "is written." But if you see, as we have often shown, that Christ is spoken of figuratively as Judah, then perhaps "the sin of Judah" is the sin of us who believe in Christ, who came from the tribe of Judah. And if you can hear it in a still more hidden sense, perhaps the prophecy is about Judas who betrayed him, so that the prophecy says of him: "The sin of Judah is written with an iron pen, engraved with a diamond point on the breast of the heart." But again, the word "their" does not fit in his case. Perhaps, then, the prophet was speaking about us, saying that if we become sinners, these prophecies reach us. We have sinned, and our sin is not written outside us but in our heart, and it is written "with an iron pen, with a diamond point." The very fact will show that the sins we commit are engraved on us by our sinning. I was not conscious of this deed or this sin in myself.

Once I have done it, I have an imprint of it, and the imprint of my sin, committed in my soul, is, as it were, written there. If my sin had been written in ink, I could have wiped it out. But now it is written "with an iron pen," written "with a diamond point," written "on the breast of the heart" of us all. So when I come to the place of instruction, the saying of the prophecy is fulfilled: "Nothing is hidden that will not be made known, and nothing is covered that will not be uncovered." My breast is laid bare, and my heart, with the letters of sin engraved on it, "by the pen" on my breast, and the imprints of my sins in my heart. "For nothing is hidden that will not be made known," but also "among one another the thoughts accusing

or even defending," and "Do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the purposes of the hearts." To whom will he reveal them? Not to himself, for he knows "all things before they come to be." But to whom, then, will he reveal them? To all who are going to see, because of their own purity, the sin of the one who has sinned, so that sinners may "rise to reproach and to everlasting shame." May the God of all deliver us from these things, that we may rise to the glory that is in Christ, to whom belong glory and power forever. Amen.

Homily 17

We have come to a much-discussed question: who is the partridge, of which Scripture now says, “The partridge called out, it gathered what it did not bring to birth, making its wealth without justice. In the middle of his days they will abandon him, and at his end he will be a fool”? We must take from the writings on the nature of animals what is recorded about the partridge. Then, knowing the facts about the creature, we can tell whether the partridge named here should be put in a better class or a worse one. It is said to be a very malicious, deceitful and crafty creature. It wants to trick those who hunt it, and often rolls about at the hunter’s feet, so that it seems to be close at hand and draws him away from the nest. When it judges that it has drawn the hunter off and that the chicks have escaped, then it flies away too. The creature is also so unclean that the males fight one another over mating, and a male mounts a male. So if this creature is malicious, unclean, crafty and deceitful, it is clear that to place it in a better class and apply it to the Savior would be impious. If we want to interpret it of the Adversary, we must see whether the whole interpretation follows from that.

Let us begin, then, with “The partridge called out, it gathered what it did not bring to birth.” The devil, then, does not gather his own creatures, nor what he has begotten. When he calls out, he gathers the creatures of another and makes them his own. The partridge called out through Valentinus, through Marcion, through Basilides, through all the teachers of other doctrines. For none of them could speak the voice of Jesus: “My sheep will hear my voice.” The voice of Jesus is in Paul and Peter. That is why Paul said, “Do you seek proof of Christ speaking in me?” But the voice of the partridge, which gathered what it did not bring to birth, is in those who lead astray and deceive, preying on the simplicity and unpreparedness of the more plain-minded believers. So “the partridge called out, it gathered what it did not bring to birth, making its wealth without justice.” The partridge has grown rich. See how many tens of thousands it has. Many have become the partridge’s, that is, of the opposing power. And it made its wealth without caring about justice or having any judgment, acting without discrimination. That is why it says the partridge is “making its wealth without justice.” But my Savior makes his wealth with judgment, and his wealth is sifted and chosen out.

"In the middle of his days they will abandon him." This means all of us who were once under the partridge that called out. For it called out not only through those already mentioned but through absolutely all who deceive, and who invite people to godlessness as though it were piety, toward teachings contrary to the truth. But "in the middle of his days" we have abandoned him. All his days are the days of this age. But since Christ Jesus has rescued "us from the present evil age," therefore "in the middle of his days" we have abandoned him. "And at his end he will be a fool." For when was he ever wise, that at his end he should become a fool? But we will say that he was wise. For "the serpent was the wisest of all the wild animals on the earth which the Lord God made." He was wise, in line with what is said in Isaiah: "I will bring upon the mind, the great one, the ruler of the Assyrians. For he said: I will act by my strength, and by my wisdom

…you may receive: "If anyone among you seems to himself to be wise in this age, let him become foolish." He who cried out before resolves it: "Be foolish and silly, so that you may become wise." So if there is a kind of wisdom that deserves blame, the kind by which "the children of this age are wiser than the children of light in their generation," then God is good. He overturns varied things by their opposites, so that what was said is fulfilled: "his last end will be foolish." When will his last end be foolish? Christ must "reign until God puts all his enemies under his feet." When God has made everything subject to him, "the last enemy to be destroyed is death." When death has been destroyed, then the partridge's last days will have come, and his end will have become foolish. That is enough about the partridge. 4. The beginning of the second chapter was also read: "A throne of glory, exalted from the beginning, the place of our sanctification, our support, the endurance of Israel. Lord, let all who have forsaken you be put to shame; let those who depart be written on the earth, because they have forsaken the fountain of life, the Lord." The blessed prophet Isaiah, seeing the Lord and his kingdom, said: "I saw the Lord of Hosts sitting on a high and lofty throne." Jeremiah also saw how God reigns, and so, glorifying him, he says: "A throne of glory, exalted from the beginning, the place of our sanctification."

If you want to understand these words of Christ, you will not sin. If you understand them of the Father, you will not think impiously. For the Savior is [also] a throne of glory, high and from the beginning. He is "a throne of glory," and that is why his kingdom is exalted. And "our sanctification" is Christ: "For both the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one." "The endurance of Israel": just as the Savior is righteousness itself, truth itself, sanctification itself, so he is endurance itself. It is not possible to be righteous without Christ, or holy without him, or to endure without having Christ. For he himself is the endurance of Israel. Even if you refer the words to God, you will not be impious in doing so. "Lord, let all who have forsaken you be put to shame, those who have departed." Each of us, when we sin, forsakes Christ through the very things by which we sin, and by forsaking Christ we forsake God. For in doing wrong he forsakes righteousness. In becoming profane he forsakes sanctification. In making war he forsakes peace. In coming under the enemy he forsakes redemption. And in being outside the wisdom of God he forsakes wisdom. So the prophet pronounces a curse on all who forsake God, teaching us what will happen to them,

when he says: "Let all who forsake you be put to shame." The further they have departed, the more let them be put to shame. "Let them be written on the earth." All people are written down: the holy in heaven, and sinners on the earth. It is to the disciples that [the Savior] says, "Rejoice that your names are written in the heavens." So we ought to rejoice if someone becomes the kind of person whose name is written in the heavens.

As the names of the saints are written in heaven, so the names of those who live in an earthly way are written on the earth. These people do not pass through the land of Edom. They hold the fields of the land of Edom and its vineyards, and they are written on the earth as people who have abandoned God. For he says, "Let those who have turned away be put to shame; let them be written on the earth." And indeed, "with the measure you measure, it will be measured to you." Each person is himself the cause of being written there. If you seek what is on earth, you are not seeking heavenly things. If your soul has leaned toward the things of this world, you are the cause of it yourself, since Jesus says, "Do not store up treasures for yourselves on the earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves dig through and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven." Are you storing up treasure in heaven? Then you are yourself the cause of your name being written in heaven. All this is on account of the words "let them be written on the earth." And the prophet gives the reason: "because they abandoned the Lord, the fountain of life." At the beginning the same prophet spoke in the person of God: "They abandoned me, the fountain of the water of life." And now: "They abandoned the Lord, the fountain of life." So let us also speak, if we do not want to abandon the Lord, the fountain of life. Let us use the voice of Jesus' genuine disciples, which they spoke to the teacher when he said to them, "Do you also want to go away?" What then shall we say? "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Here the second passage came to an end.

Then there is another prayer, which goes like this: "Heal me, Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my boast. Look, they say to me, 'Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come.' But I did not grow weary following after you, and I did not desire the day of man; you know." Only to the one who came for those who are sick, the physician who says, "Those who are strong have no need of a physician, but those who are sick," can everyone who wants to be cured of the sickness of his soul say with confidence, "Heal me, Lord, and I shall be healed." But if someone else besides him promises the medicine of souls, you could not truthfully say to that one, "Heal me, Lord, and I shall be healed." For that woman with the "flow of blood" spent "all that she had" on physicians, and "could not be healed by any of them." It would not have been reasonable to say to any of them, "Heal me, Lord, and I shall be healed." She could say it only to him, for whom it is enough to touch "the fringe of the garment." So I say to him, "Heal me, Lord, and I shall be healed." For if you heal, the end will follow upon your healing: the cure, so that I am saved.

As for all the others who will try to save me, I shall not be saved. The only true salvation is if Christ saves, because then I shall be saved. "The horse is a false hope for salvation": so everything else apart from God is a false hope for salvation. For this reason I would say to

him, “Save me, Lord, and I shall be saved.” And I say this if I am also able to say the next words, having renounced every other boast, so that I may say, “for you are my boast,” or when I fulfil the commandment that says, “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, nor the strong man in his strength, nor the rich man in his riches; but let the one who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows that I am the Lord.” Blessed, then, is the one who has renounced every boasting here below, such as in so-called noble birth, in beauty and bodily things, in wealth, in reputation, and who is content with one boast, so that he can say, “for you are my boast.”

“See, they say to me: ‘Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come.’ But I did not grow weary following after you.” Jesus says to you, “Take up your cross and follow me,” and “Leave everything and follow me,” and “Whoever does not leave father and mother and follow after me is not worthy to be my disciple.” So if you become the kind of person who always follows Jesus, you will follow, and as long as you follow you will not grow weary. For “there will be no toil in Jacob, and no labor will be seen in Israel.” There is no weariness for the one who follows Jesus; the following itself takes the weariness away. For this reason he himself says, so that we may no longer be weary, since we were weary before we began to follow him: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” So if we come to him weary and follow him, we will say, “I did not grow weary following after you.” It follows from this that we should also say, “I did not desire the day of a man.” There is a day of a man, and there is a day of God. Let each of us long for the day of the resurrection of the saints, not for the day of which it is written: “Woe to those who desire the day of the Lord; and it is darkness and not light.” Who is the one who says, “And I did not desire the day of a man”? The plain sense of the saying will convict us, because we [did] desire the day of a man. Often when we have fallen ill and seem to be facing death, as we are about to depart, we plead with the brothers who visit us and say: “Ask for my recovery; ask that I may remain in this life.” In saying this we are not longing for the holy day of God, but for the day of a man. So let us put away this love of life and this longing for a human day, and let us seek to see that day on which we will obtain the blessedness that is in Christ Jesus, to whom belong glory and power forever. Amen.

Homily 18

There are two visions in a row that have been read from Jeremiah. The first concerns the clay vessel in the potter's hand, which, after it is broken, can be put right, for it can be reshaped. The second vision concerns the earthenware jar, which, once it has been smashed, cannot be mended. When it was clay, if it was broken, even if it had already been shaped, then because it was clay it could become dough again a second time and be made a second time. But when, after being clay, it has become fired earthenware and has been hardened by the fire, then after the earthenware is broken it cannot be mended. What this means, let us first consider in general terms, and then, if God grants it, we will examine it word by word. As long as we are in this life, we are being shaped, if I may put it this way, like clay vessels by a potter, and we are shaped either toward evil or toward virtue. But we are shaped in such a way that our wickedness can be broken, so that a new and better creation may come about, and so that our progress, after it has been given form, can be dissolved back into a clay vessel.

But when we have passed beyond the present age and come to the end of life, and are then set on fire, either by the fire of the burning arrows of the evil one, whatever we then become, or by the divine fire (for indeed "our God is a consuming fire"), if, I say, we become whatever we become under this fire or that, and if we are broken, whether we are broken and lost after having been good vessels or after having been worthless vessels, we are not made anew, and our make-up admits no improvement. For this reason, as long as we are here, as if in the potter's hand, even if the vessel slips from his hands, it can be healed and made anew. This much has been said somewhat in a preliminary way, before we examine the rest in the discourse: let it be said of the two kinds of vessels, the clay one which has not yet been hardened into earthenware, and the second one, which has already become earthenware.

Let us now look at the words themselves, and at what is said about the clay vessel in the potter's hand. Let us see how the word in the prophet, the Lord who prophesies in him, gives us other and not small openings for interpreting what happens with the thing formed in the potter's hand. "The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying: Rise and go down to the house of the potter." Jeremiah is above; he has gone up beyond the clay vessels. The clay vessels are below, and the nature that governs the clay vessels, coming down together with those it governs, is below. For this reason the word spoken to Jeremiah from the Lord

says to him: “Rise and go down to the house of the potter, and there you will hear my words.” To Moses it is said, “Go up the mountain and hear.” To Jeremiah it is said, “Go down to the house of the potter and hear.” For each one who hears a word is either taught about things higher up or learns about things lower down. If I am being taught about the lower things, I go down in the word, so that I may see the lower things. If I am learning about the higher things, I go up in the word to the higher things, so that I may behold what is there. So that all of you may follow what is said as well as you can, I will use examples from Scripture too, and along with the example I will bring out clearly the interpretation I have given. “At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

There is a certain wisdom concerning each of these: wisdom about the heavenly things, how the heavenly things are arranged; wisdom about the things under the earth, since there is also a wisdom of God about the ordering of the things under the earth; and likewise about the things on earth. If I am going to take in the wisdom about the heavenly things, I go up to the heavens, as Moses went up to the top of the mountain, so that the voice from heaven might be heard by him, as it is written. For he was about to be taught heavenly forms of worship. There is a shadow and a pattern of heavenly mysteries in the written laws of worship, as the apostle taught when he said: “They serve a pattern and shadow of the heavenly things.” So just as I go up when I am about to be taught about the heavenly things, in the same way, if I need to learn about the things under the earth, even if I have become a prophet, I go down. And perhaps for this reason Samuel, when he was taught the things under the earth, went down below and came to be in Hades. He was not condemned to be in Hades, but became a scout and an observer of the mysteries under the earth. The things the apostle says about wisdom may be of this kind too, distinguished by the knowing of “what is the breadth and length and depth and height.” If you are going to know the height, you go up in the word to the height. If you are going to know what lies between the height and the depth, you know the breadth and the length. The mind that is able to follow the Son of God, led by the word that teaches about everything, reaches everywhere. And it follows him by renouncing the world and taking up the cross. For the one who can follow Jesus is the one who can say: “The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

This saying needs some comfort and explanation: “Go down to the potter’s house, and there you will hear my words.” It has to be compared with the saying, “Go up, and you will hear my words.” Some of those who hear go up in order to be taught, though they do not necessarily go up in the body. Others go down while their soul stays on high, in order to see the Word who is highest speaking about the lowest things. My Lord Jesus Christ himself has gone up and has come down: “The one who went up is the same one who came down, far above all the heavens.” So if you too intend to understand the one who went up to the highest place, the Word who speaks about the highest things, and to grasp the one who came down to the lowest places, who teaches about the lowest things, then “do not say, Who will go up into heaven?” (that is, to bring Christ down), “or, Who will go down into the abyss?” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). “But what does the Scripture say? The word is near you, in

your mouth and in your heart." Through this word you go up into heaven. The word is near you concerning the ascent, and the word is near you concerning the lowest things. What else could this be but the Word, whom the holy person can have within himself everywhere? For "the kingdom of heaven is within you."

So the prophet goes down to the potter's house and tells what he saw. He says: "And behold, he was doing work with his hands, and the vessel that he was making in the clay fell apart in his hands. And he made it again into another vessel, as it pleased him to make it." But I do not know what the prophet saw when he was at the potter's. He saw the potter working. The vessel being made was of clay. The vessel fell apart. Why exactly did he not say, "He let the vessel go from his hand," or lay the blame on the potter? It is because the passage is about living vessels, which fall apart through their own doing. That is why it says, "The vessel fell apart from his hands." So pay attention to yourself as well. You are in the hands of the potter and are still being shaped. Take care that you do not, through your own fault, fall out of his hands. No one snatches anyone "out of his hands," as it is said in the Gospel according to John. But it is not written that, just as no one snatches, so no one falls out of his hands. For free will is free. And I say: no one will snatch anyone from the hand of the shepherd, and no one can take us from the hand of God. But we ourselves, if we are careless, can fall out of his hands.

"And the word of the Lord came to me: Shall I not be able to do with you, house of Israel, as this potter does? says the Lord." Each person understands what is written according to his ability. One takes its meaning more on the surface, as if drawing from a spring on level ground. Another goes deeper, as if drawing up water from a well. Both can be helped, since the same thing is a spring to one and a well to the other. The Gospel bears witness to this when it tells the story of the Samaritan woman. There the same thing is called both "spring" and "well," sometimes one and sometimes the other. Let anyone who is able consider this closely, so as to see that what is the same in substance is a spring to the shallower view and a well to the deeper. This is my introduction to the explanation that is coming, concerning the clay vessel that fell from the potter's hand and was shaped again. Some have looked at this more simply and understood it that way. I will set before you their account and explanation. After that, if we have something deeper, we will explain that too. They say that what is shown here may be the resurrection. If the clay vessel fell from the potter's hands and he makes "another vessel" from the same material, the same clay, "as it pleased him," then God, the potter of our bodies and the craftsman who built us, can do the same. When this body falls apart and is broken for whatever reason, he can take it up again, renew it, and make it more beautiful and better, "another vessel, as it pleased him to make." Let this explanation also have its due.

Let us listen to the Lord himself as he explains and says: "Shall I not be able to do with you, house of Israel, as this potter does? says the Lord. Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hands. At one moment I will speak against a nation and a kingdom, to uproot them and destroy them; and that nation will turn back from the evils about which

I spoke to it, and I will change my mind about the evils I had planned to do to them. And at another moment I will speak concerning a nation and a kingdom, that it be built up and planted; and they will do evil in my sight and not listen to my voice, and I will change my mind about the good things I said I would do for them, says the Lord." We see that this passage about the potter's house does not refer to any individual, but to two nations. For at the start he says he is going to speak about nations, to hint something to those who are able to hear unspeakable mysteries: "At one moment I will speak against a nation." Look for the "moment" and for the first nation, against whom he speaks of destruction because of their sins. Yet even after speaking of destruction because of their sins, he still promises that if they repent, he will change his mind about the evils he said he would do to them. Then again he speaks about a second nation, that a whole nation be "built up and planted." And since this nation, which is being built up and planted, has a good promise but is able to sin, he says, after saying these things, that if they fall away from good works, "I will change my mind about the good things I said I would do for them." Who, then, are the two nations: the first one named, against which the word utters a threat, and the second, to which a promise is made? He threatens in such a way that, if they repent, he will not carry out the threat. He promises in such a way that, if the second nation falls away and proves unworthy of the promises, it will not obtain them.

The whole plan of God for the people of the world is set out above all with regard to two nations. The first nation was Israel; the second, since the coming of Christ, is this nation of ours. To the first, God made the threats he made, and we see what became of the threats against the first nation. They have been taken into captivity; their city was razed; the holy place was torn down; the altar was thrown down; nothing of their ancient sacred things is still preserved among them. For God said to that nation: Repent; and they did not repent. After this had been said to them, God speaks to this second nation about its being built up. But he sees that this nation too consists of human beings who can fall away again. For this reason he threatens this nation also, and says: Even though I have spoken beforehand about the building, the planting, and the cultivation, this nation too is going to sin; and if it sins, the same things that were said to those others because of their sins will happen to it, and they will suffer them unless they repent. Search the whole Scripture, and you will find that most of what is said concerns these two nations. God chose the fathers and gave them a promise. He brought out of Egypt a people from the fathers' stock. He was patient with them when they sinned. He trained them as a father does. He brought them in and gave them the land of promise. He sent them prophets at the proper times; he disciplined them and turned them back from their sins. He was patient, always sending those who would heal them, until the chief physician came: the prophet who surpasses prophets, the physician who surpasses physicians. When he came, they betrayed and killed him, saying, "Away with him, away with him from the earth! Crucify him, crucify him!" Immediately visitation came upon the nation. The place where my Jesus was crucified was made desolate, and God chose another nation. See how great the harvest is, even if the workers are few.

God also arranges things in another way. The net is always being cast into the sea of this life, and fish of every kind are gathered. He sends out "the many fishermen." He sends out "the many hunters," and they hunt on "every mountain" and on "every hill." See how great a plan there is for the salvation of the nations. "See then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward" the first nation, which fell; but toward you, the second nation, promises and "kindness, if you continue in the kindness; for you also will be cut off." For the axe did not lie at the root of the trees only at that time. The axe is ready to come again. "The axe lies at the root of the trees" — that is what my Jesus said then, prophesying about Israel, among whom the axe was present. He himself was the axe for the unfruitful tree, and he said, "Already the axe lies at the root of the trees." All the trees there that bore no fruit were cut down, thrown into the fire, and punished. But now another field has come into being, corresponding to the first, of which it was said: "Bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance, in your prepared dwelling place." God has brought his nation in to the mountain of his inheritance. As for the mountain, I do not look for it as the Jews do, among lifeless woods. The mountain is Christ. In him we were planted; on him we have been kept safe. So take care. Even if God is patient, the master of the house may come and say, "For three years now I have been coming to this fig tree, and it has borne no fruit. Cut it down. Why should it also use up the ground?" For the one who comes to the gathering and bears no fruit is using up good ground, Christ, the mystery of the church.

"At the end I will speak concerning a nation or a kingdom." The word "end" might seem to be used casually. But it is said with a particular meaning. In the phrase "I will speak concerning a nation or a kingdom," the "end" is of this kind: to the first nation the "end" is spoken as "I will tear down," and to the second nation, "I will build you up." Again, "I will uproot" is said to the first, and "I will plant" to the second. Now, since the "end" has been spoken, must the end therefore happen? According to Scripture, God, who does not change his mind, is said to change his mind. Let us pay attention to the wording, so that, if we are able to give an answer about how these things are said, we may accept the passage. "At the end I will speak," he says, "concerning a nation or a kingdom, to remove them and destroy them; and if that nation turns from the evils that I spoke against it, I will also change my mind about the evils that I planned to do to them. And at the end I will speak concerning a nation or a kingdom, to build it up and plant it; and they will do evil in my sight so as not to hear my voice, and I will change my mind about the good things that I spoke of doing to them." We are required to give an answer about God's change of mind. For changing one's mind seems to be a fault, and unworthy not only of God but even of a wise man. I cannot imagine a wise man changing his mind. As the word is commonly used, the one who changes his mind does so because he has not planned well. But God, who foreknows what is to come, cannot have planned badly and therefore change his mind. How then does Scripture bring him in saying "I will change my mind"? And I am not yet saying that in the books of Kingdoms it is written, "I regret that I anointed Saul as king," and that it is said of him in general, "and changing his mind about evils." But see what we are taught about God in general.

Take note of what we are taught about God in general. In one place we read, "God is not like a man, to be threatened, nor like a son of man, to be warned." From that saying we learn that God is not like a man. But another passage teaches that God is like a man. It says, "The Lord your God disciplined you, as a man might discipline his son," and again, "he bore with his ways as a man bears with his son." So when the Scriptures speak of God as he is in himself, and do not mix his dealings with human affairs, they say he is not like a man. "Of his greatness there will be no end," and "he is to be feared above all gods," and "Praise him, all you angels of God; praise him, all his powers; praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you stars and light." If you gather up the sacred writings, you would find countless other passages to which you can apply "God is not like a man." But when the divine ordering of things is woven into human affairs, it takes on a human mind, manner and language. Think of how we speak to a two-year-old child: we lisp for the child's sake. If we kept up the dignity of grown men and spoke to children without coming down to their way of talking, the children could not understand. Think of God in the same way when he deals with the human race, and especially with those who are still infants. Notice how we who are grown men change our words for babies. We give bread a special name for them, and we call drinking by another word. We do not use the speech we use with grown people our own age, but some other childish, baby-like word. And if we name their clothes for the children, we give those a different name too, as though inventing a child's name.

Are we then imperfect at such times? And if someone overheard us talking with children, would he say, "This old man has become a fool; this man has forgotten his beard and his grown age"? Or is it allowed, in accommodating ourselves to a child, not to speak the language of an elder or of a fully grown person, but a child's language? God also speaks to children. The Savior says, "Behold, I and the children whom God gave me." It could be said to the old man who speaks to the child like a child (or, to put it more strongly, like a baby): "You have borne your son's ways; you have put on the baby's manner and taken up his condition." Understand the Scripture in the same way when it says, "The Lord your God bore your ways, as a man might bear the ways of his son." Those who translated from the Hebrew seem not to have found this word in use among the Greeks. As in many other cases, they fashioned it themselves and made up "he bore your ways" (that is, he put on your ways), "as a man might bear his son's ways" (following the example I have given). So since we repent, when God speaks to us while we are repenting, he says, "I repent." And when he threatens us, he does not pretend to be one who foreknows, but threatens as one speaking to babies. He does not make a show of having known "all things before they came to be." Rather, if I may put it this way, he plays the part of the baby and pretends not even to know what is going to happen. So he threatens a nation for its sins and says, "If the nation repents, I also will repent." O God, when you threatened, did you not know whether the nation would repent or not? And what of when you made your promise? Did you not know whether the man, or the nation to whom the word was spoken, would stay worthy of the promises or not?

But he does not pretend to know. You could find many such human-sounding expressions in Scripture, such as: "Speak to the sons of Israel; perhaps they will listen and repent." God

did not say "perhaps they will listen" as though he were in doubt. God does not doubt, so that he should say "perhaps they will listen and repent." He says it to show you at length your own free will, so that you will not say: "If he foreknew that I would be lost, I must be lost; if he foreknew that I would be saved, I must by all means be saved." So he does not pretend to know what is going to happen with you, in order to preserve your free will by not having settled beforehand, or foreknown, whether you will repent or not. And he says to the prophet, "Speak, perhaps they will repent." You will find countless other things like this said about God bearing the ways of man. If you hear of God's wrath and his anger, do not suppose that wrath and anger are passions in God. They are arrangements of the use of words, meant to turn the infant around and make him better. We too put on a fearsome face for children, not out of our real disposition but as a matter of management. If we kept the gentleness of our soul toward the infant in our face, and showed him the tender affection we have for him, without turning ourselves aside or, so to speak, changing ourselves for the sake of his turning around, we would ruin him and make him worse. So in the same way God is said to be angry, and he says he is furious, so that you may turn and be made better. And truly he is neither angry nor furious; but you will experience what belongs to anger and fury, when, because of your wickedness, you fall into hardships that are hard to bear, whenever he disciplines you with what is called the wrath of God.

Next, after the account of the two nations, the first to which the threat is given and the second to which the promise is given, he says (evidently speaking to the first group): "And now speak to the men of Judah and to those living in Jerusalem: Thus says the Lord: Look, I am shaping evils against you." Because these things that I am shaping against you are in my hand, they can fall through. Make them fall from my hand, so that I may change the evils I am shaping against you and make them good. You would not find it said: "Look, I am shaping good things against you," with the corresponding things following, so as then to show that he lets the good things he is shaping fall from his hands in order to make them evil. No, he shapes evils according to the example already given, and in shaping evils he is managing things. (Leaving aside the interpretation already given for "it fell from my hands.") The point is that if it falls, I do not know what the end of the evils being shaped will turn out to be.

"Let each one turn back from his evil way, and make your practices better." Sometimes the simpler folk say: "Blessed are the people of old, because they heard the Lord speaking through the prophet": "And the Lord spoke to them." But the Lord also says to us now, through what is written, "Let each one turn back from his evil way." The Lord himself speaks with you, saying: "And make your practices better." But those to whom the words of exhortation about repentance were spoken gave an answer. Let us see what they answered, so that we do not give such answers ourselves. What do they say in reply? "We will be brave, for we will go after our own turnings away, and each of us will do what is pleasing to his evil heart." Even if you do not say it in words, if your life is such that you sin, then by your wicked actions after the words of exhortation you are saying the same thing in effect: "We will be brave, for we will go after our own turnings away, and each of us will do what is

pleasing to his evil heart." What is "we will go after our turnings away"? There are those who began to put [their hand to the plough] and to [take hold of] the good, and then turned away from it into worthless things. So whenever someone puts [his hand to the plough] and turns back, he will go "after his turnings away." For he will go after those things he turned away from, and runs back to those sins which he had abandoned.

So consider those who hear these words. Some are catechumens who have left the Gentile way of life. Others are believers who have already made progress in "stretching forward to what lies ahead." If their life has become wicked, they are saying nothing other than this: "We will go after our turnings back, and each of us will do what pleases his heart." And note that it is not just any heart, but "his evil heart." For there is an evil heart, and there is a good heart. So let no one go "after his turnings back," and let no one do "what pleases his evil heart." "Therefore," the Lord says to those who answer this way, "ask among the nations: who has heard such dreadful things as the virgin Israel has done, and done to excess?" This too may seem to have been said without any deeper meaning. But consider the church that comes from the nations. [The text here is corrupt; the sense seems to be that it is addressed among the nations, and that it will be said:] "Ask among the nations; hear what dreadful things the virgin Israel has done, and done to excess." Let us compare the life of those who sinned with the life of those who turned and believed, and we will see the difference. Those people did dreadful things, for they killed "the Lord of glory." These others, though those people did dreadful things, turned to him, who was put to death and died at their hands for the sins of the world. So "ask among the nations: who has heard such dreadful things as the virgin Israel has done, and done to excess?"

"Will breasts fail from the rock, or snow from Lebanon? Or will water carried violently by the wind turn aside? For my people have forgotten me. They burned incense to emptiness, and they will grow weak in their ways, [on] everlasting [lines/ropes], so as to walk on paths that have no road for a journey, so as to hand their land over to desolation and to everlasting hissing." Here he has spoken of different kinds of water. The first is in the words "Will breasts fail from the rock?" The second is in the words "or snow from Lebanon?" The third is in the words "Will water carried violently by the wind turn aside?" These three kinds of water are the springs of water for which the soul of the righteous longs, as it is likened to the deer. So each one may say: "As the deer longs for the springs of water, so my soul longs for you, O God." Who, then, has become like the deer, an enemy of the race of snakes, and untouched by their venom, as the story is told of the deer? Who has thirsted for God so much that he can say, "My soul has thirsted for the living God"? Who has so thirsted for the breasts of the rock? "And the rock was Christ." Who has so thirsted for the Holy Spirit that he can say, "As the deer longs for the springs of water, so my soul longs for you, O God"? If we do not thirst for the three springs of water, we will not find even one spring of water. The Jews seemed to thirst for one spring of water, God. But because they did not thirst for Christ and the Holy Spirit, they have nothing to drink even from God. Those from the heresies seemed to thirst for Christ Jesus. But because they did not thirst for the Father,

who is the God of the law and the prophets, for that reason they do not drink even from Jesus Christ.

Others hold to one God but despise the prophecies. They have not thirsted for the Holy Spirit who is in the prophets. For that reason they will not drink from the Father's spring either, or from the one who cried out in the temple and said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." So the "breasts" do not "fail from the rock." It is those people who "forsook the spring of living water." The spring of living water did not forsake them. God puts himself far from no one. Rather, "those who put themselves far from him will perish." God draws near to some, and he meets the one who comes to him. When the son who had eaten up his property came back, his father met him. And God promises through the prophets, "I will be nearer to them than the tunic is to their skin." For he says, "I am a God who draws near, and not a God far off, says the Lord." So the "breasts" will not "fail from the rock." These are the waters of Jesus. Nor will "the snow from Lebanon" fail. These are the waters of the Father. For "frankincense" (libanos) is the sacred incense according to the law of God, and it is offered on the altar, "pure frankincense, in equal measure." The mountain has the same name as this frankincense, and snow comes down from Lebanon, just as the water of the Holy Spirit does. About that water it is said, "Will water carried violently by the wind turn aside?" For it is indeed carried by the wind. The water of the Holy Spirit does not "turn aside" and does not flee. Rather, each of us, when we sin, becomes a runaway from drinking of the Holy Spirit.

"For my people have forgotten me; they have burned incense in vain." Everyone who sins has forgotten God. But the righteous man says, "All this has come upon us, and we have not forgotten you, nor have we acted unjustly," and he has not burned incense in vain. We must understand what "they burned incense in vain" means. If we take up again what was said earlier on the hundred and fortieth Psalm, we will see what "they burned incense in vain" is. In that Psalm something like this was said: "Let my prayer be set before you like incense." So my prayer is a compound [made of?] . . . a fine and delicate heart. When our heart is not made thick and heavy, the prayer sent up becomes like incense before God. If then the prayer of the righteous man is incense before God, the prayer of the unrighteous man is also incense, but incense of such a kind that it can be said of it and of the unrighteous man praying, "They burned incense in vain." It is like what is written about Judas: "Let his prayer become sin." In praying, he burned incense in vain. Let us understand still more who it is that burns incense in vain. "Three times a year," it says, "every male of yours shall appear before the Lord your God." Right after this it adds, "You shall not appear before me empty." So of those who come, [the text breaks off here; the Greek that follows is lost.]

Homily 19

. . . [the beginning is lost] . . . of the meaning of Scripture, which comes upon an eye able to take in the clarity of the sacred writings. I have said these things by way of introduction, to stir up and rouse both myself and those who are listening to pay attention to what has been read. Let us ask that Jesus come and appear to us, and that he teach us now what is written here.

"Jeremiah prophesied. And Pashhur son of Immer, the priest, heard the words of the prophecy." Many others, we may suppose, heard Jeremiah, at least as far as the plain sequence of the prophecy goes, yet no one else is recorded as having heard him so readily except Pashhur. The Scripture took care to say whose son he was: Immer's. It also says that he held the office of priest, and what rank he had among the people: he was appointed chief officer of the house of the Lord at the time when Jeremiah was prophesying these words. It is recorded that when Pashhur heard the words of this prophecy, he struck Jeremiah. Nor was he content with striking him; he also threw him into a kind of pit [or: stocks, cistern, a "cataract"]. The Scripture took care to say where this pit was: at the Gate of Benjamin. It was in a place where there was an upper room, and an upper room belonging to nothing other than the house of the Lord. The Holy Spirit recorded that these things happened to Jeremiah because of his prophecy, and that they were done by Pashhur. Then it says: on the next day Pashhur brought Jeremiah out of the pit. And Jeremiah, once brought out, said to Pashhur: the Lord did not give you the name Pashhur. Another name has been set on you. As Jacob was given Israel, as Abram was given Abraham, as Sarah was given Sarra, so he has given you the name Exile [or: Sojourner]. And the reason he has called you Exile is that the Lord says: "See, I am giving you over to exile, together with all"—with whom? Not with your wife, your sons and your daughters, but with your friends. And when you are given over to exile, your friends will fall by the sword. Then, as though there were a difference for those who fall by the sword, whether they fall by the sword of enemies or by the sword of others, it says that the friends of the man who threw Jeremiah into the pit will fall by the sword of their enemies.

"And your eyes," it says, "will see these things that are prophesied. But I will give you and all Judah into the hands of the king of Babylon," after your friends have suffered these things. They will carry them off into exile in Babylon and cut them down. For they will cut

down the king of Judah and the people of Judah with the sword, and this time the words "of their enemies" are no longer added, as they were in the earlier case of those who were called friends of Pashhur. Then it says: "And I will give all the strength of this city, and all the treasures of the king of Judah, and all the labors of this city into the hands of their enemies." The enemies will plunder the treasures, take what has been mentioned, and lead Judah and its king away to Babylon. "And you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house, go into captivity in Babylon. There you will die, and there you will be buried, you and all your friends to whom you prophesied lies." The whole passage needed to be cut short and made clear. I am not yet speaking of its deep meaning (if we are able to take that in at all), but only of its wording and the plain statement itself. Even an ordinary reader, who looks carefully at the letters and does not read casually, can understand it that far. What then do these words intend? Here is the struggle: to set out the purpose of these writings. And I admit that on my own I cannot explain them. I need, as I said before, the appearing of the power of Jesus, in so far as he is wisdom, in so far as he is word, in so far as he is truth, so that his appearing may make light upon the face of my soul.

[The text is missing here.] The magicians of the Egyptians also had staffs, which were meant to discredit the staffs of Moses and Aaron as not coming from God. But the staffs that come from God overturn those of the sophists and magicians: "Aaron's swallowed them up." For his staff was enough for this even without the staff of Moses. So Pashhur "struck Jeremiah the prophet," and he did it in keeping with his character: "and he struck Jeremiah the prophet." The words "the prophet" are added as well. Here, then, the man who struck Jeremiah struck the prophet. It is also recorded in Acts that someone struck Paul, ordered to do so by Ananias the high priest. That is why Paul said, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall." Even to this day the Ebionites, commanded by a lawless high priest of the word, strike the apostle of Jesus Christ with abusive words. And Paul says to such a high priest of the word, "God is going to strike you." Such a high priest looks handsome on the outside, and is a whitewashed wall. Christ says: "I gave my back to the whips, my cheeks to the slaps, and I did not turn my face away from the shame of spitting."

Simple believers understand this as referring only to that one time, when Pilate scourged him and the Jews plotted against him. But I see Jesus every day "giving his back to the whips." Go into the synagogues of the Jews, and see Jesus being scourged by them with the tongue of blasphemy. See those gathered from the nations, plotting against Christians, working out how they may seize Jesus; and he "gives his own back to the whips." Consider the Word of God being insulted, slandered, hated by unbelievers. See that "he gave his cheeks to slaps." He taught that if someone strikes you on the cheek, you should turn the other as well, and he does this himself. So many strike and scourge him, and he is silent and does not speak. For it is written that he did not speak while he was being scourged. And to this day Jesus has not "turned his face away from the shame of spitting." Who among those who treat the teaching with contempt does not, in a sense, spit even now on Jesus, who puts up with it?

Now that the prophet has been struck, it follows that we should tell of others who were struck, such as the apostle and anyone else who has been struck, and so set beside them what concerns Jesus himself. So "Pashhur struck Jeremiah the prophet, and threw him into the cataract that was in the gate of Benjamin of the upper room." The cataract belonged to the upper room of Benjamin. Jerusalem, where God's temple stands, is in the inheritance of Benjamin. Anyone who can listen to the divine readings will find this in the inheritance as recorded in the book of Joshua son of Nun. Since the temple was in the inheritance of Benjamin, whose name means "Son of the right hand" (for nothing about the temple of God is on the left), he threw him "into the cataract that was in the gate of Benjamin of the upper room of the house of the Lord." Since there was an "upper room in the house of the Lord," he "threw" the prophet "into the cataract." Let us also pray that we may now take Jeremiah and bring him up into the upper room "in the house of the Lord." I will show from Scripture that the upper room stands for the mind that is high and lifted up, because Scripture bears witness of the saints that they received the prophets into upper rooms. In the third book of Kingdoms it is recorded that a widow received Elijah the prophet at Zarephath in the region of Sidon, and she lodged the prophet "in her upper room." And in the fourth book, the woman who received Elisha prepared a room for him in the upper chamber. The sinner Ahaziah, on the other hand, fell from the upper room. Jesus also commands you not to come down from the housetop. For he says that when such and such things happen, "then let the one on the housetop not come down to take what is in his house." The one who flees in persecutions is not forbidden to go up onto the housetop; he is told not to "come down from the housetop to take what is in his house." It is good, then, to be in upper rooms, good to be on housetops and to find oneself somewhere high up. And the wonderful apostles too, as it is recorded of them in Acts, when they were together and devoted themselves to prayer and to the word of God, were in an upper room.

And because they were in an upper room, they were not down below. That is why "tongues as of fire appeared to them, distributing themselves." Peter also, when he was sending up his prayer to God, "went up on the roof." If he had not gone up on the roof, he would not have seen "a vessel coming down from heaven, like a linen sheet, let down from heaven by four corners." And she who did the acts of charity, "Tabitha, which when translated is called Dorcas," was not down below either, but "in the upper room." Peter went up there and raised her from the dead. Jesus also was about to celebrate this feast, of which we keep the symbol in the Passover, with his disciples. They asked him, "Where do you want us to prepare the Passover for you?" He said, "As you go, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. He will show you a large upper room, spread with couches, swept and ready. Prepare the Passover there." So no one who keeps the Passover [as Jesus does, with Jesus] is down below. He is up in a large upper room, a swept upper room, an upper room that is adorned and ready. And if you go up with him to celebrate the Passover, he gives you the cup of the new covenant. He gives you the bread of blessing as well, and he freely gives you his own body and his own blood. For this reason we urge you: "Go up to the height; lift up your eyes on high." And as for me, if I teach the divine word, the Word says: "Go

up on a high mountain, you who bring good news to Zion. Lift up your voice with strength, you who bring good news to Jerusalem. Lift it up, do not be afraid." I say all this because of Pashhur. There was "an upper room in the house of the Lord, at the gate of Benjamin," right at hand. Yet he did not bring the prophet up to the upper room. Instead he "threw him into the cataract," down below.

"And it happened on the next day that Pashhur brought Jeremiah out of the cataract." O Lord Jesus, come again! Make these things clear to me, and to those who have come for spiritual food. How is it that "on the next day" he brings "Jeremiah out of the cataract"? For as long as today lasts (and "today" is this whole present age), the sinner throws the prophet down into the cataract. But when the present day stops and tomorrow comes, then he repents and brings him out of the cataract. Then Jeremiah tells him what Pashhur will suffer. What does he say to him? "The Lord has not called your name Pashhur, but Migrant. For thus says the Lord." This Pashhur, as his sins deserve, is going to be carried off to Babylon. He will not go alone but with his friends. For he is handed over to Nebuchadnezzar, goes off into Confusion, and is punished for his sins, because he "threw the prophet into the cataract." Who, then, are the friends of Pashhur, whose name goes with the blackness of the mouth? They are all who accepted his words, who were blackened together with his blackened mouth, who took in the teachings of blackness. "And they will fall by the sword of their enemies." Those appointed over the punishments are the ones who hold the swords and [drink and] make them fall. The Word prophesies about them and says, "And your eyes will see." These things that are prophesied, he says, "your eyes will see." "And I will give you and all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon." Whoever in Judah is found so sinful as to be worthy of the king of Babylon, of Confusion, will be handed over to him. And the king of Babylon takes those who sin. By the historical account the king of Babylon is Nebuchadnezzar, but by the deeper meaning he is the evil one. The sinner is handed over to him, since he is both an enemy and an avenger.

That the sinner is handed over to him, let Paul teach you. In one place he speaks about Phygelus and Hermogenes: "whom I handed over to the one who had committed fornication" [the text seems confused here]. Elsewhere he says: "When you are gathered together, and my spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to hand such a person over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that the spirit may be saved in the day of [the mouth Melania, into the hands of the king of Babylon, and they carry him off to Babylon]." [The last words are garbled in the Greek and mix Paul's text with Jeremiah's.] "And they will cut them down with the sword. And I will give all the strength of this city." It is easy to say that this is prophesied about Jerusalem. All its strength, and everything brought into it, was then handed over to the king of the Babylonians. It is easy to say that this is prophesied about "this city," which in the days of the Savior was handed over to its enemies. The sons of Jerusalem went into captivity, and the city was torn down. But if you examine the matter and look at the city as made not of stones but of people, you will see that those people, that Jerusalem, were handed over "into the hands of the king of Babylon" because of their impiety and sin against Christ. And you are Jerusalem now. So if the word now

threatens Jerusalem, be afraid. If you sin, you are a sinful Jerusalem, and you may be handed over, so that you are no longer Jerusalem but become Babylon and Confusion, when Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonians, takes you. "And all the labors" of Jerusalem he hands over. How does he hand over "all the labors"? If after training and struggling you fall away and sin, all your labors have come into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. How are they all your labors? If you fall after toiling much for the truth, it will be said to you: "Did you suffer so many things for nothing?" Those who know that they have drawn up many labors for virtue's sake ought especially to be afraid. They should fear that, [when they have become Jerusalem] and some sin has happened, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, may [take] their labors.

To help you see more clearly how Nebuchadnezzar takes the labors of Jerusalem when she sins, I will use what is written in Ezekiel, which reads like this: "If the righteous man turns away from his righteous deeds and commits a transgression, I will not remember his righteous deeds which he did." Why? Because Nebuchadnezzar takes the righteous deeds that were done with labor, and Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, wipes them out. "And all the honor" of Jerusalem he takes. This is when a person has been given honor by God, and "being in honor" "did not understand" and sinned. So if you know you are in honor, and you were called to that honor, and then you dishonor yourself again through your sins, the Babylonian king takes the honor of Jerusalem. "And all the treasures of the king of Judah." Jerusalem is rich, but if she sins, the Babylonian takes her treasures. "And they will plunder them and take them and bring them to Babylon. And you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house, go into captivity in Babylon, and there you will die, and there you will be buried." The one caught in Confusion dies in Babylon. And the one who is set against being buried together with Christ is buried in Babylon. For there is also a good burial with Christ, through baptism, as in "we were buried with Christ, and we were raised with him." Being buried with Christ is a mystery. In the same way it is a mystery, [when it happens] through lawlessness, for someone who is a sinner to be buried in Babylon. "And all your friends," he says, "to whom you prophesied lies, will go there." Whoever explains the words of God badly, and throws the prophetic words into the pit, does prophesy, but he prophesies lies. For when someone explains the prophetic words, if he speaks truly, he himself also prophesies, and prophesies true things. But if he lies, he is a false prophet, speaking falsely about the prophetic words.

Now the first passage is finished, so let us begin the second. Right from its opening words it contains matters of no small importance. As we pay attention to the text, let us again ask Jesus to come. Let us urge him to come more visibly and more brightly, so that when he comes he may teach all of us whether the prophet was speaking the truth in what follows, as we ought to think of a prophet, or was lying, which it is not right to say of a holy prophet. He says to God: "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived. You took hold of me and you prevailed. I became a laughingstock; all day long I have gone on being mocked. For I will laugh at my bitter word; I will call upon faithlessness and misery. For the word of the Lord has become a reproach to me and a mockery all day long. And I said, I will not name the

name of the Lord, and I will not speak any more in his name. And it became in my heart like a burning fire, blazing in my bones. I am worn out on every side and cannot bear it, for I heard the slander of many gathering around me." They were obviously saying: "Rise up, and let us rise up against him, you men who are his friends. Watch for his scheme, to see whether he will be deceived. Then we will be able to overcome him and take our vengeance on him." But while they were saying these things, the prophet says: "And the Lord is with me like a mighty warrior. Therefore they pursued, and they could not understand. They were greatly ashamed, because they did not understand their dishonors, which will never be forgotten." This is the second passage of the reading. How, then, can the prophet say, "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived"? Does God deceive? I am at a loss how to handle this text. If, out of regard for God and his word, I look for anything fitting to say about him, what I am going to say needs a generous and careful handling. The prophet speaks as one who has ceased to be deceived. He says, "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived," as though his first schooling and introduction had come to him through deception. It is as though he could not be schooled in the basics and brought into godliness unless he were deceived first, so that later he might come to recognize the deception.

One useful example is enough for the matter before us. We speak to children as we guide them. We do not speak to them as to adults. We speak to them as to children who need training. We deceive children by frightening them, so that they stop the undisciplined behavior of children. We frighten them by telling tales of deception, because of what belongs to their childishness. By deception we make them afraid, so that they go to their teachers, recite their lessons, and do what suits the progress of children. We are all children to God, and we need the upbringing that children need. For this reason God, in sparing us, deceives us, even if we do not perceive the deception in time. His purpose is that, once we have grown beyond infancy, we are no longer trained by deception but by actual events. A child is led to fear in one way, and a person who has advanced in age and passed beyond childhood is led in another. For if I am able to guide him by deception [text uncertain], then God who deceives may say, "I will train them by the hearing of their affliction." I will set out accounts of how God deceives for salvation, and speaks to someone so that the sinner stops doing what he would have done if he had not heard certain words. Take the one who said, "Yet three days and Nineveh will be overthrown." Was he speaking the truth, or was he not speaking the truth, but deceiving with a deception that turns people around? If that turning around had not happened, it would no longer have been a deception but already the truth of what was said, and the overthrow would have followed for Nineveh. It was up to the hearers. Either they were deceived and believed what was said as true, and so were benefited and not overthrown. Or, if what was said had not come true and they had not been deceived but had realized that it would not happen, they would have despised what was said as a deception. Then they would have suffered not "Yet three days and Nineveh will be overthrown," but, I dare to say, things much harsher than that.

For the Ninevites had sinned. If they had not repented, then perhaps "Yet three days and Nineveh will be overthrown" would have happened. But suppose that this had not happened;

something worse would have happened: they would have been handed over to eternal fire. For this reason a different punishment is stated in the law for those who are being trained like children. But for those to whom "the fullness of time" has come, other punishments are written down. Compare the punishments of sinners under the law with the punishments of sinners under the gospel, and you will see that those people, like infants, heard of punishments suited to infants, while we, as those who have come of age, hear of harsher punishments. If a man or a woman was an adulterer back then, the threat was not Gehenna, not eternal fire, but this: "he shall be stoned with stones"; "let the whole congregation stone him." The adulterer found among those people, the adulteress found among them, will say when departing: "If only the word had said this of me as well: the people threw stones at me, and I was not being kept for the eternal fire!" For not only the adulterer but also the one who says to his brother "Fool!" is "liable to the Gehenna of fire." But if the one who says "Fool!" to his brother "will be liable to the Gehenna of fire," what will the adulterer be liable to? I look for some punishment greater than the Gehenna of fire. And perhaps I would say that Gehenna is for involuntary sins, for those who can be cleansed. But just as, for the good, the righteous, "what God has prepared for those who love him has not entered the heart of man," so what he has prepared for sinners, for fornicating and committing adultery, "has not entered the heart of man." For if what makes the one who says "Fool!" to his brother liable had entered the heart, it is clear that what has been prepared for those who have sinned in worse ways is greater than anything that enters the heart.

I cannot conceive of anything greater than Gehenna; I only believe that what has been prepared for adulterers is something greater than Gehenna. In this way I come also to the remaining punishments under the law. And I take an apostolic saying that agrees with these and that stays silent about my punishment if I sin, since I do not want to accept "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived" and be rightly deceived. But what does the apostle say? "Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse a punishment, do you think, will he be thought worthy of who has trampled on the Son of God?" Name the punishment, Paul; tell us what it is. But he says, "I do not state it." The punishment of those who sin under the gospel is greater than what is said, greater than what is heard, greater than what is imagined. For this reason the prophet was brought in like a child: he heard, and was afraid, and was disciplined, and after this was brought to maturity, saying: "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived." And you also, as long as you are a child, fear the threats, so that you do not suffer what lies beyond the threats: the eternal punishments, the unquenchable fire, or perhaps something even greater than that, which is laid up for those who have lived beyond the bounds of the right word. May we never experience any of these things. Instead, being brought to maturity in Christ Jesus, may we be justified in a way worthy of the heavenly feasts and of the Passover there, in the ascent in Christ Jesus, to whom belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Homily 20

Everything that is written about God, even when it looks unfitting on the surface, must be understood in a way that is worthy of a good God. Who would not say it is unfitting to attribute to God that he has anger, that he uses wrath, that he repents, or even that he sleeps? Yet each of these, in the hands of someone who knows how to hear "dark sayings," will be found worthy of God. His anger is not fruitless. As his word trains us, so his anger trains us too. Those who have not been trained by the word he trains by anger. So God must use what is called anger just as he uses what is called the Word. For his Word is not the kind of thing that everyone else's word is. No one else's word is "a living being." No one else's word is "God." No one else's word was "in the beginning" with the one whose word it was, even if it is only [from some beginning]. In the same way, God's anger is called anger, but not as anyone else's anger is. And just as the Word of God has something foreign about it compared with every other word whatever (he is God, he is a living Word, he has his own existence, he serves the Father), so too, since what is called God's anger has once been given that name, it has something foreign and quite different from the anger of anyone we could define. His wrath likewise has something peculiar to it. It belongs to the purpose of one who rebukes in wrath, wishing the person rebuked to turn back through the rebuke.

The word also rebukes, just as the word trains. But the word does not rebuke in the way wrath rebukes. Those who have not been helped by the rebuke that comes from the word will need the rebuke that comes from wrath. We said that there is also a repentance of God that looks unfitting on the surface, since it is written: "I have repented that I anointed Saul as king." You must investigate this repentance in a worthy way. Do not suppose that his repenting has any kinship with the repenting of those who repent. As his word had something set apart, and his anger, and his wrath had something surpassing, and none of them was akin to the things that share their names, so his repentance shares only a name with our repentance. Things are "homonyms" when only the name is common, while the account of the essence that goes with the name is different. So only the name is common between the wrath of God and the wrath of anyone else, and only the name is common between anyone's anger and the anger of God. We must understand repentance in the same way. Anyone who can should ask what God's repentance accomplishes, and what it accomplished. It brought down Saul, who was reigning lawlessly, and raised up for the people a king after God's own heart. For because of that good repentance he said: "I have

found a man after my heart, David, son of Jesse." But all this is only my introduction, because the reading from Jeremiah begins like this: "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived."

We are asking whether it works like this. Everyone else's wrath is evil, but God's wrath is meant to expose and correct. Everyone else's anger is harsh, but what is called God's anger is meant to train. The regret of any of us accuses the weakness of the one [who acted] before the regret. But in God's case his regret does not accuse God. It speaks of the outward circumstances that prompt the regret. In the same way we must understand that God's deception is of a different kind from our deception, the kind by which we deceive. So what is this deception from God? The prophet understood it. When he stopped being deceived, and knew the benefit of having been deceived, he said, "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived." First I will use a Hebrew tradition that reached us through a man who had fled because of faith in Christ. He had come up from the law and had come to the place where we live. He told a story that may look like a myth or may be a sound account able to win over those who hear it, as a way into the words "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived." He said something like this. God does not rule as a tyrant but as a king. As king he does not use force but persuades. He wants those under him to give themselves willingly to his plan, so that a person's goodness comes from willing choice and not from compulsion. Paul knew this, and wrote to Philemon about Onesimus in the letter to Philemon: "that your good deed might not be by compulsion but of your own free will."

So the God of the universe could have worked in us what is thought of as good, so that we gave alms by compulsion and practiced self-control by compulsion. But he did not wish to. For this reason he does not command us to do what we do out of grief or compulsion, so that what is done may be voluntary. He looks, so to speak, for a way for someone to do willingly what God wants. The tradition told me something like this. God wanted to send Jeremiah to prophesy to all the nations, and before all the nations, to the people. But the prophecies were rather grim, for they announced punishments, by which each person would be punished according to what he deserved. God also knew the prophet's inclination, that he did not want to prophesy the worse things to the people of Israel. So he arranged to say: "Take this cup, and you shall give it to drink to all the nations to whom I send you." God commanded Jeremiah to take a cup. To encourage him to take the cup of unmixed wine, he said, "And I will send you to all the nations, with this cup of unmixed wine." Jeremiah heard that he was being sent to all the nations to serve them a cup of anger, a cup of punishments. He did not suspect that Israel too would have to drink from the cup of punishment. So he was deceived and took the cup in order to give all the nations a drink. Once he had taken the cup, he heard: "And you shall first give drink to [text missing]."

He had expected one thing, and something else met him. About this he says, "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived." Isaiah gave a similar account. He too did not know what he would be commanded to say to the people. He hears God saying, as it is written, "Whom shall I send, and who will go to this people?" He answered, it says, "Here I am; send me."

Then he hears: "Go and say to this people: You will hear with your ears and never understand, and you will look and look and never see. For the heart of this people has grown fat," and so on. Since he did not know what he would prophesy, or that he would have to threaten the people with such things, he said, "Here I am; send me." Because of this, it says, in what follows there is "a voice of [a lion; perhaps 'of one speaking']: Cry out." And he did not answer as one eager to do what was commanded. He said, "What shall I cry?" For he was afraid that he might again hear what he heard in the earlier prophecy: "Go and say to this people: You will hear with your ears and never understand." "What then shall I cry?" "All flesh is grass, and all its glory is like the flower of grass," and so on. In these words he heard nothing against Israel. This is what that man told us, handing down the meaning of "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived."

(Jer 19) For my part, I pray that what I receive from those who teach me I will not merely keep. I pray that I will not bury the talent in the ground, as the passage says, nor tie up in a cloth the mina of those who teach something useful. Instead I pray to multiply the lessons I receive from the one who hands them on and is able to hand on what is useful. I pray to make the mina, whether of the gospel, or of an apostle, or of a prophet, or of the law, yield many times over. So when I heard these words, I began to think to myself about "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived." And as I think about it, I pray to find something true for this passage. Perhaps it is like this. A father wants to deceive his son, who is still a small child, for the child's good, because the child cannot be helped in any other way unless he is deceived. A doctor works to deceive a sick man who cannot be healed unless he accepts words of deception. In the same way the God of all acts, since he has set before himself the benefit of the human race. Let the doctor say to the sick man, "You must be cut, you must be cauterized, you must suffer other, harsher things." The patient would not hand himself over. So sometimes the doctor says something else. He hides the cutting iron, the blade that divides, under a sponge. Again, if I may put it this way, he hides the nature of what is bitter, the unpleasant medicine, under honey. He wants not to harm but to heal the one he is treating. The whole of divine Scripture is full of such medicines. Some are good things that are hidden, and some are bitter things that are hidden. Suppose you see a father threatening his son as if he hated him, speaking fearful words to him and not showing his affection, but hiding his love for his son. You will see that he wants to deceive the child. For it is not good for the son to know his father's love, his friendly disposition. The boy would go slack and would not be trained. For this reason the father hides the sweetness of his affection and shows the bitterness of his threat. God does something like this, in proportion, as a father and as a doctor.

There are some bitter things that heal even the most righteous and the wisest man. [The text seems to have a gap here.] For everyone who has sinned must be punished for his sins. "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked." "Whether fornicator or adulterer, or effeminate, or homosexual, or thief, or drunkard, or slanderer, or swindler, they will not inherit the kingdom of God." If this is understood and taken exactly, by people who cannot see the doctor's iron under the sponge, by people who cannot perceive the bitter medicine under

the honey, someone will lose heart. For which of us is not aware in himself of having drunk without good judgment and been drunk? Which of us is clean from theft, and from failing to provide what is needed as one ought? Yet see what the word says: "Do not be deceived, for these will not inherit the kingdom of God." The mystery in this passage has to be hidden, so that the many do not lose heart, so that they do not learn the facts and expect their departure from this life to be not a rest but a punishment. For who will be found to be a Paul, able to say, "It is far better to depart and be with Christ"? My own wood must be burned in me. For I know that if I depart, my own wood must be burned in me. And what wood do I have? I have slanders for wood, I have drunken bouts for wood, thefts for wood, and countless other pieces of wood I have built into my building. You see that all this escapes the notice of most believers, and it is well that it does. Each of us supposes that because he has not worshiped idols and has not committed fornication (if only we were clean at least in such matters!), he will be saved when he leaves this life. Do we not see that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive what is due for what he did through the body, whether good or bad"? Do we not see the one who said, "You only have I known out of all the tribes of the earth; therefore I will take vengeance on you for all your practices"? He did not say some of them and not others.

So then, the doctor sometimes hides his surgical knife under a soft, gentle sponge. The father also hides his tender affection behind the look of a threat. Some deceptions remove fatty growths and swollen veins and anything else that harms the make-up of the body; another removes a child's lack of discipline and softness. The prophet understood God to be doing something of this kind in a hidden way. He saw how he had been deceived by God for his good, and he says, "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived." God brought him to so great a grace that he prayed and said to God, "Deceive me, if that is for my benefit." For the deception that comes from God is one thing, and the deception that comes from the serpent is another. Notice what the woman says to God: "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." The serpent's deception drove Adam and his wife out of God's paradise. But the deception that came to the prophet who said, "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived," brought him to so great a grace of prophecy: it increased the power in him, it brought him to maturity, and it enabled him to serve the purpose of God's word without fearing any human being. So let us also understand these things, and let us pray, for the present and for the future, to be deceived by God. Only let the serpent not deceive us. Something related is written elsewhere, for it is said in Isaiah: "For the Lord mixed for them a spirit of error." You will stop there too and consider what the spirit of error does when it is mixed by God. And it is fitting that God did not give the spirit of error undiluted; rather, as the prophet put it, he mixed it.

I want to take a risk and give an example of people who were helped by being deceived. There are some who practise purity and chastity for this reason, and others who practise being married only once, because they expected that a person who has had marital relations would be lost, and that a person who has married twice would be lost. Let us compare the cases themselves. What is better for the woman who has married only once: to be deceived,

to suppose that a twice-married woman is punished and handed over to eternal punishment, and so to stay married only once and pure, or to know the truth and marry a second time? I think anyone who sees the consequence can say this: it would be more blessed to stay pure and not marry twice without being deceived, and to see that the twice-married woman does share in some salvation, though not in as great a blessedness as the one who could have married twice and kept herself pure. But if she cannot do this, it is better to be deceived, thinking that the twice-married are lost, and to remain pure because of the deception, than to have known the truth and to have come to be in the lesser rank, that of the twice-married. You will find something like this also in some who practise complete chastity and purity. Many other things could be found that we do under a deception and that benefit us. And how many people who are thought wise have found the truth about punishment, and have gone through the matter of the deception, so to speak, and have ended up living worse lives? It would have profited them to think as they did before, about "their worm will not die," and that "their fire will not be quenched," and that "they will be a sight for all flesh," and that "the chaff will be burned up with unquenchable fire." But if they imagine something different from their first understanding, and so are "about to despise the riches of God's kindness, forbearance and patience," see whether it is not true that, just because they did not seem to have been deceived, they stored up for themselves "wrath on the day of wrath, of revelation and of God's righteous judgment." They would not have stored it up if they had been deceived.

All this is said because of the deception that comes from God, since the prophet said, "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived." Let us now look separately at the words "I was deceived." Why did he not say only, "You deceived me, Lord," but add, "and I was deceived"? Sometimes one person may be working a deception while another is on guard and is not deceived. But when one person works at deceiving and the other does not guard himself against being deceived, and falls into the deception, then he might say, "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived." Now if I were in the prophet's place, I might say something like this. Whatever the serpent says to me, whether he tells me the truth or wants to deceive me, I am suspicious of his words. I am convinced that, whether he deceives me or speaks truly, he harms me. Even his truth does harm. Nothing useful comes from the serpent, since "a bad tree cannot bear good fruit." But whatever God says to me, and I am persuaded that it is God who speaks, I am ready to give myself over to him. If he speaks the truth, I accept it. If he wants to deceive me, I am willingly deceived; let God alone deceive me. And because I give myself over, persuaded that it is God who speaks, even to being deceived, and because I do not pry, wanting to be deceived not by another but by God, I therefore say: "Not only did you work the deception, but I also underwent being deceived by you." In this sense I say, "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived." And what follows when God is the one deceiving and a human being the one deceived? "You prevailed and you were able." Once he has prevailed, he is able. But if he does not prevail, then I need labors. "You prevailed and you were able."

Next he says: "I came to the passage..." I heard these things: that Jeremiah lived in the times of the most sinful people (in his days, at any rate, the captivity took place). They were so sinful that they mocked and laughed and jeered whenever the prophet spoke the prophetic opening, "Thus says the Lord." Those who heard laughed and mocked what was said. So the one who had been deceived, and had been helped by being deceived, took care not to say "Thus says the Lord." For this reason he himself, wanting to deceive for the sake of their benefit, said: "I am speaking to you my own words, since you do not listen to the words of the Lord." Then they lent their ears as if to the words of Jeremiah, and they were hearing the words of God. The man who handed the passage down to me told me these things, as he examined the openings and beginnings of the prophecies. So the beginning of Jeremiah's prophecy is, in our version, as the Seventy handed it down (I do not know what they had in view): "The word of God that came to Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah, of the priests." But in the Hebrew and the remaining editions it is: "Words of Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah." All of them agree in saying, "Words of Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah." Why then "words of Jeremiah"? Because his opening, in speaking to those unwilling to listen, was: "Hear my words." We too sometimes do such things when it seems useful to us. At times we bring words to people from the nations, wanting to bring them to the faith. If we see that they are prejudiced against Christianity, that they loathe the name and hate to hear "This is a Christian word," we do not pretend that we are speaking a Christian word, though it is a useful one.

But when we have built up that speech as well as we can, and we think we are winning the hearer, who has not listened to what was said in a casual way, then we admit that this praiseworthy speech was a speech of Christians. We do something close to what the prophet did when he no longer said, "Thus says the Lord," but, "Hear the words of me, Jeremiah." All this is because of the words, "I became a laughingstock." And do we get angry if we are ever laughed at while we are speaking, when a man like Jeremiah says, "I became a laughingstock; all day long I was continually mocked"? Why do I say Jeremiah? My own Jesus was mocked too. For it says, "The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they mocked him." But the Lord mocks all who mock the words of God. "I became a laughingstock." See what kinds of lives the prophets lived. At one moment they were laughed at, at another they were in danger, struck down and stoned by the people, killed, hated, driven out. They suffered and endured all of this so that, in keeping with God's will, seeking the glory that comes from the One alone, they might proclaim the word and reach the end that comes from God. "All day long I was continually mocked." He spent the day being mocked.

"For at my bitter word I will laugh." Laughter is a kind of promise, and the patriarch Isaac is named after that promise, for his name is translated "Laughter." That laughter is a promise is clear from the words, "Blessed are those who weep now"; the promise is "for they will laugh." Just as there is a promise, "They will be called sons of God," and "They will see God," and "They will inherit the earth," and "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven," so laughter is a promise. The opposite of that promise is the weeping of the one who is called blessed. But you will ask whether, in this good laughter, the weeping that is blessed fits with it in

one sense or another, while a different weeping is set against it, the weeping kept in store for those who are pitied for the opposite reasons. For it says, "Woe to those who laugh now, for they will mourn and weep." So the weeping that is blessed is one thing, and the weeping stored up for those who have lived badly is another. Whether that second weeping also has some useful end, I do not know. Why do I say this? Hear Paul. He taught, and he worked at it, saying that he grieved his hearers. And he admits that he was most glad just when someone was grieved by him. For he says, "And who is it that makes me glad, if not the one who is grieved by me?" And if anyone is able to move the soul of a hearer who has sinned greatly, he prays to speak words of this kind. Spoken with power, with order, with divinity and with holy thoughts, they will shake the soul of the hearer and move him to mourning, to weeping and to tears. So the speaker rejoices [when he sees the audience delighted and full of what is said].

For when a speaker leads people toward the promises, as "through the narrow and hard way" of sorrow "to life," he leads them through weeping to the laughter that is called blessed. But when he does not achieve this, I am afraid that he may be saying something like this: "Woe to those who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep." Why have I said this to you? I wanted to hint at what he means by "at my bitter word I will laugh." I wanted to show a laughter that comes out of weeping, and the other weeping which those who laugh here will weep, perhaps because God is working to produce weeping in them. For "there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." And God works this because he sees that the one who weeps over his own sins, who laments over his own lawless acts, has already come to a true awareness of his own evils. If only each one of us would say, over each sin, "Every night I will wash my bed; with my tears I will drench my couch." If only each of us, weeping over his own sins, would say, "My tears have become my bread day and night." If my word is rather bitter here, and bitter because I am distressed for their sake, then the hearers are put off. Those who are rebuked are burdened by the speaker. But I know that the end of my bitter word is to laugh, and to laugh with the laughter of the blessed. The prophet perhaps knew this when he said, "At my bitter word I will laugh." Already there is "a bitter word," but I do not yet laugh. "At my bitter word I will laugh."

"I will call upon faithlessness and misery." The righteous man calls upon God; the unrighteous man also calls upon wisdom. For it says, "It will be that when you call upon me, I will not listen to you." That is said of the unrighteous. And it is clear that the righteous also call upon wisdom at times: "Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." Here, though, the prophet says, "I will call upon faithlessness and misery," as if he called upon faithlessness the way one calls upon God, and upon misery the way one calls upon the Lord. Is it a good thing you are calling upon, Jeremiah, when you announce, "I will call upon faithlessness and misery"? But we must consider the agreements we make and the breaking of them, because there are times when one makes an agreement badly. And after making a bad agreement, I wish we would call upon faithlessness. So too, if I consider "the wide and roomy road that leads to destruction," and see that I am not miserable while I travel on it, then I move away "from the wide and roomy road" and come "to the narrow and

constricted one." There I become miserable, and I say, "I will call upon misery." I am about to break the agreements I made with the world and worldly things, so that I may take up heavenly agreements. "I will call upon faithlessness." So I leave "the wide and roomy road" and come "to the narrow and constricted one," so that I may become miserable as Paul was, and I say, "I will call upon misery." For not every person will say, "Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Only the one who has understood the body of death, the one who wants to be rescued from this body of death, will say, "Wretched man that I am."

But the lover of the body, the common sort of man, who does not believe in the age to come, does not say, "Wretched man that I am." He counts himself happy to be a man, and happy to be in the body of death. So if I can understand how Paul came to say, "Wretched man that I am," though I have not yet called upon misery, I will call upon it by breaking the agreements I made with wickedness, and I will say as Jeremiah did, "I will call upon faithlessness and misery." For he did not say, "I will call upon faithlessness toward God." I want to give an example from Scripture of a righteous person breaking agreements, to show how that person by deed called upon faithlessness. Judith made an agreement with Holofernes: for so many days she would go out and pray to God, and after those days she would give herself to the bed of Holofernes. Holofernes accepted this agreement. He let Judith go outside the camp to pray. What ought Judith to have done? Keep the agreement or break it? All agree: break it. For to break the agreements made with Holofernes was a blessed thing before God. Judith was about to break her agreements with Holofernes; she was about to say, "I will call upon faithlessness." And she did call upon faithlessness. I wish that I too might become such a person, that I might say, "I will call upon faithlessness," and call upon faithlessness toward the serpent, toward the devil. The serpent once made an agreement with Eve, and the serpent was a friend to the woman, and she to him. But God, being good, arranged for this agreement to be dissolved and this evil friendship to be broken up. And as a good God he says, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed."

So let us listen with good sense to how God creates enmity toward one party, in order to create friendship toward Christ. It is impossible to be a friend of opposites at the same time. Just as "no one can serve two masters," so no one can be a friend both of God and of mammon, a friend both of Christ and of the serpent. Friendship with Christ must create enmity toward the serpent, and friendship with the serpent must breed enmity toward Christ. "I will call upon faithlessness and misery." To help you understand better the words "I will call upon misery," I will describe something that happens to those who practice self-discipline. Often a man has the chance to marry and avoid trouble, while the flesh rises up against the spirit. Yet he chooses not to use his freedom to marry. He chooses instead to suffer hardship and toil, to "batter the body with fasting" and bring it into slavery by abstaining from certain foods, and in every way to "put to death the deeds of the body" by the spirit. Has such a person not called upon misery, when he could have given himself over to luxury and pleasure and not called upon misery at all? So if anyone is able to imitate the

prophet, let him call upon faithlessness, as we have explained, and let him also call upon misery in his disciplines. It also happens that the account about Jeremiah is true, that he lived in purity. For the Lord said to him, "You shall not take a wife, and you shall not have children." And he lived in purity. For he called upon faithlessness and misery.

"Because the word of the Lord has become to me a reproach." Blessed is Jeremiah, who had no other reproach than the word of the Lord. But we, wretched as we are, have reproaches that come not from the word of the Lord but from our own sins. We are reproached for the things in which we stumble and have stumbled, and we are abused for our wickedness. The Savior does not want us to be reproached in that way. He says, "Blessed are you when they reproach you and persecute you and say every evil word against you for my sake." "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy." So he says, "The word of the Lord has become to me a reproach and a mockery all day long." Then notice how honest the prophets are. They do not hide their own sins, as we do. They speak of sins committed not only in their own time but in all generations. I myself hesitate to confess my sins before the few who are here, because those who hear me will condemn me. But Jeremiah felt no shame over something he had suffered that was sinful. He wrote down his own sin. What follows in the passage was a sin: "And I said, I will not name the name of the Lord, and I will no longer speak in his name." You were taught to do everything in the name of the Lord, to act in the name of God. Yet you say, "I will not name the name of the Lord"? What name will you name instead? "You shall not remember the name of other gods in your hearts." And yet you say, "I will not name the name of the Lord, and I will no longer speak in his name"? So he speaks as one who has suffered something human, which we too have often been in danger of suffering. This is especially so when someone knows in his own conscience that he once endured hardship, suffering and hatred for the sake of teaching and the word. He often says, "I am withdrawing. Why should I have all this trouble? If I am in trouble because of this, because of teaching and putting out the word, why not rather withdraw into solitude and quiet?"

The prophet suffered something like this when he said, "And I said: I will not name the name of the Lord, and I will no longer speak in his name." But the Lord is good, for he prevents sins like this in men of such stature. He did not let the prophet stand by what he had just said. Even here he made Jeremiah call down "unbelief" on himself, and set aside what he had said. For he said, "I will not name the name of the Lord, and I will no longer speak in his name." Then he says, "It became in my heart like a burning fire, flaming in my bones, and I am helpless on every side and cannot bear it." The word of the Lord had become a fire burning his heart. "It became in my heart like a flaming fire, burning in my bones." Jeremiah threw off the sin he had committed when he said, "I will not name the name of the Lord, and I will no longer speak in his name." And he threw it off in the very moment he spoke. I wish that I, at the very moment I sin and speak a sinful word, would feel that a fire had come into my heart, burning and flaming, so that I could not bear it. The word is about to venture something, though I do not know whether it is good for such an audience as this. It has said that there is a kind of fire, not a fire perceived by the senses, which punishes the one punished with such pain that he cannot bear it. For he said, "It

became in my heart like a flaming fire," and "burning" not only in my heart but also "in my bones, and I am helpless on every side and cannot bear it." I fear that what is laid up for us may be like this: a fire arising as it arose in the heart of Jeremiah. But we have not experienced it. If we had experienced it, and if the two fires were set before us, this fire and the outer fire we see in those who are burned by the rulers of the nations, we would choose that outer fire rather than this one.

For that fire burns the surface, but this one burns the heart. Beginning from the heart, it reaches through all the bones, and passing through the bones it spreads over the whole person who is burning, and it comes in such a way that the one burning cannot bear it. Who, under this fire, is able to say, "And I cannot bear it"? I know that even robbers have managed to endure that other fire, the pain that comes from it. The pain from this fire is of a different kind, the one Jeremiah described when he said, "And it became in my heart like a burning fire, flaming in my bones, and I am helpless on every side and cannot bear it." The Savior, who said, "I came to cast fire upon the earth," is the one who kindles that fire. And because the Savior kindles that fire, for those who begin to listen to him he begins with the fire, and first casts fire into their heart. This is what Simon and Cleopas confess when they say, concerning his words, "Was not our heart burning on the road, as he opened the Scriptures to us?" Here the heart of Simon and of Cleopas is burned with fire. Hear them as they say, "Was not our heart burning?" 9. Who is worthy now to receive that fire in the heart, so that he does not receive it there, in the other place? I want to describe who it is that has this fire in the heart. Picture for me two people who have committed the same kind of sin, the foul, unclean sin of fornication. Of these two who have fornicated, one is not grieved or pained or stung. He experiences what was said in Proverbs about the immoral woman: "Whatever she does, she washes herself and says she has done nothing out of place." But look at the other. After his fall he cannot keep quiet. He is punished in his conscience and tormented in his heart. He cannot eat or drink; he fasts not by decision but from the pain of repentance. Picture such a man for me: gloomy and worn down all day long as he goes about, groaning aloud from the sighing of his heart, seeing his sin before him, constantly accusing him to his face.

And look at such a person: he is punished not for one day or one night, but for a long time. Which of the two do you prefer? Which do you say has hopes with God? The one who committed fornication and gave it no thought, but became callous, as one who has handed himself over to licentiousness? Or the one who mourns and weeps after a single sin? This second man [has grounds for hope]. The more he is burned by the fire of grief, the more mercy he receives, and he has enough time for his breaking, as much time as is given for punishment to that man who fornicated and was grieved. And since this time of punishment here is profitable to him, the apostle took pains to punish the one who had fornicated. When he had punished him with grief and saw that the grief was enough, he said, "Lest such a man be swallowed up by excessive grief, confirm your love toward him." Let each of us examine his own conscience and see what he has sinned, because he needs to be punished. Let him pray to God that this fire which was in Jeremiah would come upon

him, and then the fire that was on Simon and Cleopas. But the one who has both sinned and has not cared will be kept for that other fire. "And it became in my heart like a burning fire, flaming in my bones, and I am relaxed on every side and cannot bear it, for I heard the slander of many gathering around." The blameless, blessed Jeremiah (I say this setting aside that small sin, and any other slight thing he did) was slandered by many. But the slander of the many was praise for him with God. For those who slandered him said, "Band together, and let us band together against him, all you men who are his friends. Watch for his plan, and he will be deceived." They wanted to deceive him with a different deception, a deadly one, the opposite of the deception about which he said, "You deceived me, Lord, and I was deceived." And these who band together against him say, "And we will prevail against him, and we will take our vengeance from him." Those who were rebuked for their own sins think they have been wronged, and because they think they have been wronged they say, "We will take our vengeance from him."

Those who sawed Isaiah in two did something like this. They acted as men wronged (since the prophecies turned them back, punished them, rebuked them, and reproached them), so they sawed him in two and condemned him with a vote of death. But Jeremiah says about these who banded together against him, "And the Lord is with me like a mighty warrior." If we become the kind of people we ought to be, and accept that fire when it comes upon us for our sins, as it did upon Jeremiah and those like him, then after this the Lord is with us "like a mighty warrior." "Therefore they persecuted, and they could not understand." [The Jews who persecuted him: "They were greatly ashamed, and did not understand their dishonor"; though dishonored for so long a time, they do not name their own sins.] The Lord was with the one being persecuted, and so the persecuted one could not be put into their hands. Might it be, then, since many things in Jeremiah are referred to the Savior, that this too can be of that kind? For "Band together, and let us band together against him" was said also about the Savior. And the "Lord" was with him "like a mighty warrior. Therefore they persecuted, and they could not understand," the Jews who persecuted him. "They were greatly ashamed, and did not understand their dishonor." Though dishonored for so long a time, they do not name their own sins, "which will not be forgotten forever." Instead they suppose that in this age their lawless deeds will be forgotten. But we see that their lawless deeds will not be forgotten forever. And as we see this, we remember the words, "Do not be high-minded, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, how much more will he not spare" the unnatural ones? So the "Lord of hosts" is with us, "who tests the righteous, who understands the kidneys and hearts." The Lord approves what is just and rejects what is unjust. He is, so to speak, a banker of the just and the unjust. And this same Lord "understands kidneys and hearts." I ask what the difference is between "understanding kidneys and hearts" and "examining hearts and kidneys." He does not examine the hearts and kidneys of everyone, but of those who have sinned. I take "examine" in the sense it has in everyday life, when it is said of people being put to the torture.

In the law courts some people conduct the examination, some are examined, and some are in the severest suffering. But the Lord alone has a new kind of examination, for he is the one

who examines hearts, and to the Lord alone belongs the searching of hearts and kidneys. Robbers here are examined in their sides by the order of the governor. There, however, a person is not examined by an order of God but by the Lord himself, who tests kidneys and hearts. Unless perhaps I should say here that the one receiving the order is the Son, the one giving the order is the Father, and the Word is the one who examines hearts and kidneys. And I think that, of all tortures and all sufferings, the heaviest are those that come from the Word when he examines both hearts and kidneys. So let us do everything we can so that we are not handed over to that examination. I think those who are handed over to the "tormentors" mentioned in the Gospel suffer less than that. For they are handed over to many, perhaps to a greater number of tormentors at the beginning, since they are not yet worthy to be handed over to the one Word who examines hearts and kidneys. That rich man was not yet worthy to be handed over to the one who examines hearts and kidneys, and so he was tormented by several. Whether he suffers this later or not, let the one who is able examine it. But what awaits us is this: tormentors, and the one who examines hearts and kidneys over our sins. If we are not quickly set free from those sins, we will be in them. So let us rise and ask for help from God, that we may be blessed in Christ Jesus, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Sources. Greek text: Erich Klostermann's edition (Origenes Werke, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'Sche Buchhandlung, 1901); Erich Klostermann's edition (Origenes Werke, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1901), digitised by Open Greek and Latin and the First Thousand Years of Greek project (CC BY-SA 4.0). The English is a new translation made by SermonIndex with AI directly from the Greek, as a first reading version; it has not been checked line by line by a person and may contain mistakes. No older English translation was used. Where the digital Greek is flagged as damaged, the English is a best reading. Released under CC BY-SA 4.0.