St. Anthony Mary Claret

SUNDAY HOMILIES, VOLUME II

Colección de pláticas dominicales, segundo año

From the Spanish of the first edition (Barcelona, 1858)

English translation

Contributed to Mind of the Church by a friend of the library who wishes to remain anonymous

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About this translation

The *Colección de pláticas dominicales* (Barcelona: Librería Religiosa, 1858–1859, seven volumes) was compiled and published by St. Anthony Mary Claret, then Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, for the use of parish priests. Its title page says that he “formed and gathered” it “from the most classic authors”: the sermons are drawn from other preachers, who are not named, and are given here as sermons of Claret's collection, not as his own compositions. Translated from the edition of 1858–1859. This is Volume II, the first half of the “Second Year”, complete but for printed pages 52–53, which are missing from the copy used.

The notes give the references to Claret's sources and the notes he printed himself; the modern editors' commentary and the translator's own remarks are not reproduced.

Front Matter of Volume II

Half-title (p. \[1\]):

COLLECTION OF SUNDAY PLÁTICAS.\ VOLUME II.

Notice (p. \[2\]):

Various Prelates of Spain have granted 3,400 days of indulgence to all who read, or hear read, a chapter or page of any of the publications of the LIBRERÍA RELIGIOSA.

Title page (p. \[3\]):

COLLECTION OF SUNDAY PLÁTICAS,\ which, for the ease and relief of the venerable Parish Priests and Curates,\ has been formed and gathered, from the most classic authors, by\ D. ANTONIO MARÍA CLARET Y CLARÁ,\ Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, Primate of the Indies, etc.\ With the approval of the Ordinary.\ Barcelona: Librería Religiosa. — Printing house of Pablo Riera,\ calle de Robador, nos. 24 and 26.\ 1858.

Opening of the text (p. 5):

COLLECTION OF SUNDAY PLÁTICAS.\ SECOND YEAR.

1. First Sunday of Advent: On the Last Judgment, and How We Must Prepare for It

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 1, pp. 5–13. Gospel: Luke 21:25–33. Original preacher not named.

> *Erunt signa in sole, et luna, et stellis, et in terris pressura gentium (Luke 21:25).*
>
> *There shall be signs in the sun, in the moon and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations.*

The Gospel of this day is from the twenty-first chapter of St. Luke, and it reads thus:

1. “At the end of the world there shall be great signs in the sun, in the moon and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations for fear of the confused roaring of the sea and of its waves; so that men shall wither away for terror, awaiting the evils that shall come upon the whole universe. For the powers of the heavens shall be moved; and then they shall see the Son of Man coming with great power and majesty. When these things begin to come to pass, lift up your heads, for your redemption is at hand. And he spoke to them this likeness: Look at the fig tree and all the trees; when they begin to put forth their fruit, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is near. Amen I say to you, this generation of the world shall not pass away until all these things are fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away, nor fail to be fulfilled.” This is the Gospel.

2. The divine Scriptures announce to us two comings of Jesus Christ into the world. The first, when, clothed in the frailty of our clay, he presented himself to men full of mercy, to rescue them from the tyranny of the

devil and to give them a law of love, so that by keeping it they might gain the fruit of his plentiful redemption and be eternally happy. Our mother the Church recalls this coming in the four weeks that follow, called Advent, or "coming", to dispose our hearts to thankfulness for so singular a benefit as the Incarnation of the eternal Word, by exactly keeping the commands he laid on us when he became man for our salvation and remedy. The second coming will be on the last of days, when the same Jesus, adorned with his greatness, will come to call the world to account \[*residenciar*: to subject an official to the formal review of his conduct at the end of his term\] and to give the reward to those who kept the law he set before them, and the punishment to those who, abusing the clemency of his first coming, broke his commandments. Of this second coming today's Gospel speaks, and it sets forth the seventh article of the Creed, which says: *From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.* And the Church rightly places the Gospel of the judgment on this day, to make us understand that, if the same Jesus Christ who was born meek, humble and compassionate is to be on the day of judgment our terrible judge who will sentence our case, we must with the greatest care keep all that he prescribed then, to make sure of the heaven he won for us with his blood, so that we may afterwards find him kind and a rewarder of our good works. See the most fitting occupation for these days, so as to await the coming of the Lord with fruit for our souls. Following, then, the intentions of the Church, I am going to set all this out in this plática. What the universal judgment is, and how it will be held, I will show in my first part, with what our faith teaches on it. How we must prepare for this judgment, so that our lot may be a happy one, I will show in the second.

First Part

3. The final judgment is the gathering of all men who have been, are and will be in all ages, who, assembled together on the last day in the valley of Josaphat, and their cases examined, will each receive from the Lord, according to his works, either reward or punishment, says St. Paul (Rom. 2:6). The Lord, says the Acts of the Apostles, "has appointed a day in which he will judge the whole world in equity" (Acts 17:31). And why this judgment? Did God not already judge man at his death? Yes, says St. Paul: "after death, the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Is he to judge the same thing twice? Certainly not, says the prophet Nahum (Nah. 1:9). Can the first sentence be revoked? No again: "where the tree falls, whether to the east or the west, the north or the south," says Scripture, "there it shall lie" (Eccles. 11:3). Why, then, this judgment?

4. The holy Fathers give various reasons. To vindicate the honour of Jesus, says St. Augustine: Jesus was dishonoured, persecuted and crucified by men; and so he who was in truth unjustly judged is to be the one who judges the whole world with equity and justice. That is why the judgment will be in the valley of Josaphat, which lies next to Calvary, so that he may call sinners to account and condemn them in the very place where they committed the greatest of all crimes, murdering their God; and so in some way will be fulfilled what the prophet Elijah said in threatening Ahab: "In the very place where the dogs licked the blood of the just Naboth, whose life you unjustly took, there they shall lick yours" (3 Kings 21:19). The universal judgment will also be held to reveal to the world certain hidden dispositions of providence that displeased man, who did not know the wise end the Lord had in them, such as the poverty and trials of the just, the exaltation and prosperity of sinners, and the like; making plain there that his wisdom ordered all for his glory and our good. And the judgment is the time that, as Ecclesiasticus said, was appointed to clear up these doubts for us (see its chapter 39). But the principal reason for the final judgment, says my Angelic master,[1] is that body and soul may be judged justly; for at the time of death only the soul was called to account in the particular judgment. That is why the Apocalypse calls the judgment, or the sentence the Lord will give in it, a cutlass or two-edged sword (Apoc. 1:16), because he will punish not only the soul but also the body.

5. And when will this day be? No one knows it: only the eternal Father, says the Gospel (Mark 13:32); not even the Son of God knows it as man so as to reveal it.[2] But although we do not know it, we have no need, says St. Paul, to know the time or the moment of this event: we know what is enough for us to be always

prepared, which is that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:1–2), who usually waits for the least expected moment to make sure of his prey. It is true that, though the hour of the judgment is denied us, there will be many signs to announce it. Let us leave the remote ones, which are many, and speak of the near ones that today's Gospel assigns us. There will be, it says, signs in the sun, in the moon and in the stars. The sun will be darkened, the moon will be turned into blood, and the stars will fall from heaven. What does this mean? What can it be? Isaiah says (Isa. 24:23): the sun and the other heavenly bodies will be ashamed of having served the enemies of God with their light. The darkness of the sun will show forth the eternal darkness; the bloodied moon, the anger of God; and the falling of the stars, the sinner's fall into the abyss.

6. There will be signs in the elements: the earth will open in chasms, the sea will howl with its waves, the air will raise whirlwinds, and fire will form horrible volcanoes. There will be no creature, says Scripture, that does not arm itself on its Maker's side against foolish sinners (Wisd. 5:21). Absalom sinned against his kind father: then let there be a horse to carry him headlong, hair to serve as his halter, an oak to make his gallows, and lances to pierce him; let neither heaven nor earth bear with him (2 Kings 18). So it will happen to sinners. After these signs will come the end of the world: a fire kindled by the Lord will reduce it to ashes. "The fire of his zeal," says the prophet Zephaniah, "shall devour the whole earth" (Zeph. 1:18). But a fire, says David in prophecy, like the one that burns a forest (Ps. 82:15). You will have noticed that when a wood catches fire, the tall pine burns just the same as the poor little rosemary bush. So that fire destined to end the world will reduce to embers the rich palaces of princes just as it does the humble hut of a shepherd. At once the Lord will summon to judgment, by the trumpet of an Angel, at whose voice all the dead will rise: a trumpet, says St. Paul, that will be the last (1 Cor. 15:52). The last? Then there were others before it? Yes, my brethren: the voices of our conscience, divine inspirations, trials, the sermons of preachers, the warnings we took from what befell our neighbours: these were trumpets that, announcing the judgment to us, called us to rise from the death of sin. We paid no heed to them; we shall hear the last one, and we shall all rise. But how differently sinners and the just will rise! The bodies of the just, clothed with certain gifts, will shine like the sun; but the wicked will appear ugly and horrible.

7. Then they will see the Son of Man coming with great power and majesty, accompanied by the whole heavenly court, preceded by the holy cross, carried by St. Michael, the standard-bearer of the army of heaven. Whether this cross is formed of some airy matter, as some hold, or is the very one on which the Redeemer died, its particles miraculously joined together by the Angels, as others hold, what is certain is that the cross of the Saviour is to remain eternally in heaven as a sign of his triumph, as the sword with which David killed the Philistine hung in the temple. Several thrones will be set up: a great throne, says the Apocalypse (Apoc. 20:11), for the Judge of the living and the dead; a throne for Mary Most Holy, who as queen will be seated at the right hand of the Monarch; thrones for the twelve Apostles, who are to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28). All being arranged, and the just still mixed with sinners, the Angels will go out and separate the wicked from among the good (Matt. 13:49). What a painful separation! Priests will be separated: Judas from St. Peter; brothers: Cain from Abel; spouses: Ahasuerus from Esther. In short, as a farmer (and this comparison is St. Matthew's, Matt. 3:12), fork and shovel in hand, separates the wheat from the chaff, so God through his ministers will clean his threshing floor; with this difference, that on the threshing floors of the world the chaff rises up and the pure grain falls to the ground, but on that of the judgment the chaff, who are the reprobate, will fall into the abyss to be fuel for the eternal flames, and the chosen wheat, who are the just, will rise to the heavenly granaries. This done, the divine Judge, like a careful shepherd who separates the sheep from the goats, will set his chosen at his right hand, the place of honour, and sinners, the disobedient goats, at his left. The books will be opened, says the Apocalypse (Apoc. 20:12), that is, the book of the law of God and the book of our consciences; and, the cases examined in the twinkling of an eye, says St. Paul (1 Cor. 15:52), he will bless those who conformed their works to his divine commandments, who are those on the right, saying: *Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom*

prepared for you from the foundation of the world; and those who, not remembering this moment, turned away from God and his law, who will be on the left, he will curse, saying: *Depart, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matt. 25:34, 41). The sentence given, it will at once be carried out, and the good will go into life eternal, and the wicked into eternal punishment (Matt. 25:46). This, my brethren, is what the Church teaches us in explaining this seventh article of the Creed, and what I promised you for my first part.

Second Part

8. If the universal judgment, and even the preparation for holding it, is so solemn, so terrible and so majestic, what will the individual reckoning be that will be made there of all our actions? What, then, must our disposition be in life, so as not to find there a sentence that condemns us for ever? This is what it now falls to me to explain to you.

The same Jesus who in his first coming presented himself to us in the world as a meek and humble lamb, a father full of pity, gentleness and mercy, will in his second coming show himself as a lion of the tribe of Judah (Apoc. 5:5), says a prophet, who will go forth, cry aloud and confound at one and the same time (Isa. 42:13); that is, he will be the judge clothed with severity, inflexibility and rigour. This consideration alone, which so terrified St. Jerome, is enough to make us order our works according to the model that Jesus as master left us in his divine law, so that Jesus as judge may find nothing in them to condemn. The Judge, then, is the same as the Lawgiver and Master. “How hard it is,” I will say with Scripture, “to fall into the hands of this Lord!” (Heb. 10:31). So it will be: “He commanded us,” said the Apostles, “to preach that he was appointed judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10:42), that is, of those who on that day are alive by grace and dead by sin; so various Fathers of the Church interpret it. And he will judge not only as God, who is the arbiter of our lot, but also as man; so Jesus Christ himself assures us, saying: “The Father has given the Son power to do judgment, because he is the Son of Man” (John 5:27). Jesus, who became incarnate to redeem us and reconcile us with the Father, who as a wise Lawgiver dictated to us the laws most suited to ordering our conduct, who as Redeemer died for us crucified on a tree: is this same one to be our Judge? Yes, sirs: it is he who, signified in that rich man of whom the Gospel tells, who called to account the steward to whose management he had entrusted the administration of his goods, will say to us: *Give an account of your stewardship, for you can be steward no longer* (Luke 16:2). Ah, how we ought now to go over our accounts with ourselves, so that, by the good use of what the Saviour gave us, he may have nothing to reprove on the day he calls us to account! “If we judged ourselves,” says St. Paul, “we should not be judged” by the Lord (1 Cor. 11:31).

9. This being so, we must say to ourselves, especially in this holy season of Advent: Jesus, my most lovable Jesus, who, moved by the everlasting love he bore me, came down from heaven to earth, was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, solely for us men and for our salvation, to reconcile us with the eternal Father, angered by the first sin: it is he who at his tribunal will charge me with this inestimable benefit. And how have I profited by it to attain the end of his incarnation? Then I must now thank him for having become man for love of me, by avoiding offences against that Lord who was reconciled with me by the blood of his Only-begotten. I know for certain that to those who received him at his first coming and devoted themselves to pleasing him, he gave, says St. John, “power to become sons of God” (John 1:12), and they will have an advocate with the eternal Father, according to St. Paul;[1] but to the ungrateful who, despising his coming to earth, go back to offending the Lord by their sins, the same Jesus will be at the judgment the prosecutor who accuses them and the judge who condemns them. So it happened to Absalom, whose life was taken by the very Joab who had reconciled him with his father David, seeing that he had injured him a second time by trying to take his crown and his life.

10. Further: Jesus, my most lovable Master, who as a doctor of justice gave me, while he lived in the world, laws of love, banishing the rigour of the old ones, and promising me entry into glory if I kept his commandments: is he the same one who will examine with equity at his judgment whether or not I have kept his commands? Then this must spur me on to the most exact keeping of the holy law of God. I know for certain that if I do not, the law itself will be what judges and condemns me, as St. John said (John 12:48); and if I carry out even the least of his commands, he will say to me at the judgment: *Well done, good and faithful servant; because you have been faithful over a little, enter now into the joy of your Lord* (Matt. 25:21). Finally, we must say: my Jesus, my kindly Redeemer, who, to blot out the handwriting of condemnation we had contracted by the sin of Adam (Col. 2:14), became the reproach of the world and the scorn of the rabble, suffered unjust accusations, scourges and thorns, until he died on a tree as infamous as it was painful: is this same one, on the last of days, to ask me to account for the use I have made of his most holy passion? Then I must crucify my flesh with its vices and concupiscences (Gal. 5:24), so that the blood of my Saviour may not be wasted in me, and he may see at the judgment the fruit of his plentiful redemption. It is certain that, just as the same blood of the paschal lamb that freed the Israelites from the tyranny of Pharaoh took the life of the Egyptians, so the same Redeemer who will bring in, by the gates of heaven opened by his passion, those who showed by their conduct that they were his children, will cast into the pools of the abyss those who by their crimes crucified him again, as St. Paul said (Heb. 6:6).

11. See, my brethren, in what I have set before you, the devout intentions of our mother the Church when, to prepare our hearts in this season she has appointed for receiving the Child-God who is about to be born for us, she sets before our eyes the terror of the final judgment that he himself is to hold, so that with this thought we may live piously and holily, and find kind at his severe tribunal the one we are soon to see as a child lying in a manger. The Church does the same as the Angels did with the Lord's disciples on the day of the Ascension. So that they might put into practice what the Saviour had taught them in his first coming, by remembering the second, they said to them: *Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up to heaven, where your Master is ascending? Know that he whom you see going up with such majesty and pomp, this same one will come again adorned with his greatness* (Acts 1:11). The heroism of all the virtues was the fruit they drew from this reflection.

12. This, my God, is the fruit I intend to draw by considering in this holy season that the same Redeemer who came into the world to redeem me, who died, and who, ascending into heaven, is seated at the right hand of his Father, will come from thence to judge the living and the dead. I promise, most lovable Father of my soul, to act from now on in such a way that, prizing the unspeakable favours you bestowed on me when you went about among men clothed in our flesh, I may be made worthy, when you return to judge me, of a favourable sentence. Now, Lord, you are about to come to espouse my soul; but the last of days is the one appointed for me to enter your heavenly bridal chamber in body and soul. But I shall only enter if you find me, like the wise virgins, prepared with the oil of good works; and if the lamp of charity and love were out, that is, if I do not now prepare myself by a Christian life, you will shut the door of your eternal wedding against me, as against the foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1–13). "A crown of justice," says our Apostle, "is laid up for me, which the just Judge will give me on that day; and not only to me, but to all who love his coming" (2 Tim. 4:8). Give me the grace to do so, and in this way I shall be prepared to enter into glory. Amen.

Act of contrition. My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

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[2] "My Angelic master": St. Thomas Aquinas, the "Angelic Doctor" (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, Suppl. q. 88 a. 1).

[3] Mark 13:32.

[1] 1 John 2:1 ("we have an advocate with the Father").

2. Second Sunday of Advent: On the Providence of God, and the Groundless Complaints of Men against This Attribute of the Godhead

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 2, pp. 14–24. Gospel: Matthew 11:2–10. Original preacher not named.

Joannes cum audisset in vinculis opera Christi (Matt. 11:2).

When John had heard in prison the works of Christ.

The Gospel of this day is from the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew, and it reads thus:

1. “When St. John, being in prison, where Herod held him, heard of the wonderful works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples to ask him: Are you he who is to come to save the world, or are we to look for another? Jesus answered and said to them: Go and tell John what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the Gospel is preached to the poor; and blessed is he who is not scandalised at what he sees in me. And as soon as these disciples of John had gone, he began to speak to the people about him, saying: What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the winds? What did you go out to see in John? A man clothed in luxury? You know that those who dress so are in the palaces of kings. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? I say so too, and he is even more than a prophet. He is the one of whom it is written: Behold, I send my Angel before you, who shall prepare the way by which you are to go.” This is the Gospel.

2. It is surprising to see John, the forerunner of Jesus in his first coming, he who was more than a prophet, since he was the Angel commissioned to prepare the hearts of mortals by his preaching to receive the law that the Messiah was coming to give them; it is surprising, I say, to see a man of such merit, and so dear to the Lord, imprisoned, loaded with chains, expecting death at any moment; and at the same time Herod, an impious and pleasure-loving king, full of ostentation and pomp, delighting in a sensual and provocative banquet. What is this? Is there providence in God? Yes, there is. God, who promised to care for his chosen so that not a hair of their head should be lost (Luke 21:18), makes use of various means, unjust in our opinion, so that the high ends he has ordained and disposed for the general good of the world may be achieved. St. John himself knew this well: for although he saw the favours Jesus bestowed on the deaf, the blind and the crippled, while he allowed him to be afflicted in the darkness of a dungeon, still he does not lose heart in his faith. He sends two envoys to the Saviour, asking him who he was, not because he did not know (for he had already preached to his disciples that this was the Lamb who came to take away the sins of the world), but to confirm them in the divine mission of Jesus Christ. What an example to silence certain sinful resentments that trouble us when we see some grievous events, such as the tribulations of a just man, the death of innocent children, the persecution of an honest man, and storms that lay waste our fields! We raise our cry to heaven, and, blaspheming God’s conduct, we put down to injustice what he does with us, perhaps for our profit and advantage. See what moves me to speak today of the attribute of divine Providence, but in a way which, though it may seem strange, I judge to be necessary and timely, and which includes what faith says: that God is everywhere, giving and preserving being to all things. Listen.

3. The Providence of God always looks to our good, though sometimes by means we do not understand: first part. We must submit gladly to its dispositions, which are never for our ruin unless we act against them: second part.

First Part

4. For God there are no accidents. He is the universal Ruler of the whole universe, and he always acts according to the common order prescribed by his Providence. It is true that, since his judgments are incomprehensible and his ways unsearchable (Rom. 11:33), man sometimes does not and cannot penetrate the hidden purpose of his intentions. That is why St. Gregory of Nyssa said that in God’s works everything is

seen to be full of hidden providences; but nothing is disordered, nothing fortuitous: “his direction disposes all things wisely,” says Scripture (Wisd. 8:1). It might seem accidental that Abraham’s servant met Rebecca at the edge of a spring; but it was the Lord’s providence, so that the marriage of that maiden with Isaac, which he had arranged in this way, might take place (Gen. 24). The census of the whole world that Augustus ordered might seem chance; but it was the providence of God, so that, when Mary and Joseph went to be enrolled in their native town, the birth of the Messiah might take place in Bethlehem, as he had announced through his prophet (Mic. 5:2). The journey and the sweat of Jesus towards Samaria might seem casual; but it was the providence of God, so that beside Jacob’s well the divine Master might convert an adulterous and idolatrous woman (John 4). All these events were foreseen and ordained by the Lord, full of wisdom and providence, for the ends of his almighty counsel, although they seem to us to be chances, or things the Lord permits for our ruin.

5. “You, my Father,” said the Wise Man, “govern all things by your providence” (Wisd. 14:3). Indeed, he who created all things would have done nothing if he did not provide the means of governing and preserving them all. Experience shows us that he makes the plants grow, fills the fields with flowers and the trees with fruit, feeds the beasts, and cares for the young that some brute animals abandon after giving them being. But what he does with insensible and irrational things he does more especially with those creatures he formed in his own image and likeness. He assigned them Angels to guard them; a sun and moon to serve them for light and warmth by day and by night; clouds to let fall rain in due season; earth to give them food, and healing herbs to cure their ailments. And if we look at the soul, how many helps is he not supplying it every day? Even so, we do not fail to see certain events that seem to us contrary to this same Providence. We see things that at first sight strike us as disordered and directed to our ruin and perdition. That is why the Manichaean heretics admitted two gods: one who did what seems good to us, and another who was, in their judgment, the fountainhead of evil; for it seemed to them that good and evil could not come from one and the same principle. But faith teaches us the contrary. Everything, according to faith, proceeds from one God alone, who, although he never does and cannot do evil, permits certain things that make his justice and his mercy stand out; and if they seem useless or harmful to men, all are arranged according to the order his infinite wisdom prescribed for the general good of the whole universe. “From the beginning of the world,” says St. John Chrysostom (*On Providence*, bk. I), “God has been doing things which, though they are for man’s benefit, he hides from his knowledge.” Let us uncover this by giving some examples.

6. The just suffer trials in the world: are they not, then, friends of the Lord? While the rich Epulo dresses in purple and fine linen and feasts lavishly every day, poor holy Lazarus must groan, oppressed with sickness and anguish; and is he not to deserve even to eat the crumbs of bread that fall from the rich man’s table? And is this rectitude in God’s providence? Yes, my brethren, it is. Consult faith; it will speak to you. Faith tells us that whoever is predestined to heaven must be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29), poor and full of trials from his infancy; that if God afflicts the just, it is not to destroy them but that they may be happy. Joseph of old suffers the persecution of his brothers, his sale, his slavery, the calumnies against him; but divine Providence ordained this, so that, placed in Egypt, he might be the redeemer of his people, the Lord giving him the sceptre of the kingdom and power over the very ones who had afflicted him. The just seem in the eyes of the world as if dead and forgotten by God because of their trials. They are, says St. Augustine (Sermon 212 *de Tempore*), like vines in winter; but the spring of eternity will come, and then it will be known that, though dead in the eyes of the flesh, they were alive, and their life, as St. Paul says, “was hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3).

7. The wicked triumph in this world: “the way of the wicked,” as Jeremiah said, “usually prospers” (Jer. 12:1). A sinner puts up houses, builds buildings, buys orchards and gardens. Is it a merit, then, to be God’s enemies, that he should reward them? Does he favour the offender by filling him with good fortune? See how we judge, who do not know the right purposes the Lord has in this very thing. It is a hidden providence for

the end he has set himself. Sinners will glory “until the Lord comes,” says the Apostle, “to give each one the reward of his works” (cf. 1 Cor. 4:5). By means so unfit in the eyes of men he makes his power and wisdom shine. In this way God disgraces the good fortunes of the earth, so that we may detest them, as we are obliged to (if we are to reach the end of our creation), by giving them to contemptible people. The surest way to make a lady give up a fashion is for her to see a woman of ill repute wearing it; so the Lord wishes to strip our hearts of the deceitful goods of the world by pouring them out on those who are most hateful in his divine sight. Further: by this means God draws out the fruits of his kindness through the generosity of his gifts. He did this with Judas, says St. Ambrose: to draw him to his friendship, he made him treasurer of the small funds the whole Apostolic College possessed. Further: he does it to pay them in this life for some good actions they perform, taking away from them the hope of eternal rewards. So Abraham said to one of the damned: “Son, there is no more glory for you. Remember that, if you did anything good, you have already received as your reward the temporal goods you enjoyed” (cf. Luke 16:25). It is a most wise work of divine Providence to give goods to sinners.

8. A just man dies, who by his conduct has edified the whole town, and the country is left without this model for its sanctification. Is this right providence of the Lord? Yes, it is, and great providence: for the benefit of some, and the pain and punishment of others. In this world everything is mixed up: on the same threshing floor are the cockle and the wheat; in the same net the good fish and the bad. The danger of being perverted is great for a virtuous soul when it is in sight of the wicked works of the bad; that is why God, as the Wise Man says, “hastens to bring it out of the midst of iniquities, before malice should alter its understanding, and the deceits of the world beguile its spotless spirit” (Wisd. 4:11, 14). He also takes the just from this life for the benefit of sinners themselves, who, not profiting by the example of virtue they saw in them, will have a lesser punishment the fewer witnesses for the prosecution they have against their conduct, and the fewer warnings from God through the prayers of the good. He also takes them as a punishment for the wicked, so that they may have fewer advocates and intercessors to help them in their needs. That is why, when Pharaoh drove Moses from his presence, ordering him never again to appear before him, that leader answered him: “It shall be as you have said” (Exod. 10:29); but it will be to your ruin.

9. But even though divine Providence shines out in the death of the just, how is it shown when it grants a long life to sinners, who are so harmful to everyone? “Why do the wicked live?” said holy Job (Job 21:7). Why do they live? St. Augustine answers this question: either they live so that they may be corrected, or they live for the exercise of the virtuous. To see whether they will amend their sins: the Lord sees that, like those labourers in the vineyard of the Gospel, they do not work at their eternal salvation in the first hours or days of their life; and, as he is the Father of mercies, he waits to see whether at the eleventh hour, that is, in their old age, they will return to him with tears of penance and bear fruits of honour and holiness. They also live to exercise the virtues of the just by their bad example and their persecutions. If Joseph’s brothers had died, as their crimes seemed to deserve, neither would he have had so much merit in the trials they caused him, nor would he by his patience have gained the reward with which God repaid his conformity and resignation in his tribulations. Let us hear the words he said to them when he saw them prostrate at his feet in Egypt: “Can any of you resist the will of God? You plotted my destruction; but the providence of the Almighty turned the dishonour of your intention to my honour, all directed to the exaltation in which his decree wished me, and to the benefit of many peoples” (Gen. 50:19–20). The sinner is not superfluous in the world: his disorder may be useful as a remedy for others. “Just as the wicked,” says St. Augustine, “make wicked use of God’s good works for their crooked ends, so the Lord makes use of the perverse works of the wicked for the high ends of his providence.” It is always directed to the universal good, though sometimes by means that seem fruitless to us. This was the first point.

Second Part

10. What effect must the consideration of what we have explained produce in our souls? Ah, we wretched ones! Since we do not know the ends to which the Lord's works are directed, we must never judge the means his divine providence uses to be out of proportion, even if they are painful and grievous to us, always expecting good from what seems to us bad; we must humble ourselves in the presence of God, silence our resentment, and submit gladly to whatever his divine will ordains. One of the reasons the universal judgment will be held, says my Angelic master, is to display the just works of God, in which, without our knowing it, he is always providing for our happiness. Now everything is dark to our sight, everything hidden, everything is "as it were in a riddle," said St. Paul (1 Cor. 13:12); but the judgment will come, the Sun of justice will rise at it and light up everything, and then his wise providences will be uncovered. If this is so, my brethren, when you see certain events that sadden you, you must not say (so speaks Ecclesiasticus, ch. 39), "What is this for? What is that other thing for?" Everything will be uncovered in its time. This is what his divine Master said to Peter when he refused to let him wash his feet in the upper room, since it seemed to that disciple a degrading action for the Saviour to wash his feet with those hands that built the heavens: "What I do," he said to him, "you do not understand now; you shall know hereafter" (John 13:7). Who would not think a blind man mad and rash if he judged the window openings in a wall to be defects because they did not seem necessary to him? This comparison is St. Augustine's. Who, the same Saint goes on, would dare to find fault with the various tools of a carpenter's or blacksmith's workshop, and with the blows they strike there on the wood or the iron, because he does not know the right purpose for which they are done? No one; yet this is what the man does who judges the works of God's providence to be blunders because they seem to him unsuited to the good of the universe. Let us not, then, "judge before the time," says the Apostle, "until the Lord comes" (1 Cor. 4:5): he will clear up the darkness in which it is now hidden. But the opposite happens, and nothing is heard but complaints against the goodness of God, because his works seem contrary to our good. We turn the very antidote \[*triaca*: theriac, the old cure-all against poisons\] into poison; we kick against the goad that pricks us (Acts 9:5); we shoot arrows of impatience against heaven, without regard to its providence; and we even say with those impious men of Scripture: We have a dead God, a God of wood, or a God who, raised up to the heights of heaven, has the clouds for a screen, and so cannot see our troubles to remedy them (cf. Job 22:13–14). Let us look at this a little more in detail.

11. "Why," some say, "why? What cause has God had, what good can come to me from the death of the son I loved most? An innocent child in whom nature gathered all its graces? A child who was the consolation of my whole family, and the object of everyone's caresses and hopes? Is this just providence of God, to leave a whole house covered in mourning and grief?" They make this complaint through the mouth of St. Basil: *Cur meus parvulus ante aetatis perfectionem hinc aufertur?* ("Why is my little one taken from here before reaching maturity?"). This is an effect of the Lord's wise providence, the same Saint answers. A child dies, either for the sins of its own parents, as happened to the son of David born of adultery (2 Kings 12:14); or it dies as a punishment of the parents themselves, because by too much love for the child they rob God of the love they owe him. That is why, says St. Ambrose (*On Virgins*, bk. III), the Lord permitted the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter to be carried out, because her father loved her to excess; and he willed that Isaac should not die, because Abraham loved God more than his son.[1] A child dies because perhaps, when grown up, it would be a noose for its parents, giving them a thousand sorrows by the disorder of its life. To this St. John Chrysostom attributes the death of the innocent children of Bethlehem, many of whom, had they lived, would have helped crucify and kill the Saviour of life. These works, then, which trouble us, are effects of the Lord's mercy, though hidden from our knowledge.[2]

12. Others, stung by some poisonous insect, or bitten by a wild beast, or harmed by some unwholesome food, exclaim in fury: "Why should God have created plants or animals so harmful to men? Did he not put all things at man's disposal, so that he should be master of them all? Then how is it that there are four-footed beasts that attack us, serpents that wound us, herbs full of poison? What providence is this? Is there a God for that?" It would be endless if I had to lay open all the murmurings raised against the divine goodness, uttered

by men ignorant of the Lord's beneficent designs. The multitude of plants is prodigious; but not all were created for man's use. Some are meant for food for the beasts, of which some provide us with clothing, others with food, and many serve us as medicine in our ailments, and even for the very animals that serve us. The same may be said of a great number of living creatures which, though dangerous to us if we do not go with due caution, are useful to other animals that contribute to the order of the universe, and which we need for our use. Most birds feed on insects that are ordinarily regarded as harmful. Domestic fowl eagerly swallow spiders that could harm us; storks find their delicious food in a certain kind of serpent. If to this we add the excellence of medicines compounded from poisonous simples and from the most harmful animals, the wisdom, goodness and providence of God will be equally vindicated.

13. Others cannot see their rival, whom they judge unworthy, raised to some post or office without opening their mouths to curse their lot and to accuse God, who, to provide for that man, takes from us the promotion we deserve. "It is a hard thing," they say, "that a perverse Aman should rise to the favour of the monarch, and that the just Mardochai should have to live in humiliation and poverty. God cannot ordain this upside-down state of things." Ah, how little does the man who speaks so know that in the very loss of a post the happiness and salvation of the one who did not get it often lies! "Look," a disciple of his who had died said to St. Bernard, "they did not make me a bishop: that was my good fortune. If I had been of the number of the bishops, I should have been of the number of the damned." The Lord also raises an unworthy man in order to punish his sins by a shameful fall that follows his elevation. "I saw," said David, "the wicked exalted above the cedars of Lebanon; I passed by that place again, and I saw neither him nor the place where he had been set" (Ps. 36:35–36).

14. This is how the unjust complaints against the providence of God are formed in all the events that outwardly look grievous and harsh. And in view of this, what must I do today but exhort you with all the earnestness of my heart in those words of the Wise Man: *Think of the Lord in goodness* (Wisd. 1:1)? Do not accuse of cruelty him who is truth itself, goodness, sweetness and mercy. If our houses come to ruin, if our bodies fall sick, if our adversaries persecute us, if death snatches away our relatives, if the wicked man is seen to prosper, if the elements destroy our fields, in short, if we see evils in the world, reason in a Christian way about the conduct of the Lord, who from the very events that mortify us draws countless goods for our profit, if we submit gladly to his decrees. Let us not think, because we judge ourselves just and little deserving of punishment, that God is not going to afflict us with tribulations; for he sometimes sends these not for our sins but for our good, as I shall say another day, and to preserve the order disposed by his ever most lovable and beneficent providence. If not, tell me: Job, this man of whom God himself had said that he had no equal in virtue, did he deserve to be punished? Certainly not. Yet in a single day he suffers the loss of his property, his cattle, all his children and his health, and finds himself mocked by his wife and tormented by his friends. And why? The providence of God disposed it so that by his resignation he might again become the happiest man in the East and the model of patience for the whole world. Mary Most Holy, who did not contract even the stain of original sin, much less personal faults, did she deserve punishment or abandonment by the Lord? In no way. Yet see her on Calvary, made a sea of sorrows and anguish, as Jeremiah foretold (Lam. 2:13); but divine Providence ordained it so in order to make her our Co-redemptrix and sovereign Queen of Martyrs. Jesus Christ our Redeemer, holy, innocent, holiness itself by essence, did he deserve to be treated as a sinner, and that his own Father should forsake him as he expired on the cross? No, my brethren; but divine and provident wisdom decreed it so, in order to draw from his torments and death the salvation and life of the whole world.

15. O wise and merciful providence of my God! How, by the means most despised in the eyes of the flesh, you always look to my good! I, Lord, do not know the high ends you have set yourself in all you do in the universe; but I will not for that reason fail to seal my lips, even when I suffer the greatest misfortunes. I will do as David did, who, in view of his misfortunes, said: *I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth, because you,*

Lord, have done it (Ps. 38:10). I have a God who loves me, a Father who cares for me in all my steps, a Saviour who has not brought me out of the flood of sin to let me perish in the harbour. I fear nothing. Here I am, surrendered to your good pleasure. I am certain that the hand that strikes me does not wish to destroy me; and so, though by paths that are rough in my judgment, his providence is leading me to the end for which it created me, which is eternal glory. Amen.

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[1] Judg. 11.

[2] Cf. John 9:2–3.

3. Third Sunday of Advent: On the Rational Soul, and the Esteem Man Must Have for It

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 3, pp. 25–32. Gospel: John 1:19–28. Original preacher not named.

> *Tu quis es? (John 1:19).*
>
> *Who are you?*

The Gospel of this day is from the first chapter of St. John, and it reads thus:

1. “This is the testimony that John gave when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him: Who are you? And he confessed the truth, and did not deny it; and he confessed: I am not the Christ. What are you, then? they asked him. Are you Elijah? And he said: I am not. Are you the prophet we are waiting for? And he answered: No. They said to him: Then who are you, so that we may take an answer to those who sent us? What do you say of yourself? I am, he said to them, the voice of one crying in the desert: Make straight a way for the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said. And those who had been sent were Pharisees. And they asked him and said to him: Why, then, do you baptise, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet? John answered them: I baptise in water only; but in the midst of you there stood one whom you do not know, who will baptise you in the Holy Spirit. He is the one who is to come after me, and who was preferred before me, so that I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. These things took place in a village called Bethany beside the Jordan, where John was baptising.” This is the Gospel.

2. What a useful lesson the question the Jews put to St. John gives us! *Who are you? What do you say of yourself?* My Christian, who are you? You will say: a compound of body and rational soul. Let us leave the body for another occasion: what do you say of yourself with regard to your soul? There will hardly be anyone who knows how to answer this question truly, as St. John answered those who asked him, for he knew himself well. Do you know yourself? Do you know what your soul is? Ah, said the great mother St. Teresa of Jesus (*Interior Castle*, I, 1), if it would be great ignorance for someone, asked who he is, not to know it, nor who his father was, nor his country, it is greater not to try to know what we are, what our soul is, what goods it has, what value and what beauty; we stop only to attend to the body, which is nothing but the setting of this jewel. How many are ignorant on this point! God, as creator of heaven and earth, as we confess in the first article of the Creed, adorned heaven with countless precious things, since it was the palace of his magnificence and the eternal dwelling of all his chosen; on earth he created a variety of plants, trees and animals. And just as the most precious thing he created in the heavens was the Angel, so the most excellent thing he created on earth was our soul. But ah! not to know what this is, and the high ends for which the Maker formed it, is the reason men do not give it the honour that Ecclesiasticus commands us to pay it (Ecclus. 10:31), making it serve the sinful desires of our corruptible flesh. From now on, then, my brother, let them not ask you, Who are you? What soul do you have? No: I will set it out in this plática, as part of the first article of our belief. What the soul is I will say doctrinally in the first part. How greatly he wrongs its greatness who makes it serve the appetites of his sinful body I will say in the second.

First Part

3. What is the soul? But first I ask: Christian, do you have a soul? You have, and I will prove it to you. Look at a corpse, and you will observe that, like those idols, the dead works of men's hands, "they have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, hands and feel not, feet and walk not" (Ps. 113:5–7). And why? Because they have no soul to give them life and set that machine in motion. Look at yourself, and you will see that you see, hear, walk, touch and grow; and more (for brute animals do all this), you know, you remember, you reflect, you love, you hate. What is this? This is your rational soul. It is a spiritual substance that God created; it had a beginning, but it will have no end; it is immortal and everlasting, the image of God, the heir of heaven. Let us unfold these privileges, which ennoble our spirit.

4. The rational soul is spiritual; it has no body. This is what Jesus Christ gave his disciples to understand when, after he had risen, he wished to prove to them that he was alive, and in his own body, and that it was not only his soul, as they imagined: "Handle and see," he said to them, "for a soul, a spirit, has not flesh and bones as you see me have" (Luke 24:39). Ah, how ignorant of his soul was that rich man the Gospel sets before us, who, seeing the riches his house abounded in, said one night when his avarice kept him awake: "Rest, my soul, eat, drink and feast" (Luke 12:19), making no distinction between the fleshly body and the soul, which is spirit alone, since it is the image of God.

5. The image of God, yes, my brethren. "Let us make man," said the Lord when he created him, "in our image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26). And the soul is the image of God, not only because he formed it (as we usually say, this image is by such and such an artist, because it was his work), but because it represents and resembles God himself: because it is the most excellent of all the creatures of the earth; because it is whole in the whole body and whole in each of its parts; because, as God is one in essence and three in Persons, so the soul, being one, rests on three powers, memory, understanding and will; and because it is free, coming thus closer to the divine perfections. All this is the teaching of St. John Chrysostom, St. Ambrose and St. Thomas, my master.

6. "Recognise, O man, your dignity," I will say with the Father St. Leo, "and, having been made a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), as a kinsman of it, do not return to your former baseness by conduct unworthy of who you are" (St. Leo the Great, *Sermon* 21, on the Nativity).

7. This soul is capable of seeing God. He created it so that it might enjoy him in heaven; and although by the first sin it was entirely disinherited, the most precious blood of a God who became man to satisfy divine justice for the sin we had committed in Adam restored to us the right to the glory we had lost through it. Jesus Christ made us children of God again and heirs of his kingdom by his sorrowful passion and death. And see how much the worth of our soul increases from this alone. What must be the value and preciousness of the soul, if we look at how much its ransom cost the Saviour? "How precious you are, O man, if you do not attend to the Creator who formed you, ask your Redeemer." The soul is the sheep which, when it was lost, the divine Shepherd sought, coming from heaven to earth to bring it out of the sinful thickets where it had strayed; the precious jewel whose value, well known to the divine Jeweller, made him give all he had to recover it (Matt. 13:46): honour, rest, blood and life. Oh, how much you are worth, my soul, since you cost your most lovable Saviour so much!

8. And when is this soul to enjoy the heavenly inheritance Jesus won for it by his passion? After the man has died, for the soul does not die: it is immortal. See another, and one of the greatest excellences of this precious creature, which our unbelievers have tried, though in vain, to deny. It is immortal: our soul could not be the image of an immortal God if it were subject to bodily death. The soul does not die, even though the body dies. Let us dismiss with contempt those who, like the ones Scripture speaks of in the book of Wisdom, say that man dies as if he had never existed, that the body goes to the earth and the soul is scattered like a light breath of air (Wisd. 2:2–3). Far from us be such a doctrine, which our philosophers have maintained only to

give free rein to their licentious passions, putting away from themselves the truth of another, future life that threatens them with eternal torments.

9. The soul is immortal: ah, how many proofs could confirm this proposition! The Gospel shows us the soul of poor Lazarus carried by the Angels to paradise, and that of the vicious rich man suffering in the abyss (Luke 16:22–23). So these souls were still alive after the death of their bodies, though with unequal lots. And although you will often have heard it said (especially in these last times, when Religion has been terribly attacked) that no one has come back from the other world to tell us what goes on there, this is false. Others said the same in Solomon's time, and he says that they did not reason rightly (Wisd. 2:1); for they themselves read in the annals they held to be true that the soul of Samuel had appeared to Saul, announcing his ruin (1 Kings 28; cf. Ecclus. 46:23).[1]

10. Only someone who denies that God is just, which is the same as denying that there is a God, could say that our soul dies with the body. This is the argument that, as Pope St. Clement says, the apostle St. Peter, his master, taught him to convince unbelievers on this point. For our soul not to be immortal, God would have to be no rewarder of the good and punisher of the wicked, which are acts proper to his justice. What reward does the just man receive in this life, or what punishment the wicked? As a rule the good man, the virtuous man, lives in affliction, toil and reproach, and the sinner in plenty, applause and pleasure; and while an adulterous Herod is at a lewd banquet, poor John the Baptist is in prison, waiting to die on the scaffold. Since that God who promised his servants that not even a cup of water given in his name to someone in need would go without reward (Matt. 10:42) does not give it in this life, as usually happens, there must of necessity be another life, where man receives either reward or punishment according to what he has done. For this, then, it is necessary that the soul survive death, that is, that it not die, that it be immortal.

This is your soul, my Christian. Given its excellence, how greatly you will wrong it if you debase it and make it serve the appetites of a sinful body! I will show this in the

Second Part

11. All things must be loved according to the order charity prescribes. This is the principal virtue of a Christian: to love first, or with a certain preference, what, being first in worth, must also be first in love. This is what made the holy bride precious in the eyes of her beloved: "He set in order," she says, "my love" (Cant. 2:4). According to this, which do you value more, the soul or the body? You have already seen with what excellence the Most High endowed our soul. It is true that he united it to the body so that, as a faithful companion, the body might help it in life to practise the virtues, in order to attain the end for which it was created in such greatness. But if God enclosed so noble a creature in this rough shell, it was, says St. Gregory Nazianzen, to keep it humble, lest, being spirit alone, it should be filled with pride and then perish, as happened to the angel of the abyss. In this compound of soul and body, the body is a slave who must submit to the rule of the soul, which is the queen and the mistress. What injustice does the man do his soul who, guided only by the beastly appetites of the flesh, makes the flesh the queen of his actions and regards his soul as a slave?

12. "By three things the earth is disturbed," says chapter 30 of Proverbs, "and the fourth it cannot bear." After explaining the first three, it says that the fourth cannot be tolerated: it is when "a handmaid is heir to her mistress" (Prov. 30:21–23). The mistress, says St. Anthony of Padua, is reason, the soul; the handmaid is sensuality, that is, the appetites of the flesh. Rightly, then, the earth cannot bear that the body should usurp the right to rule over it that the soul possesses. Yet this is what the sinner does: he makes his soul a slave, and what governs all his actions is his fleshly and corruptible body; and he cares little that the soul should be humbled and degraded, losing all its greatness, provided he obtains the satisfaction of some sinful desires and pleasures.

13. Ask the miser whether his soul is the mistress, and he cannot help answering that it is riches that rule him, that his heart is only where his treasure is (Matt. 6:21). However much greed, usury, the usurping of others' goods and other crimes stain the purity of his soul, which should long only for goods capable of making it eternally happy, he directs all his cares to amassing the gold that will let him satisfy all that the body desires and seeks. Ask the proud man whether his soul is the mistress, and he will answer that what rules in him is the desire for earthly advancement; and to get a post of worldly honour that will distinguish him among his brothers, it will be all the same to him whether his soul receives a blot, whether he blackens it with intrigues, with treachery, with calumnies directed against an honest man whose position he covets and craves. So did Aman with Mardochai. Ask the lustful man who reigns in his heart, and in spite of himself he will say the will of the flesh, that is, pleasures as filthy as they are momentary, which his body receives, always contrary to his spirit, compelling him to consent to give over to uncleanness the members that are Christ's (1 Cor. 6:15). And so the soul, which as a spiritual being is superior to all the works of the flesh, is enslaved, giving itself up to the appetite of the body, which should be its slave. This is what Potiphar's wife did, wanting her slave Joseph to be master of a body that she owed to her husband, who was its lord.

14. What injustice we commit by this detestable conduct! Ecclesiasticus made it well understood by a very apt comparison: "I saw," he says, "servants riding on horses, and princes walking on the ground serving them as grooms" (Eccles. 10:7). There can be nothing more unjust and monstrous. Is the one to whom all honour is owed to be treated with contempt? So man does; and he does still more, says a very respectable author (Master Ávila): the horse, the donkey, which is the body, carries the soul, which is its princess, wherever it wants to carry it. "What wrong has your soul done you, my Christian," I will say with St. Augustine, "how has it injured you, that you despise it so? You must always get for the body the food, the clothing, and even the least shoe that is finest, richest, most pleasant and most healthy; and for your poor soul, worthy by its graces of all your esteem and attention, are there to be no virtues to adorn it with, and no medicines to heal its spiritual ailments? Is everything to be good for the body, and do you want only the soul to be bad?" So St. Augustine reasoned.

15. Keep in mind the excellence of your soul, my brother, and this will oblige you not to blacken its beauty. It is the image of God: the Godhead engraved its portrait on it as on a seal of wax; do not put it to the fire of your passions, for its figure will be blotted out and melted. King Demetrius, considering that there was in the city of Rhodes a painting by the hand of the celebrated Protogenes, was moved to raise the siege he had laid, so as not to destroy that picture if he entered the city with fire and sword. What, then, must we do so as not to destroy the image of God we have in our soul, but avoid sin, its only destroyer? It is the heir of heaven: it was created to reign there eternally. Ah, with what care we must not debase it by making it serve the unclean pleasures of the body! If we saw a monarch's son playing about on a foul and filthy dunghill, would we not say to him: "Sir, leave an occupation so degrading to your rank. You are destined to sit on the throne, and you lower yourself like this now?" So I say to you, my brethren: you are to be kings; God has promised it to you. If that is so, says David, "O sons of men, why do you love vanity?" (Ps. 4:3); that is, why do you give your soul over to passing pleasures, fit only for beasts?

16. What more? This soul that gives form to the body was redeemed with the blood of a God made man, who brought it out of the tyranny of the devil; and will you hand back to the devil the blood that was the price of your soul, as Judas did to the impious Pharisees? Oh, what horror! However much David longed to drink water from the cistern of Bethlehem, which was in his enemies' camp, when he saw some soldiers bringing it to him, who had sought it at the risk of their lives, he would not drink it, but offered it to God in sacrifice, saying: "Should I delight my body with water that is the blood of my subjects?" (2 Kings 23:15–17). And shall we, my brethren, make our soul serve the enjoyment of the body's disordered appetites, when its ransom cost Jesus not dangers of death, but death itself and the shedding of his blood? I do not believe it. It is, then, an injustice we do to the greatness of our soul to make it serve the appetites of a sinful body. This

was my subject.

17. My brethren, “we have not here a lasting city,” says St. Paul, “but we seek one that is to come” (Heb. 13:14). We shall die; “the body will return to the earth from which it came,” says Ecclesiastes, “but the soul will return to the hands of him who created it” (Eccles. 12:7). Its works will go with it, says the Apocalypse (Apoc. 14:13); by them it will be judged and sentenced. If it did well, mastering the body, it will be happy; but if ill, by obeying the flesh, it will be unhappy. “What, then, does it profit a man,” says the Gospel, “to gain and enjoy all there is in the world, if his soul suffers loss?” (Matt. 16:26). May God in his infinite mercy give you knowledge of the excellence of your soul, so that, adorning it with virtues in life, you may be crowned in blessedness. Amen.

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[1] 1 Kings 28 in the Vulgate.

4. Fourth Sunday of Advent: On Penance, and the Danger of Putting It Off

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 4, pp. 33–42. Gospel: Luke 3:1–6. Original preacher not named.

> *Venit… praedicans baptismum poenitentiae (Luke 3:3).*\
>
> *He came… preaching the baptism of penance.*

The Gospel of this day is from the third chapter of St. Luke, and it reads thus:

1. “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the province of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, under the high priests Annas and Caiaphas, the Lord caused his word to be heard by John, the son of Zachary, in the desert. And he went through all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the prophecies of Isaiah: The voice of one crying in the desert shall be heard: Prepare the way of the Lord. For when the Lord comes, every valley shall be filled, every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked ways shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain, and all flesh shall see the Saviour sent from God.” This is the Gospel that has just been read. There could be no more fitting lesson for us.

2. St. John, as the forerunner of Jesus Christ in his first coming, was destined to prepare the way for that spotless Lamb who came to take away the sins of the world. That is, says Cardinal Hugh (*On Luke* 3), to prepare the hearts of men with sorrow for and detestation of their sins, so that the divine Redeemer might reconcile them with God by those means his infinite goodness had laid down for our sanctification in his new law of grace. For this John preached to them in the desert the baptism of penance for the remission of sins: not because the baptism with which he baptised them had in itself the power to forgive them, for this belonged only to those Sacraments that Jesus Christ was to institute, but by stirring them up through it to do penance, so as to receive the remission of their sins from him who was coming after him. This is the opinion of St. Bonaventure, Denis the Carthusian and other Fathers. The Saviour himself, who came to sanctify the world, began his wonderful preaching in the same way as John, saying: *Do penance, and the kingdom of heaven will draw near to you* (Matt. 4:17). As if to say: I will give you an effective remedy for your evils, so that you may enter the kingdom of heaven, whose gates are shut to sinners; but you must first do penance for your sins, so preparing the way for my bounty. Indeed, my brethren: “He who created us without us, without our help,” says St. Augustine, “will not save us without us”; for he wishes us to cooperate by our own acts in our justification. “There is no choice,” says the same Saint: “either the one who has sinned repents, or he burns in the abyss.” But alas! The same men who, when attacked by some bodily illness, leave untried no remedy that might help to cure us, and at once submit to all that a wise doctor orders, see our soul not sick but dead by sin, and hear the voice of the heavenly Physician who cries out in his Gospel: “I will heal you, I will bring you back to the life of grace, and I will bring you into glory; but first do true penance”; and yet we

despise it, or put it off from day to day, until the time when perhaps it will be fruitless for us. See what I mean to persuade you of today. I will show in my first part what penance is, and the absolute need the sinner has of it; in the second, the danger he runs of finding no remission of his sins who, by putting off penance, does not do it in due time.

First Part

3. This word "penance" has many meanings. It is generally taken for a certain sorrow we feel at having done something, whether good or bad, regretting having done it. So it is said that Ananias and Sapphira repented of having laid all their goods at the feet of the Apostles (Acts 5). In a narrower sense we use the word "penance" when we repent of a sin, not because it is an offence against God, but because of some bodily harm that has come to us through it. So Antiochus repented of his crime and implored the mercy of God, which was not granted him; for his sorrow sprang only from the disease that was finishing him off, as he could no longer bear the stench that came from his sores (2 Macc. 9). "Penance" is also the name for those works of mortification and rigour by which we try to satisfy divine justice for having offended it again and again. So we say: "They have given me such and such a penance; I have done the penance the confessor gave me." But these works may better be called satisfactions or medicines than penance.

4. What we especially mean by penance here is an inward sorrow for having sinned, a sorrow conceived for this reason alone, that sin is an offence against God. Of this the Lord speaks through the prophet Joel: *Be converted to me with all your heart* (Joel 2:12); and of this the Father St. Augustine speaks when he says: "True and certain penance is caused by nothing but hatred of sin and love of God" (*Sermon* 7 *de Tempore*). This penance, then, is a supernatural virtue by which the sinner weeps for and detests the sins he has committed, with the firm resolution not to commit them again and to make what amends he can for the injuries done to God, hoping for pardon from his infinite mercy. The virtue of penance comes from God, and we cannot attain it by our own natural powers, as the Council of Trent explains (Sess. VI, ch. 3); but he gives it to whoever asks for it in truth and spirit. So Jeremiah asked for it, saying to the Lord: *Convert me, and I shall be converted… after you converted me, I did penance* (Jer. 31:18–19).

5. "At all times," so speaks the Council of Trent (Sess. XIV, ch. 1), "the virtue of penance has been necessary for those who have sinned gravely, if they are to attain grace and justification." There can be no remission of sins unless the sinner turns back to God, detesting them and purposing amendment. So Adam was justified from his sin; so Manasseh; so the Ninevites; and so all the sinners who have been converted to God since the beginning of the world. And although in the law of Moses there were some sacrifices and holocausts that were said to be for the expiation of crimes, they never justified the guilty man; they only stirred him to form true penance in his heart, and were a kind of satisfaction for the penalties he deserved. Penance is indispensable. *Unless you do penance*, said the Saviour, *you shall all likewise perish* (Luke 13:3). Even those who in the law of grace are converted to our holy Religion and ask for holy Baptism, even these, says the Council, must detest their sins and purpose not to commit them before receiving that Sacrament of regeneration. This is what the Prince of the Apostles preached to such people: *Do penance*, he said to them, *and so be baptised every one of you* (Acts 2:38).

6. The Gospel of Jesus Christ came, and this Lord, who came to establish his law of grace on kindness, gentleness and mercy, instituted a sacrament, that of Confession, in which, when we declare our sins to the priest with the required dispositions (which will be explained elsewhere), this minister, with the authority he receives from the Saviour, gives pardon for all of them by means of the absolution. The Lord did not by this abolish the means of being justified by the virtue of penance, but raised that virtue itself to the rank of a Sacrament, which must include, if it is to be valid, sorrow, detestation of sin and the purpose of not committing it again, with the hope that God, through the merits of his most holy Son, will give us their remission; and this is what the virtue of penance consists in. Jesus Christ instituted this Sacrament when,

after he had risen, he said to his disciples, and in them to all priests: *As the Father has sent me*, that is, with the same authority the Father gave me to forgive sins, *so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose you shall retain, they are retained* (John 20:21–23).

7. What, then? Is the law of Jesus Christ not a sweet yoke and a light burden? So he himself said (Matt. 11:30). Then, if before his coming the sinner was justified by mere sorrow for his sins, promising in his heart not to renew them, how much easier is this remedy for the remission of sin (some will say) than to undergo the shame of declaring sins to a man! Merely to consider what was required in former times for penance to be genuine is enough to show that it was a heavier yoke than our confession. Among many other things I leave aside, the sorrow that had to be formed under the old law, and in which the penance able to obtain pardon consisted, was a perfect sorrow that we call contrition, which is conceived solely because one has offended God for being who he is, without regard to any interest of our own. How hard this sorrow is to form! In the sacrament of Confession, although sorrow for having offended God for a supernatural motive is required, it is enough that it be conceived from some interest of our own: either from fear of hell, or so as not to lose glory, or from the ugliness that sin carries in itself, always looking to God as the source of all justice, and so beginning to love him, either because he has freed one from eternal fire, or because one recognises in him mercy to forgive. How much easier it is to form sorrow with an imperfect love, which we call attrition, than with perfect and disinterested charity!

8. This sacrament of Penance, or Confession, is absolutely necessary for all of us who after Baptism have offended the Lord with grave sin. There is no other means of being reconciled with God, says the Council of Trent (Sess. XIV); just as (and the comparison is the Council's own) for one who is shipwrecked at sea, when the ship that carried him is broken, there remains no other choice than either to perish in the waters or to cling to a plank that may carry him to port. In the same way, for us who have broken and wrecked the ship of Baptism, which was carrying us to heaven, there is in the new law no other resource for being saved than to receive the sacrament of Penance, which according to the holy Fathers is a second plank that can bring us into the harbour of glory. It is true that the perfect act of contrition, since it springs from the pure love of God, excludes all sin, puts us in grace and justifies us before the Lord; but this penance is not perfect unless it includes the implicit or explicit desire \[*voto*\] to receive the sacrament of Confession, the one means we have of being justified. Then, if the act of contrition puts us in grace, what need is there of confession? St. Augustine gives the reason by a comparison. Jesus raised Lazarus in the tomb, a figure of the sinner dead to grace; and although he received life at once, Jesus ordered the Apostles to untie him from the bands with which his corpse was bound (John 11:44). Was it not more, then, to raise him to new life than to take off the shroud and cords with which he was bound? It was more, says the Saint. But let Lazarus understand, that is, let every sinner understand, that although the Lord has raised him to the life of grace by the act of perfect contrition, he must go to the priests, he must submit his sins to the keys of the Church, which is the one remedy he has in our Religion; and that it was only out of regard for this that his sins were forgiven him beforehand.

9. And when are we obliged to receive this sacrament of Penance? Given that there is no other remedy for being reconciled with God, receiving pardon for our sins and being clothed again with the grace we have lost by sin, the most probable opinion is that as soon as possible after sinning mortally we should turn back to God with tears of true penance, either by going to confession, if this is possible, or by stirring ourselves to perfect sorrow, or contrition, until we can confess. The holy Fathers set before us a multitude of comparisons for this need. Who, they say, would not quickly shake off a viper that was biting his hand? Who would willingly nourish the plague in his body? Who would put up with a mortal enemy inside his own house? Who would keep a rotting corpse for long in the room where he lives? Well, mortal sin is a viper, a plague, a corpse. Far from us, then, be sin: let confession blot it out. It is most dangerous, my brethren, to put it off; for perhaps when we want to return to the Lord's grace by means of it, it will not be the right time to do so, and

we shall remain eternally without the salvation of the soul. I am going to prove this in my

Second Part

10. Holy Scripture always urges on us a prompt conversion after we have sinned, because our eternal salvation is endangered by delay. In particular Ecclesiasticus says to us: *Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy you* (Ecclus. 5:8–9). What is certain, my brethren, is that we have no assurance of the time of our life, for God alone (as David says) has our days numbered (Ps. 38:5; cf. Job 14:5). Which of them, then, are we waiting for to do penance? If death is sudden, let him who has not done penance beforehand not hope for salvation. So it happened to the five foolish virgins: the bridegroom, a figure of the hour of death, arrived when they were not expecting him, and because they did not have their lamps lit as they had been told, he shut the door of the heavenly wedding against them (Matt. 25). This will happen to those who are not in good time burning with the holy oil of grace. Ah! "No man knows his end," says the Wise Man; "but as the fowler takes the birds in the snare and the fisherman the fish on the hook when they feel most secure, so death waylays men" (Eccles. 9:12). And when? "In the evil time": when they are in sin. So it happened to Jezebel, to King Baltassar, to the rich man of the Gospel, and to countless people you yourselves will have known. We trust in youth, in robustness, in our healthy constitution; but when men say (it is the Apostle who speaks), "Now there is peace and security in our life," then a sudden death overtakes them (1 Thess. 5:3). And then? Then, if they die in sin, there is no other way out than to perish eternally.

11. But let us grant that death is not sudden, although in my judgment nearly all the deaths of sinners are. The hellish practice we see, of not wanting to sadden a sick man with the news of his approaching end, means that there is hardly anyone who believes he is dying, even when the illness threatens a swift destruction. All the symptoms that announce it seem doubtful to him; and already the breath is expiring on his lips, and he still mingles his last gasps with the sweet hope of living. What more? Having come through other dangerous illnesses he has suffered gives him confidence that he will also come through the attack that has laid him low. What an error! Three times Samson had freed himself from the bonds with which Delilah tied him to hand him over to his enemies. The fourth time came; and, having bound him while he was asleep, she woke him, saying: "Samson, the Philistines are coming upon you." "No matter," he answered, "I will get free of their hands as at other times." But it did not happen so: Delilah had cut off the hair in which his strength lay, and he fell victim to his adversaries (Judg. 16). You will have come through dangerous illnesses, my Christian, once, twice or three times; but the fourth time will come, your strength will fail you, and you will fall into the hands of the devil.

12. But let us grant that some charitable person persuades you, like the Angel of the Apocalypse, that "there is no more time" (Apoc. 10:6), only a few short moments of life. What will you do then? David said it, speaking of sinners: "Their infirmities were multiplied, and afterwards they made haste" (Ps. 15:4). At once let the doctor come, at once the confessor, the notary to make the will! Ah, my brethren, in that hour things are done in haste that require much reflection to be done so as not to be fruitless. You will want to turn back to God with a true penance in order to obtain the remission of your sins; but that moment is not the right time to do it. The body, which is the organ through which the soul exercises its functions, is at the time of death nothing but an almost insensible machine that is crumbling away: the limbs sluggish, the senses weak, the reason clouded; and if the dying man has any awareness, he uses it all in trying to get rid of the symptoms that trouble him. He sees his wife already lamenting her widowhood, his children weeping at their coming orphanhood, his goods, for whose acquisition he toiled, about to pass into other hands. This, together with the terrible bombardment of the devil, who also makes haste so as not to lose his prey, means that at death there is no one who remembers God as he ought, as David said in one of his psalms (Ps. 6:6).

13. What, then, will the dying sinner do in that hour? He will want to turn truly to the offended Lord, but he will see his desires frustrated. Who, running fast downhill, if he notices a precipice before him, can suddenly either turn back or stop? No one: the momentum of his run will throw him into the pit. Now, the sinner has run headlong towards hell with his sinful passions: do you expect that, when he reaches the brink of the abyss in death, he will turn back from his guilty course? It is impossible without an extraordinary help from the Lord. To make a perfect act of the love of God (as, in the opinion of the Fathers, is needed in that hour) when a healthy man can form one only with such difficulty! To drop suddenly the vicious habits he had formerly contracted, and adorn himself with virtues he has perhaps never practised! To make a well-made confession, when those he made in life will have been pure ceremony! Ah! Absalom was riding against his father on a runaway horse; his hair caught in an oak; he was left hanging from it; Joab came and pierced his heart with a lance (2 Kings 18). He had time enough to draw his sword and cut the hair that served as his noose; but he did not do it. He cut his hair only once a year, because its weight burdened him (2 Kings 14:26); and as he had not been accustomed in life to cut it, he had no facility in doing so at death. So St. Jerome reasoned, applying this event to the difficulty of cutting off sinful habits at the hour of death, and of making a good confession, for one who has not confessed more than once a year, and that only so as not to incur the anathemas of the Church.

14. And if to all this we add the abandonment in which God leaves the sinner in that hour as a punishment for his rashness, what shall we say? There is no doubt that God forgives whoever asks pardon of him with tears of true penance, even at the last moment of his life; so he has promised through his Scripture (Ezek. 33:12). But this promise is addressed to whoever asks him duly and with a true spirit of penance; and this, as I have explained, is almost impossible. That is a false penance, says St. Augustine: only necessity drives the man to it, not the love of God nor due sorrow for his sins. It is a confession extracted by torture, which is not valid unless it is repeated in freedom. And so the Lord, seeing that if they come to him after having despised him it is only because they are forced by necessity, refuses them his help, as Jephthah did on a similar occasion with the men of Gilead (Judg. 11:7), and abandons them to their enemies. *I called you*, the Lord will say, *and you paid no heed to my voice; now I will laugh at your unhappy death* (Prov. 1:24–26). Enough: enough has been said of how much the salvation of your souls is endangered by putting off penance to a time that perhaps will not be the right one for doing it.

15. Loving Father of my soul, sweet Redeemer of my life, all the means you have given me to be reconciled with a God I have gravely offended have been fruitless for me, because I have not contributed on my side the penance needed for the remission of my sins. I have put off my conversion from day to day, although, as David said, I do not know how long I am to live, and whether within a few moments my Maker will call me. I have postponed my penance, waiting to do it at the hour of my death, when the anguish of illness, my habits inclined only to evil, and the just abandonment of God, because I have made myself unworthy of his graces, will make my conversion impossible. Give me your help now, Lord, for this is the acceptable time and these are the days of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2), so that, coming like the prodigal to the feet of a priest, he may give me the robe of grace, which alone lets one enter into glory.

5. Sunday within the Octave of Christmas: On Eucharistic Communion

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 5, pp. 43–51. Gospel: Luke 2:33–40. Original preacher not named.

Ipse accepit eum (Luke 2:28).

He took him.

The Gospel of this day is from the second chapter of St. Luke, and it reads thus:

1. “The father (that is, St. Joseph) and the mother of Jesus were wondering at the marvellous things that were said of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother: This child whom you see is set for the

fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted; and your own soul a sword of sorrow shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts hidden in their depths may be revealed. And there was there also a prophetess called Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser. She was far advanced in years, and had lived seven years with her husband, whom she married as a virgin; and she had remained a widow until the age of eighty-four, and was almost always in the temple, serving the Lord night and day with fastings and prayers. Having come to the temple at the same hour as Simeon, she began to praise this Lord, the child, and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Israel. And after Joseph and Mary had performed all things that the law of the Lord commanded, they returned into Galilee, to their city of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, being full of wisdom; and the grace was in him." This is the Gospel.

2. It alludes to that happy day on which most holy Mary, fulfilling the law of purification, presented the blessed fruit of her womb in the temple of Jerusalem, where the holy priest Simeon received him into his arms, according to the ceremonies the law of Moses had laid down for this case. But what is most striking in this Gospel is what that just minister of the sanctuary, filled with the gift of prophecy, said to Mary: This Child, whom many will contradict, will be the resurrection and the fall of Jerusalem. The words "fall" and "resurrection" seem to say opposite things. But there is no contradiction, because these effects are received by different persons. He was resurrection for those who, like Simeon and Anna, were waiting with due dispositions for the redemption of Israel, whom the Saviour by his most sacred passion drew out of the death of sin, and dying gave them life and resurrection. And he was the fall of those who, full of iniquity, made Jesus the target of their contradiction, persecuting him until they set him on a shameful gibbet; we have seen well the fall of these, for in punishment of their guilt they were left without king, without temple and without priest, and today they wander scattered through the world, made the object of men's abhorrence.

3. I, my brethren, see figured in this the different effects that Eucharistic Communion of the body and blood of Jesus Christ causes in men, according to the different dispositions with which we approach to receive it. In our churches the same Jesus is presented as in the temple of Jerusalem. We are obliged to receive him in the Sacrament, because he himself said on the night of its institution: *Take and eat, all of you, for this is my body*; and so the Church commands that we receive him at least once, at the solemnity of Easter. And we do not receive him in our arms like Simeon, but within our bodies, becoming one thing with him. But ah, what different effects he causes in us when we receive him! For those who, like Simeon, are full of the Holy Spirit, that is, adorned with the due dispositions, he is life and resurrection; but for those who come to that sacred table unworthily, that is, with their soul stained by sin, he is death, he is ruin. I am going to treat this subject, which I judge to be among the most important. I will show the dispositions with which we must approach holy Communion (First Part), and the different effects it causes in those who receive it worthily or unworthily (Second Part).

First Part

4. Jesus Christ our Saviour, who on the night of the supper instituted the wonderful sacrament of the Eucharist, as we shall explain at length another time, and who was going to give his Apostles Communion with it, commanding them to do this in memory of his sorrowful passion, saying to them, *Take and eat*, first washed their feet with the greatest humility and affection. By this he gave them to understand that they must prepare themselves to receive this sacred bread of Angels with purity of body and soul, the indispensable dispositions that must precede this marvellous Communion. For as body and soul must serve and adore God, since both were formed by his divine omnipotence, body and soul must be prepared to receive him in this Sacrament. Let us speak, though briefly, of these two dispositions.

Dispositions of the body. The chief one was commanded by the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, almost from her beginning: to be fasting, having eaten nothing at all, however small, from midnight until after

receiving Communion. “It has pleased the Holy Spirit,” said St. Augustine (*Ep.* 54, ch. 6), “that in honour of this Sacrament nothing should enter the Christian’s mouth before the body of Jesus Christ.” The manna, symbol of the Eucharist, fell on the fields of Israel at dawn, before the earth had received rain or any stain; and so it is fitting that what it signified, the living bread that came down from heaven, be the first thing to enter our body. Second: the body must be clean of every impure stain, even if contracted without sin. It would not be seemly to appear before one’s monarch in a stained garment, even if the stains were involuntary. Married people, then, should keep continence for some time before receiving Communion and receiving the purest of men, who was born of a Virgin, according to the teaching of St. Gregory the Great and of St. Thomas, my master. When David asked the priest Abimelech for the loaves of proposition, which represented this mystery, before giving them to him the priest made sure that for three days they had abstained from relations with their wives (1 Kings 21). How great, then, must be the bodily purity of those who are to receive the bread of the elect and the wine that brings forth virgins (Zach. 9:17)? Third: we must bring the body decently clothed, each according to his means, with the greatest neatness and decency. If the Holy Spirit says that no one can hide fire in his bosom without his clothes burning (Prov. 6:27), I will dare to say that outward cleanliness of dress denotes that which the soul has within. Jesus Christ chose to be wrapped at his birth in swaddling clothes which, though very poor, were neat, say the Fathers of the Church; at his death a very clean sheet served as his shroud; and even the tomb was new, one in which no one had been buried.

5. But the superiority of the soul over the body demands greater dispositions in the soul for coming to share in the sacred Eucharistic table. There are three chief ones: faith and knowledge of what one is about to receive; purity of conscience, free of all mortal sin; and bringing the soul adorned with the variety of the virtues. Knowledge of who it is that is received in Communion. “When you sit to eat with a prince,” said Solomon in the Proverbs (ch. 23:1), “consider diligently what is set before you.” And if this warning is given so that a man, sitting at the table of an earthly monarch, may prepare himself according to the quality of the dishes, as the holy Fathers explain these words, how much greater knowledge is needed to dispose our soul, considering that in holy Communion we are to partake, not of a prince’s dishes, but of the immortal King of the ages himself? Before Communion, then, there must be faith that what we receive in the host is the true body and blood of Jesus Christ together with his divinity: so the Church commands us to believe, against the doctrine of various heretics who denied it without foundation. Faith that by virtue of the words of consecration the whole substance of bread and wine that was in the host and in the chalice is changed into the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ: a greater miracle than that of Aaron’s rod, which when thrown on the ground was changed into a serpent and, when taken back into the hand, recovered its first nature. That the whole Christ is in the whole host, and whole in the least part of it; and that he is there with his whole body and members as he was in the manger and on the tree of the cross, although by a marvel he does not have the actual extension he had when he occupied a place in the world. That though thousands of men receive him at the same time, all receive him whole. It is as with our words, though in a more divine manner: we pronounce a word, and although it spreads divided through the air, all who heard it hear it not broken but whole and perfect. Truly we see nothing in this august Sacrament but bread and wine; but faith must make up for the defect of our senses. When the patriarch Isaac was about to die, he wished to bless his son; and as all his senses had lost their strength, his sight deceived him, thinking that Jacob was Esau; his touch deceived him, judging some kid-skins to be the hairy hands of Esau; his taste deceived him, thinking that what he ate was his first-born’s game. Only his hearing was faithful, for he knew by the voice who it was he was blessing, and so he said: *The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau* (Gen. 27:22). So in Communion our senses deceive us, judging to be bread what is no more than its species; but faith is not deceived, for it hears the voice of our divine Jacob, who says: *This is my body. This is my blood.*

6. The second disposition of the soul is purity of conscience: that we do not come to receive the body of the Lord with unforgiven mortal sin. The Ark of the new covenant and the idol Dagon cannot stand together (1

Kings 5). That is why St. Paul commands us to prove and examine our conscience before Communion. *Let a man prove himself*, he said, *and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice* (1 Cor. 11:28). Let the Christian prove himself, and examine scrupulously whether he has confessed his sins at the feet of the priest with the conditions that holy tribunal requires; whether he has left not only the sin but the affection or inclination to what offends the Lord. No one can serve two masters at once, says the Gospel, without hating the one and loving the other (Matt. 6:24); so one cannot love Jesus Christ as is required for receiving him without hating sin, which makes us slaves of the devil. If his heart is separated from his brother by hatred, aversion or antipathy, let him first be reconciled with him before presenting himself at the table of the God of peace, love and friendship: so the divine Master himself commands (Matt. 5:23–24). Finally, let him examine whether his soul is in the grace of God; and after he has proved himself thus, says the Apostle, let him eat of this sacred bread.

7. Third: the soul must be adorned with the variety of all the virtues, so as to receive the whole fruit of this wonderful mystery in which the Lord God of all holiness is eaten. The chief virtue that must adorn us is love. This is the sacrament of love, says my angel St. Thomas; and Jesus Christ instituted it when he wished to give men the greatest proof of his love, as St. John said (John 13:1). Then, if love is repaid with love, how much must we show to Jesus Christ when he gives us his own flesh and blood to eat? Desire to receive him: "Our loving Jesus is all desirable," said the Bride of the Canticles (Cant. 5:16); and if this Lord, at the institution of the Sacrament of the altar, said to his disciples, *With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you* (Luke 22:15), how much more desire must we show in receiving him? Humility: Jesus shows it by narrowing, so to speak, his majesty and greatness to the species of bread and wine. We, then, who know this majesty by faith, without being hindered in this knowledge by the lowliness of the sacramental species, under whose veil the divinity is hidden, must acknowledge ourselves unworthy to receive him, much more than the Centurion acknowledged himself unworthy that the divine Master should enter his house to heal his servant (Matt. 8:8). Thanksgiving: we must thank the Lord for a benefit he has denied to the Angels of heaven, and because, in order to dwell with men until the end of the ages, he instituted this Sacrament, willing to give himself to us as food so that our soul might have eternal life. But this already belongs to the effects of Eucharistic Communion; we shall set it out in the

Second Part

8. Resurrection and fall, life and death. See the different effects the holy Eucharist produces, according to the different dispositions found in the one who receives it. The same sun that softens wax hardens clay; the same bodily food that nourishes and sustains life in some and restores their lost strength can cause death when received into a disordered and overloaded stomach. The same ark of the Covenant that made the true Israelites triumph over their adversaries was the cause of the terrible punishment of the Philistines. With these symbols the holy Fathers express the different effects caused by the divine sun of justice, the food of our soul and the ark of the new covenant, Christ in the Sacrament: giving life to those who prepare themselves and receive him duly, and death to those who communicate unworthily. Let us prove these two effects very briefly.

9. It gives life to the good. Holy Communion causes three effects especially in these. The first is to unite us intimately with Jesus Christ, who becomes one thing with us, as food does in our bodies. What a priceless favour, that God should unite himself with us, should in a certain way make us divine! Yes, my brethren, the Saviour himself says it: *He that eats my flesh abides in me, and I in him* (John 6:57); and he abides in such a way that, as he says elsewhere, he gives life; so that the life we have after communicating worthily we may say is no longer our life, but that we live by Jesus Christ. *I live, now not I*, said St. Paul, *but Christ lives in me* (Gal. 2:20). The second effect of the Eucharist is to sanctify the soul; and so the one who communicates eats grace, in St. Augustine's expression, because he eats the very author of grace. This does not mean that this

Sacrament causes the first sanctifying grace with the remission of mortal sins; no: this is not a Sacrament of the dead, nor was it instituted to put in grace one who is in mortal sin. Just as bodily food does not nourish or sustain a dead body, but strengthens and preserves life in the living, who die if they do not take it, so the sovereign and Eucharistic bread does not give the life of grace to the soul that is dead through sin; but in one who lives in the Lord's grace it increases that grace, and without it the soul would die of weakness. *Unless you eat of this bread*, said Jesus Christ, *you shall not have life in you* (John 6:54). The third effect of the Eucharist is to give us courage to resist our enemies within and without. *You, Lord*, said David in prophecy, *have prepared a table before me against all those that afflict and persecute me* (Ps. 22:5). That is why the Father St. Cyprian said (*Ep.* 54) that with the help of holy Communion the Martyrs came out victorious against all the attacks by which the devil tried to make them lose the faith, and rose above the torments of the tyrants. It defends us even from outward enemies, and countless victories have been won among the Christian people when the soldiers of their armies armed themselves to go out to battle more with the power of this Sacrament than with the force of their weapons of war. Gideon experienced this effect of the divine Sacrament in figure: fighting with few men against many squadrons of Midianites, he saw that a loaf baked under the ashes, a symbol of the Eucharist, fell from heaven on the camp of the enemy and left it destroyed (Judg. 7:13). See in all that has been said the effect Communion produces in those who receive it worthily.

10. But woe to him who communicates unworthily, that is, without the dispositions explained above! *It were better for that man if he had not been born*: this is the curse that Jesus Christ hurled at Judas for having communicated with the wicked design of handing over his kind and divine Master into the hands of his enemies.[1] This ungrateful disciple of the Saviour is the most perfect example both of the crime of coming to receive the Lord in grave sin and of the ruin and death that follow on this crime. If Jesus said to Pilate that he who had handed him over sinned more than the judge who sentenced him (John 19:11), I will dare to say that the Christian who unworthily receives the body of the Lord commits a greater crime than Judas himself. He is a profaner and a sacrilegious man, for he makes no distinction, and does not discern the body of the Saviour from other bodily foods (1 Cor. 11:29). He is a traitor who, with the mask and kiss of peace, hands over the Saviour to his enemies the demons, after having received from his merciful hand more favours than Judas had received, for whom Jesus Christ had not yet died nor shed his blood. He is guilty of the death that was given him on Calvary through Judas, and exceeds in malice those who crucified him; for they did not know what they were doing, and the sacrilegious profaner of the Eucharist puts him on the cross again knowing who it is he crucifies.

11. An enormous crime, which calls for a terrible punishment. And so it is given: in the first place the devil seizes his soul and takes possession of it to enslave it. *No sooner had Judas received the morsel that Jesus Christ gave him*, says St. John (ch. 13:27), *than Satan entered into him.* Not only this: the one who communicates unworthily eats in the sacred bread, according to St. Paul, his own judgment (1 Cor. 11:29); that is, he is already sentenced. He goes, like Aman, from the table to the gallows (Esth. 7); so it was verified in Judas himself, who shortly after his sacrilegious communion hanged himself with his own hands. Even this is little: he eats the very terrible judge who condemns him to the abyss. Ah, how Jesus Christ symbolised all this in that parable of the feast! A king, he says, made a majestic banquet at the wedding of his son. Those who had come into the wedding were already at table, and he saw one who was not adorned with the wedding garment the occasion required. Angry, he turned to him and said: Why do you come here so unbecomingly dressed? Why have you not dressed as befits this wedding? Surprised and convicted, he was silent. Then the king called his servants and said to them: *Bind this man hand and foot, and cast him into the exterior darkness* (Matt. 22:13), that is, throw him into hell. This is the end of the profaners of the body of Jesus Christ, who, if for the good he is life and resurrection, for the wicked is death and ruin.

12. Do not allow, my God, any Christian to experience this tremendous effect of unworthy communion of your body. If it saddens me to see, or even only to hear of, the profanation the impious make of this

venerable Sacrament, even though on my part it is involuntary, and I find no means sufficient to make amends to you for this offence and injury done to you, with how much more reason shall I avoid from now on the sacrilegious reception of this great mystery of faith, removing the dross from my soul so that it may remain a pure vessel, as Isaiah said, and be a worthy throne for my God in the Sacrament? I do not want death and ruin, my God; I want life and resurrection. I shall obtain all this by communicating worthily; for you tell me in your Gospel: *He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood, I will raise him up on the last day* (John 6:55), and he has the eternal life of glory already assured. Amen.

[1] The Gospel text cited is Matt. 26:24.

6. First Sunday after Epiphany: On Sanctifying the Feast Days

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 6, pp. 52–61 (pp. 52–53 missing from the copy used). Gospel: Luke 2:42–52. Original preacher not named.

\[Printed pages 52–53 are missing from the copy used. They held the heading of this plática, its Latin theme, the Gospel of the day (the finding of the child Jesus in the temple, Luke 2:42–52), the opening paragraphs and the start of the First Part. The title is supplied from the volume's Index. The translation resumes at the top of p. 54, in the middle of a sentence, apparently in paragraph 3.\]

First Part

\[3\]. \[…\] in a truly extraordinary way. For the other precepts it seems that God did not wish, or at least did not command, that we should apply anything more than understanding and will; but for this one he wishes and commands that our memory be faithful, so that it never forgets so important a precept.[1] In it we must know which day there is an obligation to sanctify, and how it is sanctified. Let us speak of these separately. Which day must be sanctified? God commanded the Jews to observe the last day of the week, the sabbath, in a holy and religious way, so that by observing it they might have a perpetual monument of the wonderful creation of this machine of the universe, after whose making, as the Holy Spirit says, he rested on that day. The holy Fathers give other reasons for this, which need not be repeated. But for Christians the Sunday is what the sabbath was in the law of Moses. The Saviour did not lack far higher motives for inspiring the Church to make this transfer, just as he also changed circumcision into baptism, the sacrifice of the paschal lamb into the most holy sacrifice of the Mass, and all the legal holocausts and victims into the most sweet Sacraments of grace. And if the Jews offered God the last day of the week in thanksgiving for the benefit of creation, we Christians dedicate the first to him for the same cause; and it is called Sunday \[*domingo*\], which means the Lord's day, because it is, as David said in prophecy, *the day which the Lord has made* (Ps. 117:24) for his worship, honour and veneration. A day most worthy of our joy and respect; for on it the Saviour was born, according to the Sixth Council; on it the star appeared to the Magi; on a Sunday St. John baptised him; on it he worked his first miracle at the wedding of Cana; on it he entered Jerusalem in triumph; on it he rose again; and Jesus worked countless other marvels on this day.

4. The change from Saturday to Sunday for its sanctification was made by the Apostles, instructed by Jesus Christ; and from the first year after the resurrection the Sunday already took the place of the Jewish sabbath. That is why St. Luke says that on this day the faithful gathered to share in the holy mysteries (Acts 20:7). And although this precept is a natural one, which admits no change, the change made from the sabbath was not one of substance but of ceremony; for the precept of sanctifying one day in the week always remains, whether it be this day or any other. Besides Sunday there are other feasts that the Church, our lawgiver in spiritual things, whom we must obey, has chosen. Such are Corpus Christi, the Ascension, the Conception of Mary, the Assumption, the Nativity and others. So too in the law of Moses there were, besides the sabbath, other feasts, such as the Pasch, Pentecost, the feast of Trumpets, of Tabernacles and various others.

5. And how are feast days sanctified? “Those things that are dedicated to the worship of God,” says my angelic Master,[2] “are the things we call sanctified by the law”; and so, since the Lord commands us in the third commandment of the Decalogue to sanctify Sundays and feast days for him, we shall say that they are sanctified only by dedicating them to the worship of God. But it should be noted, the same Saint continues, that in this precept we must consider the end of sanctification and the means of carrying it out. The end is to spend this day in those works of the spirit by which the Lord, who is spirit, is glorified; and the means are to free ourselves of all bodily labour, so that the spirit, set free, may fly to its God. That is why the same One who commands us to sanctify the feasts, says St. Gregory, also forbids us to do servile works on them. *See*, says the Lord, *you shall do no work of labour on the feast day: neither you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your servants, nor your beasts* (Exod. 20:10). Not because these works are bad in themselves, but because of the obstacle they place to the due sanctification of the feast day. So ploughing, digging, sewing, in short every laborious work, is forbidden by the tenor of this precept, which includes all that we ordinarily call manual labour. To say that it is permitted where no scandal follows, and no one sees another doing his work, is an error which, although fairly common, was condemned by Pope Innocent XI. Holding fairs and markets on feast days falls under the prohibition of this precept; the Council of Reims forbade it under pain of excommunication. But those actions in which the body has little or no part, such as reading, studying, writing, giving counsel and the like, are not forbidden. So teaches St. Thomas, my master. One may also work as much as is necessary and indispensable for the worship and adornment of the sanctuary, such as ringing bells, arranging altars and whatever else concerns this. That is why Jesus Christ said in St. Matthew: *The priests in the temple break the sabbath, and are without blame* (Matt. 12:5). One may work to prepare what is needed for food; the Church, a mother full of compassion, does not wish her children to abstain from work as strictly as God once commanded the Jews, who on Friday gathered the manna for the sabbath and on that day also prepared the food for the feast day. So when the Pharisees reproached the Apostles for plucking some ears of wheat to eat on a feast day, Jesus Christ excused them by citing the example of David (Matt. 12:1–4). One may also work to prepare medicines for the poor sick; the Saviour himself did so with the blind man and with the bent woman. Likewise one may work if a neighbour’s need demands it.

6. Jesus Christ gives us to understand this when he said: *Which of you, if he sees his neighbour’s ass fall into the mire, will not pull it out on the feast day?* (Luke 14:5). One may work if a man cannot otherwise support himself. *Man was not made for the feast day*, said the Saviour, *but the feast day for the good of man* (Mark 2:27). One may, with due permission, gather in the crops or do some other farm work when some harm would result from not doing it that day. So the Maccabees fought on a feast day because they could not avoid it (1 Macc. 2:41). It is the opinion of some authors that sinning on a feast day is a servile work, since *he who sins is the servant of sin* (John 8:34); and among these some say that it is a circumstance that must be told in confession.

7. Once the faithful are freed from the manual labour and servile works forbidden on Sundays and feasts, their heart is left free to be dedicated entirely to God, which is the purpose of sanctifying these days. At all times and in every place we must adore and bless God and give him due thanks for the benefits he grants us. All days are the Lord’s days, says the Prophet; nevertheless the Lord has always reserved a set time for his worship. We do not know what it was for the true believers under the natural law; under the written law, as we have said, it was the sabbath, which Scripture calls holy and the rest of the Lord; and under the law of grace it is Sunday and the days prescribed by our ecclesiastical prelates. On these days, so that they may be sanctified in a way that fulfils this precept, all the faithful must devote themselves only to the virtues. The Church already prescribes hearing a whole Mass on them; and besides this, according to the teaching of many Fathers and Doctors, all gathered in the Roman Catechism, they must be spent in attending the divine offices, hearing the divine word, explaining the catechism to one’s family, and in other works of piety, religion and mercy. The first Christians gathered in church on Sunday for the reading, sermon, sacrifice, communion and the other offices of the Church. St. Justin affirms that on that day they made the collection of

alms to relieve the poverty of their needy brethren. St. Paul writes in his letter to Corinth (1 Cor. 16:2) \[of the collection on the first day of the week\]. On that day they prayed to God with more fervour, and did so not kneeling but standing, in memory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ which took place on this day. So said Tertullian: this is what we ought to do. I cannot but say that if the Christian abstains from bodily labour and hears Mass with a spirit of devotion, contemplating in it the sacred mysteries of the life, passion and death of our adorable Redeemer, which are represented in this sacrifice, even if he does nothing more, I will not dare to say that he sins mortally. But ah, my brethren! Although this is my opinion, there is no lack of very weighty Doctors who judge it a mortal sin not to spend the greater part of feast days in works of virtue and piety. What is certain is that when Mary and Joseph had lost Jesus, though through no fault of theirs, they did not find him in the bustle of the crowd, nor in private houses, nor in squares or streets: they found him in the temple, the chief house where God himself dwells, and where he receives the homage and worship we must all render him, especially on the feast day. I will say that outside the temple and whatever relates to the service of the Lord, it is profaning the feasts, a crime contrary to the sanctification that is commanded. I am going to show this in the

Second Part

8. All days are equal by their nature, but not by their condition. There are days that may be called plebeian, ordained for service and to be filled with manual labour; and others noble and festive, to which every servile work must yield, and which must be spent in spiritual actions. Ecclesiasticus makes this distinction in chapter 33. Hear his words: *Why does one day excel another?… By the knowledge of the Lord they were distinguished… some of them he exalted and blessed, and sanctified for himself, and some he put in the number of ordinary days* (Ecclus. 33:7–12). The Lord wished this to be observed in the old law as in the new. The Hebrews celebrated these days exalted by God, sanctifying them with a truly religious spirit. The same was done in the first centuries of the Church, when the tyrants tried with the most terrible persecutions to turn the faithful away from Christian observances; and yet they could never extinguish the devotion the faithful have for feast days. So an ancient historian (Nicephorus, bk. VII, ch. 6) says that in the time of the impious Diocletian more than twenty thousand Christians gathered in the city of Nicomedia alone to celebrate duly the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder! In those times the feast day was God's day. God was sought and found where he should be sought: he was found in the church, in receiving the Sacraments, in confessing one's sins, in the preaching of the divine word and in the study of Christian doctrine. Would that these examples were imitated! St. Bernard would not have wept so much, recalling that fervour, at the sight of the profanation with which the feasts are treated in these wretched times.

9. These days are called holy for no other reason than that they must be regarded in a holy way, because they must be spent only in holy works, leaving aside everything that can hinder God's worship and service on them. But what happens? Let us look impartially on these feast days at the houses, the squares, the promenades, the offices, the workshops, what am I saying? at the very temple of God; and we shall scarcely find the Lord in them, for he cannot be found where the crime of violating his feasts is committed. *What fellowship has light with darkness?* says St. Paul (2 Cor. 6:14). Let us go on Sundays and feast days into the offices and workshops of the craftsmen; and what do we see? One sews, another prepares the loom for the next day, another sharpens the tools of his trade, a woman mends; and each, though he may not make the feast day equal to a working day, is busy preparing what is needed for work, as if this were not already work in itself. With saying "it is necessary", everything is covered up and hidden; but God cannot be deceived, says his Scripture.

10. Let us go into the houses: what do we see? Gaming tables, where quarrelling, cursing, blasphemy, perjury, cheating and theft are the spirit of the amusement reserved for that day; and the effects are discord, the loss of all a father of a family has earned in the whole week, the tears of the poor wife and family left

without food, bad example to the children, and above all the ruin of souls. So St. Anthony of Padua said that in every point of the cards there is a crime. Let us go to the taverns: and what do we see? You yourselves will be seeing it: drunkenness, obscene words, backbiting, false witness, gluttony, in short every vice. "O feast days!" said a weighty author, "rightly does the calendar mark you with a cross, so that the devil may not carry off your profaners at the sight of so much folly." What, then, are we not to enjoy ourselves, when even the doctor Tertullian says, "We give Sunday over to joy" (*Apol.* ch. 16)? Yes, my brethren. I do not forbid, I will say with Nazianzen (*Oration* 6), a moderate recreation of the mind, because it is aimed at taking breath in our labours so as to serve God better; what I forbid, the Saint continues, is wantonness and that total surrender to every sinful amusement.

11. Let us go to the fields: and what do we see? Many farmers who, to save time for the next day, without permission or real necessity, water, dig, harvest, sow… but what they sow is barrenness, provoking the wrath of God so that the clouds become bronze and the earth iron, so that it bears no fruit, as a prophet said (Lev. 26:19).

12. If we go out onto the roads, what do we see? A great procession of people of every class and age. Where are they going? Is there some rogation? They are going, you say, to a shrine, or to a neighbouring village to venerate its Patron. If it is done in a spirit of piety, it is a sanctification of the feast. But alas! How often is this feast crowned with crimes, as St. Augustine said! Absalom, on the pretext of going to visit the sanctuary of Hebron, for which he asked his father's leave, once away from his presence raised a rebellion against his own father and king (2 Kings 15:7–12). People go to sanctify the feast of most holy Mary and of the Saints; perhaps a sermon will be heard there in which their virtues have been made plain; and in that very place the dykes are opened to lewdness, to gluttony and to other crimes, in rebellion against God, whom they were chiefly going to honour.

Let us go into the very temple of the Lord: and what do we see? Continual irreverence in these which are houses of God, places of prayer; and not even here is God found, except with the scourge in his hand, as in the temple of Jerusalem, to punish the iniquities committed in it in the midst of the greatest solemnities, as David said (Ps. 73:4). There you will see that on the feast day people attend one Mass, the shortest if possible, so that time is left for worldly amusements, and even this incomplete and badly heard. There young people of both sexes come to carry on, with their glances and gestures, the impurity that reigns in their hearts; there people laugh, talk and amuse themselves as if they were enjoying a comic play. There… but better to say: from there people flee as much as they can, because where God is present is no fit place for libertine sinners. Do not be surprised at my words; hear those of the famous Salvian (*On the Government of God*, bk. VI): "If by chance on a feast day there is some worldly amusement at the time of the solemnity, I ask everyone: which place is fuller of Christians, the church or the house of amusement?" That is to say, on these days only God and his house are worthy of contempt. Is this sanctifying the feasts? Is God found in this way, so that we may render him our homage and service, by seeking him where he can in no way be found? Yes, he is found: to punish the violator of the feasts, to detest and hate his sabbaths and his solemnities, to curse their bodies and their souls; his Prophets say it all. He is found, but to make those who want no feasts have many of them, says St. Augustine, laying them on a bed of pain and making them unable to work, and so increasing their misery. He is found, says Chrysostom, but to allow thieves to seize the profits they sought by working on the feast day, or storms to devour them. I am horrified each time I read Jeremiah and Ezekiel and see the anathemas and threats God hurls through their mouths against those who commit the detestable crime of profaning days destined to be sanctified and dedicated to the Lord's worship.

13. May the Lord not allow any Christian to deserve these punishments. To avoid them, sanctify the feasts, my children, with purity and religion. Let us not give ourselves over to sensual pleasures at a time God has reserved for himself. Holy Scripture is full of blessings for those who spend these holy days in honouring the Lord and his Saints and in purifying their souls. Chapter 26 of Leviticus assures such people of the

possession of the goods of the earth, so that they may be happy, powerful and fortunate on it. Above all, in chapter 58 of Isaiah countless temporal promises are made to those who, turning away from all work, worldly amusement and crimes on Sundays and feast days, offer themselves with their whole heart to give thanks to God and ask his help. Let us do so, then, and let us be sure, as the same Prophet says, that the Lord in reward *will feed us with the inheritance of Jacob* (Isa. 58:14), that is, he will give us the inheritance that Jesus won for us, which is glory. Amen.

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[1] The third commandment alone begins "Remember" (Exod. 20:8).

[2] St. Thomas Aquinas, "the Angelic Doctor" (*Summa* II-II, q. 122, a. 4).

7. Second Sunday after Epiphany: On Marriage, and the Grievous Consequences for Those Who Do Not Contract It with a Right Intention

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 7, pp. 62–70. Gospel: John 2:1–11. Original preacher not named.

> *Nuptiae factae sunt in Cana Galilaeae (John 2:1).*
>
> *There was a wedding in Cana of Galilee.*

The Gospel of this day is from the second chapter of St. John, and it reads thus:

1. "Three days after Jesus had left Judaea for Galilee, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the Mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. And when the wine failed, the Mother of Jesus said to him, as by way of a request: They have no wine. And Jesus said to her: Woman, what is that to me and to you? My hour is not yet come. Nevertheless the Mother of Jesus said to those who were serving: Whatever he shall say to you, do it. Now there were there six stone water-pots, used for the purifications of the Jews, each holding two or three measures. Jesus said to them: Fill the water-pots with water; and they filled them up to the brim. Then he said to them: Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward; and they did so. When the chief steward had tasted the water that had been changed into wine, and did not know where this wine came from (though the servants who had drawn the water from the pots knew well), he called the bridegroom and said to him: Every man at first sets forth good wine, and when men have drunk well, then that which is worse; but you have kept the good wine until now. This was the first of the miracles of Jesus, and by it he manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him, that is, were strengthened in their belief." This is the Gospel.

2. Happy wedding, filled with blessings! Fortunate wedding, to which the Prince of eternity, the Captain of the house of Israel and the immortal King of the ages was invited, and at which the august Empress of the heavens, universal Queen of all creation, was present! At this wedding wonders were worked to relieve its needs, and the Messiah began to manifest the divinity of his mission; and at it, according to many holy doctors, the seventh of the Sacraments, Matrimony, was instituted. And whence did so much happiness come to it? From having called Jesus to it. Jesus was present and Jesus blessed it: it could not fail to turn out well. Where was Jesus that he did not do good to those present? He enters Peter's house and heals his sick mother-in-law; he comes to the pool and cures a paralytic of thirty-eight years' illness; he goes to Jairus's house and raises his daughter; he withdraws to the desert and feeds more than five thousand people with five loaves; he comes… but where God is, where Jesus Christ is, all is happiness and contentment. So it happened to the bride and groom of whom the Gospel tells. But I ask: whence come so many misfortunes, so much unhappiness and such grievous effects in the marriages of today? It comes from not calling Jesus when they are contracted, because the Lord is not present in them. Earthly and perhaps sinful ends are the motive of worldly matches; light is not asked of God for making them, nor are they contracted for those holy and honest ends for which God instituted them. See how, on the occasion of this holy wedding, I have reason to treat of this Sacrament of the law of grace. I will show what marriage is, and the right ends that must move

one to contract it (First Part); and the grievous effects that follow when those contracting it do not look to God in doing so (Second Part).

First Part

3. What is marriage? Matrimony: this word is derived from "mother" \[*madre*\], because, as St. Augustine says (*Against Faustus* XIX, ch. 26), "the woman ought to marry in order to be a mother"; or because it is chiefly her task to bear and rear the children; just as the word "patrimony" is taken from "father" \[*padre*\], whose special task it is to acquire and preserve the family's means. Properly speaking, marriage is the conjugal union of man and woman. If we wish to discover its origin, we must imitate Jesus Christ, who places it at the beginning of the world (Matt. 19:4–6). Indeed, as soon as God had formed Adam from the slime of the earth, he said: *It is not good for man to be alone; let us make him a help like to himself… Then the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam; and when he was fast asleep, he took one of his ribs, and filled up flesh for it; and of that rib he formed Eve, and brought her to Adam. Then Adam said* (by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says the Council of Trent): *This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh… Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh* (Gen. 2:18–24). From this it follows that marriage is the union of man and woman by divine institution, whose purpose is to propagate the human race and to help one another in their labours. A union more intimate and close than that between a man and those who begot him; for to be united to his wife the man will leave father and mother. An indissoluble union, says the same Council (Sess. XXIV, at the beginning), because it is not lawful for man to separate what God has joined.

4. Marriage, then, as the conjugal union of man and woman which obliges them to live in inseparable companionship, continued thus as a contract between the two under the natural law, and even under the law of Moses with some variations, until Jesus Christ our Saviour came into the world to make the shadows give way to the realities, and raised this same conjugal contract to the rank of a Sacrament, in order, says the same Council of Trent, to perfect this natural love, strengthen this indissoluble union and sanctify the married. This Sacrament, then, which causes a uniting grace, and which is the sacramental union between lawful persons who must always live together, is a living image both of the union God has with the just soul by grace and of the union Jesus Christ our Redeemer made in his incarnation with the Church, which, to make her his bride, clean and without stain, he washed, says St. Paul, with his most precious blood (Eph. 5:25–27), enriched with his gifts, exposing himself for love of her to a shameful death and promising never to be separated from her until the end of the ages.

5. This Sacrament, like all the others of our mother the Church, consists of matter and form, and a minister with due intention. The remote matter of marriage is the bodies of the contracting parties, and the mutual giving of them that they make is the proximate matter; just as natural water is the remote matter of Baptism and the ablution or washing done with it on the person baptised is the proximate. The form is the words of the contracting parties, in which with that "I will" they expressly give the consent they must have inwardly; and the ministers of this Sacrament, in the more probable opinion, are the contracting parties themselves. For although all this is done, and must be done, in the presence of the bishop, or his vicar general, or the parish priest of one of the two parties, or whoever these delegate for it, this is no more than an indispensable condition, without which the marriage would not be valid. This Sacrament must be celebrated between persons who are lawful or capable of it. Marriage is founded on a contract, which Jesus Christ did not abolish when he raised it to the dignity of a Sacrament; and as every contract that does not conform to what the laws lay down is null, so marriage has as many impediments disqualifying persons from contracting it as there are divine or human laws that put some obstacle in the way. There are many impediments that either annul a marriage contracted with them or, though the marriage is valid, make those who contract it so sin mortally. These impediments are many, and they are neither easy to understand nor still less to explain in the short

space of a homily. Those who wish to marry should learn of them from their parish priest, so as not to go wrong in so important a matter. Since this is one of the Sacraments called "of the living", it must be received without consciousness of mortal sin; and if it is received in that state, a sacrilege is committed by not treating holy things in a holy way, and in that case it does not communicate the uniting grace that is proper to it.

6. Although the labours and hardships that marriage brings with it are many, as the Apostle said (1 Cor. 7:28), they are made bearable by the three precious goods that come from it, offspring, fidelity and the sacrament, which make honourable in the married circumstances that in others would be sinful. The first good of marriage is offspring, that is, the children begotten of lawful wife and husband. A good beyond telling. Hear the Apostle: *The woman shall be saved through the children she bears, if they continue in faith, and holiness, and a well-ordered life* (1 Tim. 2:15). Ah! What blessings came to Tobias, Jacob and other patriarchs from their children! The second good is fidelity, that is, the faithfulness husband and wife must keep towards each other, given the gift they have made of their bodies, each resting on the integrity of the other and not defiling the marriage bed. "Son," the elder Tobias said to his son (Tob. 4:13), "be content with your own wife, and do not go seeking another's." Since they are no longer anything but one flesh, *the wife*, said the Apostle, *has not power over her own body, but the husband; and likewise the husband has not power over his own body, but the wife* (1 Cor. 7:4). Very grave are the penalties against adultery. This fidelity of marriage requires husband and wife to love each other with a holy and pure love. *Husbands*, says St. Paul, *love your wives, as Christ loved the Church* (Eph. 5:25), who loved her so unselfishly that he gave her all he had. The third good of marriage is the Sacrament: that is, the grace it communicates for bearing its burdens, and the bond that ties them so closely that they can never be separated. *To those who are joined in marriage*, so St. Paul speaks to the Corinthians, *I command, not I but the Lord, that the wife depart not from her husband; and if she depart* for a just cause, *let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband; and let not the husband put away his wife* (1 Cor. 7:10–11).

7. The abundant graces that sanctify marriage and make it sweet depend on the ends or causes that move men to embrace it. There are three ends, according to the Catechism of the Council, that a man should have for joining himself to a woman in this Sacrament. The first is the companionship they give each other for mutual help. The Lord gave Eve to Adam as a help; and so it seems that God intends this union so that, amid the labours of this life, the woman may have in her husband, and he in his wife, someone to comfort and encourage them, especially in old age. The second is the propagation of the human race, always having as one's guiding star not sensual pleasure, but that there may be those who glorify God on earth and afterwards praise him eternally in heaven. "You know, Lord," said Tobias at the time of his marriage, "you know, Lord, that I take this your servant not to satisfy sensuality, but only from the desire of having children who will praise your name for ever" (Tob. 8:9). The third is to remedy incontinence: the struggle between flesh and spirit, which arose from the first sin, is continual; and so let him who fears being overcome in it take up this state, in which he has resources so as not to offend God with impurity. *If they do not contain themselves*, says St. Paul, *let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn* (1 Cor. 7:9). See here, my brethren, marriage very briefly explained. Let us now see the harms that come to those who do not look to God in contracting it.

Second Part

8. The bond between man and woman, said St. Jerome, must be regarded by those who intend to marry not as a carnal knot ordained only for the satisfaction of the senses (in such marriages God is not present), but as a visible sign of the Lord's grace and an image, as we have said, of the most pure union of Jesus Christ with his Church. When marriage is founded on these solid principles, since it is Jesus who attends the wedding, it will be holy and pleasing to God, a nurse of peace in families and a benefit to society. The woman will turn her eyes and desires to her husband alone, as God said to Eve (Gen. 3:16), and the husband will see in his wife a faithful companion, worthy of his love and attentions. God alone, says the Apostle, must be the object of

marriages: *Let them marry*, he says, *only in the Lord* (1 Cor. 7:39).

9. I would wish (and I am going to speak with St. John Chrysostom and St. Ambrose) that Christian parents would take as an example for the marriages of their children what the patriarch Abraham did when he married his son Isaac. Hear it, for here is plainly shown the spirit and the ends with which marriages should be made. When, then, he sought to find him a wife worthy of his merit, to secure in him the Lord's promises, he did not want Isaac to choose her by himself, lest he be dazzled by one of those outward attractions by which the young are deceived. He called a trusted servant and ordered him to go and look for a bride for Isaac; but not from the land of the Canaanites, an unbelieving and wicked land, but from his own kin, worship and religion. How prudent! He does not seek riches, beauty or rank, no; he seeks faith, religion and virtues. The servant sets out with a great retinue and ten camels laden with rich gifts; he enters Mesopotamia, and near the city of Nachor he stops, prostrates himself on the ground and asks God with a fervent prayer to enlighten him to succeed in the commission entrusted to him. What a lesson this is, both for parents and for children, when it is time to choose a state for the latter! He was calling God to the wedding with prayers, that is, asking him for light to choose rightly. This servant said in his prayer: "Lord, I want nothing but your pleasure; and the sign that it is so will be this: the maiden who comes out for water to this fountain or well, and who, when I ask her for a drink, says yes, that she will give me some and will draw for the camels too, she, Lord, is the one you choose as wife for my master." A good petition! For a house of hospitality, like Abraham's, let a charitable wife be sought; for a house of virtue, to seek a dissolute spouse can have no good outcome, all will be misery. At this Rebecca came to the well; Abraham's servant asked her for water, and she told him she would give it to the camels too. While she was busy drawing the water, the envoy, says Scripture, watched her thoughtfully; he contemplated her beauty, her modesty, her gravity with a gentle bearing, her modest eyes, her silent tongue, her hands diligent in the work of mercy she was doing. Abraham's servant went up to her and asked her whose daughter she was, and she told him she was the daughter of Bathuel, of a people that worshipped the true God; and at the same time she offered him her father's house for lodging, for she knew it would be welcome there. Then, seeing so virtuous a maiden, and one of Abraham's kin, he knew that she was the chosen one; and accepting the offer of lodging, the marriage was arranged that night. Then they set out for the bridegroom's home; and as they drew near, the servant saw Isaac from afar and said to Rebecca: "That is your husband." At once she covered her face, as if to say: Let Isaac first hear of my good qualities; for I do not want him to make this match for the beauty I have, but because he learns from his steward that I am virtuous and will know how to look after his house (Gen. 24). Happy marriage, in which God was so present! What blessings fell on it, since it was the origin of all the tribes of Israel and the stock from which the Messiah came!

10. But what blessings can be hoped for from the marriages of our days? Let us first ask: what spirit moves and animates them? The same St. John Chrysostom (who tells the story I have related for your instruction) himself answers. A hard-working, industrious and Christian husband is not sought; a wife who is honourable, retiring, a lover of virtue, careful of her house, is not desired; that is not what is sought. Even if the man is an idler, an impious man, even if the woman is a libertine, a good-for-nothing, the only question is whether there is property, whether there are relatives from whom advancement may be expected, whether there are connections that may be advantageous. More: people ask whether she is beautiful and dresses well, whether he has a dashing air. What an error! Those famous giants, in stature and in vices, of whom Scripture tells, came into the world because the sons of God, seeing the beauty of the daughters of Cain, took them for wives (Gen. 6:2–4). What was to come of marriages in which, with God and his religion put aside, only outward beauty is considered? Giants, monsters of unhappiness and iniquity. Well, this is the outcome for one who regards only outward qualities as the purpose of his marriage, without looking to God in making it. What a chain of grievous effects comes from this!

11. Next follows unhappiness between the spouses; for when the flattering qualities they had set before themselves soon vanish, and perhaps even before they disappear, they see the mistake of their illusion. They see that the husband is an idler, a libertine, a gambler, a man of bad habits. In short, the wife sees that the husband to whom she gave her hand for his fine appearance goes looking outside the house for the contentment he does not find in his own. The husband soon notices the mistake of his passion: that the woman he accepted because she seemed a goddess in her face, besides being of no use for anything in the household, has an unbearable temper and studies only how to please strangers. So a short while after the wedding, the one quarrels, the other curses her lot; all is tears, all coldness, all contradiction. Not only this: most of the scandals seen in the world have no other source than a wrong choice made by not calling God to it. When the spouses, whom not the love of the Lord but that of the flesh and human considerations united, are estranged, there follows a longing for an unlawful love. The heart of man always loves; and if it is not in the love of God, says St. Augustine, profane love fills it. So the husband or wife who have shaken off the yoke of holy married love soon look for someone to fill the void left in their heart. See the fountainhead of adulteries and concubinage, and from these come discord, the loss of property, separations, plots of murder, and… would that we did not experience the grievous effects that follow on these marriages contrived without consulting God, only private whims! We would not see so many unhappy children weeping over the lack of peace in their homes and the destruction of the property they were to inherit; so many lawsuits, with which the courts are full and their judges weary; so much gossip fed by their quarrels; and so many criminals as we have seen in prisons and on scaffolds, to which many married people were led who rid themselves, by murder, of the lawful partners the Church had given them, so as to enjoy other criminal strangers freely.

12. See explained, though briefly, what marriage is. *A great Sacrament*, says St. Paul (Eph. 5:32), because it is an image of that spiritual marriage that Jesus Christ made with his Church, and for which he came down from heaven to earth, showing so generous a love for her that he gave her even his most precious blood as a dowry. See also the right ends that must guide those who intend to marry, and the grievous effects that follow from not calling God to the wedding, that is, from not consulting God and asking him for light to choose rightly, being moved to the match solely by earthly and sensual ends, in which the devil usually has so great a part. I conclude with what the angel Raphael said to the young Tobias. The Angel advised him to marry Sara, the daughter of Raguel. The holy young man resisted this match, because he knew that seven husbands this Sara had had had died on the first night of their marriage, the devil taking their lives. But the holy Archangel gave him a lesson that in a few words confirms my whole homily. “Look,” he said to him, “do not be afraid. Those who arrange their marriage to satisfy their sensuality, like the beasts in this, make themselves slaves of the devil, and he exercises his dominion over them until he destroys them; but those who marry for the honest ends of nature and reason, purposing to extend their line so as to serve and glorify God, are free from the servitude and tyranny of the devil” (Tob. 6:16–22). An Angel said this when marriage was no more than a natural contract; what would he say now that it is a Sacrament of the law of grace? Would that all who receive it profited by this lesson! May God in his infinite mercy grant it to all, so that, their married union being holy, they may live in peace and grace, and afterwards live eternally happy in glory. Amen.

8. Third Sunday after Epiphany: On the Priestly Dignity, and the Respect Owed to It

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 8, pp. 71–79. Gospel: Matt. 8:1–4. Original preacher not named.

> *Ostende te sacerdoti (Matt. 8:4).*
>
> *Show yourself to the priest.*

The Gospel of this day is from the eighth chapter of St. Matthew, and it reads thus:

1. “When Jesus had come down from the mountain, a great multitude of people followed him; and behold, a leper came to him and, acknowledging him beforehand as the Son of God, adored him, saying: Lord, if you will, you can make me clean of the leprosy. And Jesus, stretching out his hand, touched him, saying: I will; be made clean. And at once he was cleansed of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him: See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded.” This is the Gospel.

2. The law of Moses commanded the priests to judge leprosy. They removed lepers to a separate place so that they might not infect the healthy with their disease; and once they were cured, they presented themselves to the priest appointed for this, and if he declared them clean, they were allowed to rejoin the other citizens. Only when it was doubtful whether they were cured or not did the law command the priest to keep them apart from the rest of the people. Jesus Christ, who came not to break the law but to fulfil it, having cured this leper, ordered him to present himself to the priest so that he might declare his perfect cure. He did this, according to Cardinal Hugh, besides fulfilling what Moses had commanded, to show the honour and reverence due to the priest. The Saviour also wished to symbolise that, although the sinner sees himself cleansed of the leprosy of mortal sin through compunction and perfect sorrow for his sins in an act of contrition, he nevertheless wants him to present himself to the priests of the law of grace, to submit his sins to the keys of the Church in the sacrament of Penance, so that the minister appointed for it may purify him completely and give him the prescriptions needed to avoid relapses, burning his garments, that is, purifying his soul by due satisfaction for the remnants of his sins. O priesthood worthy of all our respect, since the Most High entrusts it with such commissions, and it received such honour from the great Priest according to the order of Melchisedech, Jesus Christ himself! The priesthood of the law of grace is one of the seven Sacraments the Saviour instituted, and it is called Order. The faithful should be instructed about it, so that they may venerate and esteem it. I will therefore show how great and sublime the dignity of the priest is (First Part), and what reverence is owed to him (Second Part).

First Part

3. Jesus Christ is the first and chief priest of the law of grace: the most holy high priest of the ages, who came to offer for all that holy and peaceful victim in which the eternal Father lovingly delights. He is the minister and the offering itself; and in the sacrifice he instituted all the others that were celebrated in the law of Moses are, as it were, recast. Jesus Christ, says St. Paul, received from the Father the glory of being high priest (Heb. 5:5); and from the fullness of his power the supreme pontiffs, the bishops, parish priests and other priests receive theirs, each according to the order of his hierarchy, all included in the priesthood. All that we do and carry out in our ministry comes from the Saviour. In ordination he confers on us the power the eternal Father gave him, and we are no more than his vicars on earth. How great, then, must be the dignity of the priest? It can be gathered somewhat from the high and sublime offices to which the Lord appoints priests.

4. The office of the priest includes two powers, that of order and that of jurisdiction. All power is directed either to the true body of Jesus Christ in the most holy Eucharist, and this is the power of order; or to his mystical body, which is the Church, and this is the power of jurisdiction, by which priests must govern and direct Christians to heavenly and eternal blessedness. This second power descends from the first, which is as much more excellent than the second as the true body of Jesus Christ is more excellent than his mystical body. These two powers are what are called the keys of the Church, which the Saviour conferred on St. Peter, and he on all his successors, when on the night of the supper he ordained him priest like the other Apostles, giving them the faculty of ordaining others.[1] Oh, how great is the priest’s power by that alone of consecrating and distributing the most sacred body of Jesus Christ! This power exceeds all that the human mind can conceive; it is a power without equal. To the Angels was given the faculty of showing men a symbol or figure of this mystery: as when a loaf baked under the ashes appeared in the air to Gideon so that he might conquer the army of the Midianites with it; or to Elijah so that he might take strength to climb

Mount Horeb, where the Lord was calling him; and to others in like cases. But to none of them was granted the power of changing bread into the very body of the Saviour. Not even to most holy Mary did he give such a power, although she is the most sublime of creatures, being the Queen of all the virtues. It is true that in some way we may say that the incarnation of the eternal Word is mirrored in the consecration of the bread and wine, and that the latter renews the former on our altars. At only a few words of our Lady, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word* (Luke 1:38), the Word came down from the bosom of the Father and became man in her most pure womb; but the priest goes further still, for with only these few words, *This is my body, this is my blood,* a like marvel is worked or renewed. Each time the priest pronounces the tremendous words of his ministry, Jesus Christ comes down from heaven into his hands and enters his breast. It is as though the Son of God becomes incarnate again and is born on our altars, and we can say: *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us* (John 1:14).

5. Ah! If we weigh the words in which the Father St. Augustine explains this in his exposition of the Psalms, we shall notice some circumstances that magnify the priest's power even above the mystery of the incarnation. Hear them for your instruction and teaching: "O venerable dignity of priests, in whose hands the Son of God becomes incarnate as in the womb of the Virgin! O sacred and heavenly mystery!… that at one and the same moment the God who reigns in heaven is in your hands in the Sacrament of the altar! O venerable holiness of hands! O happy exercise! O true joy of the world!… The priest performs this mystery, and the Angels, on whom this power has not been conferred, attend the celebrant like servants." At so ineffable a privilege heaven is amazed, earth wonders, man is confounded, hell is horrified, the devil trembles, and it is an object of veneration to the angelic greatness. More cannot be said: in this power is verified what Scripture says: *The Lord obeying the voice of a man* (Jos. 10:14).

6. Following on this power comes that of jurisdiction, and its chief exercise is forgiving men's sins. Nothing is more wonderful than that a frail, mortal and corruptible man can say with authority to the penitent, "I absolve you from your sins", with such truth and effect that, if nothing is lacking on the part of the repentant sinner, as soon as the priest pronounces these words of absolution all his sins are forgiven him. O power beyond our understanding! When Jesus Christ said to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven you", the Pharisees murmured, saying: *Who is this who blasphemes? Who can forgive sins but God alone?* (Luke 5:21). They were right: *Who can make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed?* said Job, *Is it not you who alone are?* (Job 14:4). But in this lies the priestly dignity, that this power, which belongs to God alone, is granted to a man. Jesus Christ himself said to his disciples, and in them to all priests: *Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained* (John 20:23). St. Peter Damian, including all priests in Peter, exclaims: "O dignity of Peter! That the judgment of the priest should precede the sentence of God, and the Almighty confirm the priest's judgment!" So it is; and in the priest's hand is the hand of the Most High. By this power the soul dead through sin rises again, the children of hell become heirs of heaven, and the captives of the devil recover their freedom. Is there any king or prince who enjoys this pre-eminence? Has it been said to them, or to any of the Seraphim, or to the princes of the earth: *Whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven*? (Matt. 18:18). Certainly not. The kings of the world can free their prisoners; and Angels have been seen loosing the chains of the imprisoned; but this power was only over bodies, while the priest's touches the soul and reaches up to heaven; and as the Father gave all judgment to his Son, so the Son grants it all to the priest.

7. To these two keys or root powers, which raise the priesthood to so high a degree, all its other prerogatives are reduced: receiving and giving the Eucharist and administering all the Sacraments, judging offenders in the ecclesiastical court, sanctioning the laws of the Church, preaching or instructing the faithful, and governing the Saviour's flock, each according to the grade and condition he has. From this comes the excellence of their dignity. In the first chapter of Malachi \[cf. Mal. 2:7\] they are called angels, for they carry out Christ's embassy; they are ministers of God who do his will; they stand before the throne of God

and of his Lamb and cry “Holy, Holy, Holy”; in short, they carry out all the duties granted to the Angels, and many more. In various places of Scripture they are called gods (Ps. 81:6; Exod. 22:28); and Jesus Christ himself gave this to be understood, as St. Jerome explains (*On Matt.* 16), when, after asking his Apostles, “Whom do men say that the Son of man is?”, he asked them again, “But whom do you say that I am?” As if to say: Men say that I am Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the Prophets; but you, who are not mere men, since your dignity makes you godlike and lets you know my divinity, what do you say? See, my brethren, how far the dignity of the priest reaches, and how great and sublime it is. Let us now see what reverence is owed to him.

Second Part

8. The fourth commandment, which commands us to honour our parents, understands by this word not only those who gave us the earthly being we enjoy, but also those superiors who have some charge to rule and govern us, not only temporally or in civil life, but also, and preferably, those who govern us in spiritual things in relation to heaven, for which we were created. To these, then, we owe the honour and reverence corresponding to their dignity and character. And it does not speak only of the pastors and prelates of the Church, to whom this honour is chiefly due, but of all priests in general, for all are ministers for the salvation of our souls. We owe them, then, respect and support. Let us speak of these separately.

9. Respect. Every priest must be respected and given honour, and contempt or insult towards him avoided; it is enough that they are our fathers for us to do so. And they are in fact; St. Paul regarded himself as such when, writing to the Corinthians, he said to them: *I write not these things to confound you, but I admonish you as my dearest children; for in Christ Jesus by the Gospel I have begotten you* (1 Cor. 4:14–15). Scripture speaks of this precept expressly. *My son*, said Ecclesiasticus, *with all your soul fear the Lord, and reverence his priests. With all your strength love him that made you, and forsake not his ministers. Honour God with all your soul, and give honour to the priests* (Ecclus. 7:31–33). So that as often as it commands and exhorts us to the honour, love and fear of God, so often does it enjoin the same regarding priests. The Apostle of the Gentiles, writing to Timothy, said to him: *Let the priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word* (1 Tim. 5:17), both for their dignity and for the fulfilment of their ministry. And to the Thessalonians he said: *We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; that you esteem them more abundantly* (1 Thess. 5:12–13). Merely to consider their dignity and the power they enjoy, as I explained before, is enough to move us to venerate them. That is why we must pay them our respect in public and in private: whether speaking of them or with them, giving them on every occasion a place of distinction and honour, obeying their commands, hearing their instructions and keeping them carefully; *for they watch*, says the Apostle, *as being to render an account of your souls* (Heb. 13:17). We must inspire these same sentiments in others, so as to raise the ministers of the sanctuary out of the degradation in which a libertine world has buried them. We cannot love our Religion without respecting its ministers. Whoever murmurs against them, slanders them or criticises their actions (a thing forbidden and punished by God in Scripture) is close to falling away from the faith of Jesus Christ, who says to priests: *He that despises you despises me* (Luke 10:16).

\[9b\]. Constantine the Great, when he attended the Council of Nicaea, would not sit except in the last seat, after the priests. And when certain written accusations against some ministers of the altar were presented to him for judgment, he answered: “Far be it from me to judge those whom God has made judges of my soul on earth”; and he threw the accusations into the fire. This example of respect for the priesthood was given by a Christian emperor, who paid them this honour not for their persons but for the dignity they hold.[1]

10. But are they entitled to this honour even if their conduct is bad? This is the expedient irreligion seeks in order to evade this precept. My brethren, priests, even if they are bad, are priests, and the sins that stain their soul cannot tarnish their dignity. They represent Jesus Christ, and in his name they benefit our souls; and this is enough for us to respect them as we do those who are holy, for all are legates or ambassadors of the Lord.

He may lose for himself; but he gains for us by the goods he communicates to us. A torch consumes itself, but it gives us light. Those who built Noah's ark perished in the flood; but they saved Noah and all his family. Oh, what terrible punishments the Lord hurls against those who despise the priesthood! We see Mary, the sister of Moses, covered with leprosy for having murmured against her brother (Num. 12). Core, Dathan and Abiron, for slandering the priests of the law, are swallowed alive by the earth and buried in hell (Num. 16). These and others bear witness by their punishment to how abominable it is in the eyes of the Lord not to pay the priesthood the honour and respect owed to it.

11. Support. The precept that commands us to honour our natural parents commands in this very thing that their children give them the necessary food when they have no means of earning it. So too the honour we owe to priests, who are the fathers of our spirit, includes the faithful's contributing to their livelihood. *The workman is worthy of his meat*, said Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St. Matthew (Matt. 10:10). St. Paul confirms this truth in different ways. First, with some comparisons he gives in various places of his first letter to the Corinthians: *Who serves as a soldier at any time at his own charges? Who plants a vineyard, and eats not of the fruit thereof? Who feeds the flock, and eats not of the milk of the flock?* (1 Cor. 9:7). He proves it also from the ancient Scripture itself: *It is written in the law of Moses*, he says, *You shall not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn. … Does he not say this for our sakes? For these things are written for our sakes* (1 Cor. 9:9–10). He confirms it also with this powerful reason: *If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we reap your carnal things?* (1 Cor. 9:11). This is a convincing argument. What reason is there why priests should study, keep vigil and toil to teach us, correct us, administer the Sacraments to us and forgive our sins, and be bound perpetually, like a careful shepherd, to the prompt relief of our needs (especially those who have the care of souls), and that we should leave them to perish of hunger? If the day-labourer works, does he work in vain? He sows for you, digs for you, reaps for you and does the other tasks; and afterwards is he to go and eat at his own expense? Certainly not. *The labourer is worthy of his hire*, says the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:7). Then, if priests work in the Lord's vineyard, it is just that they be fed.

12. This support is given to priests especially through the payment of tithes and first-fruits, so that those who serve the altar may live by the altar (1 Cor. 9:13). There are repeated commands of the Lord about this, so that there may be enough for the worship of the sanctuary and the support of its ministers. To be sure of this truth one need only read what the Council of Trent says in Sess. XXV, ch. 12: "Those are not to be tolerated who by various arts and pretexts try to exempt themselves from the obligation of paying tithes, or rashly take and usurp for themselves those that others pay, since it is certain that the payment of tithes is due to God." To prove that tithes are due to God, there are countless places of Scripture that show it. In Exodus we read this precept: *You shall not delay to pay your tithes and your first-fruits* (Exod. 22:29). In Leviticus it says: *All tithes of the land, whether of corn or of the fruits of trees, are the Lord's, and are sanctified to him* (Lev. 27:30); and then it includes also the obligation of tithing the increase of the cattle, the sheep and the goats in the shepherd's care. In the book of Numbers the Lord commands that to those of the tribe of Levi, who were the ministers of the sanctuary and to whom no land had been allotted as to the other tribes, the tithes of Israel be given for the ministry they perform in serving in the tabernacle of the covenant (Num. 18:21). From all this it follows that always and constantly, in all times and ages, it has been due by lawful right to give priests the necessary support by means of tithes, since they are dedicated to the service of God and to the common good of the people as well; for so the people have someone to offer sacrifices to the Lord in their name. This precept of tithes is, in substance, natural and divine; in its manner it is ecclesiastical. It is natural and divine in substance, because nature itself teaches that he who works must eat at the expense of him for whom he works; just as one who serves the kingdom in temporal things must be paid by the kingdom, or the king who rules and governs it. But as to the amount and share to be given, the manner of tithing and from which produce, this is an ecclesiastical precept, and it is generally regulated by the laws of each diocese or by the lawfully established custom of the towns. Tithing must be done from the good and the bad together; to tithe,

or give the tithe, from the worst one has gathered is to say that the most deserving person in the house should eat the lowest and meanest thing in it. God commanded that tithing be done in this way from the whole heap together, as appears from chapter 27 of Leviticus, and added that if anyone tithed only from the bad, both bad and good should all be assigned to the Lord (Lev. 27:33). Many would be left without a harvest if this command of the law of Moses had to be fulfilled. But even though that is not so now, let bad tithe-payers fear the Lord's punishment, since they do not fear the anathemas hurled by the Church; let them remember Cain, abandoned by God for offering him the worst of the fruits of his land.

13. To this, my brethren, comes what I meant to prove to you about the dignity of priests, which could not be more sublime because of the two powers they hold over the real body of Jesus Christ and over his mystical body, which is his Church; and the reverence we owe them because of this, paying them honour and the necessary support. Fulfil this obligation if you want God to bless you; and above all keep in mind these words of St. Jerome, with which I conclude. "Far be it from me," he said to Heliodorus, "far be it from me to think or speak against those who with their lips consecrate the body of Jesus Christ for us who are Christians, and who, holding the keys of heaven in their hands, judge us before the day of judgment comes" (*Ep.* 14). God give us his grace to do so. Amen.

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[2] Matt. 16:19.

[1] The story is told by Rufinus, *Hist. eccl.* I.2.

9. Fourth Sunday after Epiphany: On the Lord's Prayer

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 9, pp. 80–90. Gospel: Matt. 8:23–27. Original preacher not named.

> *Imperavit ventis, et mari, et facta est tranquillitas magna (Matt. 8:26).*
>
> *He commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm.*

The Gospel of this day is from the eighth chapter of St. Matthew, and it reads thus:

1. "When Jesus had gone into a boat, his disciples followed him; and presently a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves; but he was asleep. Then the disciples, full of fear, came to him and woke him, saying: Lord, save us, we perish. And Jesus said to them: Why are you fearful, when I am here, O you of little faith? And rising up at the same time, he commanded the winds and the sea to be still, and there came a great calm. And those who were present wondered at this, saying: Who is this, whose command the winds and the sea obey?" This is the Gospel.

2. The Apostles see themselves in danger of shipwreck; they pray to their divine Master; he hears them and brings them out of their danger; yet he does not fail to rebuke them for their lack of trust. See here in a few words the need of prayer and the way it is to be made. And how ought we to pray? Ah, here I am brought into my subject. Jesus Christ answers us: *Thus shall you pray: Our Father, who art in heaven,* etc. (Matt. 6:9). The prayer of the Our Father is the most perfect, the one in which the Saviour gathers all that we can ask and desire: a prayer which, according to the Fourth General Council, all of us must know by heart under pain of mortal sin. And this prayer being so perfect, do we obtain what we ask in it? The same Jesus who said, *Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you* (John 16:23), is the one who said: *You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss* (James 4:3). See my purpose. Although I mean to treat each of the petitions of the Our Father separately, it has seemed fitting to show today what prayer is and the excellence of the Our Father above all others; I will do this in the First Part. Why do we often not receive what we ask of God in prayer? Second Part.

First Part

3. Prayer, an act of the virtue of religion, is a raising of the soul to God, in which we lay our needs before the Lord and ask his help. It may be public or private. Private prayer is that which each person makes in his retirement, for God hears us anywhere: he heard Daniel in the lions' den, the three young men in the furnace of Babylon, and Judith in her oratory. Public prayer is that which the faithful make in common in the church, where we know God has his chief throne in the world, or in another place set aside for it. This prayer is the most acceptable to the Lord, and he has made countless promises about it: *Where there are two or three gathered together in my name,* he says, *there am I in the midst of them* (Matt. 18:20). Prayer may also be mental or vocal. Mental prayer does not come outward: in the hidden depths of his heart a man rises to God, contemplates his essence, attributes and mysteries, moves his will with this meditation, and drawing fruits of virtue from it, God fills his desires with good things. Vocal prayer pronounces with the lips what lies shut up within. There is need to pray, as repeated precepts show. Jesus Christ and his Apostles tell us in various places: *Watch and pray* (Matt. 26:41). *Pray without ceasing* (1 Thess. 5:17). *We ought always to pray* (Luke 18:1), and others. The heap of miseries we contracted through the first sin naturally leads us to ask for their remedy from him in whose hands our lots lie and who is the only giver of all good things. Countless examples prove the usefulness of this virtue, in which the Lord, hearing the prayer of his servants, granted them all they asked. By it Moses brings his enslaved people out of Egypt; Esther frees the Hebrews of Susa from the death that threatened them; and Elijah by his prayer makes heaven rain on a people that had not seen rain for three and a half years.

4. But, as I have said, among all prayers the most perfect is the Our Father. Several reasons confirm this truth. First, the authority of the one who instituted it, who is the Son of God himself, the Wisdom of the Father, the Teacher of justice and the Angel of great counsel, God himself, who knows our needs better than we do and the way we should ask his help while exalting his glory. Jesus Christ gave it to the Apostles: it was not made by the Angels, nor by any of the Prophets and Patriarchs. When a king, who alone can grant a favour, dictates to the petitioner the memorial with which he is to request it, it is a proof that he is willing to grant it. Recognising this, the Church says in the canon of the Mass: "Admonished by saving precepts and taught by divine instruction in the form of prayer, we dare to say: Our Father," etc.

5. Second, this prayer exceeds the others in the multitude of needs it sets forth. "All that we ought to ask of God in a holy way," said St. Augustine (*Ep.* 130 to Proba), "it embraces; and however many words we may wish to add, they will do no more than express what it says." That is why Tertullian calls it the breviary of the whole Gospel. Third, it excels in that such sublime things are summed up in so few words, a brevity that greatly helps the memory of people of every age and sex. For this reason the Father St. Cyprian said (*On the Lord's Prayer*): "How great and how many are the mysteries of the prayer! How briefly gathered, yet how rich in spiritual power! Nothing has been left out of it, so that the whole heavenly doctrine might be contained in our petition." Fourth, it excels in the order in which it makes its petitions, setting in order in a few words all that we must ask. For in the first place we must ask for the glory of God, and then for all those goods we should desire: first eternal goods, to attain the end of our creation; then temporal goods, and among these first those of the spirit, as means for reaching eternal salvation; then the bodily goods needed for our livelihood; and lastly preservation from all evils. So that this prayer, well meditated, is like Jacob's ladder joining earth with heaven, our petitions rising by it as by steps, and the Lord's blessings coming down upon us.

6. Fifth, there is the confidence it gives us of obtaining what we ask; for we speak to God with the very words of his Son, following the form of prayer he taught us and fulfilling what he commanded us, saying: *Thus shall you pray.* Ah! How pleasing to the Father is the voice of his Only-begotten! How he hears it out of respect and reverence for him! With what delight he will listen to a speech pronounced with the lips of his own Son! How eagerly the Holy Spirit will carry to heaven, with singular privilege, a memorial set forth by him whose body and lips he formed from the blood of a Virgin! So it is; and if Christ promised the fulfilment

of what we ask the Father in his name, how much more when we make our petitions to the Lord not only in his name but in his very words? For all these excellences this Lord's Prayer was put into use from the time of the Apostles: then it was recited without fail three times a day by all Christians, as St. Clement says (*Apostolic Constitutions* VII, ch. 25);[1] whence it came that St. Hilary and St. Augustine call it the daily prayer.

7. This prayer contains seven petitions and a preamble. The first petition regards the honour due to the supreme Being, who is the object of all our desires: this is *Hallowed be thy name*. It belongs to children to seek and ask for all that tends to their father's honour. The next three are directed to asking for ourselves three kinds of goods we need: heavenly goods, when we say *Thy kingdom come*; spiritual goods (as means of reaching this kingdom of God that we desire), when we say *Thy will be done*; and when we say *Give us this day our daily bread*, we ask for temporal and bodily goods. The three petitions that follow are ordered to beseeching the Lord to free us from three kinds of evils. The first and greatest of all is sin, and so we ask: *Forgive us our debts*, which are our sins. The second evil consists in the wiles with which the devil tries to throw us into sin so as to make us like him in torments, and so we say: *Lead us not into temptation.* Lastly we say *But deliver us from evil*, so as to avoid the evils we may experience in the world, such as illnesses, persecutions, loss of property and others.

8. The preamble of this prayer ennobles and exalts it, because in three or four words we show God the motives that encourage our hope in making these seven petitions to him, expecting the fulfilment of our desires. *Our Father, who art in heaven.* See here a public profession of our faith, by which we confess that we must direct our prayer to God alone, because from God alone, from the sovereign Father of lights, comes down every perfect gift (James 1:17). It is from him alone that we ask the goods we need; and although we pray to most holy Mary, to the Angels and to the just, it is only that they may intercede for us so that we may obtain what we ask of our heavenly Father. That is why when we speak with God we say: "Father, Son and Holy Spirit, have mercy on us; deliver us, Lord; give us this," and other such prayers; but to the Saints we say only: "Holy Mary, St. Michael, St. Peter, pray for us, intercede for us."

9. We begin the preamble by saying: *Father.* Ah! The divine Saviour could have begun this prayer with some other word that showed the divine Majesty more, such as "Creator" or "Lord"; but he wished to remove from it all that could intimidate us. He puts in only what moves those who were going to ask to love and confidence. Who will not come full of joy to the throne of his Father, who is *the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort* (2 Cor. 1:3)? Father! Oh, what hope this word gives us! The Jews boasted of having Abraham for their father; but so great is the love God has for us that he granted us the grace of being called, and being, his children (1 John 3:1). With what confidence shall we come to pray, when we know that it is our Father of whom we ask! For, as Scripture says: *What father, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a scorpion?* (Luke 11:11–12).

10. *Our Father*. We do not say "My Father"; that belongs to Jesus Christ, who is his only natural Son. This word reminds us that all of us have no other father than God; and that, as I said at the beginning, common prayer is of more value than private, for so each one asks for all and all for each one. *Our Father*: so in this whole prayer we never say "give me my daily bread; forgive me; deliver me from evil"… no; we put everything in the plural, "give us… forgive us… deliver us", because, our Father being common to us, we are all brothers and must ask for all.

11. *Who art in heaven.* Is God not, then, everywhere? So he is. *Do not I fill heaven and earth?* said the Lord through Jeremiah (Jer. 23:24). He is everywhere by essence, presence and power; but we say that he is in heaven because there he has his chief throne, as the kings of the earth have theirs in their court. *The Lord's throne is in heaven*, said David (Ps. 10:5). We say that he is in heaven because this gives more life to our faith and hope, since from there, says Scripture, he looks upon the needy. Not for that does he cease to know all our needs and hear our supplications. Far from us be the blasphemy uttered by some impious men of

whom the Wise Man tells: “God,” they said, “dwells on the heights of the empyrean; the clouds are a screen to him, and so he cannot see our needs” (cf. Job 22:13–14). Let us not say this. Our Father who is in heaven sees all, hears all, and attends even to the most secret things of hearts. And does he grant us everything we ask him in our prayer? I am going to answer in the

Second Part

12. The same Jesus Christ who commanded us to pray, who gave us the form of our prayer, and who said to us, *Seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you; ask, and you shall receive* (Matt. 7:7), refused what some asked of him. He would not work new wonders, as the Pharisees wanted; he did not make fire come down from heaven upon Samaria, as some of his disciples asked; and he did not grant the request of Salome. What does this mean? St. Augustine gives three reasons why the Lord ordinarily refuses our petitions: *Quia mali petimus, quia mala petimus, vel quia male petimus.* Many times God does not hear us, says the Saint, because when we pray we are sinners \[*mali*: being bad\], or because we ask for bad things \[*mala*\], or because, even if we ask for what we ought to ask, we ask badly \[*male*\]. Let us unfold these causes.

13. Because we ask in sin, being bad. *When you multiply prayer*, said the Lord through Isaiah, *I will not hear, for your hands are full of blood* (Isa. 1:15). Here we are given to understand, according to the exposition of St. Bernard, St. John Chrysostom and other Fathers, that we have no cause to complain when God rejects our petitions if our consciences are not pure. Who would be so rash as to presume to obtain a favour from his king by presenting himself to make his request with hands stained with the blood of the king’s son, whom he had cruelly murdered? Well, this is what the man does who, with consciousness of mortal sin, dares to approach the throne of mercy with hands on which the blood of the Son of God, of whom we ask, still steams; for it is certain that by our sins we have crucified Jesus Christ, as the Apostle says (Heb. 6:6). We must wash ourselves of the stains of sin before praying in order to obtain our petitions. “God does not hear prayers that are not pure,” said St. Ambrose (*Sermon* 56), “and they cannot be pure when the soul is stained.” *Wash yourselves, be clean*, cried Isaiah. And how are they to wash? *Take away the evil of your devices* (Isa. 1:16). It is true that the impetration of prayer does not depend necessarily on the state of grace. God hears sinners, though not as sinners: all must implore his mercy, which is infinite. He excludes only one who prays with present attachment to sin.

14. Let us give some examples. Will God hear one who prays while his faith wavers, denying or doubting one or more of the truths of Religion? Certainly not. “Where faith is lacking,” says St. Augustine, “prayer has perished”; and St. Paul had already told us: *How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?* (Rom. 10:14). Will he hear an angry man who sows discord among his brethren? No more. *I will*, said the Apostle to his disciple Timothy, *that men pray in every place, lifting up pure hands, without anger and contention* (1 Tim. 2:8). Will he hear the rancorous, who so resist the precept of Jesus Christ to forgive injuries? By no means. Jesus Christ himself says so in these words: *When you stand to pray, forgive, if you have aught against any man… for if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your sins* (Mark 11:25; Matt. 6:15). Will he hear one who is hard and unbending to the cries of the poor, refusing them alms? No: *He that stops his ear against the cry of the poor*, say the Proverbs, *shall also cry himself and shall not be heard* (Prov. 21:13). Will he hear the lewd, who come to beg God for his graces with an affection wholly of the flesh? No more: rather, says St. Bonaventure (*Sermon on a Confessor*), it is to one stained with impurity that it applies to be among those with hands full of blood, whose prayers the Lord does not hear, for by blood is understood carnal concupiscence.

15. So we could go on adding examples confirming that God does not hear those who ask while they are sinners; he does hear them, however, when, moved by the spirit of sorrow, they ask God, saying: “Lord, forgive me my sins.”

Nor does he hear us when we ask for bad things. Since God is just, justice itself by essence, he cannot grant our petitions when they are unjust. We must ask for nothing that it is not lawful for us to desire; for prayer is nothing but an expression we make to God of our desires. If it is not lawful for us to desire evil, sin, we must not ask for it, nor, even if we ask for it, will it be granted us; for that would make God a cooperator in evil. Our mother the Church, well aware of this, says in one of the Sunday collects: "O Lord our God, so that those who ask of you may obtain their desires, grant by your help that they ask nothing but what is pleasing to you." What, then, does the Lord want us to ask for? *Seek first*, said Jesus Christ, *the kingdom of God* (Matt. 6:33). Then the temporal goods we need for our livelihood and that of our family, and for keeping that moderate standing that corresponds to our state. God created us, put us in the world, gave us certain needs arising from Adam, and placed us in this or that class; and so nature itself dictates that we ask God for the help we lack for preserving all this. It must be asked with reference to God and his service; for if he creates us, preserves us and places us in a certain state, it is so that we may love and serve him. The other means, which as superfluous do not lead to heaven and are not means of gaining it, but perhaps of losing it, it is not lawful for us to ask.

16. But ah, my brethren! We complain that our prayers and supplications are not heard. God turns a deaf ear to our prayers. And why? Because we often ask for bad things, which God, being good, cannot grant, except for our punishment. Riches are asked for; but to use them like the rich man of whom St. Luke speaks, in extraordinary luxury, in the delights of a dainty table, and even in buying idols of flesh. What infamy! God will refuse it, because he sees that, as a prophet said, you want to make him serve your sins (Isa. 43:24). You will ask for posts and appointments, but for what? To lord it over the innocent, to make a noise in the world, and to present yourself as a god whom all must adore. Will that Lord grant this who condemned the Pharisees for longing for the first seats in the synagogue and wanting to be honoured with the title of Rabbi, so that their pride might grow still more? Bodily health is asked for; and for what? To spend it in crimes, to abuse it against the law of God. And will he grant it for this end, when he knows that sickness, as he said to St. Paul, perfects virtue (2 Cor. 12:9), if we turn away from sin? People ask for… Gentlemen, I cannot explain everything. Listen, and be horrified. A young man once asked me myself for prayers for the success of a design he had. Some time later he fell into danger of death; he called me to hear his confession, and among other sins that he confessed with great sorrow, the greatest in his judgment was having asked God to bend to his lustful desires the will of a married lady, who was faithfully resisting his impure advances. A fine petition! Would God hear it? No: God does not hear when bad things are asked of him.

17. Lastly, he does not hear either when things, though good, are asked badly. How does one ask God well? Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who taught us to pray and dictated the words of our prayer, gave us an example in the garden of how we must pray in order to be heard by God. He prostrated himself on the ground, putting his face to the earth (Matt. 26:39). See first the humility with which one must ask. To approach God we must know our miseries well, and this knowledge leads us to humble ourselves in the Lord's presence. So the publican prayed, who did not dare even to raise his eyes; God heard him; and he did not hear the wife of Zebedee, who besought him with a certain haughtiness: *Say that these may sit* (Matt. 20:21). The second thing we see in the prayer of Jesus is confidence. *My Father*, he said to him: a word that, besides inspiring love, shows that he had placed his hope in him. Although humility makes us recognise ourselves unworthy of the Lord's graces, his divine Majesty is nevertheless much pleased that we trust in his mercy for the fulfilment of our desires. The Centurion had humility, for he did not judge himself worthy for the Saviour to enter his house; yet he had such confidence that he could give health to his servant that he said to Jesus: *Lord, only say the word, and my servant shall be healed* (Matt. 8:8). God does not grant graces to one who does not firmly hope to obtain them. The leper said to the Lord: *If you will, you can make me clean*; and in fact he was cleansed at once. He gave sight to the blind man who asked it of him; but this was because, when Christ asked him whether he believed he could do this, he answered yes (Matt. 9:28). In short, of most of those whom the Saviour helped when they asked him for something, he required trust in him.

18. The third thing Jesus Christ taught us in prayer is to ask with perseverance. *He prayed three times*, says the Gospel, *saying the selfsame word* (Matt. 26:44). We must not grow tired of asking, even when it seems to us that God is deaf to our prayers. Often, according to the Gospel, a poor man gets alms by the importunity with which he asks (Luke 11:8); so the Lord, when he sees that we do not cease to beseech him, seeing in this perseverance a clear proof of our faith, grants us what we ask him. So it happened to the Canaanite woman: as often as the Saviour put her off, so often did she come back to him begging for her daughter's health. In the end, by her perseverance, she obtained all she wanted (Matt. 15:21–28). Fourth, Jesus Christ shows that we must always ask resigned to the divine will: *Not as I will, Lord*, he said, *but as you will* (Matt. 26:39). We must be as content when God refuses our petitions as when he grants our requests. Christ asked not to suffer so painful a passion: the flesh did this; but the spirit wished only to submit to the will of the eternal Father. So, although what we ask may seem fitting to our self-love, God, who sees into our hearts and knows our true interests, sometimes refuses what we seek; and then we must conform ourselves and say: *Lord, thy will be done.* From all this it follows that if humility, confidence, perseverance and resignation are needed to attain the end of our prayers, when these virtues are lacking we ask badly, and consequently it is no wonder that we do not receive. I have briefly proved what prayer is, the excellence of the Lord's Prayer above all others, and the reason why the Lord does not always grant us what we ask him in prayer: either because we ask while being bad, or because we ask for bad things, or because we ask badly.

19. May the Lord set our words right, so that we ask nothing but what is pleasing in his divine eyes, and with that spirit, religion and virtue that make us worthy of deserving what we ask; above all, that we may desire nothing but what tends to the attainment of glory. Amen.

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[1] The thrice-daily recitation is in the *Didache* 8.3.

10. Fifth Sunday after Epiphany: On Faith, and the Reasons Why It Is Lost

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 10, pp. 91–98. Gospel: Matt. 13:24–30. Original preacher not named.

> *Domine, nonne bonum semen seminasti in agro tuo? (Matt. 13:27).*
>
> *Lord, did you not sow good seed in your field?*

The Gospel of this day is from the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew, and it reads thus:

1. "Jesus put forward to the people this parable or comparison: The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while the men who guarded it were asleep, his enemy came and sowed cockle among the wheat, and went away. And when the blade had sprung up and brought forth the ear, the cockle appeared also. Then the servants of the master of the house came to him and said: Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? Whence then does it have cockle? And he said to them: An enemy has sown it there. And the servants said to him: Will you have us go and gather it up? No, he answered, lest perhaps, gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also with it. Let both grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn; but gather the wheat into my barn." This is the Gospel.

2. Most of the Fathers of the Church interpret and set out the meaning of this parable in this way. This man who sowed his field is Jesus Christ our Saviour, the true father of the family; for he made us his children when, through the sin of Adam, we were children and slaves of the devil. The field is the Catholic Church, which he himself planted, cultivated with his labour and watered with his own blood. The seed he sowed in it is Catholic doctrine and faith: good seed; and we know it is good because the same Lord, who came only to seek our good, sowed it, that is, preached and taught it with those words of eternal life that came from his mouth, and as such has revealed it to his Church. It is known to be good by the outward fruits it produces and by the countless signs with which God himself has accredited it. These are very powerful motives for us to

believe that this faith is good, that it is certain, and therefore able to make us bear fruit so that we become worthy of entering the heavenly barn. Whence, then, comes it that there is cockle in this Church? Why, when our faith and the doctrine it teaches are certain, are there so many unbelievers, so many heretics, so many Christians in name, who call this Catholic doctrine and faith into doubt? Ah! The enemy of God and of men, the devil, has sown it. The devil, envious of our happiness, desires that on the day of judgment, which is the time of the harvest, we may be separated like impure cockle by the Angels from the chosen wheat, which are those justified by true belief, and that we may find ourselves fuel for the flames of hell. For this reason he sows the bad doctrines contrary to the Religion we profess, either by perverting our heart or through his followers, who with their maxims and example confuse the true doctrine with the false. See, my brethren, why I intend, as a true servant of the father of the family, to show you today all that I have set before you in summary: the great motives of credibility we have for believing that our faith and the doctrine it teaches are certain (First Part); and the reasons why this faith bears no fruit in many, who call its doctrine into doubt (Second Part).

First Part

3. Our holy Catholic religion contains mysteries, dogmas, precepts, Sacraments, ceremonies and even counsels; it contains rewards for the good as well as punishments for the wicked and transgressors. All this has been set before us as the object of our faith by the Church, which is *the pillar and ground of the truth*, according to St. Paul (1 Tim. 3:15). But the Church (assisted by the Holy Spirit, who will not forsake her until the end of the ages) does not propose it as something of her own, but as all revealed to her by God so that she may present it to us. That is to say, my brethren, that all we venerate in this Religion, which by the mercy of God we have inherited from our fathers, is certain and beyond doubt, because God himself has said it, who, being wise and truthful by essence, can neither be deceived nor deceive us. In this our faith consists. It is true that it proposes obscure things to us: for example, that God himself became man; that, being one in essence, he is three in persons; that he was born of a Virgin, and so on. All this is obscure, but so it must be, being mysterious. By the light of reason alone we cannot penetrate what lies beyond its limits; only by the light the Lord sends us from heaven through faith can we know it as certain, considering that God, being almighty, can do more than we, being mortal and ignorant, can understand. If we believe things we have not seen only because sensible men say them, *how much greater*, says Scripture, *is the testimony of God* (1 John 5:9), who tells us to believe this or that?

4. But although what faith presents to us is obscure, we do not believe blindly, which is what the philosophers charge us with; no. Besides the testimony of God, we have certain signs by which we can know that this testimony is certain. That is why St. Paul says, on the one hand, that we must *bring our understanding into captivity in obedience to the faith* (2 Cor. 10:5), that is, that we must close the eyes of reason to all argument when it is a question of believing the dogmas of Religion. On the other hand he says that our *service* of faith is *reasonable* (Rom. 12:1), that is, that nothing we are commanded to believe by faith is repugnant to reason. And how should it be repugnant to reason? Although the mysteries of Religion are not intelligible, *the testimonies of God*, according to David, *are become exceedingly credible* (Ps. 92:5). And what grounds have we for making credible what faith teaches us? Ah! Besides the fact that the greatest ground is the authority of God, we have many outward signs by which we can be convinced of the truth of what God has revealed to us.

5. The first and chief is the one Jesus Christ himself gave to those who asked him how they should believe what he commanded them to do, and who had given him power to establish a new law. And Jesus Christ gave them no other sign than to say to them: *Destroy this temple* (he was speaking, says the Gospel, of the temple of his body), *and in three days I will raise it up* (John 2:19–21); that is, kill me, and on the third day I will rise again. His death and resurrection was the sign Jesus Christ gave us so that we might believe all that

we now believe in the Church. That Jesus died there is no doubting, for the whole people to whom he had preached saw it. And did he rise? Yes, my brethren, he truly rose, says the Gospel: see here the foundation of our belief. *If Christ be not risen*, said St. Paul, *then vain is our preaching, and vain too is your faith* (1 Cor. 15:14). But who assures us that he rose? The Jews themselves, his opponents. They asked Pilate for guards for the tomb, lest his disciples come by night and, stealing the body of that seducer who said he would rise again, the error be confirmed. They sealed it, then, and guarded it with trusted men; and afterwards they do not find him. These report it to their superiors, adding that a great brightness had overcome them; and the superiors offer them money to say that while they slept his disciples stole the body. "Fools!" says St. Augustine. "If they were asleep, how could they testify that the disciples stole it? If they were awake, how were they guarding the tomb?" All this (leaving aside the revelations) bears out the resurrection of Jesus, the greatest sign of our faith.

6. After this sign follows another, which shows the truth of our Religion with the greatest clearness: the way in which it was spread. God wished to convert the world, and that men should believe in his Son and the doctrine he had preached; and for this he sends not eloquent orators and famous sages, but twelve poor men, most of them fishermen, without education, without birth, without learning; and these begin to preach the faith we hold, and they succeed, says St. Augustine, in putting the men of greatest genius under the yoke of the cross, making them not only Christians but preachers of Christianity. *Here is the finger of God* (Exod. 8:19); this is the work of the Most High alone. One man cannot usually deceive another without having more talent than he. Therefore the Apostles were not deceivers; for since they were unlearned, only God, who spoke in them, could make them convert the wisest philosophers, making them embrace a doctrine that they themselves detested, since it contradicted their most impure and detestable passions.

7. Another sign of the truth of our Religion: the miracles the Lord has worked through his servants to confirm it. This is the sign Jesus Christ gave to the disciples of John: *The blind see*, he said to them, *the deaf hear, the lepers are cleansed, the dead rise again* (Matt. 11:5). The supreme Being and sovereign of nature cannot disturb the order he has established in it in order to authorise a lie. If he has worked miracles to confirm us in the faith, it is a proof that the faith is true. He has in fact worked them; we read of many in the histories, and perhaps some of us have witnessed them. Not miracles of the kind with which a lying fanatic or a conjuror entertains and dazzles the eyes of a simple and ignorant people, no; but miracles that partake of creation, which human skill cannot reach, such as the raising of a man truly dead or the sudden cure of a sick man given up by the doctors; miracles, in short, not spread abroad by superstitious and partial people, but by learned and just men, and even by enemies of Religion, who confess that they saw frustrated all the means they used to contradict them.

8. More signs: is not the blood of countless Martyrs, who gladly offered their limbs to the tyrant in defence of Religion, an unanswerable proof of its divinity? How could tender young girls and delicate children have risen above torments if a divine power had not strengthened them? How could so many unlearned Martyrs have withstood the arguments of those who tormented them, unless it was not they who spoke but the Spirit of God who spoke through their mouths (Matt. 10:20)?

9. I could bring another sign in favour of our faith: that a great many doctors and men of the highest rank have been converted to it after long comparing the dogmas and doctrine of our Gospel with those of the sects they followed, as happened to St. Augustine; a proof that they found it truer, more certain and more secure. But I am going on too long. I have said enough to show the countless motives of credibility that our Religion and Catholic faith have in their favour. Why, then, can there be people who doubt its truth? I will show it in my

Second Part

10. Good seed did Jesus Christ sow in the field of the Church. The doctrine, mysteries, dogmas, precepts and even counsels that faith gives us have filled the Church with just men, heaven with courtiers and the altars with Saints, who serve us as models. Yet the Church is full of cockle, that is, of errors and crooked maxims, which, although kept hidden in a nation that does not let them shine in public, because it would pull them out by the root, nevertheless do great harm and choke the good seed of Religion that our fathers sowed in our hearts from infancy in God's name. The comparisons Scripture makes of the Church already show that in her there is a mixture of wheat and cockle, of good and bad: she is the threshing-floor where there is grain and chaff, the net where there are good fish and bad, the wedding where there are wise and foolish virgins… But let us examine whence comes this diversity of fruits in one and the same soil and with one and the same good seed, which is faith.

11. Our growing lukewarm in faith, our calling into doubt some of its mysteries or precepts, and even our turning away altogether from the true belief of Religion, authoritative as it is, usually spring from two sources. The first springs from the depravity of our heart; the second from the perverse doctrines with which some try to delude us. Would that I had time to explain this at length! I will say it in summary.

12. Lack of faith nearly always begins in the heart. As soon as a man gives himself up to the most shameful passions, he tries to silence the remorse that follows on sin; but at once the law of God rises before him and keeps him from living at ease in his wanderings, through the gnawing worm of conscience, which, according to the Wise Man, never dies (Isa. 66:24; Mark 9:43), and because it does not die it is always crying out to him: See, you are acting against God and his holy law, and against the principles of Religion. The way to recover his peace would be to curb his passions, as Jesus Christ commands him, to go to the sacrament of Confession to expiate his sins, and to fulfil the obligations of a Christian with new faithfulness. But he does not do so. His excessive love for some attractive objects he sees in the world, when the Gospel offers him nothing for it but the cross and labours, does not let him prefer the distant consolations it promises him in heaven to the present pleasures he enjoys on earth. What does he do then? He shakes off the yoke, forms doubts about a future life that would be one of torment for him, withdraws from certain acts of Religion that are troublesome to him, and disregards a faith in which the idea of what is to come is more unbearable to him than the experience of the present. Is it not so, my brethren? Speak to me frankly.

13. When you are of a mature age, when the passions have lost their strength and reason therefore enjoys all its freedom, have you then formed ideas contrary to Religion? Did these perhaps arise in those happy days when, moved by the holy upbringing your parents and parish priests gave you, virtue was precious to you and the exercises of Religion a pleasure? Ah, certainly not! Then you found all your comfort in it, and in anguish and trouble you went to God because you heard him say: *Come to me, and I will refresh you* (Matt. 11:28). But the passions were stirred up and all was lost; and as a rule the measure of faith is the measure of morals.

14. Second: our lack of faith also comes from the company of many libertines with whom we may have conversed in these latter times. David already said it, showing the ruin of the children of Israel: *They were mingled among the heathens, and learned their works, and served their idols* (Ps. 105:35–36). What is to follow from the company of an unbeliever but unbelief? We have had the misfortune that from among ourselves, as St. Paul foretold (Acts 20:30), men have risen up who in word, deed and writing have spoken perversely against God, Religion, its mysteries, its Sacraments and its ministers: who have shouted that there is no hell, that confession is useless, that the soul dies with the body, that impurity is lawful, that indulgences are a money-grab, and who knows what else; but all these things have already been refuted thousands of times by Scripture, the holy Fathers and the practice of the Church, as I shall show you separately in various homilies. Yet what an impression these erroneous maxims would make on the hearts of simple men who neither know nor have been able to learn our Religion from its principles (a solid knowledge of which is enough to despise them), and the more so as they are so flattering to a nature inclined to evil since the first sin!

15. And so these doctrines have spread too far; and I am not surprised, because they are a gangrene, as St. Paul said (2 Tim. 2:17), which goes on consuming the body of Jesus Christ. Doctrines which, being new, curious and pleasant, attack faith gently and kill it by stealth. What follows from this? That once the bridle is taken off the passions, it seems to us we can do anything without scruple; and so usury is sanctified, revenge made respectable and rebellion encouraged, provided all this can be done out of sight of human justice. What more? The innocent maiden, the chaste wife, the modest widow are prostituted; for these infernal serpents, like the ancient one, seeing that some Eves refuse their lustful desires out of fear of eternal punishment, say to them: *No, you shall not die* (Gen. 3:4); that is, do not fear hell, it is a fairy-tale…

16. This is one source from which lack of faith usually springs. Flee, my brethren, flee from these doctors of unbelief; and while they try to destroy the solid foundations on which Religion rests, give yourselves to preserving it. You have seen that the authority of a wise and truthful God tells you that what faith teaches is the truth; and besides this, that we have countless outward proofs which assure us that, although the mysteries of faith are obscure, we do not believe them blindly: reason itself makes them credible in view of so many proofs. Despise the maxims of the libertines who try to separate you from what we have always believed; despise them, for, being unbelievers for show, they cease to be so when they see their doctrine rejected with contempt.

17. Yes, my God, so I mean to do: I believe and will firmly believe all that you have revealed to your Church. These sacred marbles, these baptismal fonts where I received our faith, will be witnesses of my constant belief. I will try to keep purity in my heart so that I do not slip into unbelief; for I hear your Apostle say: *Keep faith and a good conscience, which some rejecting have made shipwreck concerning the faith* (1 Tim. 1:19). Happy am I, who received the mercy of being added to the number of your believers, when so many thousands have been buried in the darkness of unbelief! Give me grace to persevere in my Religion; for so I am sure of attaining blessedness. Amen.

11. Sixth Sunday after Epiphany: On the Sin of Scandal

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 11, pp. 99–108. Gospel: Matt. 13:31–35. Original preacher not named.

> *Simile est regnum caelorum grano sinapis (Matt. 13:31).*
>
> *The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed.*

The Gospel of this day is from the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew, and it reads thus:

1. “Jesus Christ put forward this parable to a multitude of people: The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. This grain indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it has grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and becomes like a fruit tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches. Jesus told another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and kneaded into three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened. All these things Jesus spoke to the people in parables, or comparisons, and without them he did not speak to them, that what the Prophet had said might be fulfilled: I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.” This is the Gospel.

2. The holy Fathers interpret these two parables that Jesus puts forward in it in various ways. Some say that both the little mustard seed and the bit of leaven signify the faith, which, having begun with only twelve poor fishermen, a very small seed indeed sown by Jesus Christ our divine Master, has branched out and spread through the whole world, and which all the strength of hell can no longer uproot. Others apply it to the divine word, which, sown in well-prepared soil, gives a fruit beyond telling, as the Saviour announced. Others say that this mustard seed and this leaven represent sin, which, if it is not cut off at its beginnings, grows through habit into a tree of iniquity, the harder to uproot the deeper the roots it puts down in the sinner’s heart. But as I consider all this, I see clearly represented in these two parables the sin of scandal, as widespread in the

world as it is little recognised by men. A man commits a sin in the presence of others: see the farmer who throws in a little mustard seed, which, small as it is, grows to the utmost, putting out as many branches of fruits of wickedness as there are sins committed through his bad example by those who saw him. See a little leaven which, mixed with the pure flour of innocent consciences, corrupts and sours them all, as far as lies in it, inciting them by its scandal to break the law and lose grace. An execrable sin, which according to most Doctors of the Church has little remedy, because of how hard it is to repair the harm it produces. This is the crime of which the Holy Spirit speaks to us when he says: *Sow not evils in the furrows of injustice, and you shall not reap them sevenfold* (Ecclus. 7:3) \[the preacher paraphrases: "for you will reap them with difficulty and great pain"\]. This sin is opposed to the virtue of charity, and in my judgment it is forbidden in the fifth commandment of the Decalogue, which says *You shall not kill*; for although the man who gives scandal does not wound or kill the members of the body, he kills or wounds the soul, making it die to the grace of its God; and it is therefore a homicide of a higher order than bodily homicide, as much as the soul whose life he takes is more excellent than the body. I am therefore going to speak today of this sin. I will show what scandal is (First Part), and what a terrible charge will be laid at the judgment against one who has given scandal to his neighbour (Second Part).

First Part

3. Scandal is a word or deed less than right which gives one's neighbour occasion of spiritual ruin, causing him to commit some sin because of it. By "word or deed" are understood also the omissions we commit in what we are obliged to do; and it is said "less than right" because, to scandalise or give another occasion of sin, it is not necessary that what we say or do be bad: it is enough that it have the appearance of evil. This scandal may be active or passive. Active scandal, the scandal we give, is what I have just explained. Passive scandal, the scandal that is taken, is the very ruin of soul experienced by one who is moved to sin by a word, deed or omission of his neighbour that is less than right, or has the look of evil. Scandal may be given directly, when we say or do something with the purpose and intention that others should sin. This is the proper work of devils, who do not lack imitators. Like Absalom, even if they do not say it in words, they are saying inwardly what he said to his servants when he wanted to kill his brother Amnon: *It is I that have commanded you* (2 Kings 13:28).

4. But one may scandalise indirectly when, not intending a neighbour's ruin but to satisfy one's own appetite, one induces another to sin, as Amnon solicited and induced his sister to incest to satisfy the desire that so tormented him (2 Kings 13). And one may also scandalise not by inciting to sin, but by doing sinful actions in front of others, foreseeing that the ruin of their souls may follow, such as stealing, killing, uttering obscene words or the like in the company of others.

5. Passive scandal, or scandal taken, is divided into pharisaic scandal and the scandal of the weak. Pharisaic scandal is when someone is scandalised, or takes occasion to sin, out of pure malice of his own, without his neighbour having given him any reason for it; it is so called because the Pharisees took occasion and pretext from the holy actions of Jesus Christ to insult him. The scandal of the weak or faint-hearted is when occasion to sin is taken solely from one's own weakness, or from ignorance of the reasons why another does some action that seems bad to him: for example, that someone eats meat on a forbidden day out of necessity, or other similar actions; such people should be told the reasons why it is done. To be scandalised is always a sin, because it implies the ruin of one's soul; for taking scandal is nothing else than sinning because of what one sees in another.

6. Active scandal, that is, voluntarily giving others occasion to sin by doing an action or saying a word that is bad or seems so, is a very grave sin. Jesus Christ gave this to be understood when he said: *Woe to the world because of scandals! For it must needs be that scandals come; but woe to that man by whom the scandal comes! It were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be*

drowned in the depth of the sea (Matt. 18:6–7). This word "Woe!" denotes in Scripture a great punishment awaiting him, greater than dying by drowning in the sea; and God does not impose grave penalties except for grave faults. A grave sin, especially when one scandalises in a grave matter; and a sin that forms a species distinct from the one committed, which must be told in confession. For example: someone blasphemed against God in the presence of others. He commits not only a sin against religion by the blasphemy, but against charity by the scandal; and he must confess all of it: that he blasphemed, and that it was in front of so many persons. Nevertheless, some good works should be omitted so as not to scandalise the little ones or the ignorant, out of consideration for human frailty, provided they are not among those necessary for our eternal salvation. So teaches St. Thomas, my master (II-II, q. 43, a. 7). But we are not obliged to omit any good action to avoid pharisaic scandal, which comes only from the malice of the one who takes it.

7. There are many particulars about all I have said on scandal, but not everything can be explained in the brevity of a homily. I will give some examples, so that you may come to know what this sin is and the ways in which it can be committed; and in the second part much more will appear in the charge God will lay against those who give scandal. Since scandal consists, as was explained, in giving occasion, by our words, works or omissions, for others to break the law of God or of his Church, when these are bad or seem so, we find scandals sown in the world in different things which, though they seem very small at first, afterwards form a very leafy tree with countless fruits of wickedness, where a multitude of sinners come to nest, symbolised by the branches the little mustard seed produces. We see scandals in houses, in families, in squares, and even in the very places to which only holiness belongs, the churches. Scandals among the great, among the common people, among the rich, among the poor, among men and women. Scandals in speaking, in writing, in dressing, in dancing; and the misfortune is that amid so much scandal, which like rotten leaven has infected the whole mass of Religion, there is hardly anyone who confesses this sin; for unless it is something that shocks the whole town, we find nothing by which we have given scandal. Well, listen.

8. It is scandal when, by the authority one enjoys, or to get one's own way, as we say, advice is given to commit a crime. So Jezebel gave scandal by advising Achab to take the vineyard and the life of poor Naboth (3 Kings 21). So did Achitophel, advising Absalom to abuse his father's wives (2 Kings 16:21); so did Caiaphas, who advised in the Jewish Sanhedrin that it was expedient for Jesus Christ to die (John 11:50). It is scandal when someone, using his command over his inferiors, out of revenge, avarice, lust, lack of religion or all of these together, orders the killing of an innocent man, the swearing of an oath even if false, robbery even of the tabernacle, the violation of even the most virtuous woman. So Nabuchodonosor gave scandal by ordering the soldiers of his army to storm the temple of Jerusalem and steal the vessels consecrated to the Lord's worship; Jeroboam, by ordering his people to abandon the worship of the God of Israel and adore the idols he himself had made and set up in Bethel and Dan, saying to them: *Go up no more to Jerusalem; here are your gods* (3 Kings 12:28). So David gave scandal by ordering one of his generals to arrange the battle so that Urias would lose his life in it, because it suited him that, once dead, this man, who had esteemed him so highly, should not come to know of the crime the King himself had committed with the wife of that holy Israelite (2 Kings 11).

9. It is scandal when a father, either from self-interest or from need, consents to sin in his house or family, allowing his wife an unlawful relationship, his daughter concubinage, his son to go and steal what belongs to others. This was the scandalous sin of Adam, who consented to the crime of Eve and her dealings with the serpent; but what wonder that he kept silent about it, if he too ate of the fruit of her sin? It is scandal when a father of a family, or any superior, out of indulgence or excessive and ill-ordered love for his children or dependants, does not punish them or correct their faults, though he sees them and they may produce grievous consequences. So Hagar, from the great affection she had for her son Ismael, did not rebuke him for the indecent games to which he was leading the innocent child Isaac (Gen. 21:9); and so the priest Heli, who likewise did not correct his two sons Ophni and Phinees, although they scandalised the people with their

thefts and lewdness; and if he did sometimes correct them for appearances' sake, he did it with a kind of mildness that did not produce amendment (1 Kings 2).

10. It is scandal, and a very grave one, when a woman, whether single or married, by the softness and artifice of her words, the looseness of her actions, the nakedness and worldliness of her dress and the movements of her body in the dance, induces and provokes men to desire her, seek her and solicit her to immodesty. So did Thamar, who, painting her face and dressing in a harlot's garb, provoked the patriarch Juda to commit incest, though he did not know she was his daughter-in-law, for he took her for a prostitute who trafficked in her flesh (Gen. 38). So too the daughter of Herodias gave scandal, who by the turns she made in a dance caused the blind and passionate Herod to cut off the Baptist's head (Matt. 14).[1]

11. In short, scandal is anything bad, or seeming bad, that we do in the presence of others, whether by word, deed or omission. And just as the first angel, by the scandal he committed in heaven, drew after him the third part of the stars (Apoc. 12:4), that is, of the other angels, so the man who gives scandal, like poisoned leaven, corrupts most of the people he deals with. This is scandal. Let us see the charge and punishment God will lay on the perpetrators of this crime.

Second Part

12. As soon as Cain had killed his brother, God appeared to him and said to him: Ah, Cain, where is your brother Abel? What do I know? he answered. *Am I my brother's keeper?* Then look, God said to him: *The voice of your brother's blood cries to me from the earth,* and asks vengeance against you: *cursed shall you be upon the earth* (Gen. 4:9–11). Ah! To how many will this question be put at God's tribunal, without their being free to answer as Cain did! We must all care for one another's spiritual life; God has entrusted our neighbours to us (Ecclus. 17:12). We all form one body, as St. Paul said, whose head is Jesus Christ. And just as the members of a body, according to the same Apostle, are careful for the good of each one (1 Cor. 12:25–26), so that the head guides the feet lest they stumble, the hands go to where there is a wound or pain, and the mouth complains even when nothing hurts it, but the arm has the pain, because all care for the good and health of each member; so each member of the Church, each Christian, must care for the other member, who is his neighbour, his brother, so as to prevent his ruin. Now, then: the man who gives scandal, who has taken away his brother's spiritual life, is a Cain, whom the Lord will ask at the judgment: Where is your brother? Because of you he lived in sin, he died in his sin, because of you he is condemned; where is he? Many, says St. John Chrysostom (*Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life* III), answer this question in the world: "Let him who perishes perish; it is nothing to me." But since God in his judgment will know that this Cain-like answer does not satisfy, because he ought not to have led his neighbour into evil, he will say to him: The blood, that is, the sin and damnation of your neighbour brought about by you, cries out and asks for vengeance: *Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire* (Matt. 25:41).

13. How many will go there for this cause? The owners of houses who give them over or let them to people they know mean to sin in them with impunity, in lewdness, gambling or scandalous dances, will be terribly judged. They will appear guilty of all the sins committed there. *Woe to them,* says the Lord through Ezekiel (ch. 13:18), *that sew cushions* for sinners to rest on in their wickedness! These, says the Father St. Jerome, are those who, when they ought to hinder sins, flatter sinners, so that they freely continue in their iniquities. The same is done by those who offer a house or room so that people may be busy there without hindrance in offending the Lord; and though they themselves do not gamble or have unlawful dealings, they are nonetheless the cause that others do so in their houses. The sailors who carried Jonah were on the point of perishing and even lost their goods by throwing them into the sea; for although they were not offending God on their voyage, they had taken on board their ship a man who was sailing against the Lord's commands (Jon. 1).

14. Those ladies will also be judged and punished who, as I said before, dress provocatively, who either by their nakedness incite to impurity or by their extravagance lead other women to ruin their households to equal them in luxury. When Moses died, the Lord, seeing that the Hebrews had an inclination to idolatry, hid the body of that leader whom they so loved so that no one could find it (Deut. 34:6), in order to take away their occasion of worshipping it as a god. Well, if God hides the body of a saint to take away the occasion of idolatry, what will he say at his tribunal to those women who uncover what ought to be covered in their bodies, knowing the licentious human inclination to worship these idols of flesh? Are they not guilty of all the impurities others commit? "Lord," they will say, "I had no intention that anyone should be lost because of me." That will be no excuse before God; for the man who fires a bullet, even if he has no intention of killing anyone and does it only for amusement, will be charged with the death he causes, which he could have foreseen. If, as has been explained, even good works that are not necessary for salvation must be avoided to prevent the fall of frail persons, how much more must those be omitted that do not even have the appearance of good, such as scandalous nakedness and provocative dress, the more so when one foresees that with them one is firing bullets that kill the souls of so many unfortunates? God commanded in the old law that if anyone opened a cistern and did not take care to cover it, and an ox or an ass fell into it, he should pay its price to the owner (Exod. 21:33–34). It did him no good to say: "I did not open it for any animal to fall in." That is true; but you could foresee that if it was open an animal might fall in, and therefore you pay the price. You, madam, will pay the price of all the souls that fell into the snares which (though without intention, as you say) you laid for heedless youth by uncovering what ought to have been hidden. How well the most chaste Susanna did when she was brought before the tribunal to be judged for a crime of which she was innocent! As soon as she entered it, she covered her face; and Scripture gives us to understand this when it says that in the presence of the judges they uncovered her (Dan. 13:32). Blameless woman, why do you cover yourself? If you were guilty of the crime imputed to you, it is true that you ought to be covered: this was the custom among the Romans and the Persians, and even the Hebrews did so with their condemned; and so, as soon as they declared Jesus Christ guilty, St. Luke says that, so as not to omit this ceremony, they covered his face (Luke 22:64). But innocent Susanna, why does she veil herself? Tertullian answers: she had already learned her lesson from having been uncovered, for which reason the three old men fell in love with her; and so she covers her face, fearing to give again the occasion of scandal that her accusers maliciously took from her.[1] Would that the ladies of our time did the same! They would not see themselves at the judgment covered with confusion and torment for the scandal they have given in this world by their nakedness and provocation.

15. Finally, all those will be judged and sentenced to the abyss who by their bad and dissolute life have given occasion for the ruin of so many souls that have followed in their steps. Holy Job, giving us an idea of this charge to be laid at the divine tribunal, says: *You have put my feet in the stocks, and have observed all my paths, and have considered the steps of my feet* (Job 13:27). Words which the Father St. Gregory (*Moralia* XIII) and other doctors explain thus: You, Lord, have punished my feet for the bad steps they have taken against your holy law, and because others have followed the tracks or marks I left with my sins. To understand this, see a comparison. You are going to cross a mighty river; there is no bridge, for the river carried it away; you cannot find the ford; but then you notice certain marks in the sand, tracks or footprints left by others, and at once you decide to follow them, without foreseeing that those who went into the river perhaps perished in its current. How powerful a bad example is! How many will have drowned in the river of the abyss through wanting to sound the river of vice, through following the scandalous steps of a man or a woman! What a charge for these, for having led so many souls by their bad conduct to the precipice of sin! What an account! What a punishment!

16. See, Christian: your sin did not end in the act in which you committed it. You will give account not only of your bad steps, but of the tracks you left for others; not only your works will be examined, but all those that followed them. "Give an account of them," the just Judge will say. Give an account, gambler, foul-mouthed man, blasphemer, not only of your abominations but of the souls you corrupted with the

pestilent air of your impure words, and caused by your example to blaspheme, swear, backbite and curse. Give an account, impure man, not only of your wickedness, concubinage and filthiness, but of those that others committed, either because they saw you do them or because you yourself taught them to do them. Give an account, adulterer, not only of your frequent entry into your neighbour's house to dishonour him with the sins you make his wife commit, but of the rash judgments, the gossip and the other sins that arose in the town from this sin of yours. Give me an account… But, my brethren, there would be no end if I wished to show you the terrible charge that will be laid on the day of judgment against all who by their words, actions or culpable omissions have been the occasion of the spiritual ruin of so many souls.

17. What has been said is enough so that, if you recognise yourselves guilty in this matter, you may seek amendment; and not only this, but repair as far as you can the harm you have caused. If your steps were contrary to the law of God, direct them now towards virtue, so as to edify those you scandalised; if you did it with bad doctrines and words, speak in future words that retract the old and sinful conversations; and above all, go to confession and ask God's pardon for having lost so many souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. This is the only means of returning to his grace. Amen.

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[2] Matt. 5:28.

[1] Tertullian, *On the Veiling of Virgins* 15.

12. Septuagesima Sunday: On Man's Last End, and the Few Who Attain It

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 12, pp. 109–118. Gospel: Matt. 20:1–16. Original preacher not named.

> *Multi sunt vocati, pauci vero electi (Matt. 20:16).*
>
> *Many are called, but few are chosen.*

The Gospel of this day is from the twentieth chapter of St. Matthew, and it reads thus:

1. "The kingdom of heaven is like a householder who goes out very early in the morning to look for labourers to work in his vineyard; and having agreed with them for a denarius a day, a coin of that country, he sent them into his vineyard. He went out likewise about the third hour of the day, and saw others standing idle in the market place, and said to them: Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just; and they went. He went out again about the sixth and the ninth hour and did the same. At last he went out about the hour of vespers, and found others standing doing nothing, and said to them: Why do you stand here idle all the day? They said: Because no one has hired us. And he said to them: Go you also and work in my vineyard. But when night came, the lord of the vineyard said to his steward: Call the labourers and pay them their wages, beginning from the last to the first. So those came who had gone about the hour of vespers, and each received his denarius. The first, seeing this, thought they would be given more; but nevertheless each received only a denarius, and taking it they grumbled against the householder, saying: These last have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the heat. But he answered one of them and said: Friend, I do you no injustice: did you not agree with me for a denarius a day? Take what is yours and go; for I wish to give to this last as much as to you. What, is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Or is your eye evil because I am good? So at the judgment, those who were last in the world, but worked steadfastly while they lived, will be first; and the first (but who used their time badly) will be last, and shut out of heaven. For many will be called to the faith, and few chosen for glory." This is the Gospel.

2. Little interpretation is needed for this parable or comparison in order to see that the Lord is speaking of the end for which we were created, which is, according to the catechism, to know, serve and love God in this world, and afterwards to see and enjoy him in the next for ever. The householder is God, whose children we all are, for he made us in his image and likeness. His vineyard is the Church, which he himself planted, and,

as he says elsewhere in the Gospel, he fenced it with the hedge of his commandments, both those general for all and those particular to each one. This vineyard he watered with the most precious blood of his Son, with which he cleansed it so that it should remain pure and without stain, as the Apostle says. The labourers are all of us men, and more particularly all of us Christians, whom he calls to work in it, each in the state, class or condition where his divine Majesty has placed him; for in a vineyard some dig, others prune, others gather the fruit, and others oversee the workers as foremen. Of these labourers, some have much time to work because their life is long, others less because it is short. But at last, when the night of death comes, God pays them their day's wage, which symbolises the eternal glory for which they were created: equal in so far as it is glory, but greater or less according to how much and how we have worked. Therefore to the one who does not work by serving God in this life, the wage of glory will not be given in the next, even though he was created for it. So it is, and these are the greater number, says the Gospel: Many are called, and few are chosen; not on God's part, who wills all men to be saved, but because we do not use the means to attain this end. See my subject. For what end was man created? I shall answer in my first part. How many attain this end for which they were created? I shall do so in the second.

First Part

3. Man was created, says St. Augustine, that he might know God; knowing him, love him; loving him, possess him; and possessing him, enjoy him. God alone is our last end, and to him alone we must direct our affections and services, as the one centre of our soul. We were not created to enjoy the riches, honours and delights of the world, and so in God alone can man find his joy. Hence it comes that nothing on earth fills the heart of man. No one could have been better satisfied with the goods of this world than the great Alexander, for he came to rule almost all the world then known; yet when they told him there was still more land to discover, he began to weep because he did not yet have what was lacking; and even had he had it all he would have wept just the same, because a thousand worlds enjoyed by man, with all their treasures, posts, offices and delights, would not satisfy him, since he was created for none of these. God is the only one who can satisfy him, who, according to David, fills all our desires with good things. The Lord placed in our soul a most vehement desire to enjoy the good; and since the goods of this world stop at the body and do not reach the soul, it follows that even if a man enjoys them all, his soul can never be satisfied. David gives clear testimony of this: in Psalms 41 and 62 he shows himself thirsting for goods that would fill him, as the hart longs for the fountains of water. He explains this thirst at a time when he was already endowed with an untold courage with which he tore bears and lions to pieces, acclaimed for his victory over the giant Goliath and over all his enemies, married to no less than the daughter of his King; he himself wore on his brow the crown of his people. Have you anything more to desire, David? I have more; I am not satisfied; I thirst, he says. The reason, according to St. Vincent Ferrer, is that, just as a sick man who is thirsty does not quench his thirst by seeing water, nor by having his lips moistened with it, because it does not go where the thirst is, that is, within the body, so nothing of earth can satisfy man: his thirst is in his soul, and only God can fill it. And so David said: I shall be satisfied, Lord, when your glory shall appear.

4. Man cannot find complete satisfaction on earth, because the Lord did not create him for it, but for himself, as his last end. That is why St. Thomas, my master, says that in beatitude all the soul's desires are taken away, because there it sees its last end and has nothing more to desire; and since nothing else can be this last end, nothing satisfies the soul, and it always longs for that. You made us for yourself, Lord, said St. Augustine, and so our heart is restless until it rests in you.[1] A venerable writer gives a comparison about this. Explaining those words of St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come, he speaks thus: We set out from a town (Zaragoza, for example) to go to Madrid to see the king. From the moment we set out we keep asking those we meet on the road: How far is it from here to Cariñena? And the moment we reach that town we ask: How far is it from here to Daroca?… What is this? Such eagerness to reach Cariñena, and already we are asking about Daroca? Yes, the traveller will say,

because I am not to stay in Cariñena; I shall spend the night there, but the end of my journey is Madrid, for I left Zaragoza to see the king at his court. What an apt comparison! We came out of nothing to see the King of heaven, to enjoy him eternally in his glory; and we must of necessity pass through our life, which is the road to heavenly glory. We need creatures and temporal goods, necessary for our sustenance. But ah! none of this can fill us. This is not our city that is to last; we seek the future glory; we seek God, who is our end; and nothing calms us or can satisfy us but God alone, union with him for ever, the centre for which we were created.

5. But although God and his glory are the end for which we were created, we were also created to know, serve and love God in this world. When the sovereign Householder placed us in this great vineyard of his, when he called us to his Church, he offered us, yes, the denarius, the wage of heaven and of himself; but it was on condition that we work in it according to what he commanded us. Since we were his, he could well have created us only to serve him and do his will; but nevertheless, to spur us to serve him, he set the reward before us, and a reward which, though it is a grace he grants us, he wishes to be as if due in justice, as the Gospel hints: I will give you, he says, what is just. He created us, then, to know him, love him and serve him before enjoying him. To know him, we must acquire by means of faith (without which we cannot please him, says St. Paul) the knowledge of who God is, and above all that he is our Creator: that while so many millions of men whom he could have created have remained in the state of mere possibility, to us he gave being without any merit of ours, the being we enjoy with a body full of perfection and a soul that is the image of his divinity; that he created the heavens, the stars, the elements, and all the fruits and animals to preserve this life he gave us; that he is our Redeemer, and without his blood we would have been slaves of the devil for ever. In short, we must know God and his benefits, and on this knowledge follows loving him. When one knows a thing as useful and good for oneself, love for it necessarily results from that knowledge; and if perhaps we love something evil, it is because we reckon it good for us. God, by his greatness, his power and his beneficence, his justice and his infinite righteousness, is the most worthy object of our love. But this love, says the Father St. Gregory, must not be idle, and the greatest proof of the love we must have for God is to carry out the works of his service, which is the keeping of his commandments. This is the only means of obtaining the reward for which we were created. Jesus Christ said it: If you would enter into life, keep the commandments.

6. One does not serve God by keeping only the general commandments he has given to all men, if one does not fulfil the particular ones of one’s state, class and condition, which is the work God assigns to each in his vineyard. What then? Is there, and must there be, a distinction of states, classes and conditions? Yes, my brethren. Oh, how admirable is the composition of the world and of the Church, and how wise the providence of the Lord who governs it! He gives us an earthly being and adorns us with his grace; and needing none of our goods, as David said, he gently directs us all to beatitude; and since this has different mansions, he has also arranged different roads that are to lead us to it. These are the various states, offices and ministries to which God himself inspires his creatures as most conducive to attaining their last end, all of them necessary to preserve the order of the universe. It is like a human body (and this is the Apostle’s comparison), which has in it a diversity of members, and all have a different way of acting; for if all were eyes we would not walk, if all were ears we could not see, etc. So in the world, where all men form one body whose head is Christ, there are different states, offices and employments, all necessary for the good of the commonwealth, and each must fulfil what the Lord commands him in his own; for, according to David, he set for each certain laws on the road he has chosen. Not all are for everything, and what will be a straight road leading one person to his end will be crooked for another and will take him to the abyss. If the Israelites found a free passage through the sea to the land the Lord had promised them, the Egyptians found their ruin in it. God must inspire it, as I shall say another day. And even this is not enough to save us: the Lord called St. Peter and Judas to attain their end in the apostolate, and the one was a saint in it, and the other a traitor. In the state or class in which God has placed us we must fulfil the obligations it contains. This being supposed, how

many attained the end for which they were created? I shall tell it in the

Second Part

7. Jesus Christ himself answers in the Gospel, saying that although many are called to his faith, few are chosen to receive the denarius of glory. There is no doubt that, generally speaking, the number of those who attained their happy last end is great. Thousands of thousands, says Scripture, stand before God, and ten times a hundred thousand serve him; and St. John saw in his Apocalypse twelve thousand of each of the tribes of Israel sealed with the mark of the predestined, and afterwards a multitude that no one could number, gathered from all tribes, tongues and nations, who, prostrate before the throne of God and of his Lamb, enjoyed his glory and his delights. But the happy ones are few compared with the countless number of the unhappy ones who did not attain the eternal reward. That is why the Saviour calls his flock little: little in comparison with the greater number of the reprobate. And what is the cause of this? Let us set aside the unsearchable judgments of God, which it is not lawful for us to examine. We, as God's creatures, are in his hands like clay in the hands of the potter, and he can make from one lump of it, if he wills, a vessel of honour, and if not, one of dishonour. But what we know for certain and of faith is that God does not will the perdition of men, and that whoever keeps his commandments will enter heaven; that he calls all to his vineyard, and that whoever works in it he infallibly pays his wage. Therefore whoever is lost, whoever does not receive the denarius of glory, is lost because he wills it, because he does not fulfil the obligations, both common and particular, of his state; that is, they will not enjoy God because in life they did not serve him. And how many are these? More than the first. Let us run briefly through the states and classes.

8. If I were to make the visitation of the states in the way the Lord commanded the prophet Ezekiel to make it, I would have to begin with my own; for he said to him: Begin at my sanctuary. But ah! the mass of obligations it comprises makes me shudder, and makes me fear that I may be among the number of the reprobate for not fulfilling them with the exactness that is due. The priest will not attain the end for which he was created merely by doing what any Christian does, if he is not a good priest. As such, says the Cardinal of St. Victor, he is so consecrated to God that he must have nothing secular about him; a teacher of the nations, who on the one hand must teach the faithful the doctrine of Jesus Christ with his words, and on the other must be by his works, as St. Paul commanded the priest Timothy, an example and model of all good works. Woe is me, said the same Apostle, if I do not preach the Gospel! that is, if I do not teach the people by example and doctrine to turn them from error and corruption. He must be a faithful dispenser of the mysteries of God, administering the holy Sacraments to the faithful with that holiness which holy things require; and for all this he must not leave his talent idle, like that useless servant of the Gospel, but use it in the service of God and of his neighbour. He must counsel what is just, feed the poor, console the sorrowful; in short, he is the shepherd of souls and answerable for their blood; that is, at the day of judgment an account will be demanded of him for their perdition. How many of us fulfil these obligations? Would that they were many; but much is asked of us in order to serve God and afterwards enjoy him.

9. Judges of the people, ministers of justice, how many of you work in the Lord's vineyard to earn the wage of heaven? Your obligation is to care for the people entrusted to you. You are the air the subjects breathe; if this is corrupt, what health will the people have? You are the pilot who steers the ship of the homeland; if the pilot sleeps, does not keep watch, does not stay alert, the ship will go to the bottom. You are the ones who hold the sword of God in your hand, says the Apostle, and this for the punishment of evildoers; if this sword stays still, if concubinages are not broken up, if thieves are not punished, if those mouths of hell, blasphemous and sacrilegious, are not stopped… If you do none of this, you neither love nor serve God in this life. And how many do it, so that we may reckon up how many of you God will afterwards reward? I suppose they will be many; but all the same, know that a severe judgment will be made of all superiors, says the Holy Spirit. And so, although by God's mercy those whom God has called may be good, let them tremble

at the sight of their obligations, lest perhaps they are not among the number of the chosen.

10. Fathers of families, do you know the obligation you must fulfil to be saved? The laws of your state tell you that children are a deposit God placed in your hands, and that you must present them back into his with improvement. Your obligation is to feed, instruct and give an example of virtue to your family, as I shall explain at length another day. How many parents, then, will be chosen for heaven? To answer this one need only cast a glance over the world, and you will see nothing but a multitude of boys and girls who already at their tender age dishonour the purity of our Religion with their tongues and actions. See so many idlers, so many vagabonds, so many jails, so many penal garrisons, so many scaffolds full of evildoers, all fruits of a bad upbringing, which shows how little those of this class serve God by fulfilling the laws of their state. And having seen this, how many of these bad labourers in the Lord's vineyard will receive the wage of heaven?

11. Rich of the world, are those of you who are saved the greater number? It is no crime to be rich, and there are many Saints who were so, such as Hezekiah, Job and many kings. Jesus Christ did not say, Do not have riches, but, If you have them, do not set your heart on them. The laws, then, that your class imposes on you, so that you may serve God in it, are to make good use of the goods the Most High granted you, not using them to give free rein to your passions; and that, beyond what is necessary for the needs of your household, with the rest you must succour the needy. This is what St. Paul commanded Titus to preach. Will many of these be saved? Ah! I see that hardness towards the miseries of poor Lazarus, the spending of money on dressing in purple and fine linen \[*holanda*, Holland linen\], and feasting splendidly every day, was alone what buried the rich man of the Gospel in hell; and since we all observe this same conduct in most of the rich of this world, it makes me believe the number of the chosen among them is small; and Jesus Christ himself persuades me of it when he says that it is as hard for a rich man to enter heaven as for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.

12. You poor, how many of you are saved? You will say all of you, since the Saviour already calls them blessed, and says that theirs is the kingdom of heaven. But take care, my brethren, for there may be a mistake in this. What Jesus Christ says is: Blessed are the poor in spirit. In this last word your obligations are contained. Poor in spirit is the one who loves the very poverty he has, content with what the Lord wishes to give him by the hand of those who have means; the one who with his patience, conformity and resignation in his hardship and in the contempt he receives makes up for the lack of his temporal goods; and who, since he is conformed to the image of the poor Jesus, full of hardships from his infancy, is so also in the virtues that adorned and enriched him. This being said, how many poor will receive the eternal reward? I well know of many who join the most heroic virtues to their poverty; but I also know that many have chosen to beg so as not to work and to eat at others' expense; that if an alms is refused them they fly into a rage, with blasphemies, oaths and curses against the one who has not helped them; in short, many are seen in whom the poverty of soul is greater than that of body. See how many there will be chosen for heaven.

13. So I could go on through all classes and states. In all we see that the greater part is made up of bad Christians. If we look at farm labourers, we shall see most of them given to drunkenness and obscene words; if at the trades, sellers cheating buyers in the sale of their wares; if at the young of both sexes, given to idleness, forwardness and impurity; if at the old, we see that the closer they come to the grave, the further they live from God and his service. In short, there is hardly anyone who uses the necessary means to attain his happiness.

14. My God! Most lovable Father! With how much reason you say in your Gospel that although many are called, few are chosen. You called us all at the time of our creation to enjoy you eternally in the delights of glory; but we shall not be chosen for it without the indispensable condition of serving and loving you in life. We were called to the vineyard to earn the wage; but we were not chosen to receive it, for not having worked in it at the post you gave us. Yet I now hear a voice that calls me and says to me: Until now you have stood idle the greater part of your life, and have spent it without serving or loving God. But I hear this voice, and

though late, I shall try to make up for lost time by working with fervour for the salvation of my soul, certain that, if I do so, you will give me the holy wage of glory. Amen.

[1] Augustine, *Confessions* 1.1.1, quoted in.

13. Sexagesima Sunday: On the Word of God, and Especially Why It Bears No Fruit in Many

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 13, pp. 119–129. Gospel: Luke 8:4–15. Original preacher not named.

> *Semen est verbum Dei (Luke 8:11).*
>
> *The seed is the word of God.*

The Gospel of this day is from the eighth chapter of St. Luke, and it reads thus:

1. “When a great number of people had gathered, and were coming eagerly from the towns to hear Jesus, the Lord spoke to them in a parable: The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, part of the seed fell by the wayside, and was trodden down, and the birds of the air ate it; another part fell upon rock, and as soon as it sprang up it withered, because it had no moisture; another part fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up with the seed choked it; and another fell on good ground, and having sprung up yielded fruit, a hundredfold. Afterwards Jesus Christ gives the explanation of this comparison, saying: Here is what this parable means. The seed is the word of God. Those signified by what falls by the wayside are those who hear it; but then the devil comes and takes the divine word out of their heart, lest they believe and be saved. Those figured by the seed that falls on rock are those who hear the divine word and receive it with joy; but since these do not have a heart burning with charity, in which it could put down deep roots, they believe for a while, and when temptation comes they soon fall away. The seed that falls among thorns denotes those who heard the word of God, but afterwards let it be choked by the cares, riches and pleasures of life, and so bring no fruit to full ripeness. Finally, the seed that falls on good ground means those who, hearing the divine word with a good and sincere heart, keep it carefully, and bring forth fruit in patience.” This is the Gospel.

2. The Saviour of the world and Teacher of the nations always used parables in preaching his Gospel, and without them he did not speak to them, he says himself. He did so in order that, by means of comparisons within the reach even of the simplest people, they might better understand the eternal truths he announced to them. Such was the parable of the sower which he puts before us today through St. Luke. The Lord himself explains it. The seed, he says, is the word of God. This word is the pláticas and sermons in which parish priests and other preachers explain to us the words God himself has spoken to us in his Scripture; in this the priests are nothing but channels through which God himself speaks to us for our spiritual health. These sermons either explain the dogmas we must believe, the prayers with which we must pray, the commandments we must keep and the Sacraments we must receive, which is all that the four parts of Christian doctrine contain; or else they teach us the morals we must practise in the exercise of the virtues and the detestation of vices. So faith teaches us, so Scripture and the holy Fathers tell us, and so the example of the Saints confirms. There is no good our soul does not obtain if this divine word is heard as it should be; and if the world is seen full of scandals and transgressions, it is either because sermons are not heard, or are not heard as they should be in order to bear fruit in us. Jesus Christ today gives several causes of this; but the chief one is that the devil, envious of our happiness, leaves no means untried that may help to take this divine word out of our hearts, well assured of the benefit our soul can gain from it. So the Gospel itself says. Therefore, and recognising it as an indispensable duty of every Christian to learn to be one, and to know all he must practise in order to be a disciple of Jesus Christ (for this is to be a Christian, says the catechism), I am going to show you the necessity and usefulness of hearing the divine word, in the first part; and the means the devil uses to make it fruitless in us, in the second part.

First Part

3. The necessity and usefulness of the divine word: here is the foundation of the very strict obligation to hear it, understand it and practise it. Nature itself in a certain way inspires the necessity of hearing the sermons and pláticas that announce to us the words the Lord spoke to us of old through his Prophets, and lastly spoke to us through his only-begotten Son, as St. Paul says. For if we have been created to know God, serve him and love him in this life, in order to merit enjoying him in the next, this obligation must naturally incline us to know how we are to know God, with what actions we are to serve him, and on what the love we must show him is founded, by practising virtue and detesting vice. If the whole man must be ordered to God, he must of necessity know the science that teaches him how to order all his actions to him, in the way faith teaches him to do it, and all that faith contains; and this is what we call the science of God. Vain are all men, says the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Wisdom, in whom the science of God is not found. This science must not be merely speculative, enlightening the understanding with the knowledge of the truth, but also practical, putting into practice what the former shows the mind; it is a science that unites in itself the fear of God, his worship, obedience to him and love of him. God alone has being by essence, immense, eternal, most solid: to know him, to have knowledge of what he is, and to be united to him by love, this is the true science. Other things, though created by God, share from him an imperfect, diminished, dependent, unstable, temporal being. To know the science of these things (though many are necessary, since we are in the world) is not bad: for example, to know agriculture, mathematics, medicine, the arts and trades. But to give oneself over to them, to love them as if they were eternal, this practical science, so understood, is vain; and vain are those who give themselves to them without relation or tendency to God. Vain, empty of merit and foolish were the Gentiles, who, having no science of God and ignorant of the Divinity, adored as gods stones, a log or unclean animals. Vain and dull were those philosophers who, coming to know God by investigating natural things, did not honour or glorify him with the piety that was necessary and fitting for a supernatural God. Vainest and most foolish are those Christians who, having knowledge of the true God by faith and having founded their hope on him, do not try to instruct themselves in the science that teaches them how to believe in his mysteries and fulfil his divine commands perfectly.

4. This true science is what is learned in sermons and pláticas, which are the divine word, hearing in them God himself, who exhorts the people through us, says St. Paul; his Son Jesus Christ, who is the Teacher of justice, whom he promised through a prophet to send us for our instruction, and whom he commanded us to hear and listen to. For truly, my brethren, how are we to believe in God, says St. Paul, of whom we have not heard? If our parish priests and priests do not explain to us the mystery of the most blessed Trinity, that of the Incarnation of the eternal Word, that of the holy Eucharist and others, how are we to give them the assent necessary for salvation? If we do not hear from our fathers, prelates and superiors how to praise God with the worship due to the divine Majesty, how to honour our parents, prelates and superiors, how to do good and not offend our neighbour, shall we keep the commandments of God and of his Church without this previous explanation? How would we practise the actions Christian morals comprise if there were no one to instruct us in the virtues, making clear to us the order and connection they have among themselves? In short, how would we be good Christians without learning to be so? No one exercises an employment or art well without learning the rules of the art or trade he is to practise. It is true that man could learn very well through books, and especially through the catechism, all he needs for his eternal salvation. Yet either the books do not contain it at length, or people cannot read them, and if they read them, not all can understand them. For this reason there is a strict necessity of hearing the divine word, in which all that conduces to our teaching is explained; and the living voice of the ministers of the sanctuary gives a new soul to the dead expressions of the books of our instruction.

5. This necessity of hearing the divine word is greater because of the sin of Adam, by which man was stripped of the supernatural goods with which God had enriched him, and weakened in the natural goods with

which he had been formed. And although the Father of mercies gave him as a remedy the sacred bath of Baptism, made a treasure by the price of his blood, still this is not enough to give us perfect health; for there remains in us, even after we are baptised, the mass of passions which, if not curbed, bring death to our soul. Stripped of the supernatural gifts, the soul loses grace, the infused habits of the virtues, and that holy readiness to do good which belonged to the innocence it had. It was weakened in what is natural; for the inborn keenness of our understanding was darkened in the shadows of ignorance, and the will, once inclined to all that is good, was shamefully depraved, its appetite always inclined to evil. It happens that a little child falls into a filthy pond and his body takes a blow: he suffers two harms; his clothes and flesh are soiled, and he feels pain in the bruised part. His loving mother takes him out, washes him, cleans him and changes his clothes; but the harm of the bruise heals slowly. So we, plunged in the mire of original sin, are washed of the stain of sin by our most loving mother the Church in the Sacrament of regeneration; but we still remain sick with ignorance and concupiscence. And who will cure it? Hear the apostle St. James: Receive with meekness the divine word, which is able to heal your souls. Indeed, sermons heal the soul of ignorance, for the preacher reveals to us the Catholic truths we do not know, and makes plain what we cannot understand. The declaration of your words, Lord, said David, enlightens our understanding. They heal the will and take away its depravity; for when the punishments destined for sinners and the rewards for the just are made known, our heart leaves sin and embraces virtue, and our souls are left healed and converted.

6. See at one and the same time the necessity and the usefulness of hearing the word of God. Usefulness: ah, how great is that which comes from sermons! Besides all that has been said, if we read the works of the holy Fathers, we shall find countless proofs attesting the wholesome effects this divine seed produces in well-disposed souls. Origen calls it medicine for spiritual ailments; St. Jerome, a most strong shield against the implacable enemies of the Christian faith; St. John Chrysostom says it is an abundant and beneficial rain that makes human hearts fruitful, making them put forth the variety of all the virtues; St. Augustine, that it is food for the strong and milk for little ones. In short, the divine word is, as the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Wisdom says, a remedy for all our spiritual ailments. Read also the histories, both sacred and ecclesiastical, and there will be seen a multitude of conversions brought about by the power of the divine word. Jesus Christ preaches it, and Matthew abandons the unlawful trade he was following and joins the college of the Apostles; the Samaritan woman leaves her life of prostitution and becomes a preacher of the Gospel; Magdalene forgets her past wanderings and, following Jesus, weeps for her sins and becomes the apostle of the Apostles themselves. St. Peter preaches in Jerusalem, and thousands of Jews, on whose hands the blood of a God-Man was still steaming, venerate and become disciples of the very one they had just crucified as an impostor and blasphemer. St. Ambrose preaches, and Augustine comes out of the mud of heresy and impurity where he was sunk, and becomes an illustrious Doctor of the Church of the Saviour. St. Anthony the Abbot enters a church, hears the preacher of the Gospel say, If you would be perfect, go and sell all you have, and at once he does it, becoming in the monastic life one of the most illustrious lights of the Church. St. Simeon Stylites…

7. But there would be no end if I had to explain the fruits of holiness that the divine preaching of the Gospel produces. Yet it is necessary that this holy seed fall on well-prepared ground; that is, says St. Albert the Great, on a good heart, soaked in devotion, moistened with the tears of penance, burning with charity, and with the roots of bad habits pulled up by the confession of sins. For it to bear fruit, the same Saint continues, it must be heard with the inner ear of faith; kept in the memory by frequent meditation on what has been heard, and in the affections by a great esteem for what has been preached in the Lord’s name, not looking at the quality of the person preaching, but at that Lord who says to his ministers: It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your heavenly Father who speaks in you.

8. In view of all this we might ask: if the power of the divine word is so great, how is it that its fruits are so little seen? How is it that the world is full of scandals, lust and revenge? How is it that fidelity is lacking in

spouses, modesty in maidens, fear of God in the young, reverence in children, humility in the poor, charity in the rich, and prudence in the old? How does sin triumph, and virtue lie humbled? Is there no physician in Gilead to heal, I shall say with the Prophet? That is: is there not now in the world the general medicine, which is the word of God, sermons, preachers and priests, who are, according to the Councils, the physicians of our soul? Then why are the wounds of the children of God's people open? Why are vices not cured and the wounds sins make not scarred over? Why does the divine word bear no fruit? I shall answer in the

Second Part

9. Jesus Christ, explaining the parable of the sower, gives three reasons why the seed of the divine word bears no fruit in our souls. Sometimes because it falls among stones, and cannot grow for lack of substance: that is, because it falls on hardened hearts not warmed by the love of God; and so at the first temptation they give way, and do not do what has been preached to them in sermons and instructions. Sometimes because it falls among the thorns of riches, in hearts addicted to the temporal cares of life, and these choke the divine word they have heard and do not let it bear the fruits of esteem for eternal life to which they have been exhorted. But the first reason why the word of God is barren in the world is that the devil takes it out of men's hearts, so that they may not believe it and may lose the salvation they could gain by its means. Yes, my brethren, the devil puts all his study into keeping Christians from receiving in their hearts the voice of God through his ministers, so that, continuing in ignorance of the Christian doctrine they announce to them, and in the depravity of soul from which they try to cure them, he may make them like himself in the eternal pains.

10. Indeed, there are three failings in men with regard to the divine word, according to St. Thomas, my master: that of those who do not hear it; of those who, though they hear it, do not receive it; and of those who, though they hear and receive it, do not practise it. From all these the devil takes the divine word out of their hearts, to make it impossible for them to gain the eternal reward.

11. In the first place he tries to make some not hear it, nor go to sermons and pláticas. David compares such people to the asp,[1] which, shut up in its nest, when the snake-charmer sings at its door to draw it to himself and, when it comes out of its hole, to catch it, refuses to lend its ear, pressing one ear against the ground and stopping the other with its tail. Satan produces this effect in many Christians. While the sacred orator explains Christian doctrine in the church and rebukes the vices that dominate us, they, shut up in their houses, give no ear to the voice of God, who wishes to draw them out from the midst of iniquity. These rational asps fear that if they hear the preacher speak of the eternal pain that will follow for those who wilfully do not know what every Christian must know to be saved, if he tells them that death is coming near, judgment follows it, and damnation is the fruit of their sin, sadness and melancholy will seize them; and, quite comfortable in the hole of their abominations, they fear that the voice of God's minister will make them come out of it to hand them over to Jesus Christ. That is why they stop their ears, or the devil stops them, to hinder their salvation. O my God! One day you commanded the prophet Jeremiah and said to him: Go, and stand at the gate of the children of my people, and say to them: Hear the word of God. Now it would be fitting for you to give us a like command: Go outside the church to bring Christians into it, that they may hear my words. Go to those houses where gaming, dancing and worldly conversation take up the time that should be given to instructing man in the duties of Religion. Go and cry out: In the church you will hear what is good for you. Go to those taverns where idleness, gluttony and drunkenness turn men into brutes, and tell them: The parish priest, the preacher, calls you to the church to make you drunk with divine love, and to make you turn your back on abomination and sin. Go to those houses and to those who, like the lazy bride, are resting in their beds while the ministers of the Gospel cast this holy seed so that it may bear fruit of honour and holiness, and tell them: Arise, my love, and go to hear the Lord in his preachers, and open to Jesus Christ, lest some day you wish to do so, and to open to him the door of your heart, and he has already

passed on, as the bridegroom did with her, and you find yourself forsaken by his love. Go…

12. But ah! How many Satan has led astray in this way! Many do not hear the divine word because, too self-satisfied, they judge that they already have sufficient knowledge of Christian doctrine and morals. What an error! King David was most wise; he knew very well that adultery was a greater crime than stealing the one little ewe lamb a shepherd had; yet for a whole year he went without repenting of having taken for himself the only wife Uriah had. But Nathan preaches to him, setting before him the likeness of the stolen ewe, and at once he weeps and says: I have sinned against the Lord. Seed cast on the ground becomes more fruitful with the rain that comes from on high than with the watering the farmer does by hand himself; and so the divine word that comes down to us from the pulpit bears more fruit than what we hear from books.

13. The second whom the devil deceives in order to take the divine word out of their hearts are those who, though they hear it, do not receive it as they should. Of these, some take in sermons superficially, and with their ears on the preacher have their hearts at home, or in the homes of the objects of their liking. Such men show that their taste does not lead them to this exercise, and that they are not sheep of Jesus Christ, since they have no appetite for the salt of divine wisdom. Just as (and this is a comparison of St. John Chrysostom) one who looks at the dishes on a table with distaste and disdain shows that he is not hungry, or that his stomach is overloaded, so one who does not long to hear sermons, or hears them with indifference, shows that he does not wish to be nourished by them, or that his spirit is so full of earthly things that it does not admit those of heaven. So it is that countless people are found who, when the sermon is over, cannot report a single word of it. Fools! Because they are such, the Wise Man compares them to a broken vessel that cannot hold any liquid. If the sacred orator spoke to them of comedies, of courtships, of cards, and of all that rules their appetite, they would listen with pleasure and keep his teaching; but since, as a rule, what is said in the pulpit does not please the flesh, it is not heard in such a way that it remains in the memory. The fool, says Solomon in Proverbs, does not receive the words of wisdom unless he is spoken to in the language that is in his heart.

14. Others of these hear sermons for a crooked purpose. They attend them as if going to a concert of music, only to delight the ear, so that they enjoy only those preachers adorned with grace, a good voice, singular invention, ingenious subtleties and other natural gifts, which, though not to be despised, are not the soul of discourses. These are like those thirsty people who will not drink water unless it is in a silver cup. Ah! The pulpit is not a theatre of entertainment, but a school of truth; and those who let themselves be carried away only by the outward form of the words fare as the Jews of Jerusalem did, who, according to St. Augustine, heard the best preacher, Jesus, and at the sight of that torrent of wisdom that came from his mouth were delighted, and went away amazed, but did not go away converted: *admirabantur, sed non convertebantur* \[they marvelled, but were not converted\].

15. The third, from whose heart Satan tears the word of God, are those who hear and retain it, but do not do what it has taught them. My brethren, said the Apostle, I charge you to be doers of the word, and not hearers only. There is no doubt that sermons are able to justify a sinner and make sinners, leaving the paths of ignorance of their Christian duties and of the iniquity of their heart, turn back to God with tears of true penance; but those who only heard the precepts of his law, says the same St. Paul, will never be justified in the Lord’s presence, but those who keep the law they have heard will be. Ezekiel saw cherubim full of knowledge who had hands like a man’s: by this it was signified that not only is knowledge of our obligations necessary, but hands are needed to carry out what we have learned. What use is it that we hear the dogmas of Religion and have them explained to us, if we do not adorn our soul with that living faith with which we must believe them? What does it matter that we hear and learn from preachers that we must not steal, blaspheme, backbite, be impure, etc., if with this knowledge and science we are thieves, blasphemers, backbiters and adulterers? To know all this, to hear it and not practise virtue, said Chrysostom to the people of Antioch, will not only not contribute to your eternal salvation, but to your damnation. For the servant who, not ignorant of his lord’s will, does not obey it, says Jesus Christ, will be more terribly punished than the one

who was wholly ignorant of it. God has promised in his Gospel that those who hear the word of God will be blessed; but only those who hear and practise it.

16. Let us conclude, my brethren. You have seen very briefly explained the parable of the sower, in which one of the chief obligations of the Christian is shown to us: that of hearing the word of God announced by his ministers. It is necessary to instruct us in what we must practise to be disciples of Jesus Christ, which is what the name of Christians given us in Baptism means. It is useful for our salvation, as the fruits this holy seed has produced in men through all the centuries prove. But for this it is necessary to hear it, for Scripture cries out to us continually: Hear the word of God. It is necessary to retain it, and above all to put into practice what has been heard in sermons and kept in the memory. This will be for this divine seed to fall on well-prepared ground, able to give a fruit that springs up to eternal life. Amen.

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[1] The printed margin gives Ps. 57 (Vulgate; Ps. 58:4–5 in modern numbering).

14. Quinquagesima Sunday: On the Fourth Article of the Creed, and the Sins of Carnival

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 14, pp. 130–140. Gospel: Luke 18:31–43. Original preacher not named.

> *Illudetur, et flagellabitur, et conspuetur (Luke 18:32).*
>
> *Jesus Christ will be mocked, scourged and spat upon.*

The Gospel of this day is from the eighteenth chapter of St. Luke, and it reads thus:

1. “Jesus took the twelve Apostles aside, and said to them: Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and there all the things will be accomplished that the Prophets wrote of the Son of Man. For he will be delivered to the Gentiles, mocked, scourged and spat upon; and after they have scourged him they will put him to death, and he will rise again on the third day. But the Apostles understood none of these things; this was a language unknown to them, and they did not understand what was said to them. And it came to pass that as he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. And when he heard the crowd of people passing, he asked what it was, and they told him that Jesus Christ was passing by. And at once he called out, saying: Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And those who went in front rebuked him, that he should be quiet; but he cried out much more: Son of David, have mercy on me. Then Jesus stopped, and commanded that he be brought to him. And when he had come near, he asked him, saying: What do you wish me to do for you? And he said to him: Lord, that I may see. And Jesus said to him: Look, your faith has saved you. And at once he saw, and followed him, giving glory to God. And all the people who saw it praised God.” This is the Gospel.

2. It surprises me to see that on days which almost the whole world keeps holy to drunkenness, gluttony and dancing, the Church puts before us a Gospel which relates in a few words the passion and death of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, and all that the fourth article of the Creed contains in these words: Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. All things have their time, says the Wise Man: there is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time of compunction and a time of dancing. Carnival, then, seems to be the proper time to laugh, to dance and to amuse oneself; Holy Week, a time of mourning, of weeping and tears. Why then is a mournful subject put before us today, when everything invites to pleasure and merriment? St. Vincent Ferrer raises this question, and he himself answers: that the Church rightly does this in order to banish from her children the sinful amusements that corruption has invented for these days, setting before them on the first day of Carnival what that Lord suffered for us. In this she does what the king of Moab did, who, seeing himself besieged by three enemies of his, the kings of Israel, Judah and Edom, took his firstborn son, killed him with his own hands, and hung the body on the city walls in sight of the besiegers; and they, horrified at this deed, fled, abandoning the siege. A symbol, says Cardinal Hugh, of what happens

in these days: in them the three enemies, the world, the devil and the flesh, besiege us to make us surrender: the world with its amusements, the flesh with drunken bouts and feasting, and the devil moving the other two with his suggestions. What does God do by means of the Church? He sets before us his only-begotten Son hanging on a tree, full of torments and insults, so that at the sight of him the army of the world, the devil and the flesh may flee, and may not take our poor soul captive to the offence of its God. Ah, my brethren! How abominable in the eyes of the Lord will our sinful conduct be in these days, when Christ is set before us suffering and dying for love of us! This is what I am going to show, in order to answer to the wise intentions of the Church. I shall explain the fourth article of the Creed, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, in the first part; how abominable it is in the eyes of the Lord to offend him in these days, when we remember that his Son suffered for us, in the second part.

First Part

3. God so loved the world, says St. John, that he gave his own Son. Through the sin of Adam man was lost; he was cast out of paradise and condemned to suffer eternal torment with the apostate angels, always a slave of the devil. But remembering his ancient and everlasting mercy, God decrees his redemption at the same time as he pronounces his punishment. He could well have saved man by various means that his divine wisdom held; but he willed to show his greater love by sending his Only-begotten, so that, bearing on himself the weight of our iniquities, he might make satisfaction with his infinite merit, and at the cost of the suffering of the humanity he put on, for the sin man had committed. Given this prior decision and providence of the Lord, it was fitting that the Son of God, who was also son of man by the hypostatic union, should suffer pains and a most shameful death. The Prophets went on announcing it through all the ages. Abel, killed at the urging of his brother's envy; Isaac, sacrificed by his father; the paschal lamb, slain as the children of Israel went out of Egypt; and the bronze serpent that Moses set on a pole for the health of his people: all were symbols and figures of the passion and death of Jesus for the salvation of the world.

4. Jesus, then, was born, and lived practising the trade of his foster father, until, when the time for his preaching came, he began to teach the way of truth with those words of eternal life that came from his mouth. The following that came after his preaching, his miracles, his gentleness, his attraction, so that the whole world went after him, as the Jews said in the council at Jerusalem: this stirred up the envy of the scribes and Pharisees, whose hypocrisies he laid bare; this moved the bitterest persecution against him; this was the cause of his arrest and of his being handed over to Pilate, who was the only one who could sentence him, according to the orders of the Roman Emperors, who had taken from the Jews the authority to put the accused to death without the sentence of their commissioners. Pilate was one of these, and so it is said that he suffered under Pontius Pilate. With reason the Roman governor who judged the Saviour is named: first, so that by so memorable a fact, about which so many inquiries would be made by the enemies of our belief, the time when it happened might remain beyond doubt; secondly, so that the whole world might know the iniquity of a judge who, knowing the innocence of the one presented to him as accused, nevertheless condemned him to a most cruel death; a crime that heaven punished by making him kill himself in the year of Christ 41, on his way from France; thirdly, so that the prophecy the Saviour makes in today's Gospel might be fulfilled, that he would be delivered to the Gentiles, for Pilate, to whom the Jews delivered him, was one.

5. And what did Jesus Christ suffer? Ah! Although the four Gospels give a long account or history of the passion and death of Jesus, it can hardly be sufficiently explained how far his torments went. Soul and body suffered extraordinarily: the body with pains, and the soul with anguish. The Lord suffered all the pains that all the Prophets had announced of the Messiah, Redeemer of the world, and that the ancient Patriarchs had pointed to in figures. Let us draw out something of his most sorrowful passion. He suffered from every kind of people, of all classes, of both sexes, of all ages: from Gentiles and Jews, from the great and the rabble, from the citizens of Jerusalem and from foreigners, from the princes and from the scribes, from men and

from women, from his enemies and even from his own disciples; for one sells him, another denies him, and others leave him abandoned at the time of his arrest. Here was fulfilled what he said through Isaiah: I turned my face every way, and found no one to help me.

6. He suffered in everything a man can suffer: in himself, and in his friends, whom he seems to have loved more than himself; and so he said to his executioners: If you seek me, here I am, take me; but let these disciples of mine go free, giving to understand what he suffered at seeing them outraged. He suffered in his good name through blasphemies, in his honour through slanders, in his goods by being stripped of his clothes and having lots cast for his tunic, in his soul and its powers through fear, sadness and zeal, and in his most sacred body through the wounds and the crucifixion. He suffered in all his members: in his head through the crown, whose seventy-two thorns pierced his temples; in his holy face through the blows and the spittle, and in his eyes through the veil with which they covered him in the house of the High Priest; in his tongue through the gall and vinegar with which they tormented him; in his arms and hands through the violent stretching with which they dislocated them to put him on the cross, and through the piercing of the nails; in his back through the wounds of the five thousand and more lashes he received; in his knees through the bruises they took in the three falls, when he fell to the ground weighed down by the cross; and in his feet, because, pierced with the nail, they bore the whole frame of his body. In short, the Prophet could well say: From the sole of the foot to the head there was no sound part in him.[1]

7. He suffered in all his senses. In touch, most bitter pains; in taste, that bitter and unpleasant drink they gave him when he said, I thirst; in smell, the foul odour, according to some Fathers, which that place, a burial ground of corpses, gave off; in hearing, jeers, mockery, insults, taunts; in sight, seeing his nakedness, he who was purity itself; seeing his most holy Mother weeping, become a bitter sea of sorrow, as Jeremiah foretold in figure; John, crushed with grief at the sufferings of that most loving Master who the night before had let him lean on his breast at the paschal supper; and Magdalene and the other pious women who had accompanied him, pierced with a feeling beyond words.

8. He suffered at every period of his life. He was born in poverty, was brought up in want, was persecuted by Herod from childhood, his most holy Mother being obliged to carry him to Egypt to shield him from the death that threatened him. He was hungry and thirsty; he was worn out with heat and weariness; in short, he could well say: I was poor and in labours from my earliest infancy. And after this he suffered what we have seen under Pontius Pilate. He willed to be sold like Joseph; bound and captured like the ark of the covenant; covered with wounds from the scourges like Job; crowned with thorns like the ram of Abraham; carrying the cross up the mountain like Isaac, and set upon it like the bronze serpent. And in all this no comfort was given him; and, full of sufferings on the cross, he even cried out: My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?

9. See, Christian, that Jesus is saying to you: See if there is any sorrow like my sorrow. But see that Jesus Christ had no need to suffer so many pains. He offered himself to them because he willed it, said Isaiah. We are the cause of his torments. He was wounded and slain for our iniquities. All that Adam and his descendants owed for their sin he took on his own account; he paid it all for us. Oh, how much we owe him, my brethren! How much more we ought to repeat with the Apostle: He loved me, and gave himself up for me! What should I do but love him? He loved me so that he gave for me all he had. What should I do but give him my heart, my life, my soul in return for the love he has for me? He gave himself up for me to the torments of his passion and death, to blot out my sins, to open heaven to me, and to reconcile me with his eternal Father, who had his arm raised to punish me justly. What should I do but abstain from sin, for which Jesus Christ died, lest on my part I renew his wounds and put him on the cross a second time? This is the fruit we must draw from considering the passion of Jesus Christ. This is the Church's intention in singing us today the Gospel that announces his sufferings: to curb our sinful appetites in these days of licence. This being so, how abominable will it be to offend him in them, in view of what he suffered for love of us? Let us say it in the

Second Part

10. Nothing draws us away from sin more, said a Father, than the memory of the passion of Jesus Christ. This, then, is the intention of our mother the Church in setting before our eyes in the Gospel all that the Saviour suffered and endured: to hold us back from the sinful pleasures that are usually indulged in these days in most towns. Even for this purpose, in many places the Forty Hours are celebrated, exposing the most holy Sacrament of the altar, which is the memorial or reminder of the passion, where, though he is alive, the sacrifice of the Lamb slain for love of us is renewed, the bread baked under the ashes \[*pan subcinericio*\] symbolised in the one Gideon saw; for he is able to make us conquer, in these dangerous days, the infernal Midianites who try to destroy us. We are told today, then, that the Son of God was made the reproach of the world and the contempt of the rabble, until he was cut off, as Isaiah said, from the land of the living, by a death that comprises all insults and all pains, and this for us men and for our salvation and remedy. Who then will there be so insensible and so bold as to dare to offend his Benefactor, his Father, his Redeemer and Master, at the very time when he is showing his love?

11. Yet there are many Christians in name who do it, trampling on their God, wounded and dead for love of them, in order to give themselves to the most shameful disorders. They are like Tullia, daughter of Tarquin, who, rushing headlong in a carriage to the unlawful arms of her lover, when the coachman stopped because her father's dead body was lying in the street and the horses were about to run over it, angrily said to him: Go on; is my father's corpse to hold back the satisfaction of my desires? An execrable barbarity! But it is repeated in these days by the very people who glory in being children of Jesus Christ; for when the dead body of their Father, who offered himself as a victim for their salvation, is set before them in the Gospel, they run to give vent to their passions, without his memory being any obstacle to them. This is what God abominates above all, this he detests; and of this he complained, as history relates, to a holy soul to whom Jesus, covered with wounds, appeared during the prayer she was making on one of the days of Shrovetide, and said to her those words he had already said through his Prophet: These wounds I received in the house of those who said they loved me. Ah! That the Jews wounded him, and even, when he was shown to the people on Pilate's balcony, cried, Crucify him, crucify him, is not strange; but that his own friends, those who for so many reasons ought to love him, should cry out in practice in every disorder of these days, Death to Jesus, death to his law (for this is what is said with every sin committed), provokes the divine vengeance beyond measure, and the more so when the Church gives them this reminder today.

12. Tell me: if a painter, wishing to make an image, first drew the head all wounded, the hair bloodied, the eyes livid and sunken, the mouth covered with yellow pallor, the tongue purple, the face disfigured and ugly; and then the whole body exquisitely adorned with a garment studded with the most precious stones, a musical instrument in the hands, and the feet in the posture of dancing a provocative dance, what would you say? Foolish or mad painter! So luxurious and pleasure-loving a body does not go with so horrible a head. Yet this deformity is made in Christendom in these days. Our head is Jesus Christ. He is, said St. Paul, the head of his Church; consequently all of us are the members, the body of this head. The Gospel today paints Jesus Christ for us become a centre of pity, and we wish to enjoy the most sinful amusements. Let us go into detail. In the first place, Jesus is shown to us naked on a tree. He who clothed the fields with loveliness and the flowers with beauty, and who kept the clothes of the Israelites whole for the forty years their pilgrimage in the desert lasted, was presented to the whole rabble indecently clad, which for the Saviour, who is purity itself, was the most painful torment; and he suffered it so that man might be clothed with his garments, better than with fig leaves. This consideration ought to make us dress with the decency and humility proper to a Christian. But ah! In these days it seems all effort is put into appearing before people in clothes perhaps beyond the means of the one who wears them, and in a way that incites to lust. How deserving of punishment such persons are! Jeremiah abhors an animal called the lamia, which bares its breasts to feed its cubs, but at the very time they are enjoying this nourishment smothers them in its own embraces.[1] This happens in this

season: how many die spiritually, drawn by a certain nakedness they notice, which feeds their lust?

13. Moreover, Jesus Christ is shown to us thirsty, and fed only with gall and vinegar. This is reason enough to abstain in these days from excess in food and drink; but just the opposite happens. These are days when gluttony and drunkenness rule a great part of men, who show, as St. Paul said, that they acknowledge no other God than their belly. For this contempt shown to the Lord (forgetting the benefit he did us by his passion, for he brought us out of the slavery and tyranny of the devil) his divine justice is provoked, and perhaps he will give them the punishment he gave those Israelites who, unjustly forgetful of the favour their Lord had done them in bringing them out of Pharaoh's tyranny, craved the fleshpots of Egypt. He did indeed send them a multitude of quails to satisfy their hunger and their gluttony; but when they were most taken up with their feast, hear what the Lord did, as is related in the eleventh chapter of Numbers:[2] The flesh was still between their teeth, they had not yet finished eating, when behold, the fury of God was stirred against his people, and he struck them with a very terrible and deadly plague.

14. Jesus is also shown to us silent on the cross, and if he spoke, it was seven words that showed either his pains or his great love for us. This requires us to answer our Benefactor with moderation of tongue, and that all our words be edifying, looking in them to the honour of God and the good of our neighbour. But what is done in these days? Let those provocative songs say it, those obscene words, those curses, blasphemies and oaths, those impure conversations, those defamatory tales; so that what Scripture said is fulfilled: that the tongue speaks what the heart is full of. Christ is bound hand and foot with iron bonds that pierce those most delicate members; he is without movement. This ought to make us order our steps and actions in these days according to what the law this crucified Lord laid on us prescribes. But far from this, people give themselves to dancing, where, as St. John Chrysostom said, everything goes loose, eyes, hands, feet; and since the devil is in the middle, says this Father, he directs all the movements, so that each and every one may put the Saviour to death again. They will experience the punishment of Herod, who because of a dance rushed to take the Baptist's life, and himself met the most abominable death.

15. Lastly, Jesus is painted for us in today's Gospel crucified as an evildoer, his divine nature disguised in the strange garb of the human, and the Holy of Holies covered with the mask of a sinful servant, worthy of the greatest punishments. But men, forgetful and ungrateful for this device that divine wisdom adopted in order to be able to suffer for them, dress in strange costume, cover it with a little mask, wishing to change the work of God, says Tertullian, and, taking the shapes of devils or beasts, disfigure the image of God they bear; all with the purpose of putting a kind of veil over their face so as to say and do without restraint what no one would allow them to do barefaced. This is a fault God condemned in the wife of Jeroboam when she tried to deceive a prophet of the Lord in this way; worthy of punishment from that God who said in his Scripture: Cursed be everyone who wears foreign or strange garb.[3] The fact is that such people, far from appearing in these days as children of a crucified God, make a show of presenting themselves as children of the devil, the first to disguise himself, dressing as a serpent to make man offend his Creator. Oh, how little conformity men who are members of Jesus Christ have with their divine head, according to the portrait the Gospel gives us of him! Let them expect, then, the thunderbolt of divine vengeance threatened by the sacred Scriptures. Hear, as one for all, how God threatens those who act in this way in the sixth chapter of Amos. In a figure the Prophet showed what happens in Carnival time. Woe (this is God's threat, announcing the greatest punishments), woe to you who spread lust over your couches! See in this the indecent dances represented. Who drink wine from your bowls: see the excesses of gluttony and drunkenness. And who anoint yourselves with fragrant balm: see here luxury drawn. Woe to you, woe! And why this threat? They had no memory of, nor compassion for, the sufferings of Joseph. That is, although they knew that Joseph son of Jacob (who represented Jesus) had suffered so much in Egypt so that his brothers might have protection (ah, how much more the Saviour suffered!), they gave themselves up to dissipation, licentiousness and disorder. In this is represented the crime, abominable to the Lord, of those who, in these days when the Church sets before them

the likeness of the better Joseph, our divine crucified Saviour, give themselves to the most shameful sins. This was my subject.

16. I shall not be one of those, my God, who insult you thus; I shall contemplate in this time your anguish and your pains; and so, how could I satisfy my sinful passions? I shall not do it, not so much for fear of your judgments as for the gratitude my love owes you. I remember what the noble Uriah the Hittite did when the King told him deceitfully, to cover his own crime, to go home, rest from the toils of war, and answer to the lawful love of his wife. Lord, he said to him, what are you saying? Is this the time for that? Is it right that the ark of God should be in the field, exposed to become the prey of its enemies, and that I should go into my house to eat, drink and give myself to the delights of love? Certainly not; you will not get that from me; that is not fitting for my fidelity. So shall I say, my God, to those who in these days invite me to the disorders proper to them. My God, my Redeemer, the ark of the new covenant, is not merely exposed to his enemies, but wounded, scourged, crucified and dead on a gibbet; and am I to dance, eat and drink without measure, and take delight in impure actions? The love I have for my Jesus does not allow it. I know that, just as he rewarded the good Angels who separated themselves from those who in their pride did not give glory to God, in the same way the Lord my God, if I separate myself from those who work iniquity and withdraw to the church to praise and bless him, will afterwards reward me in glory. Amen.

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[4] Isa. 1:6.

[1] Lam. 4:3 (Vulgate *lamiae*, "sea monsters" or "jackals").

[2] The Spanish says chapter 12 ("xu"); the quail story is Num. 11:31–34.

[3] Compare Deut. 22:5 and Zeph. 1:8; the wife of Jeroboam is in 1 Kings 14:1–6.

15. First Sunday of Lent: On the Sixth Petition of the Our Father

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 15, pp. 141–150. Gospel: Matt. 4:1–11. Original preacher not named.

> *Jesus ductus est in desertum a Spiritu, ut tentaretur a diabolo (Matt. 4:1).*
>
> *Jesus was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit, to be tempted there by the devil.*

The Gospel of this day is from the fourth chapter of St. Matthew, and it reads thus:

1. "Jesus was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit to be tempted there by the devil; and having fasted forty days and forty nights, sustained by his divine power, afterwards he was hungry. And the tempter, coming near, said to him: If you are the Son of God, command that these stones be turned into loaves. Jesus answered him and said: It is written: Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Then the devil took him to the holy city of Jerusalem, and setting him on the top of the temple, said to him: If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written that he has commanded the Angels to take care of you, and they will bear you up in their hands, lest perhaps your foot strike against a stone. Jesus answered him: It is also written: You shall not tempt your Lord and God, asking him for miracles without need. The devil took him again to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and said to him: I will give you all these things, if you fall down on the ground and adore me. But Jesus, angered, said to him: Begone, Satan, for it is written: You shall adore the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve. Then the devil left him, and at once the Angels came to him and served him food." Thus far the whole Gospel.

2. The Saviour did all this for the instruction of those he came to teach virtue by his doctrine and example. He withdrew from the world into the desert, not because his virtue was in danger there, for it could not be lost, but to teach us to flee the occasions of sin. He allowed himself to be tempted in the desert three times, with the greatest insistence, to see whether the devil could hurl him into sin, or to learn whether he was the true Son of God, which had been hidden from him. Jesus Christ conquers, comes out victorious, because he

resists the assaults of temptation powerfully and uses the weapons the Lord has left us written in his holy Scripture for triumphing over it; and then he receives the reward of his victory in the homage of the Angels. The disciple, then, is not above the master: if he is tempted, so are we, and we can likewise conquer with the Lord's grace, using on our part the means he himself has left us to triumph over temptations. That is why we say to God in the sixth petition of the Our Father: Lead us not into temptation \[*no nos dejes caer en la tentación*, literally "do not let us fall into temptation"\];[1] for the victory in combat is God's, and without him we would be conquered; but we are the ones who must fight if the Lord is to help us. Here is the whole subject of this plática. In its first part I shall explain briefly what temptation is, and what we ask when we beg the Lord not to let us fall into it. And in the second, because it is more important, I shall set out at greater length the means we must use on our part to come out of it victorious.

First Part

3. Temptation, of which we are properly speaking here, is all that induces us to sin and spurs us to break the laws of the Lord, in whatever way this inducement or spur to evil may come. God, who is holiness itself by essence, and who hates all who work iniquity, as David said; God, whose will is our sanctification, and who created us to serve him, keep his commandments and afterwards enjoy him for ever, cannot induce us to sin, said the apostle St. James. And although it is said that he tempted some just men, this is a way of speaking of sacred Scripture to signify that the Lord put the fidelity and virtue of his servants to the test for their greater crown. And if he tempts, it is by permitting temptations through the unsearchable judgments of his providence, always directed to his greater glory and the good of men. Who then tempts us? Who induces us to commit sin? Three powerful enemies that fight our soul to hurl it into ruin: the world, the flesh and the devil. The world tempts us by setting before us its pleasures, its delights and its riches, making us see them under the mask of happiness and good, like the golden cup of Babylon, so that we may drink poison and perdition from it. The flesh, stirring us with the inclination to evil we have had since the sin of Adam, makes us long for sensual and carnal delights, making us feel in our members a law contrary to that of reason, to take us captive to the law of sin; so St. Paul said. The devil, envious of our happiness and opposed to the supreme power of God, to whose throne he once wished to ascend, in order to win followers and take his children from the Lord, tempts us and provokes us to iniquity; and for this he uses the world and the flesh as auxiliary weapons, to make sure of his trophies. So we can say that all temptation comes from the devil, whom the Gospel rightly calls the tempter; who, like a raging lion, as St. Peter says, goes about seeking whom he may devour, studying the temperaments, the character, the tastes and the needs of men, so as to attack each one on the flank and not put his victory at risk.

4. Unhappy man! How surrounded you are by temptations! With how much caution you must live! You are exposed to a continual war! Know, says Ecclesiasticus to him, that you pass through the midst of many snares.[1] It does not say look, but know; that is, consider with reflection that a certain snare to make man fall is hidden in all things. A snare in food, a snare in drink, in riches, in poverty, in honour, in lowliness. Explaining this, St. John Chrysostom says: A man goes out into the street, sees his enemy, and hatred assails him; he sees someone praised, and envy attacks him; he sees a poor man, and wishes to despise him; he sees a woman, and her beauty wishes to take him captive. Do you see how many snares? Many times your wife is a snare for falling, at other times your children, at other times your friends, at other times you yourself. So the Saint speaks, and this is only saying what Jeremiah wrote: A snare is upon you, inhabitant of the earth. That is why our soul is compared to a lily among thorns; because, as St. Bernard said, while our soul is united to the body it lives in a world full of thorns, and so it must of necessity feel the pricks and stabs of temptations; to be among them and not be harmed is not given to human power, but to divine. Therefore, according to this Saint's teaching, temptations can be overcome with divine help. So it is: the devil, who, as I have said, is their chief author, cannot make us fall if we do not wish it.

5. The Angel of the Apocalypse, says St. John, holds him bound with eternal chains, and so what he can do is bark like a dog that is tied up; but he cannot bite unless assent or consent is given to the barking of his temptations. According to this, are temptations not evil if one does not consent to them? Certainly not: they are useful and profitable for the soul. What does he know who has not been tempted? says the Wise Man. He neither knows how far his own misery reaches, so as to be on his guard, nor that of other men, so as to have compassion on their faults; nor the worth of the virtues for destroying the devil's tricks; nor how far the power of God reaches in making us triumph over our adversary. The man who is tempted acquires all this knowledge. Temptations serve for the exercise of humility, prayer, mortification of the flesh and other virtues, which, as we have said, are the weapons for resisting the devil's attacks. They serve to test our faith, our hope and our charity. As the furnace tests the firmness of the clay vessel, says Scripture, so temptation is the greatest test of a just soul. So, by means of the temptations they suffered and overcame, the chastity of Joseph and Susanna, the patience of Job, and the fidelity and obedience of Abraham have come to our knowledge. Temptation is like the shovel or the fork with which the wheat is separated from the chaff. It serves also for our reward. Blessed is the man, says St. James, who endures temptation; for, his virtue being tested by it, resisting the world, the flesh and the devil, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord promised to those who love him. What is certain is that glory will be given by way of a crown; this supposes victory, victory a fight, and a fight enemies. See, then, how temptations, far from being evil, are useful, if we triumph over them, if we do not consent, if we do not fall into the snares they set for us. So, Lord, we say in the Our Father, do not let us fall into temptation. As if to say: Give me your grace, your help, without which I am not able to overcome all temptations effectively. It is written: Unless the Lord keeps the city, he who watches to guard it labours in vain. I have experienced it many times, when, tempted to evil, I have triumphed by your grace; and I have clearly seen that, given the terrible force the enemies of the soul exerted on me to plunge me into sin, if the Lord, as David said, had not helped and upheld me, my soul would almost have been dwelling in hell already. So, Lord, help me, do not let me fall into temptation, and inspire my spirit with the means I must use on my part to come out of it victorious. I shall show in my second part what these are.

Second Part

6. The whole effort of the Philistines was to leave the Israelites defenceless, so as the better to conquer them in battle. So they forbade them to have makers of weapons, so that there was a time when only Saul and Jonathan were armed when they went out to war. Satan, our cruel enemy, uses this same cunning: while he increases his forces with the help of the world and the flesh, he tries to turn Christians away from the means the Church and sacred Scripture propose to us for destroying his attempts; Scripture, the tower of David, from which hang a thousand shields and all the armour of the mighty. There are various weapons, then, with which, with God's help, we can conquer Satan when he tempts us and wishes to make us yield to sin: prayer, flight from occasions, resisting temptation at its beginnings, calling on most holy Mary, the remembrance of the last things, and frequenting the Sacraments. Let us say something of the worth of these weapons the Lord gives us in his Scripture, so as to crown us with the humiliation of our enemies.

7. Prayer. This is the powerful weapon Jesus Christ himself gave us in his Gospel. Watch, he said, and pray, that you may not enter into temptation. St. Paul used it in his combats with the infernal enemy, and it served him to triumph over his cunning. Hear how he himself expresses it: Lest the multitude of revelations with which the Lord enriched me should make me proud, he allowed the angel of Satan to chastise me by stirring my flesh to sin; for which reason I prayed three times to the Lord that the tempter might depart from me, and he said to me: My grace is enough for you to conquer. Indeed, that God who says, Ask and you shall receive, when a soul finds itself afflicted by the onrush of temptations, and turns to God imploring his help and assistance with a true spirit of piety, grants it in such a way that he makes the soul draw profit from the temptation itself, as Scripture says. Especially we must have recourse to Jesus Christ, who is the propitiation

for our sins and our advocate with the eternal Father. In the wounds of this most sweet Redeemer we shall find refuge against the snares of the devil. In the clefts or holes of this rock the holy bride took refuge in the persecutions with which her adversaries troubled her. Even in the world we see that if a child is chased by a barking dog, he runs to shelter in his father's arms, and no longer fears the beast's bites. Come to me, he himself tells us in his Gospel, come to me, and I will refresh you. To this Lord, symbolised in the bronze serpent set on a pole, the mere sight of which freed the Israelites from the serpents that wished to devour them, to this Lord we must pray continually in our spiritual combats, so that by the merits of his passion and death he may free us from the temptations that would plunge us into the abyss; and say to him with David: Enlighten, Lord, the eyes of my soul, that they may never sleep in the death of sin; let my enemy never say: I have prevailed against him.

8. Flight from occasions. We shall do little by praying if we do not avoid the occasions of sin. These are so strong in making us fall into sin that they have driven over the precipice many men firm and constant in virtue. David was strong and constant, a man after God's own heart \[*cortado a medida del divino corazón*, "cut to the measure of the divine heart"\]; yet his chastity could not resist the sight of an alluring occasion. Solomon was most wise and loved by God, and the cleverness of some idolatrous women dragged him into idolatry. Samson was brave and a man of virtue, and his not having freed himself from the company of Delilah brought him to ruin. Now look, says St. Jerome: you are neither as strong as Samson, nor as wise as Solomon, nor as virtuous as David; how much then must you flee from what can lead you into sin? That is why the Prophet cried out: Flee from Babylon, if you wish to save your soul. Let him who does not wish to fall into the snare not go near it; let him who does not wish to be stained with pitch not touch it; let him who does not wish to be burned not draw near the fire. Under these symbols Scripture shows us how indispensable flight is, if we are not to fall into the temptations to sin. So God commanded Lot not only to leave Sodom, but to go away from its borders, so that no spark of its burning might reach him. Many times the devil does not propose sin openly; he disguises it, making it seem, for example, to a young man that visiting that young woman, showing her affection, taking her hand or making her some demonstration of fondness is no fault; and so, not separating himself from this occasion, he ends in an unlawful relationship what began as courtesy and honest love. No, my brethren: with reason David asked God not only to keep him from sin, but from every road that led to iniquity.

9. Resisting temptation at its beginning. This is the means of stifling temptations at their source. A newly sprouted sapling is easily pulled out of the ground; but if it is allowed to take root in it, much force is needed to remove it, and even then some hidden root always remains. So when the devil begins to attack us with his cursed suggestions, we turn easily away from them; but who, without a very special grace of the Lord, will be able to check their progress once they have grown to their full size? The Father St. Jerome, explaining in a letter to the virgin Eustochium those words of the Song of Songs which say, Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines,[1] speaks to her thus: I do not want you to let evil thoughts grow in your soul, however small; let nothing of Babylon and confusion grow in you; kill the enemy while he is small. The first movements towards sin are what must be repressed, for when they are greater they have an irresistible force. This is why Pharaoh had all the male children of the Hebrews he held captive killed: because he feared that when they grew up a formidable army would be formed from them to fight against him. If our mother Eve had resisted the first attacks of the diabolical temptation, we would not have suffered the ruin we endure through her drawing out her conversation with the serpent. If Cain had stood up to the first thought of envy, he would not have murdered his innocent brother Abel. From one spark a great fire is kindled, says the eleventh chapter of Ecclesiasticus.

10. Calling on most holy Mary. Ah, my brethren, what a powerful weapon this is for scattering temptations! She is destined, as God said, to crush the head of the infernal serpent; and however much he makes war on the children and lovers of this Lady, as St. John says in his Apocalypse, his attacks against them serve only

for his confusion and shame, seeing himself conquered by the power of this Mother of clemency. The devil is confounded and ashamed when he sees that Mary humbles him, interceding so that all who call on her may not fall into the temptation he has contrived for them. Who doubts it? Abimelech, a symbol or figure of Satan, could not bear to be conquered by a woman; and when one of them threw down a great stone on him from a tower and broke his head, he called his armour-bearer and said to him: Kill me; I do not want it said that a woman took my life. Would that I could say more on this point.

11. Remembering the last things. It is written: Remember your last end, and you will never sin. Who, remembering that he must die; that he must appear before the tribunal of Jesus Christ to give an account of what he has done, well or ill; that if he consents to the temptation proposed to him there is a hell where he will pay for his sin for ever, and if he conquers he will rejoice for ever in heaven; who, I repeat, reflecting on this attentively, will not use all the means within his reach to resist temptation and triumph over his adversary? Just as, to wean children from craving milk when it is time to take them from the breast, a little aloes or something similar is usually put on it, so, for us to loathe all the pleasant things Satan sets before us to seduce us and hand us over to the death of sin, an effective remedy is to set death before us, whose memory is bitter, Scripture says. The disordered love of riches attacks you: say to yourself what was said to the rich man of the Gospel: Fool, this night you will die, and whose will all you have gathered be? The temptation of impurity and the delights of the flesh assails you: remember the punishment given to the woman of Babylon: As much as she glorified herself and lived in delights, so much torment and mourning give her. So with these and similar considerations of what awaits us at our death we take courage to resist the devil and deny him entry into our souls.

12. Frequenting the Sacraments. There is no doubt that the more grace a Christian is adorned with, the more strength he acquires to overcome the temptations by which the enemy wishes to destroy him. The Sacraments of the law of Jesus Christ confer grace through the merits of that Lord who came to cast out of the world the prince of darkness who held it subjugated. Each, besides the general grace all of them communicate, causes its own special and characteristic grace, according to the purpose of its institution; and so each and every one is an impenetrable shield for resisting the snares of the devil, if man cooperates with it, as St. Thomas says. But the sacrament of Confession has this effect in a particular way; for since in it we uncover to the spiritual father all the recesses of our heart, and lay open to him the temptations that fight our soul, nothing is more powerful for standing up to the diabolical arts and undoing them, say the holy Fathers and spiritual men, and for frightening Satan when he sees his tricks uncovered. The tempter usually inspires men to keep silent about their temptations, like a libertine who, to seduce another man’s woman, first of all earnestly charges her not to tell her father, mother or husband of his love and passion, because he foresees that their discovery will be followed by their being hindered. That is why the famous Cassian, so experienced in spiritual combat, exhorting people to reveal their temptations to their director, says that just as a snake hidden under a stone flees at once if the stone that covers it is lifted, so the devil, the serpent of the abyss, the moment the inner secret in which he hid his suggestions is revealed to the confessor, at once flees headlong into the abyss. And perhaps with the mere intention of doing it, the tempter already departs from the soul. Jesus Christ symbolised this when he sent ten lepers to the priests to be cured of their ailment, and before they reached them the sick men were already healed and the leprosy had fled from them.

13. These, my brethren, are the means we must use so as not to fall into temptation. They are almost indispensable. Satan tempts everyone, and perhaps the most virtuous and just most of all; for he holds sinners all too secure, since they tempt themselves. Son, said the Wise Man, are you coming to the service of God? Then prepare your soul for temptation. But, as you have seen, temptations are useful for the exercise of the virtues and for their reward. Yet it is indispensable to pray to God and use on our part the means to overcome them.

14. This I will do, my God, all the days of my life. Woe is me if I let the weapons fall from my hand, for I shall be the victim of the fury of my mortal enemy! Set me, Lord, for my protection, I shall say with David, under the shadow of your protection, and so I shall be able to say: Though armies of enemies rise against me, my heart will not fear, because you are with me. Let enemies come in this way, Lord; let combats come; for I know that, coming out victorious by your grace, I shall receive the crown of glory. Amen.

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[2] God tempts no one (Jas. 1:13).

[3] The printed margin gives chapter 9 (Sir. 9:20 in the Vulgate numbering).

[1] Song 2:15; the Spanish gives chapter "ix". Jerome, Letter 22 (to Eustochium).

16. Second Sunday of Lent: On the Eternal Life of Glory, and How to Attain It

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 16, pp. 151–160. Gospel: Matt. 17:1–9. Original preacher not named.

Transfiguratus est ante eos (Matt. 17:2).

He was transfigured before them.

The Gospel of this day is from the seventeenth chapter of St. Matthew, and it reads thus:

1. "Jesus took with him Peter, James and John his brother, and led them apart up a high mountain, and was transfigured before them: his face became shining as the sun, and his garments white as snow. And at the same time Moses and Elijah appeared to him, speaking with him of the passion and death he was to suffer in Jerusalem. Then Peter, speaking up, said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, let us make here three tabernacles, or tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and from this cloud came a voice that said: This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased: hear him. And the disciples, hearing it, fell to the ground on their faces, and were seized with extreme terror. But Jesus came to them, touched them and said: Rise, do not be afraid. And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell no one what you have just seen, until the Son of Man has risen from the dead." See the Gospel of the day.

2. But see in it a portrait of the glory of that eternal life which we are commanded to believe in the last article of the Creed. Jesus Christ our Saviour, who had come into the world to free us from the slavery of the devil into which the sin of our first father had put us, so that we might attain the end of our creation, gave men, at the time of his preaching, the most fitting means for it. He gave them laws and commands so as to please the Lord by their actions. He showed them that the Christian life was a laborious life, a life of hardship and labours; that to be his disciples it was indispensable that they imitate him by taking up their cross, that is, by resigning themselves in the tribulations and hardships of this mortal life. He told them that by embracing his doctrine they would be the object of the contradiction and persecution of the wicked; in short, he drew them a portrait of all the hardship the doctrine of the Gospel contains. But so that they might not lose heart on the road of virtue, and might be filled with the great reward he had prepared for them for their labours, he willed to show them the goods they would enjoy once their course in this life was finished, displaying the glory with which his eternal Father rewarded him, and which they, as his children, were to inherit. But it is to be noted that only three were witnesses of this marvellous vision; not because all were not worthy of it, for only Judas, the holy Fathers say, was unworthy to see that likeness of heaven; but to show us that, just as of twelve men called to his apostolate only three shared the glory of Tabor, so, although many are called to the Catholic religion, few will be those who go up the holy mountain of glory. And who will these be? Of the Apostles, only those enjoyed the vision of which we speak who obeyed Jesus when he called them to Tabor, who followed his steps and endured the roughness of that high mountain; so that we may know that only those will attain eternal life who by their virtues answer God's call to his Church. Beatitude, therefore, is to be the subject of this plática. What is glory? Eternal life: I shall explain it in the first part. What must we do to reach

it? I shall tell it in the second.

First Part

3. What is glory? Ah! This is a subject whose explanation seems to have struck dumb the wisest Fathers of the Church, who did not know what to say. God commanded the prophet Ezekiel,[1] in order to make a portrait of the holy city of Jerusalem, a symbol of heaven, to make it on an unbaked brick, to signify that all that can be said of it is a rough sketch. Eye has not seen, said St. Paul, nor ear heard, nor can there enter the heart of man what the Lord has prepared for those who love him. The prophet Baruch speaks of the greatness of this holy place, and says only: O Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast the place of his possession! St. John wishes to explain its beauty and magnificence, and the most he does is to compare it to a city built from its foundations of diamonds, sapphires and most precious stones, washed by a river of silver. David tries to weigh the number of its inhabitants, who are the Angels and the just, and says they are multiplied beyond the grains of sand of the sea. St. Bonaventure tries to show the union those noble citizens have among themselves, and finds no other comparison than that of the seven sons of Job, so brotherly and united that the goods of each were the goods of all; for the blessed rejoice as much in the glory of their companions as in their own. What then shall I say of this glory, when such superior wise men, inspired by God, described it only in outline? Nevertheless let us say something, though briefly, of the glory the saints will enjoy there. The Lord made man a compound of soul and body; and just as soul and body must serve him in this life and at the same time love him, so body and soul must each have its particular reward in eternal life. Let us speak with some distinction, beginning with the lower, which is the body. What is now fleshly and corruptible will be adorned with four glorious gifts, which are clarity, impassibility, agility and subtlety.[2] Jesus Christ included them all in these words alone: The just will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.[3] For the sun is bright; impassible, since it takes no harm in the filthiest places; agile, since its course is very swift; and subtle, since it penetrates everything.

4. The bodies of the just, then, in the kingdom of God will enjoy clarity like the sun, such as the sun will be then, which, according to St. Anselm, will be seven times greater than it is now. How transparent they will be! There their bones, their veins, their organs, all their inner parts will be seen, but all equally beautiful and bright. They will enjoy impassibility, when what is mortal in them puts on, according to St. Paul, immortality. St. John and Isaiah show this gift when they say: There will be no death there, nor mourning, nor weeping, nor any pain; they will not hunger, nor thirst, nor suffer heat. In short, none of the needs this corruptible body, exposed to every hardship, now requires. Agility: that is, they will have wings like eagles, says Scripture; they will fly and not grow weary; swifter than sparks, they will be able to run from the throne of Mary to that of Jesus, and from there to all the other saints. Subtlety, by which, like Jesus Christ in the upper room, which he entered without opening the doors, they will be able to pass through the hardest and most solid things. They will not on that account cease to be bodies; but they will be refined bodies, which can pass through everything without obstacle.

5. And what will each of their senses receive there? Ah! The eyes, so St. Anselm speaks in the place cited, the eyes, the smell, the taste, hands, throat, heart, and even the inmost marrow of the bones, and each of the parts of the body in common and in particular, will feel an unspeakable joy and sweetness. Eyes that closed so as not to see what it was not lawful to desire, there you will see the glorious body of Jesus Christ and of most holy Mary with all the beauty and glory with which they are now clothed. Ears that closed so as not to hear lies, impurity and backbiting, there you will hear… but what? You will hear, says St. Augustine, what canticles, what hymns, what organs, what music, what melody! And so with the other senses.

6. But this glory of the body is nothing compared with that of the soul. All that is not seeing and enjoying God is mud and rubbish: a man who enjoyed all the rest could not truly be called blessed. The soul, this indeed enjoys the supreme good, which is the end for which it was created. The Lord endowed the soul with

three powers, understanding, memory and will, and gave it as many virtues to exercise in earthly life, which are faith, hope and love; but on reaching heaven he rewards it with three glorious gifts, which are: vision, the reward of the understanding that believed by faith; possession, the reward of the memory, which was exercised in hope; and fruition, the reward of the will, which was quickened by divine love. Let us speak a little of each gift of the glorified soul.

7. Vision. By faith we had known God and his mysteries as in a riddle, in ciphers and in shadows; but there our understanding will know God as he is in himself. Strengthened by a supernatural light that flows from God's inaccessible light, it will see him, and in him as in a mirror all things of heaven, earth and the abyss, according to the greater or lesser light God is pleased to communicate to it in keeping with its merit. It will see the divine Essence with its attributes, with its mysteries, which seem so incomprehensible to us in the world. It will see God! Ah! If the bodily eyes will receive so much glory in seeing the greatness the Lord formed in heaven as a palace for his chosen ones, what joy will that of the soul be, says St. Augustine, in seeing the one who arranged and prepared it all? If you long for greatness, said the same Saint, God is greater; if beauty, God is more beautiful; if sweetness, he is sweeter; if splendour, justice, strength and goodness, God is more than all you can imagine.

8. Possession. This is the reward of hope. What a wide field opens here for our consideration! The soul, possessing all it hoped for in the world, what consoling and joyful memories its memory will bring up there! It will remember there all the inspirations the Lord sent it from on high to practise the virtues that have won it so much glory; the sufferings it endured with patience, now enjoying God's promise that said to it, Come to me, and I will console you: now it sees it fulfilled. It will remember its sins, it is true; St. Augustine and St. Gregory say so. But it will be a memory not sad but full of contentment, like the sailor who, safe in the harbour he longed for, recalls the storm in which he thought he would sink to the bottom of the waters. Holy souls recall their sufferings and their dangers; but they see themselves now free, and possessing all they hoped for from a God who rewards his servants.

9. Fruition. To explain this many sermons would be needed. To be united to God! To enjoy God! To love God without any more danger of losing him! This is the most that can be desired. Yet this is what the blessed soul enjoys, the Lord so rewarding the love it bore him with its will in this mortal life. When God gives glory to the just soul, he will say to it, according to the Gospel: Enter into the joy of your Lord. He does not say, explains Cardinal Hugh, Let my joy enter into you, but Enter into my joy; because, since each blessed soul loves God more than itself and more than all others, it will rejoice more in God's happiness than in its own and in that of all who are with it. This joy follows from the union it will have with God; for there the soul will be transformed in God, deified by an ineffable communication and participation. By it, says St. Peter, we shall become partakers of the divine nature. Here, seeing the King does not make us kings, nor does seeing the sun make us suns. But by the sight of God, the supreme King of glory, we become kings, and by the sight of the divine Sun we shall be a living portrait of brightness.

10. What do you say to all this, my brethren? St. Gregory answers: On hearing these things, he says, the mind is set on fire, and would already be there, where it will rejoice without end. But glory must be sought, he says in the book of his *Morals*, by the roads that lead to it. And which are these? I am going to tell it in the

Second Part

11. Who shall go up the mountain of God, or who shall remain for ever in the holy place of his glory? So David asked in Psalm 23, and he himself answers: He who is innocent in his hands, clean of heart, who has not received his soul in vain, nor sworn deceitfully to his neighbour.[1] Cardinal Hugh explains these words and says that by the mountain is understood the kingdom of heaven, and that whoever has these four things will go up to it. Innocent of hands: here he excludes sins of deed. Secondly, clean of heart: here he excludes sins of thought. He who has not received his soul in vain: this excludes sins of omission. And he who has not

deceived his neighbour: here he excludes sins of word. See the road to heaven, and the means of reaching it. Let us speak with some distinction.

12. Innocent of hands. Look, Christian, at yours: look at your works. Have you practised virtue? Have you kept the commandments God laid on you? For there is no other way, says Jesus Christ: If you would enter into eternal life, keep the commandments. Being blessed does not consist in believing in God. Faith must be living; it must be accompanied by the works it teaches us itself. Only the innocent is saved. Only the innocent? So David says: The innocent of hands, of works. What then, can the one who has sinned after baptism no longer enter glory? I do not mean that: there is an innocence that excludes all sin, and there is an innocence acquired by sorrow and penance. It is true that what man sows in life he will reap at death, says the Apostle; and so it seems that only he who sowed virtues will reap glory. But this does not prevent our saying that the one who, having sinned, weeps for his fault with the due dispositions will gather the fruits of eternal life. By a comparison you will see this clearly. Sow a grain of wheat; leave it in the ground; let no water fall on it; you will find the grain just as you sowed it. Water it, let rain fall on it; then it will seem that it must rot; but at harvest you will gather it again, greatly multiplied. So it happens in spiritual things. He who sows sins will reap eternal death. What a man sows, says the Apostle, that he will reap; but if he waters it with tears of true penance, he will enjoy the heavenly fruit. He who sows in tears, said David, will reap in joy. This recovers the innocence needed to go up the Tabor of glory.

13. Clean of heart. Here he is not speaking of the bodily heart we have placed within our breast, but of the understanding and will, represented by the name heart. On this supposition, what David requires for gaining glory is that the conscience have no sin. So St. Jerome said: this is to be clean of heart. It is, says St. Peter Damian, to order all thoughts according to God, every movement of reason and appetite, not only repressing the passions, but even, if it could be, not knowing them. It is also to keep chastity, not only in deeds, but in thoughts and desires; so St. Lawrence Justinian. In short, those who order all their inner life to the honour and service of the Lord are those of whom Jesus Christ said: Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God. What is certain is that the heart, representing, as I have said, the understanding and will, is like a mirror formed by God so that, helped by the light of glory, it may see the divine essence clearly, and love and enjoy it for ever. If it is a mirror, how free it must be of stain and dirt! How clean and pure! It will not be able to see God otherwise. But ah, my brethren! Who can say, My heart is clean? This question Solomon asked in Proverbs, I can ask now. Let us examine our heart, which according to the Gospel is a spring of evil thoughts, and let us see impartially: What passion have we conquered? What appetite have we curbed? Ah! Let so many wicked desires of lust, of revenge, of stealing other people's goods tell it; so many rash judgments; so many lingering delights \[*delectaciones morosas*, dwelling with pleasure on sinful thoughts\]. If these passions are not conquered, the thoughts are evil; there is no cleanness of heart to enter glory.

14. He who has not received his soul in vain. Here sins of omission are excluded from heaven. God gave rational man a soul so that with it he might work out his eternal salvation, fulfilling the general obligations of a Christian and the particular ones of his state and office. To receive one's soul in vain, then, it is not necessary to sin by deed; it is enough to omit fulfilling one's respective obligations. Oh, how many will be shut out of the kingdom of glory! The Christian who does not act according to what his faith commands him, which is the soul of his soul, received the faith in vain, for he keeps it idle. He is a Christian in appearance, an empty Christian, a stage Christian. You see that in a play one man represents a king, another a judge, another a father of a family, another a shepherd. Ask one of these, for example the shepherd, and say to him: Man, how are sheep cared for? What is the most suitable and wholesome pasture? How are their illnesses cured? He will tell you: I know nothing of that. But are you not a shepherd? I am a shepherd only in the performance; I tend no flocks. So it is with many Christians who are stage Christians. One is a judge, but does nothing that pertains to administering justice; another is a father of a family, but omits all he must do to care for it; another is… But why weary myself? We are all Christians; but there are few who do not omit the

general or particular duties they must practise as such. Such people received their soul in vain, and so they cannot go up the holy mountain of glory. He who has not deceived his neighbour with words. Here, according to Cardinal Hugh, sins of word are excluded. Although he speaks here only of the deceit that can be done to one's neighbour with words, it is certain that this expression includes all that we say, whether against God, against ourselves or against our brethren. He who, far from praising the most holy name of his God, blasphemes it, his precepts, his Sacraments and his ministers, is shut out of heaven. He who curses himself and says what can bring harm on him by his rash words; he who backbites, slanders, defames or reviles his neighbour, or deceives him with double-dealing in his dealings and agreements: these, since they sin with their tongue, are not fit to be blessed. Ah, with how much care the Lord charges us through Ecclesiasticus: Make a balance for your words and a strong bridle for your mouth.[2] That is, says St. John Chrysostom, let us speak as one who weighs his words. For a gold coin to pass as genuine, it is put on one side of the balance, and on the other the weight fixed by law; and if it does not agree, if they are not equal, it is not accepted. So when we are going, for example, to give a rebuke, let charity be put in the scale; if the rebuke does not agree with it, it is nothing but revenge. The desire to backbite comes: put justice on the other side, and you will see that what you are going to say is against justice, because you want for your neighbour what you do not want for yourselves. Oh my brethren! If we weighed our words like this, they would not come out so little in keeping with the Lord's law. But the countless sins committed with the tongue make clear what the Holy Spirit says of it: that it is a whole world \[*universidad*\] of all evils. With reason, then, sins of words bar the entrance to glory.

15. You have now seen, my hearers, the means we must use to attain eternal life, which we believe as an article of our faith, and in which the Lord has prepared for us so many goods that human tongue cannot explain them.

16. My God! Just judge and rewarder of all that is good! In view of what has just been said, my soul already longs and faints, contemplating the courts of the house of the Lord… When will the day be that I go and appear before the face of my God, to contemplate his divine essence and enjoy it for ever? But ah, Lord! I cannot enter your divine tabernacle if I am not innocent in thoughts, words and deeds, if I omit any of the commands you have set before me as the indispensable road for attaining my happy end. Give me help so that I may not make myself unworthy of your sight, and be cast out from it like the foolish virgins. You compare the kingdom of heaven in your Scripture to a wage given to labourers, to a crown of justice, the reward of victories, and to a wedding feast. If it is a wage, I shall try, my God, to earn it, enduring all labours to work out my salvation; if it is a crown, I shall fight manfully against all my passions to triumph over my spiritual enemies; and if it is a feast, I shall try to prepare myself with the wedding garment, so that, adorned with your divine grace, I may be admitted to the eternal life of glory. Amen.

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[3] The printed margin gives Ezek. 4 (4:1, the city drawn on a brick).

[4] *dotes*.

[5] Matt. 13:43; the printed margin gives "Matth. ni".

[1] Ps. 23:3–4 (Vulgate; Ps. 24 in modern numbering).

[2] Sir. 28:29 (Vulgate); the printed margin gives chapter 18.

17. Third Sunday of Lent: On the Integrity of Confession

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 17, pp. 161–170. Gospel: Luke 11:14–28. Original preacher not named.

> *Erat ejiciens daemonium, et illud erat mutum (Luke 11:14).*\
>
> *He was casting out a dumb devil.*

The Gospel of this day is from the eleventh chapter of St. Luke, and it reads thus:

1. “Jesus was casting a devil out of the body of a man, and it was dumb. And when he had cast out the devil, the dumb man spoke, and all the people marvelled. But some of the Pharisees said: He casts out devils by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of devils. Others, to tempt him, asked him to work some miracle. But Jesus, seeing their thoughts, said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself will be destroyed, and every house divided against itself will be ruined. Now if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Why then do you say that I cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub, that is, of the devil? That would be the devil going against himself. By whose power do your sons cast them out? You will tell me, by the power of God; and that is why I say that they will be your judges; that is, they themselves will condemn you for attributing to the work of the devil what in them you acknowledge to be the work of God. Certainly, if I cast out devils by the power of God, as you must confess, then without doubt the kingdom of God has come to you. The Saviour goes on speaking about this with some comparisons; and then a woman from the midst of the crowd raised her voice and said to him: Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked. And he said to her: Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.” This, in sum, is the Gospel.

2. The holy Fathers give it many interpretations; and in truth every word is an instruction. But, following the opinion of some of them, I see in the man it tells of, possessed by the devil and left dumb by him, the image of a sinner. Although Jesus Christ our most lovable Redeemer left him, in the sacrament of Penance or Confession, a sweet refuge and a sure remedy for healing his sins if it is received with the due dispositions, he turns the medicine into poison, and, possessed by the devil, falls dumb at that tribunal where, by speaking, the grace we had lost by sin is restored to us. I am not speaking here of those who do not come to receive this Sacrament; I speak only of those who, if they come to it, come only to profane it and add a horrible sacrilege to their sin. Many go to confession; but confession, among other conditions that will be explained on another occasion, must be entire if it is to be fruitful. And many, urged on by the shame the devil instils in them (giving it back to them, as a holy Father says, when he had taken it away from them so that they might sin), come out dirtier from the very washing of their soul, throwing mud into the very fountain of life by a sacrilegious confession. See, then, my subject this day. Would that I could cast the devil out of such sinners in the name of my God, so that his kingdom may come to them, as Jesus Christ says in today’s Gospel. I shall show in the first part, by way of doctrine, what the integrity required in confession for it to be valid is; and in the second, how groundless is the shame by which the devil tries to keep confessions from being entire.

First Part

3. Confession, besides having to be accompanied by sorrow and purpose of amendment, must be entire. He who wilfully keeps back any sin, says the Council,[1] leaves nothing for the divine goodness to forgive, for it is the same as if he confessed nothing. For a good thing to be good, it must be whole and complete; we see this verified in every field. A clock, however perfect and costly it seems, stops moving if a single tooth is missing from one wheel. A city may be well fortified, but if there is a single breach in its wall the enemy can get in through it. But let us take the comparison by which St. Thomas of Villanova symbolises the integrity of confession. Confession is a bridge, says this glorious Saint, by which the sinner (who by his sins has put an immense sea between himself and the offended Majesty) passes from the state of sin to that of grace. If, then, a bridge is missing one arch, carried away by a great flood, it is now impossible to cross by it from one side of the river to the other. So a single sin which a man knowingly leaves unconfessed leaves him in the abyss of sin, unable to cross over to the saving harbour of glory. The twenty-eighth chapter of Proverbs hinted at this when it said: He who hides his sins will not be directed towards grace; but he who confesses them all will find pardon and mercy. Let us see, then, what he must do for his confession to be entire.

4. For confession to be entire, in the first place all mortal sins must be confessed, whether of omission or commission, which after a diligent examination are found in the conscience as committed since the last good

confession. So says the Council of Trent. All of them: if a single one is left out, as I have said, far from giving life to the soul, confession gives it death. Saul left a single Amalekite without the punishment God had commanded him to carry out on all of them, and this was the cause of the Lord's, as it were, repenting of having made him king of Israel. And they must be confessed not only in general or in a lump, but distinctly; that is, their number as far as it can be stated, or saying more or less how many, when it cannot be stated with certainty. One does not fulfil the obligation by saying: I am a sinner, I have committed many sins. No, that is not enough; nor is saying, I am very proud, very lustful, or something similar. A venerable prelate of our time (whom I use a great deal on this subject, because I judge him one of those who have written best on it) says that in the India of Malabar a fruit is found that at first sight seems a single one, but on opening it three hundred are found inside it. Many times a man confesses one sin, but when it is well opened out it contains many. A lady will accuse herself of being very vain; this seems a single sin. But with this she says, or rather keeps quiet, that her whole God consists in being praised, looked at and courted; and that every day she rages with envy if she sees that another is looked at, praised or courted. How many more sins are contained in this word that she does not explain? That she misspends the time and money needed for her household in adorning herself lavishly, and even indecently, to be the object of public attention. I am vain: a Malabar fruit. Another accuses himself of being very fond of amusement, a great joker. See a single sin on the surface; but how many does it contain that he does not state distinctly? His amusement consists in going off to enjoy himself indecently away from home, without fulfilling his obligations in it. He is such a joker that he leaves no woman without insulting her with provocative words, impure touches, immodest games… but none of this is specified. Only: I am a joker; a Malabar fruit, in case the confessor lets it pass without searching it.

5. Sins must be told as they are in the conscience: the certain as certain, the doubtful as doubtful. Of these there are four kinds. The doubt may be, first, of fact: that is, when one doubts whether one has committed a sin. Second, of quality: when one knows one has committed it, but doubts whether it is mortal or venial. Third, of species: when one doubts whether the sin one has committed is against one virtue or another, for example whether it is against charity, against justice or against religion. Fourth, when one doubts whether one has confessed it or not. In all these doubts there is an obligation to confess the sin, specifying what one doubts. Even in the old law, which commanded lepers to present themselves to the priests to be separated from the people, it was ordered that on the mere doubt whether what a man had was leprosy or not, he should be sentenced to separation, because of the danger of infecting others, or of not being healed himself if in reality he was a leper. So the sinner must present himself to the priest, declaring his sins to him even when he is only in doubt about them, so that by the pardon he may be cleansed of the unclean stain, if perhaps he has contracted it.

6. Sins must be confessed not only clearly and distinctly, according to their number and species, but also with the circumstances that accompany them. Of these there are some that change the sin from one species to another. For example, stealing is a sin against the seventh commandment; but if one has stolen in a church, or something belonging to it, this, besides being against that precept, is also another sin against the virtue of religion. Fornication is a sin against the sixth commandment; but if it is with a married person, as David did, it will also be adultery; if with a relative, whether by blood like Amnon or by marriage like Herod, it will be incest; if with a person consecrated to God, it will be sacrilege. There are other circumstances that, without changing the sin into another species, aggravate it within the same one. For example, you have stolen; but you have stolen a thousand pesos: this is a graver sin than having stolen two hundred, though it is all theft. You have committed a sin on a feast day: it is graver, especially on the principal feasts, than on a working day. The circumstances that change the species must absolutely be confessed. It is not enough to say, I have had an immodest act with a woman: it is necessary to say, she was my sister, cousin or niece; she was a married woman; she was a nun, or had made a vow of chastity. Of those that only aggravate the sin within its own line, there is an obligation to confess those by which the gravity can be known, for example the amount stolen or something similar. For, as the Council of Trent says, medicine cannot cure what it does not know;

so the confessor, the spiritual physician, cannot give the fitting medicine if he is not told the symptoms, the disturbances or the height of the fever of the sin the penitent shows him. The Council itself seems to give all this to understand when it says: Those circumstances must be confessed that change the species of sins; for without them the penitents cannot set out the sins themselves entirely, nor can the judges of this Sacrament take cognisance of them, nor can they come to form an exact judgment of their gravity, nor impose on the penitents a penance proportioned to them. So the Council; and although it says nothing about the circumstances that aggravate, the obligation to confess them is inferred from the same reason it gives for requiring the confession of those that change the species. For the confessor must give a greater penance to one who stole a million than to one who stole four pesetas, and he could not do so if the penitent said only, Father, I accuse myself of having stolen grave matter, without specifying how much it was. This teaching, besides being safer, is more probable.

7. There is also an obligation to confess the proximate occasion in which one finds oneself. He who loves danger, says the Holy Spirit, will perish in it. To put oneself in danger is already a sin, because one wilfully loves what leads one into sin. That is why, when God banished Adam from paradise for having eaten of the forbidden tree, he placed an Angel with a sword in hand to guard not only the tree but the whole way that led to it. Man must abstain not only from what is forbidden by the law, but from all that can probably make him a transgressor; and so he must confess it if he does not. The habit of sinning must also be confessed, for the same reasons as the proximate occasion, because such a confession carries no sorrow or purpose of amendment. Sorrow is a detestation of the sin committed with the purpose of not committing it again. What detestation or hatred of sin has he, or what purpose of abhorring it, when he is continually committing it? If, then, it is a confession without sorrow, the confessor must know it so as not to invalidate the Sacrament. Other people's sins must be confessed: this does not mean that the husband should confess his wife's sins, the father his son's, etc.; no, but those sins that others have committed through our fault: as if one ordered someone to be killed, as David did with Uriah; if one advised a theft, as Jezebel did with Ahab; if one gave scandal by one's dress, words and actions. All this must be told, for one is guilty together with the others if they have sinned through one's fault. See very briefly explained what must be confessed for confession to be entire. Let us now see the chief cause why integrity is usually not kept in this Sacrament. It is shame, and I shall show it in the

Second Part

8. The confession of sins is a humbling and shameful thing; there is no doubt of it. Only the consideration of the countless goods that come to the soul through confession can make it easy to confess them entirely: such as the restoring to it of grace, with all the earlier merits it had lost by sin, as a prophet said; the beauty and comeliness the soul receives with confession, as David says; and the tranquillity, joy and gladness with which the soul finds itself when put in grace, that Lord who commands the sea and the wind calming it and bringing it back to peace from the fright and alarms that always go with a conscience troubled by sin, as the Holy Spirit says. So the Council of Trent explains itself in chapter 5 of session XIV. The devil, envious of our good, puts all his study into making Christians dumb in the confessional, so that they may not come to enjoy the beneficial fruits of an entire confession. He is a ravening wolf, said Chrysostom; and just as the wolf, when it seizes a sheep, first of all grips it by the throat, so that it may not call the shepherd with its bleating and he rescue it from that danger, so the devil, as soon as he has taken man captive by sin, puts on him the noose of shame, so that by his confession the confessor may not take him out of his power. This cunning of Satan is as old as man's sin. As soon as he had deceived Adam and made him disobedient to the law, he at once inspired him with shame at confessing his crime. God calls him in paradise: Where are you, Adam? as if stirring him to acknowledge his sin. But he, ashamed of the nakedness his crime had put him in, presented himself, yes, but covered with some fig leaves. See here a symbol of the ashamed sinner. The confessor calls him by the question he puts to him, so that he may confess all his sins; but the devil has

hindered him from showing himself clearly, putting certain pretexts or excuses before him, so that shame may not let him make his confession entire. Groundless pretexts, the devil's scarecrows; in the end, fig leaves. What are these on which the devil makes you found all your shame?

9. Ah! My sins are many and very ugly; I committed them secretly; how am I to show them now to a man who perhaps will spread them abroad, or at least I shall lose his esteem? See here in a few words the whole foundation on which we build the blushing or shame of confessing our sins entirely. We shall see briefly, then, how all are buildings founded on sand. Are your sins many? And how great is God's mercy to forgive them? David's, he said himself, were multiplied beyond the hairs of his head; yet he grieved for them, confessed them to the Lord, and the Lord gave him remission of them all. Lord, St. Peter asked Christ, how many times shall I forgive the sinner? Up to seven? I do not say to you only up to seven, the Saviour answered him, but up to seventy times seven: a number which, according to the holy Fathers, gives to understand that, even if sins are countless, the priest must forgive them. And if you do not confess them because they are many, will they be fewer next year?

10. But you say: besides being many, my sins are ugly and horrible. I suppose so, for there is none that is not; but it does not matter. Let them be idolatries like those of Manasseh: he confessed them, and they were forgiven him. Let them be denials of God: St. Peter had them, and having received pardon, was afterwards prince of the Apostles. Let them be adulteries like those of the Samaritan woman: Jesus Christ sees her repentance and absolves her. Let them be public scandals like those of Magdalene: yet the Saviour, at the sight of her sorrow, turns her into a saint. Let them be ugly: by confessing them they will become beautiful. St. Mary Magdalene herself appeared to another woman, now venerated on the altars, in a mantle all set with diamonds, and said to her: These are my sins, which by true repentance have been made beautiful in this way.

11. The sinner goes on with his excuses, saying: I sinned in secret; how am I now to confess my sins to a man? I believe your sins were hidden; for he who does evil, says the Gospel, flees the light. They are mysteries of iniquity, and every precaution seems too little to keep them from people's sight; the shadows of night served you to commit them, or the most hidden part of a house. But for this very reason you must confess them. There is no more effective means of hiding them for ever than to tell them to the confessor. Blessed are they, says David, whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. What happiness, my brethren: to confess one's sins and to cover or hide them are one and the same! So God allows it as a reward for the one who confesses them, and he even hides them from the sight of the devil. On the contrary, to keep them back in confession is to uncover them, the Lord permitting it as punishment for one's silence. Sarah laughed behind her mantle when an Angel announced to her that she would have a son, for it seemed a laughable thing to give birth at a hundred years old. The Angel asked her why she laughed, and she denied it out of shame; and for not confessing her laughter to an Angel of the Lord she became the laughing-stock of the people when a son was born to her nine months later, called Isaac, which means laughter. Ah! How many laughs, how many sins are hidden from the confessor, an angel of the Lord, who perhaps would have found a means to cover that fault; and after some months the Lord allows it to be found out, and those who were ashamed to tell them find themselves more ashamed!

12. But they are told to a man who can reveal them: so sinners reply. I answer that the one to whom they are told is a man who takes the place of God, and who for no reason, even at the risk of his reputation and even of his life, can tell even the very least venial sin you have confessed to him. I know less, said St. Augustine, what is confessed to me than what I am wholly ignorant of; for this I can ask about, but what I know through confession I cannot even talk about with the penitent himself unless he gives me leave. In the temple of Solomon the Lord commanded that there should be a lampstand with seven lights; but he also commanded that there should be a golden vessel full of water, so that the wicks might be cut with snuffers and at once put out, so that their smell might not offend. This is a symbol of confession. Let there be in the Church, God

seems to say, one who cuts off sins in the confessional; for this is the minister adorned with the gold of charity and the water of silence, so that they may be left dead there, and no one may catch the smell of the sins confessed.

13. But at least you will say: I shall lose my esteem and good name with the confessor. This is an error. Jesus Christ did not wish to entrust the ministry of confession to the Angels, say several Fathers of the Church, because, being already incapable of sin, they might be astonished at the guilty frailties of men. Let men, then, be the confessors: they are clothed with the same miseries as the penitents they hear; perhaps they will have committed more sins in number and gravity than the one they have at their feet, and before hearing your confession the confessor will have had to do the same with another priest. And are these to be astonished at your sins? No, my brethren: the confessor already knows by experience that the bramble can give only thorns, and that if Jesus Christ had not foreseen sins in the world, he would not have instituted the sacrament of Penance; for the Lord himself said: Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

14. Besides, how can you lose standing with the confessor? Rather, you gain his greatest esteem and regard. For before you confessed he looked on you indifferently, not knowing whether you were good or bad; but after you have confessed, he now sees in you angels who by God's mercy have come out of the unhappy state of sin into that of grace; you have broken the chains with which the enemy held you doubly subjugated by means of shame; you have come out of his hands victorious, and have happily fallen into God's. Lose? Ah, my brethren! I cannot explain to you in words expressive enough the joy a confessor feels when he sees a penitent vomit up the most horrible sins, whose poison had killed his poor soul. He looks on such a one with a holy envy, because he sees in him a soul in grace, who by his confession has filled all the Angels of heaven with joy, as the Gospel says. See, then, how frivolous are all the pretexts and excuses Satan puts before your eyes so that you may not see the light, making you dumb in confession so that you may not receive the immense goods bound up with it.

15. Who will there be, my God, in view of all this, who refuses to come with confidence to the tribunal of mercy to confess all his sins? Was I to profane with my sinful silence, out of groundless shame, a Sacrament you enriched with the price of your most holy blood? Was I to leave my soul unhealed so as not to uncover my hidden wounds to the physician of my soul? No, most loving Father: far from me so sacrilegious an irreverence. I shall confess all my sins, and you have promised to give me pardon for them. You are my Father, and through your ministers you will receive this prodigal of your kindnesses; you will have them put on me the robe of grace, which will mark me as your son for all eternity. Amen.

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[1] The printed margin gives Trent, Session XIV, chapter 5.

18. Fourth Sunday of Lent: On the Upbringing of Children

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 18, pp. 171–179. Gospel: John 6:1–15. Original preacher not named.

Accepit Jesus panes (John 6:11).

Jesus took the loaves.

The Gospel of this day is from the sixth chapter of St. John, and it reads thus:

1. "Jesus went over to the other side of the sea of Galilee, which is that of Tiberias, and a multitude of people followed him because they saw the miracles he did on the sick. And he went up a mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the day of the Pasch, which is the great feast of the Jews, was near. Having then lifted up his eyes and seen that a very great multitude of people was coming to him, he said to Philip: Where, or with what, can we buy enough bread to feed all these? But this he said to test his faith, for he knew very well what he was going to do. Philip answered him: Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be

enough to give each a little. Another of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to him: There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fishes; but what is this among so many people? Jesus then said to them: Make them sit down. There was much grass there, and about five thousand men sat down to eat. Jesus, then, took the loaves, and having given thanks to his Father God, distributed them to those who were seated, and also the two fishes, as much as they wanted. And when they were filled, he said to his disciples: Gather up the pieces that are left over, that they may not be lost. So they gathered them, and filled twelve baskets with the pieces left over after all had eaten. And those men, seeing the miracle Jesus had done, said: This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world. But Jesus, knowing that they were going to come to take him by force and make him king, fled again to the mountain alone." This is the Gospel.

2. The fourth precept or commandment of the law of God, which says, Honour your father and mother, also lays on parents the obligation of caring for their children. Parents, then, owe their children three things according to this precept, says the catechism of Christian doctrine: to feed them, to bring them up in the law of the Lord, and to give them examples of virtue. It is an obligation which, unfortunately, is seen to be largely abandoned by many Christians. Jesus Christ our Redeemer, whom God in his infinite love had sent into the world as the example and model of all virtues, today gives a living instruction to all fathers of families on how to fulfil the duties Religion lays on them with regard to the children the Lord has put in their care, and of whom they must give a strict account on the day of judgment. The Saviour, then, at the cost of a miracle, fed that multitude of children who followed him as a beneficent father; he instructed them with those words of eternal life that came from his mouth, without their having opened theirs for three days to ask for food, so enthralled were they by his doctrine; and he gave them an example of virtue by fleeing the worldly applause with which they wished to exalt him at the sight of his kindness and fatherly care. See, then, my aim this day. I shall show in the first part of my plática the obligation parents have towards their children; and in the second, that far from fulfilling it, they usually do the opposite of a good upbringing.

First Part

3. There are three duties, as we have explained, that parents owe their children according to the catechism: to support them, to instruct them, and to give them examples of virtue. Support. It is a strange thing to have to show parents their obligation to support their children, when even the most brutish beasts do it for theirs; and the hind, which as soon as she gives birth to her young flees and abandons them, is abhorred by the prophet Jeremiah. Parents, then, under pain of mortal sin, must feed their children while they cannot earn their living, and give them an employment, position or trade by which they can support themselves afterwards, at the same time taking care of their goods so that they may inherit them; for it is not the children, says St. Paul, who ought to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. Mothers are obliged, according to grave doctors, under mortal sin, to nurse at their breasts the offspring of their womb, when there is no reasonable cause that excuses them. Nature is driving them to it; otherwise it would have given them milk to feed them in vain. They have an example of this in Sarah, who nursed Isaac at her breasts; Rebecca, Jacob; and above all the Queen of heaven, most holy Mary, fed her most sweet Son, as the Church sings, with milk heaven provided her; for there was no cause by which her sacred breasts could have been filled otherwise. Parents must feed their children even if they are bad, because they do not cease to be children, however delinquent they may be, and are consequently entitled to be given what they need to live.

4. Upbringing. The standing of a true father, said the philosopher Aristotle, is not gained by begetting alone, but by a good upbringing and teaching. Parents who are content to bring their children into the world will indeed multiply the people, said Isaiah, but not the joy of their homeland. Good teaching gives the homeland pious priests to sanctify it, zealous magistrates to judge it, tireless farmers to feed it, honest merchants to enrich it, and fearless soldiers to defend it. So St. Jerome spoke. Among the Hebrews it was an unshakable practice that parents should instruct their children themselves. So we see that David called his own and said

to them: Come, children, hear me, and I will teach you the fear of God; that is: come, for I will teach you the laws of the Lord and the fear you must have of him if you transgress them. This upbringing must begin when they are very small, teaching them to open their eyes to the things of heaven before they can look at those of the world. So we read in Scripture that Susanna's parents taught her the law of Moses from when she was very young.

5. You must bring up yours according to the law of Jesus Christ. You must teach them the catechism of Christian doctrine, where they may learn the Creed, which contains the mysteries it is necessary to believe in order to be saved; the Our Father and the Hail Mary, which explain what we must ask for in view of our needs; the Commandments, in which all we must practise is set out; and the Sacraments, which justify us and give us grace according to the disposition with which we receive them. You must also instruct them in humility, in patience in hardships, and above all in having a docile and charitable heart towards their needy neighbours. They will be richer with this after your days than if you left them great estates. Good instruction was the riches St. Louis left his son Philip, St. Monica Augustine, the mother of the Maccabees her seven sons, and especially Tobit his son. Hear what, among other instructions, he said to him: Remember your God always, my son, and never consent to sin. Respect your mother; remember how many pains she has suffered for you… Try to be merciful, and give to the poor according to your means… Do not be impure, and, content with your own wife, do not go seeking another's… Let the wage of the labourer never sleep in your house… Do not allow pride to rule in your heart, for from it all evil had its beginning. What you would not have done to yourself, do not do to another. Ask counsel of the wise, and ask God to direct all your actions always.[1] These instructions of Tobit to his son must be your continual conversation with your families. This upbringing must be accompanied, if necessary, by punishment. Have you children? says the Holy Spirit; then chastise their loins, if they are bad, even while they are small.[2] They will grow up; and the tree that is not straightened while it is young always stays crooked. Because David did not punish Absalom's first crimes, Absalom went so far as to try to put his father to death.

6. Mothers, to whom the care of daughters chiefly belongs, must teach them the work proper to their sex, so that afterwards they may be worthy of praise, like the valiant woman of Scripture. Above all, they must renew in them the promises made at Baptism to renounce Satan and all his pomps; they must inspire them with modesty and retirement, and above all keep them away from the company and games of boys. Let the female sex always be together with its own sex, said St. Jerome; the girl must not know, or rather must fear, playing with boys. These, my brethren, are the maxims and teaching you must give your children. What satisfaction for a father if (like a gardener standing among the flowers he has grown) he can say to his children what Isaac said to Jacob: The smell that comes from you, my son, is like that of a field which the Lord has blessed! And if the father does not know how, or his occupations prevent him from teaching his children, what is he to do? Ah! He is not relieved of the obligation on that account. There are teachers, schools, parish priests: let him send them to these, says a council, and so they will learn, and they will teach others in their homes. Parents are gravely obliged to this.

7. Example. This is the chief and most effective instruction. Children, being unable to reflect, usually do what they notice with their eyes. Let the father and mother go ahead on the road of virtue, always fleeing vices, and the children and household will follow them. When David wished to go out with his household, fleeing from a persecution, he went out first, and all followed him. Vain is all instruction by word, vain the voices of preachers, vain all the decrees of authority, if parents, who must give example, think nothing of doing in their children's presence actions contrary to a good upbringing. See, St. Paul said to his disciple Timothy, that for the divine word you sow among those in your charge to bear fruit, you must set yourself up as the example and model of all good works.

8. So father and mother must teach by their conduct what they have told their children by word that they must observe. All their members must edify their family. Their eyes must never look at vanity or impurity; their

ears must not permit conversations contrary to the Lord's law; their lips must not utter lies, nor impurity, nor obscenity, nor backbiting; their hands… ah, works are the chief Christian lesson. All the actions of fathers of families must be pure, edifying, holy; and even those permitted them by their state they must hide from the sight and hearing of their children, so that they may never learn what they ought always not to know. The force of example for imitation is great. History tells that a monkey, whose instinct is to imitate everything it sees done, once saw a mother undress a baby beside the fire, wash it in hot water, dress it again and put it in the cradle. The monkey, finding itself alone, took the baby, unwrapped it, and to wash it put it into a cauldron of boiling water; the child died, as was to be expected, from such a washing. See an action that in the mother was just and beneficial; but the same done by the monkey killed that infant. Children are monkeys for imitating, and an action that in their parents may be virtuous because of their state, seen and done by their children, will cause the death of their souls. Married people can understand me. Your obligation is great, fathers of families; but do you fulfil it? Let us see it in the

Second Part

9. Support, upbringing and example: these, we have said, are the three special duties parents owe their children; but this indispensable obligation we see, unfortunately, broken by most men. Let us speak with some distinction.

10. Support. Although parents usually fulfil this duty, driven by nature itself, there are still offenders in this matter. Those mothers who, content to have brought forth their children, hand them over without necessity to a wet nurse to suckle them, are gravely culpable, exposing the fruit of their womb to drink in with the milk countless bodily ailments, and infallibly the inclinations to vice of the one who feeds them. What a responsibility! Those parents who, through negligence or malice, do not set their children from childhood to learn a trade or craft able to feed them afterwards by the sweat of their brow, leaving them all day wandering the streets, learning or teaching depraved habits: to these, besides the sin they commit in the presence of God, the homeland owes a multitude of idlers, thieves, disturbers of the peace, and at the least troublesome beggars; and the penal garrisons and scaffolds owe them countless convicts, fruits of idleness. Our towns are full of such parents.

11. Upbringing. How many parents apply themselves with care to teaching their children the rudiments of Religion, handing them over to a careful teacher if they themselves have not the knowledge or means to teach them? Does that father fulfil this obligation who, far from instructing his children in Christian doctrine, does not even teach them to make the sign of the cross? The one who not only does not exhort them to peace and the forgiveness of injuries, but on the contrary provokes his children to anger, against what St. Paul commands, and, when someone has wronged them, often tells them: Take a stone, break his head, etc.? The one who trains them from childhood in unlawful dealings and trading, so that they may get rich at little cost? The one who sends his children to steal their neighbour's goods? Ah, my God! What punishment these parents make themselves worthy of! The Israelites were two hundred and fifteen years captive in Egypt because Jacob had sent his sons there to buy wheat. If this lawful journey brought so many evils, how many do those deserve who send their children into the fields and houses not to buy but to steal? Will that mother fulfil the precept of Christian doctrine who, besides not teaching her daughters the obligations of Religion and of their sex, straightway imbues them with the maxims of a sinful world, having them learn to sing, to dance, and to respond fondly to the advances of their admirers? That mother (what a pity!) who, even when the girl has no discernment, already dresses her, or rather undresses her, according to the rules of fashion, so that she lets us know what fruits of indecency she will bear later, when she shows such impure flowers in her first days? That mother (what horror!) who is her daughter's procuress, putting her honour and her body up for sale, the daughter earning by obscenities so that her mother may enjoy all her whims? Do these parents give their children the upbringing they owe them? We ought to answer this question with the tears of

Religion and of the State!

12. One of the duties of upbringing is the parents' watchfulness over their children's conduct. So we know that Jacob sent Joseph, his favourite son, to where his brothers were keeping the flocks, charging him to see what they were doing and whom they were keeping company with. Is there this watchfulness in fathers of families today? Does anyone find out where that son or daughter goes when he or she leaves the house? Does anyone examine what that young man is doing who is in secret with the daughter? None of this. As a rule, parents, says St. Jerome, are the last to know the evils of their house; the neighbourhood is already telling the vices of the wife and children, and they still do not know them. The son goes where he likes, the daughter speaks alone with whom she pleases, and the parents see it and say nothing. Sir, they say, this man who is alone with my daughter intends to marry her. Well then, when he marries let him do it. You will not let someone pick the grapes of your vineyard who is going to buy it the following year: apply the comparison.

13. Example. The parents of our century must bear in mind that the first liquor put into a jar always keeps its smell in it; and so, if what children see their parents do in their early years is bad, that is what they usually do all their lives. The Wise Man said it: The young man, he said, the young man who went by bad ways will not leave them even when he is old. According to this rule, what will become later of the son of that gentleman who sees nothing in his father but attachment to money, misuse of his goods, hardness towards the poor, and debts to others left unpaid? The child will see it, learn it and do it always. The son of that merchant who at his father's side sees nothing but usury, monopolies, one weight and measure for giving and another for receiving: what will this child do? He sees it, learns it, and will do so when he is grown. The son of that day labourer who sees nothing in his father but a tongue of hell, ill-treatment of his wife, and who on feast days spends in drinking bouts what he has earned in the week: what will this child do? He will see it, hear it, do it then, and afterwards all his life. The daughter of that woman who sees nothing in her mother but continual idleness, animal greed, and whispering in a corner with a man the Church has not given her: what will that girl do? Let it suffice to say with St. Ambrose: What is a daughter to learn from an adulterous mother but the ruin of her modesty? What is certain is that we learn the Castilian tongue and not Greek, because that is the one we have heard spoken. So if children hear oaths, blasphemies and backbiting, if they see scandals, thefts and lewdness, that is what they will speak and do; and if we complain of them, their parents will say with Quintilian: We taught them, they learned it from us.

14. What a charge, fathers of families! What an account you will have to give the just Judge of our souls for this deposit he entrusted to your care! What punishment you can expect for your carelessness, bad upbringing and example, when the Lord has promised bad parents to stretch out the scourge of his severity to them and to their fourth generation! What laments they will utter against you from the abyss to which you have brought them by your bad upbringing, finding themselves because of it amid the greatest torments! Even in this world they will complain of you at the sight of the calamities they suffer, which spring from a bad upbringing. St. Bernard relates that when they were about to hang a young Roman, he asked the authorities to let him say goodbye to his father; and when this was granted him, as he embraced him he bit off his nose, saying: You, father, are the one who hangs me, you kill me; for because you did not bring me up well and correct my crimes, I have come through them to this shameful execution.

15. O my God! You are the only one who can remedy the fatal effects of a sinful upbringing, by inspiring fathers of families to fulfil their respective obligations. Make them understand the wrong they do their own children, leading them to unhappiness and even to hell; the wrong they do the Angels, depriving them of companions they would have had in glory; and most holy Mary, who, having adopted them as her children, has them taken from her again and handed over to the devil. And what more? Make them see the injury they commit, by the bad upbringing of their children, against your own Son Jesus, who suffered a shameful death to make them your children, while their parents make them children of Satan again. Give them light to know their error, grace to correct it, and the reward of their amendment in glory. Amen.

[1] Tob. 4 (the printed margin gives chapter 4), abridged.

[2] The printed margin gives Sir. 30 (compare Sir. 30:12). Eph. 6:4.

19. Passion Sunday: On Respect for the Church

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 19, pp. 180–187. Gospel: John 8:46–59. Original preacher not named.

Tulerunt lapides ut jacerent in eum (John 8:59).

They took up stones to cast at him.

The Gospel of this day is from the eighth chapter of St. John, and it reads thus:

1. “Which of you (Jesus asks the Jews) shall convict me of sin? If I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me? He who is of God hears his words; therefore you do not hear them, because you are not of God. The Jews then answered and said to him: Do we not say well that you are a Samaritan and are possessed by the devil? Jesus answered: I am not possessed by the devil, but I give due honour to my Father, and you have dishonoured me; but as man I do not seek my own glory. There is one who seeks it and judges. Amen, amen, I say to you: If anyone keeps my word, he shall never see death. Now we know well that you are possessed by the devil. Abraham died, and the Prophets died, and you say: He who keeps my word shall never taste death? Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died, and the Prophets, who also died? Whom do you make yourself? Jesus answered: If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say that he is your God, and you do not know him; but I know him, and if I said that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I know him, and I keep his word. Abraham your father longed eagerly to see my day, that is, the day I came into the world; he saw it by faith and was filled with joy. The Jews said to him: You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham? Jesus answered them: Amen, amen, I say to you: Before Abraham was, I am. Then they took up stones to throw at him; and Jesus, making himself invisible to their eyes, went out of the temple.” This is the Gospel.

2. What is this, my brethren? The Jews wish to throw stones at Jesus in the temple? Stones, not only material ones to wound his most sacred body, but also spiritual ones, insulting him, blaspheming his name, and losing the reverence due to so supreme a Majesty. Would that the stoners of the sanctuary had ended with the Jews! That of Jerusalem was without doubt worthy of respect, because it was the stage of the sacrificial victims and the place chosen by the Lord for paying him the respect due to him. But it was only a figure of those which were to be built under the law of grace, and so Jesus Christ himself had already foretold its destruction. Even so, he punishes the faults the Jews committed in it against God, and abandons them, leaving it. What more terrible punishment? But ah, to stone God in our churches with profanations, irreverences, little respect for that sacred place where Jesus our Redeemer himself is really present, though under the sacramental species! This profanation is much more deserving of God’s threats, punishments and abandonment than those of the temple of Jerusalem. Veneration of churches is commanded us under the virtue of religion, and there is so little knowledge of their excellence and dignity that it has seemed fitting to me to speak on this subject, in my judgment one of the most important. I shall show in the first part of my plática what a church is; and in the second, how worthy churches are of our respect, and consequently how deserving of punishment their profanation and irreverence.

First Part

3. Although the whole world is God’s and the whole universe his palace, yet, says my Angelic master, the temple, which is commonly called a church, is properly his house. Everywhere the Divinity shows signs of being present, we must pay him honour, render him our homage and avoid offending him. In this sense the whole universe is an august temple of the Lord. Men under the natural law had no other; but they did not on

that account fail to adore God and offer him their hearts. They saw the sun, the stars, the sea, the earth full of precious things, and all this was for them a secret voice that said to them: Here is God, creating and preserving everything; and moved by gratitude they offered him a contrite and humbled heart at the foot of an altar they made of earth. But it came about that men grew corrupt, and scarcely knew God any longer by the works he did on our behalf; and for them to know and adore him, it seems it was necessary that God himself, through the ministry of the Angels, should appear to them, speak to them with intelligible words, and make his orders known to them. The places where God made these appearances men at once consecrated, setting up there altars that were no more than a heap of stones, sometimes sprinkled with oil, a symbol of the Lord's graces. So did Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and many others.

4. But God wished to have a house for himself, where the divine Majesty might be venerated with certain ceremonies that would quicken men's faith and make a show of the faith they professed. Moses in his written law had already made some ordinances about it, but there was as yet no temple: the ark of the Covenant, the object of Jewish veneration, travelled about, perhaps in the open. The Lord, then, inspired some just men to build a sanctuary, and David attempted it and even gathered an immense stock of materials, ashamed that while he dwelt in a sumptuous palace God should have no house of his own. Death prevented him from carrying it out, and Solomon his son built it with the greatest magnificence in Jerusalem, so that the Lord whom the heavens and earth cannot contain should be, as it were, enclosed in that sacred place. This is what is called the temple of Solomon: the first, the richest and most venerable. All the Jews went to it, at least at the solemnity of the Pasch; for the Lord told Solomon that there his eyes would be open and his ears attentive to all who called on him there in their needs, and that he would accept only the victims and sacrifices offered him there. But ah, with what pomp of ceremonies the supreme Majesty was made to be respected there! Three walls separated the people from the inner tabernacle, and into the third, where the ark of the Covenant stood, only the high priest entered, and that once a year, to offer sacrifices for his sins and those of the people. So the venerable bearing of the high priest, the silence of the Levites, the composure of the people, the separation of men and women and the solemnity of the holocausts caused such respect and even fear in the Jews that more than once they would say with Jacob: Oh, how terrible is this place! This is the house of God and the gate of heaven.

5. It was the profanation of this temple of Solomon, then, that so angered Jesus Christ today and made him abandon it, depriving the people of his favours. But soon, in the fullness of time, with the passion and death of Jesus Christ, all the ceremonial of the old law began to lose its value, so that a more spiritual and devout one might take its place; and from then on these second temples which we enjoy began to be built. In the early Church, as the pagan emperors persecuted all Christians to the death, these had no public churches: they hid in caves, and mostly in the houses of the faithful themselves; they all gathered, celebrated the holy sacrifice of the Mass, received the Sacraments, and heard the word of God proclaimed by its ministers. But all this was done without pomp or magnificent ceremonies, such as began to be carried out when the Church began to enjoy peace and quiet. This peace began when the pagan emperor Constantine the Great was converted to our Religion. This most religious Monarch built magnificent churches throughout his dominions in honour of the true God, for the worship of Jesus Christ, his most loving Mother and the other Saints; and even the very temples where the pagans had adored the devil in their idols were, once the idols were destroyed and the sites purified, dedicated to the Catholic religion.

6. These, then, are our churches: they are sacred fortresses, palaces where the immortal King of the ages dwells in a special way. St. Gregory Nazianzen said: Here is where God receives the vows and offerings of his children; here is where he hears the prayers of the faithful most particularly: Where two or three are gathered together in my name, said Jesus Christ, there am I in the midst of them.[1] So that, just as if you go to pay a creditor a single coin, and it is not genuine or is doubtful, they refuse it; but mixed with others that are genuine, it usually passes for the value of the rest; so the prayer of an individual, if it is weak, lukewarm, not

genuine, God does not heed; but made in church in company with those of other fervent souls, it takes on their value and is heeded. In short, these churches are the stage of our sanctification, and, as David says in prophecy: God himself, who has his throne in heaven, dwells in his holy temple. How worthy, then, are our sanctuaries of the veneration and respect of men? How deserving of punishment will their profaners be? I shall answer these questions in the

Second Part

7. If the sanctuary of Jerusalem was so worthy of respect, and the act of stoning him there so angered the Saviour, how much more so are the churches of the law of grace, which are the reality of what that one prefigured? Ah, let us consider what each of them is. What did the temple of Jerusalem contain? What was done in it? The whole reason Solomon gave the Jews to stir them to venerate it was to tell them that the glory of the Lord was there. This consisted in a cloud formed of dense smoke, from which the Lord spoke to them. In our churches there is not the glory of the Lord, but the very Lord of glory, not visible but hidden under the sacred species of bread and wine. In that temple it was the Angels who carried up to heaven the prayers of the just, as St. Raphael told Tobias; but here Jesus Christ himself is the offering and the offerer, and is praying for us to reconcile us with his eternal Father. That temple looked like a slaughterhouse, say the holy Fathers, for in the sacrifices performed cattle were slain, birds burned, and the blood of the victims stained the whole floor. Here the victim offered, in the only sacrifice there is, which is the Mass, is the living Lamb of God; and if he is dead, it is only in representation, for he is alive and giving life to the one who receives him. There is no blood in our churches but that of a God-Man, which, shed on Calvary over our heads, freed us from the sword of the destroyer. In short, the most precious thing the temple of Jerusalem contained was the holy ark, in which were the rod of Aaron, the tables of the law Moses received from God on Mount Sinai, and a little of the manna that fell in the desert, kept in an urn.

8. But let us speak plainly. What is there in our churches that is not more worthy of our attention? Here are those baptismal fonts where, better than Naaman the Syrian in the Jordan, we are cleansed of the leprosy of original sin. Here are those holy oils, which either strengthen us in Baptism and Confirmation or wipe out the remains of our sins in Extreme Unction. Here are these pulpits, where the ministers of the Gospel, or rather God through them, teach us the straight road to obtain our salvation. Here are those confessionals, where Jesus Christ, through the priests, receives us with love and forgives our offences by absolution. Finally, here is that venerable tabernacle which contains, not the rod of Aaron, but the Lord who brought us out of the power of the infernal Pharaoh; not the tables of the law, but the Lawgiver himself, our master; not the manna, but the living Bread that came down from heaven; and this is the tabernacle of God with men, which he chose so as to dwell with us until the end of the ages.

9. All this, my brethren, must stir up in us a spirit of devotion in these holy places: composure in our actions, reverent attention to the sacred mysteries celebrated there, silence, prayer and the other virtues proper to the house of God. But ah, the idea of our sanctuaries no longer exists. What irreverences are seen in these houses, to which, according to David, holiness belongs! What conversations! What glances! What laughter! What things we see every day in the house of prayer! Look, Ezekiel, God said to this Prophet when in spirit he brought him to the temple of Jerusalem to observe the disorders the children of Israel were committing there; look: does it seem a small offence to you, what these men commit, who, not content with filling the earth with iniquity, come to insult me within my very house? Then I will punish them, I will turn my back on them, and when in their needs they implore my favour I will be deaf to the sound of their cries.

10. Do you hear God’s threats, gentlemen? Then expect their fulfilment, though I think you are already experiencing it: plague, famine, drought, poverty and other scourges are often effects of the profanation of churches. Ladies are seen in them who come more to receive the incense due to the supreme King than to show God their miseries. Others, while the priest is asking mercy for their souls, are in the corners insulting

the One whom they ought to appease by their sorrow. Others show such impatience at the length of the divine offices that they count the minutes the Mass lasts, complaining of the gravity and slowness of a devout minister and praising the scandalous haste of another. There are also, as Jeremiah said, those who put stumbling blocks to modesty in the very house where the name of the Lord is invoked; and so we say that there are persons who in church are feeding lust through their eyes, and who with signs, words or little notes carry on their illicit love affairs there, doing perhaps in church what in their own home a careful father or a watchful husband would try to prevent.

11. What is this? Do you know, gentlemen, where you are going when you enter the church? Do not be surprised at this question. When the ancient pagans went to the temple of their idols, one of their priests stood at the door and said in a loud voice: Do you know where you are going? We are going, they said, to the house of our gods. Do you know what you are going there for? We know, they said, that we are going to thank them for the benefits they bestow on us and to ask their help in our needs. With this thought they entered with the greatest composure. Some took off their shoes so as not to soil the floor; others tied their hands to show that they made themselves incapable of irreverence; others let a hand that held a torch be burned, as happened to a page of Alexander the Great, so as not to interrupt the solemnity of the sacrifices with their cries. This was done by those who adored a cat or a dog as god, and all of them the devil. If Christians, on entering our churches, reflected that they go there to weep for their sins, and that if God does not forgive them they must suffer an eternal fire; that they go there to pay due homage to a God who created them and redeemed them at the cost of his most precious blood; that they go there to ask for water for their fields, fair weather in storms so that their crops are not lost, and health for the sick, so that death may not snatch away the father or husband who must support them; if they considered… But let us not weary ourselves. All this is erased from men's memory, and people go to church just as to the square, the promenade, a social gathering or a gaming house. Oh, how much evil your enemies do, says Scripture, in the holy place! It seems, Lord, that those who hate your name glory in insulting you in the midst of the solemnities![1] Of what punishment, then, is the profaner of our churches not deserving? It is little to be scourged by Angels, as Heliodorus was for trying to rob the treasury of the temple. Little to lose his estate and even his life, like King Belshazzar, for having put the sacred vessels to profane use. Little to be punished by God, as Jesus Christ did in the temple, scourging those who made the holy temple of God a house of commerce and trade. All this is little for the Christians who throw stones at Jesus Christ in his own house with irreverences and profanations; for those men sinned against a temple of the old law, which was a shadow of ours; but since ours are more worthy of esteem, the profanation of them is more criminal. This was my subject.

12. My God, just God, I fear the rigours of your wrath when I consider the little respect, veneration and composure I have shown until now in your holy temple, without considering that in it I was baptised, I received the forgiveness of my sins, and you fed me with your own flesh and blood; and above all, that it is your house, the place you have chosen to be honoured and venerated in a special way. From now on I promise, my God, with David, that I will enter your house with the Christian spirit that befits it; I will adore you in your holy temple with the reverence it deserves; but I will do it all with fear of offending you. So, in the very place where I have offended you so much, I shall find pardon, grace and glory. Amen.

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[2] Matt. 18:20 (the printed margin gives Matt. 18).

[1] Ps. 73 (Vulgate numbering; Ps. 74:3–4 in modern Bibles).

20. Palm Sunday: On the Entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, and the Fickleness of This World's Glories

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 20, pp. 188–193. Gospel: Matt. 21:1–9. Original preacher not named.

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini (Matt. 21:9).

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

The Gospel of this day is from the twenty-first chapter of St. Matthew, and it reads thus:

1. “When Jesus and his disciples drew near to Jerusalem and had come in sight of Bethphage, a village near the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them: Go into that village opposite you, and at once you will find a she-ass tied, and her colt with her; untie her and bring her to me; and if anyone says anything to you, tell him: The Lord has need of them, and at once he will let you bring them. Now all this was done that the word of the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: Tell Jerusalem, the daughter of Sion: Behold your King, who comes to you full of meekness, sitting upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of one used to the yoke. And the disciples went and did as Jesus had commanded them. And they brought the ass and the colt, and laid their garments on them, and made him sit on them. A great multitude of people also spread their garments on the road; others cut branches from the trees and strewed them on the road by which he passed. And all, both those who went before him and those who followed, cried out: Hosanna, that is, salvation and glory, to the Son of David: blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest heavens.” This is the Gospel.

2. What is this, my brethren? Is this Gospel read today in church, when the solemn celebration of the passion of Jesus Christ begins? Is the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem proclaimed and represented by the procession just held, and in a little while an exact account will be given of the Saviour’s arrest, his infamous accusations, his scourging, his thorns, his agony, his death and even his burial? What connection has such triumph with such infamy? Indeed, everything seems to go together, the glories of Jesus and his torments. It all happened within four days: today they receive him with magnificence and pomp, and then they crucify him on a tree. This is where all the glories of the world end. The present solemnity reminds us of the great mysteries of the entry of Jesus into the holy city, and of how fickle the world is in the honours it pays. See what I mean to persuade you of in this short plática, joining what the Church wisely joins. I shall uncover the mysteries contained in this entry of Jesus: first part. The fickleness of all the glory of the world: second part.

First Part

3. Jesus Christ did nothing that was not full of mystery, and in today’s ceremony a manifestation of the purpose of his divine mission is seen most clearly. The Saviour looks for a donkey to solemnise his entry into Jerusalem, the first time he presented himself publicly there as the Messiah. The Prince of eternity, the Only-begotten of the Father, on a donkey! To enter Rome in triumph, Aurelian had his chariot drawn by four stags; Mark Antony ordered that he be drawn by many lions, and forty elephants drew the triumphal car of Julius Caesar. That, yes; but does Jesus Christ use donkeys to show his greatness? So it was fitting: all this was full of mystery. Those Princes were going to make a display of their sovereignty and their victories, showing in the qualities of the beasts that drew them the means they had used to triumph over their adversaries. Jesus Christ came to conquer our enemies not with speed, strength and cunning, but with humility and patience; and so he uses animals that signify these. He goes to conquer, not with the gilded armour of Saul, but with the sling and stones, as the shepherd he was of our souls.

4. Next comes the Hebrews’ spreading of their cloaks and garments on the ground where the Saviour was to pass. So did those who attended Jehu when he was anointed king of Israel, an action performed only for kings; and so Plutarch was surprised that it was done for Cato of Utica. They do this for Jesus, whom with their own voices they proclaimed Son of David and holy King of Israel. And they do even more. They acknowledge him as King and Emperor of the heavens, calling him blessed; for he was the one who came in the name of the Lord, that is, he was the Son of God, who having his throne in the heights of heaven (Hosanna) was true God. That is why the covering with their cloaks of the ground he trod is not without

mystery. When the princes of the world are received, they are placed under a canopy, but the streets are not usually carpeted; that is, they cover the sky, to which their dominion does not reach, and leave uncovered the earth, which is the only thing their empire extends to. For Jesus Christ they cover the earth, because his kingdom, as he himself said, was not of this world, and leave heaven uncovered for him, which is the chief throne of his majesty and sovereignty.

5. The third thing the people of Jerusalem do is take in their hands branches of palm, olive and other trees to acclaim the Redeemer at his reception. So we read that the provinces received Holofernes as a king when, in the name of Nebuchadnezzar, he entered to take possession of them; so Alexander the Great when he entered Babylon; in Italy the great Pompey; and in Jerusalem itself King Agrippa. So too they acclaim Jesus Christ. The palm is a sign of victory, and as he came to conquer the world, death and the devil, they rightly present him the palms that announce his victory; and palms carried not by the Lord in his hands but by men, because, as today's Gospel says, he comes for us, *venit tibi*; and so it is we who must carry the palm, since all his victories turn to our profit. They receive him with olive branches, very rightly and justly, because, like the dove from Noah's ark, he brings the olive branch that announces the peace of the whole universe, and that the terrible waters of divine justice have now ceased, God having been reconciled with men by the blood of his Only-begotten, as the Apostle says.[1] All, in short, was lively acclamation and applause at this reception so full of mysteries. And how long did this rejoicing and glory of the Lord last? Not at all. As long as all the glory of the world lasts, as you will now see.

Second Part

6. St. Bernard, in the second sermon he wrote on the present solemnity, cannot cease marvelling at what happens in a single week in the city of Jerusalem. Today they receive Jesus amid the greatest acclamations, and that same night there was no one to give him lodging, and he had to withdraw to a neighbouring village. Today they welcome him as king, and on Friday they lead him to a shameful execution as an evildoer. Today they honour him with others' garments, and soon they shamefully strip him of his own. Today they cast branches at his feet, and shortly they put thorns on his head. Today they acclaim him as son of David, heir to his kingdom, and the next moment they kill him because he said he was a king. Oh, what changes are these! What connection has saying, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, with Crucify him, crucify him? What agreement between calling him king of Israel and crying, We have no king but Caesar? What union between green branches and dry thorns, flowers and the cross? No other answer can be given to this but that it is all a mystery that instructs and teaches us. The same men, after having praised, honoured and exalted Jesus, a short time later and in the same place bring him low, insult him and crucify him, to show that everything in the world passes with this speed.

7. What is the world? David compares it to the great sea, *hoc mare magnum*: a sea which, besides the bitterness of its waters, proclaims the fickleness of its waves, lifting up now what in a moment they plunge into the abyss. St. Jerome says that it is a cartwheel which, if the spoke of pleasure and honour puts us today at the greatest height, with half a turn, made in a moment, casts us down into the mud of misfortune. Today Alcibiades is seen adorned with display, beauty and riches; tomorrow will be the day of his trial, his exile and dishonour. Today Polycrates enjoys a fortune so favourable that he seems to unite all power in himself; tomorrow he will be pursued by a rival and crucified on a mountain height. Today Vitellius, \[Jacilo\], Nero and Numerian will enjoy the throne and receive homage from their subjects; tomorrow the sceptre will fall from their hands in disgrace, and they will taste infamy and ignominy. What fickleness! Well may Solomon say that nothing is lasting under the sun. So said Solomon, who was the richest, the wisest, the most exalted, and who enjoyed every delight, as he says he denied his heart and eyes no pleasure they craved; and in the end he concludes: All is vanity, all fickleness: *Omnia vanitas*.

8. St. John sums up all the glory of the world in only three goods, which are the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life: that is, carnal delights, riches and offices. What is all this? Vanity, fickleness. Sensual delights vanish like smoke, and a Jezebel, full of beauty, was soon seen eaten by dogs. Riches disappear, not only in the grave (where their owners, says Scripture, will open their hands and find nothing), but even in this very life; and we see a great captain who had amassed treasure begging alms. Offices… ah, offices, which are sometimes taken up to oppress some poor wretch, are will-o'-the-wisps, wandering stars. I saw a wicked man, said David, raised above the cedars of Lebanon; I passed by again, and I did not even see the place where he had stood. Countless examples could be brought to confirm this, but brevity prevents it. I only say: cast a glance over these recent times. How many have we seen in them in high posts, where they presented themselves to us as idols to whom we were to pay adoration, who tried to subjugate every man, what am I saying? God himself in his Religion and his ministers? And where are they? What has become of their honours? Ah! The tenderness of my heart does not allow me to display their hardships, their misery, their disgrace, their fears, their punishments. What more? Not even the seat they occupied in the exercise of their offices exists any longer, since those offices no longer exist. Ah, vain world, fickle world! If only you let your goods be enjoyed without anxiety for the little time they can be enjoyed, which is the very short and brief time of life; but you do not do so. There is no one who does not mix his bread with vinegar, as Ruth did in Boaz's field. There is no glory of the world that does not have some bitterness joined to it at the same time. The end of joy, says the Wise Man, is mourning and sorrow. Enough.

9. Catholics: if Jesus Christ today enters the earthly Jerusalem, this Easter he will enter, in the Sacrament, the mystical Jerusalem of your soul. How do you mean to receive him? Imitate the people of Jerusalem: know and meditate well who it is that comes to you. They knew that he was their King, the son of David. You, see that he is the Son of the eternal Father in body, soul and divinity. Receive him by casting the old man, which is your sins, at the feet of the priest, as they cast their cloaks and garments at the feet of the most holy High Priest of the ages. Receive him with the variety of all the virtues signified by the different flowers and branches with which the Jews went out to receive him. But do not imitate them in fickleness and ingratitude. They crucified on Friday the one they had received with applause on Sunday. Take care that you do not crucify him again with new sins, after having had the great, undeserved happiness of receiving him in holy communion. Embrace constantly in your heart the peaceful King who reigns in your soul; the heavenly Physician who comes to heal all your ailments; the divine Master who comes to teach you the way of truth; the Giver of gifts who comes to enrich you with his grace; the eternal Rewarder who will give you glory. Amen.

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[1] Col. 1:20 (the printed margin gives Col. 1).

21. Easter Sunday: On the Mystery

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 21, pp. 194–202. Gospel: Mark 16:1–7. Original preacher not named.

Surrexit, non est hic (Mark 16:6).

He has risen, he is not here.

The Gospel of this day is from the sixteenth chapter of St. Mark, and it reads thus:

1. "When the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome prepared the spices they had bought, to go and anoint Jesus. And setting out on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the tomb, the sun having already risen. And they said to one another: Who will roll away for us the stone that covers the tomb? For it was very great. But looking, they saw the stone rolled back and set aside. And entering the tomb, they saw an Angel in the form of a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a white robe, and they were amazed and astonished. He says to them: Do not be frightened. You

are seeking Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. But go and tell his disciples, and especially Peter, that he goes before you into Galilee, as he told you." This is the Gospel.

2. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. So sings the Church our mother throughout this paschal time. This is the day on which Jesus Christ completed the work of his divine mission. Now indeed the justice of God will be satisfied, for his only-begotten Son has paid superabundantly the debt we had contracted by the sin of Adam. Arrest, bonds, unjust accusations, scourges, thorns and cross: all these went to make up the sacred balm that healed our wounds. Jesus died, he who it was fitting should die so that the whole people might be saved. But if Christ died for our offences, he rose again for our justification, says St. Paul. He rose, and rose truly. This is the great mystery we celebrate this day: a day of joy, of delight and of universal gladness. This is the mystery we are commanded to believe in the second part of the fifth article of the Creed, which says: The third day he rose again from the dead. These few words give us much moral instruction, showing us not only the true resurrection of the Saviour, but the spiritual resurrection that God requires of sinners dead through sin, of which Jesus gives us the model in his own. But so as to spend today only in contemplating this august mystery, I shall leave for the next plática the explanation of how we must rise to the life of grace. My subject for this day will be: What are we commanded to believe in this fifth article of the Creed? I shall say it in the first part. What should our joy be at the Lord's resurrection? I shall say it in the second.

First Part

3. What do these words mean: The third day he rose again from the dead? They mean that our most lovable Saviour, who came into the world and became man for us and for our salvation and remedy; who was made the reproach of the world and the scorn of the rabble; who suffered and died as painfully as shamefully; and whose body, taken down from the cross, was laid in the tomb, while his blessed soul went down to hell to strike terror into the rebel spirits and bring out the souls of the just who were held there; this same one, on the third day after his death, rose again: that is, his most holy soul was united again to his body, taking back everything that belonged to it, as theologians assert, guided by the teaching of St. John Chrysostom. Everything proper to the Lord's body was united to it. And although it is true that in many churches some relics of the passion, apparently stained with blood, are exposed for the veneration of the faithful, this is not the Saviour's own blood, but certain marks it left, which, keeping their red colour, look like blood to our eyes. To these relics is given the adoration of latria that is given to the humanity of Jesus Christ because of its hypostatic union with the eternal Word; not because they are now united to it, but because of the physical contact they had with that sacred body, just as the cross, the thorns and the other instruments of the most holy passion are adored in the same way.

4. With the divine soul of Jesus united to his body in the resurrection, who can sufficiently explain the beauty and brightness it would give it? The holy Fathers show it by a comparison. When the sun reaches its setting, it often strikes with its rays a dark, gloomy, sombre cloud; but at once the cloud loses all its ugliness and is clothed with beauty and splendour, very like the sun itself. So the body of Jesus Christ, dead in the tomb, was a mass of wounds and disfigurement: the Jews had left him like a leper. There was no sound part in him from foot to head, as a prophet foretold; in short, this divine Nazarite had been left without the whiteness and beauty with which he had been formed; and he who was white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands, was without beauty or comeliness, and there was no one who could recognise him, as Isaiah said. But his most blessed soul enters that body, the divine Sun of justice strikes with its rays the dark cloud of the shattered body, and at once all its dreadful disfigurement flees, transformed into the greatest beauty and splendour. The endowments of a glorified body, which had been suspended during the Saviour's life by a miracle of Omnipotence, were revealed as soon as he was raised, and he appeared impassible, agile, subtle and as

resplendent as the sun. This dazzled the soldiers guarding the tomb, and they could not fail to recognise the dignity of the one they had judged an impostor.

5. This resurrection, says the Creed, was on the third day. The Lord was dead from three in the afternoon on Friday until early on Sunday morning. Jesus Christ had foretold it when he said to the Jews: Destroy this temple, that is, my body, and in three days I will build it up again; and again when, asked for signs of his divine mission, he said: No sign shall be given you but that of the prophet Jonah; for as he was three days and nights in the belly of the whale, so the Son of Man will be that long in the tomb. Jesus Christ was not dead three whole days and nights; but taking the part for the whole, they are completed: that is, Friday afternoon, the whole morning and afternoon of Saturday, and part of Sunday morning. He could well have risen immediately after his death; but he willed that these hours should pass to convince the world that he had really been dead, for three days in the way we have explained was an ordinary length of time to make his death evident. He could also have put off his resurrection until the end of the world; but it was not fitting, says my Angelic Doctor, that a body which was the shell of the most precious pearl and the living temple of the divinity should be so slow to receive immortality; and so, once the time needed to prove his death was fulfilled, his most holy soul, from the bosom of the Fathers to which it had descended, would cry out with David: You will not leave my soul in hell, Lord.

6. This resurrection was on a Sunday. So St. Matthew says that the Lord rose on the first day of the sabbath; and as "sabbath" is understood as "week", as the Hebrews called it, its first day was Sunday. This is the tradition of the Catholic Church from the time of the Apostles; and so, from that time, instead of being called the first day of the week, this day is called *domingo*, or *dominica*, which means the Lord's day. On this day, says St. Leo, the world had its beginning, and on it, through the resurrection of the Saviour, life began and death ended. And at what hour did the Lord rise? The holy Fathers differ on this, but their opinions can easily be reconciled. All agree that he rose very early in the morning, according to the prophecy of the seventieth psalm, which says: I will arise very early. Some say that the resurrection was a little after midnight; so St. Athanasius said: You will rise at midnight to sing the divine praises, for at that hour the Lord rose. What is certain, says Abbot Rupert, is that Jesus Christ was born at midnight, and so it seems fitting that his resurrection, which is like a second birth, should be at the same hour. The Church, in the canon of the Mass of this day and in the blessing of the paschal candle, calls the hour when this mystery took place a most sacred night. And although it is true that some holy Doctors assert that it was already day, and the Gospel itself declares it when it says that the Marys went to the tomb when the sun had already risen, all can be reconciled if, as the Father St. Peter Chrysologus says, the sun rose that day three hours earlier than usual, to make up for the three hours it hid its light at the Lord's death. But be that as it may, he rose, says St. Jerome, when he willed and at the hour that seemed good to him, which has been revealed to no mortal.

7. Christ our Redeemer rose by his own virtue and power, not by the work of another, like the son of the widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus, Lazarus and others, who came forth from among the dead by the power of God; Jesus by himself. And in this his divinity is revealed, for it is not compatible with human nature, nor granted to any man, to raise himself when he is placed among the dead: this belongs only to the supreme power of God and is reserved to it alone. That is why the Saviour said: I have power to lay down my life and to take it up again when I will. He died because he willed to subject himself to human frailty, and he rose by himself, using his divine power for it. So St. Paul said in his first letter to the Corinthians.

8. Countless figures announced this resurrection of the Lord, as is clear from the Old and New Testaments. Adam asleep comes out of his sleep, God having formed Eve from his rib: a symbol of the death and resurrection of Jesus, by which his bride the Church was formed. Noah waking from the sleep in which he had been seen naked and mocked; Isaac returning alive from the sacrifice; Joseph coming out of prison to grasp the sceptre of Egypt; the rod of Moses which, turned into a serpent, recovers its first nature; Samson who at midnight, breaking down the gates of the city of Gaza, triumphs over the Philistines: these and many

other figures show the triumphant resurrection of our adorable Saviour. Happy day, blessed day, day the Lord has made for us to rejoice in! And what should this joy be like? I shall say it in the

Second Part

9. At your resurrection, O Christ, heaven and earth rejoice. So sings the Church our mother all this paschal time, adding in all her antiphons, verses and responsories this word: Alleluia, which signifies joy, gladness and thanksgiving. It was right that everything should be filled with joy and rejoicing on this day, when everything was wrapped in mourning and weeping on the day of the passion and death of the very Author of life. All was sadness when there were fulfilled in Jesus the bloody prophecies in which the divine oracles foretold the Lamb who was to be slain to redeem us from the slavery of the devil. We saw him sold like Joseph, taken captive like the ark of the Covenant, covered like Job with wounds under the blows of more than five thousand lashes, crowned with thorns like Abraham's ram, carrying the cross like Isaac, lifted up on the pole like the bronze serpent, and shut up like Jonah in the belly of the tomb. This we saw, and our heart was oppressed with bitterness at contemplating his innocence punished for our crimes. It was just, then, that heaven and earth should be filled with jubilation at seeing also fulfilled the prophecies that announced his resurrection and triumph over death and hell.

10. Joy among the Angels. The Angels of peace who wept, in Isaiah's expression, at the death of the Saviour of the world are filled with joy on this day, and appear as the first heralds of the resurrection in white garments, symbols of gladness as black ones are of mourning; and they comfort men and spur them to joy and jubilation. Joy among the holy Fathers in limbo, seeing in their dwellings of horror the most holy soul of their Liberator lighting up the place of darkness. Joy among the Apostles, seeing alive and triumphant that divine Master for whom they had left all they possessed, and whose death had plunged them into the depth of sadness. Joy… but what joy in the most lovable heart of most holy Mary, seeing full of splendour and glory that Son of her most pure womb whom a little before she had held lying in her lap, become a little bundle of myrrh! Oh, what joy was this Lady's! That of the patriarch Jacob when he learned that the son he had mourned as dead was alive and seated on the second throne of Pharaoh is nothing, is paltry, compared with what most holy Mary had when she saw her sweet Jesus, who had been devoured by the wild beast of death, now full of glory, and lord not of Egypt but of the whole universe. Joy even in the stars and elements. In their own way they showed their sorrow at the Lord's passion: the sun was eclipsed, the moon hid its light, the stars were darkened, the earth opened in chasms, the wind raised earthquakes; in short, all creatures, says St. John Chrysostom, felt it to see the Creator of all suffer. But on this day everything was clothed in joy, and the sun, according to St. Maximus, shone with an extraordinary light, as if celebrating the triumphant Redeemer with it.

11. O Christians, how great, then, should be the joy that fills our faculties and senses at the Lord's resurrection! This is, I say again, the day the Lord has made for us to rejoice in. God made all days, but not all give us a general reason for pleasure and gladness. In the other feasts of the Saviour that we celebrate, besides recalling something God did not make, since they always look in some way to sin, there is also some circumstance that moves us to sorrow and tears. For example: the day of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ is a day of joy; yet we see the newborn Child weeping between two animals and lying in a lowly manger. The day of the Circumcision is glad, but it was done with the shedding of the blood of the Son of God made man for us. The day of the Epiphany is festive, but there is myrrh in it, which announces death. And so with the rest. But on the day of the Resurrection all is complete joy; there is no weeping, there are no sorrows: all is salvation, all restoration, all triumph, and consequently all joy.

12. But what should this joy be in us? Ah, joy not in the flowers of vanity, but in the fruits of eternal life, which we begin to enjoy with the redemption Jesus has given us, hoping from him for the resurrection to life obtained by his own. Joy not of a worldly pleasure, but of the Holy Spirit, contemplating that by rising the

Lord gave us the greatest proof, according to St. Paul, of his divinity; for if Christ had not risen, this being the sign he gave us for believing his doctrine, our faith and our hope would be vain.[1] But alas, how many rejoice these days in a profane and sinful way! How many base all their joy on the sumptuousness of their clothes, thinking that outward luxury, perhaps scandalous, must display the solemnity of the feast, making the tradesmen work even on the days of the triduum of sorrow, so that Easter may not lack the garment that shows the pride and arrogance ruling the heart! How many rejoice today only because the penitential time of Lent is over, in which the body had been afflicted by fasting, rough food and spiritual exercises, so owed to the satisfaction we must give God for our sins; putting in place of Christian frugality, today, gluttony, drunkenness, provocative songs, dances and worldly amusements! How many have waited for this day as a day of licence to open the floodgates to the excess of their passions, which the parish priests, the preachers, the confessors and even the very circumstances of the preceding season had closed! Do you think, my brethren, that this is the joy to which the Church invites us in these paschal days? Her intention is far from this. Of those who act in this way it may be said that, if they have been for some time contrite and penitent, it was only to rest from their disorders and gather more strength for when Easter came. Oh, what an error! The one who receives an extraordinary joy on this day is Satan; not because the wonderful effect the Lord's resurrection works in true Christians suits his depraved designs, but because of the effect seen in sinful souls, who today procure a thousand occasions to offend God and fill hell with men, when Jesus Christ himself goes down into it to close its gates. No, my brethren: our joy must be spiritual; it must be in the Holy Spirit, and in the way the apostle St. Peter teaches us when he says in his first epistle: Giving thanks to God, who has begotten us again and given us a living hope of obtaining the incorruptible inheritance, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ his Son. Our joy must be like David's when he said: My soul, fill the Lord with blessings, for he has crowned you with his mercy; that is, we must thank the Lord because, when we were dead through sin and disinherited from the kingdom of heaven, his infinite mercy has made it possible for us to be crowned again, his most holy Son opening to us by his resurrection the door to reign with him, who is the firstborn of the dead. Our joy, finally, must be to celebrate this feast not with the old leaven, says the Apostle, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth; that is, not giving ourselves up to our old sins, but practising holiness of life as new men. I shall speak of this in the next plática. Enough for today.

13. This is the mystery we celebrate, the foundation of our faith, according to St. Paul: it is worthy of our spiritual joy. Most pure Virgin, no one had a greater share of joy on this day than you, who had the share of sorrow and grief on the day of the passion and death of your most loving Son. Therefore let the beginning of our joy be to congratulate you with the same words, full of alleluias, with which the Church does it: Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia, for he whom you were worthy to bear in your womb, alleluia, has risen as he said, alleluia. Pray to the Lord for us, that, venerating his resurrection in holiness, we may rise with him to reign for ever. Amen.

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[1] 1 Cor. 15:14–17.

22. First Sunday after Easter: On the Spiritual Resurrection

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 22, pp. 203–212. Gospel: John 20:19–31. Original preacher not named.

> *Oportet eum a mortuis resurgere (John 20:9).*
>
> *He must rise from the dead.*

The Gospel of this day is from the twentieth chapter of St. John, and it reads thus:

1. "When it was evening on that day, the first of the week, on which Mary Magdalene and the other women had gone to see the tomb, the doors of the house where the disciples were gathered being shut for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and, standing in their midst, said to them: Peace be with you. And having said this, he

showed them his hands and his side. And the disciples were overjoyed to see the Lord. And he said to them a second time: Peace be with you. As my Father sent me to save men, so I also send you, that you may labour in this great work, and I make you sharers in my authority. Having said these words, he breathed on them and said to them: Receive the Holy Spirit: sins will be forgiven to those to whom you forgive them, and retained to those to whom you retain them. But Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles, also called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came to show himself to them. And the other disciples said to him: We have seen the Lord. But he answered them: Unless I see in his hands the marks of the nails that pierced them, and put my finger into the holes of the nails and my hand into the wound in his side, I will not believe he has risen. And eight days later, the disciples being again in the same place, and Thomas with them, and the doors being shut, Jesus came and, standing in their midst, said to them: Peace be with you. Then he said to Thomas: Put your finger here and see my hands; bring your hand also and put it into the wound in my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believing. Thomas answered and said to him: My Lord and my God. Jesus said to him: You have believed, Thomas, because you have seen me: blessed are those who have not seen me and have believed, for their reward will be in proportion to the merit of their faith. Jesus certainly did many other miracles in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing it you may have in this world the life of grace, and in the next eternal life, which can be obtained only in his name and through his merits." This is the Gospel.

2. The Church our mother continues to speak to us of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to explain at length what we believe in the fifth article of the Creed: The third day he rose again. So august a mystery, in which, according to St. Paul, the whole foundation of our faith lies, needs an explanation that will strengthen us in believing it and set before us the lessons given in it for our instruction and teaching. In my last plática I said what the confession we must make of this article amounts to, showing how and when the Saviour rose, and at the same time the joy this sacred mystery ought to fill our hearts with: a spiritual joy, which had to be founded on purity of soul. But I left for this one the showing of how we must conform ourselves to the Lord's resurrection, in which we are born, coming out of the death of sin to the life of grace by penance and the confession of our sins. St. Paul shows us this in a few words in his letter to the Romans. We, he says, have been buried with Jesus Christ by the baptism of his death, so that, as Jesus Christ rose from the dead, so we may walk in a new life and bear in ourselves the image of the heavenly man.[1] Our resurrection, then, must be like that of Jesus Christ. Today's Gospel gives us its model. There it is shown that Jesus Christ truly rose; this I shall show in my first part. That our resurrection from the death of sin must be conformed to that of Jesus Christ: second part.

First Part

3. The resurrection of Jesus Christ our Saviour was a true resurrection. His resurrection had of necessity to be true, so as to be a clear proof of the truth of his divinity and his doctrine, and so that we might be free of sin, the forgiveness of which was, as it were, bound up with Jesus' rising. For, as St. Paul said, if Christ had not risen, our faith would be vain, and you would still be in your sins. Because if he had not truly risen, faith in the risen Christ, which is the root of our justification, would be false, and a false faith can give neither the forgiveness of sins nor the beginning of true holiness. The Lord gave so many proofs of this truth that the Apostles, knowing that this mystery was as certain as belief in it was necessary for men's salvation, bore witness to the world of the resurrection of Jesus Christ with the greatest vigour, as is said in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 4; and this Lord, when he saw that some of his disciples wavered on this point, rebuked their unbelief, because they did not give assent to those who had seen him truly risen.

4. And what proof have we of the truth of his resurrection? The testimony of Jesus' own enemies, who publicly confessed it, would be enough in place of all. The Jews who, as agents of the Pharisees, guarded the

tomb where he had been laid, and who had such an interest in that man whom they called a deceiver not rising, lest by the fulfilling of the word he had given the number of his believers should grow: they themselves confessed that, when they were most awake, on watch lest his disciples should come to steal the body and say he had risen, they heard a great earthquake and saw a heavenly brightness that dazzled them, and that afterwards they did not find him in the tomb. What more proof of his having risen? They saw him dead, shut in under a stone, the tomb sealed, all surrounded by sentries, all watching the approaches to prevent a surprise, themselves extremely concerned that the dead man should not disappear; yet he comes forth free from among the dead and leaves the counsels of his adversaries mocked. His resurrection, then, was true; not apparent, not imaginary, not airy, not feigned. Here was fulfilled what the Lord said through one of his prophets, speaking to the Jewish Synagogue: Do not rejoice over me, my enemy, because I have fallen into death; I shall rise, even when I sit in darkness.

5. But the Saviour gave further countless proofs of his resurrection. The one he gave today in the Upper Room, as the Gospel relates, is convincing; yet several more appearances Jesus Christ made to his disciples prove it true. Let us state those the Evangelists relate, for our conviction. Six times Jesus Christ showed himself alive on the very day he rose from the dead. The first was to his most holy Mother: so St. Ambrose says, and this is the opinion of the generality of Doctors, and what piety and reason required. How should she not be the first to see Jesus glorious, who above all creatures had the right to enjoy the triumph of a son she conceived in her womb and offered to the eternal Father as a victim to satisfy his divine justice? It is true that the Gospel does not mention this appearance; but that is not strange, for, as the Lord made these appearances so that the truth of his resurrection should be spread through the world, most holy Mary was not a witness for this purpose, being excepted as his mother. In the second place he appeared to the Magdalene in the guise of a gardener, when she was weeping inconsolably at not finding the body of her divine master in the tomb. In the third place, to the women who for the same reason were returning disconsolate from the place of burial. It will seem a strange thing that women were the first to see the Saviour risen; but this was the design of divine wisdom, to show us that, as women were the first heralds of the death of the world, so they should be of its life and resurrection: so the Father St. Cyril.

6. Then Jesus appeared to St. Peter, who had a claim to this by his dignity and by having wept for his sin. He also appeared that same day to two of his disciples who were going to the village of Emmaus; and although at first they did not recognise him, as soon as they sat down at table in Emmaus they saw that it was he, in the breaking of the bread. That evening, as today's Gospel says, he appeared to the Apostles, entering the Upper Room without opening the doors, by the endowment of subtlety he enjoyed. Eight days after his resurrection, as St. John also says today, he returned to the Upper Room, where the Apostles were still remaining in hiding for fear of the Jews; and Thomas, who had not been present at the earlier appearance and had doubted his Master's resurrection, saw him then; and putting his hands into the wounds of the Lord's most sacred body made his glorious resurrection evident to him. The eighth appearance was to the Apostles who were fishing on the sea of Galilee; and to make them understand that this was not an imaginary vision, and that it was not only the spirit they saw, but also his body now united to it, he let himself be touched with their hands and ate with them. The ninth appearance was on the mountain in Galilee, where he let himself be seen by more than five hundred disciples, as St. Paul says. The tenth was to James, according to the Apostle writing to Corinth. The eleventh on the day of the Ascension, when all his disciples saw him go up to heaven; and when he was already there he appeared to St. Paul on the road to Damascus, to convert him from a ravening wolf into a vessel of his election, to carry his name to the nations.

7. Does it seem to you, my brethren, that the truth of the Saviour's resurrection is well proved? If it had been feigned, could so countless a multitude of witnesses who confirm it have let themselves be deceived? Certainly not. This is a true resurrection. As such the Apostles preached it; and so that people should not doubt it, the Lord took care that the first Evangelists of his faith and religion should be the very ones who had

seen him alive, suffering on a cross, dying on it, and laid in the monument or tomb, and who afterwards saw him alive again in body and soul. So we see that when the Apostles held their first council to put someone in place of the apostle Judas, who had fallen away and hanged himself in despair over the betrayal he had committed against his divine Master, St. Peter, who presided over that assembly, exhorted them to choose a new apostle from among those who had been with them from the beginning of Jesus' preaching, so that he might preach the resurrection of this Lord as one who had been an eyewitness of it; and in fact they named Matthias, who was one of the disciples, and had witnessed everything. The Lord truly rose. And how must we rise when the death of sin has us in its power? We shall see it in the

Second Part

8. Two deaths are found in us: one of the body, the other of the soul. The first is the separation of spirit and flesh. This death is unavoidable: it was caused by the sin of the first man, for which God said to Adam, and in him to all of us, since we all sinned in him: You shall die. For this death there is a resurrection on the day of the general judgment, which Jesus Christ won for us by his own. For if we believe, says St. Paul, that Christ died and rose, we must also believe that we shall all rise in him. But there is another death, which is that of the soul: God does not cause this, but we give it to ourselves when we actually sin. A ruinous death, an unhappy death. In it we lose everything. For as a man, when he dies, naturally loses his riches, his ties, his life, and though the body looks like a man it is no more than a corpse; so when a man sins mortally he is at once stripped of all the treasures of virtue he had acquired before; he loses union with God, he loses the grace that gave life to the soul; and though he has the appearance of life, he is a spiritual corpse, and his body, says St. Cyprian, is a bier on which he carries his poor dead soul. But the Lord's mercy has provided for this spiritual death another, spiritual resurrection, which is penance, or rather the sacrament of Confession; and this resurrection may be received through perfect sorrow for one's sins when one cannot confess. This resurrection is owed to the Saviour's. Jesus Christ, says St. Paul, rose for our justification;[1] that is, according to St. Peter, so that, being dead through sin, we may live through justice. What a consolation, my brethren! If through the frailty proper to our nature we have sinned and died to grace, we have a means of rising again through penance, enriched by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But for this we must conform ourselves, in penance, to the resurrection of the Lord. His had two qualities, to be true and to be lasting: two circumstances that must accompany our conversion.

9. A true resurrection. Christ's was so, as I have shown in my first part. Such, in the first place, must ours be, and such is the one many of the faithful will usually have made this Easter. Many: not all, for I am not unaware that there will still be some who are in the death of sin, giving ear neither to God's inspirations nor to the voices of the preachers. There will be some young man to whom, although the Lord has called him and said, as to the son of the widow of Nain: Young man, I say to you, arise from the bed of those sins in which you lie, he will not have answered this voice, and will not have confessed, or will have done so without the proper dispositions the catechism commands us. There will be some young girl, dead in sin, whom God has wished to raise to grace this Lent, as he did the daughter of Jairus, but who, quite content in her shameful dealings, has paid no heed, through shame or through malice. There will be some sinners grown old and rotting in the tomb of their wickedness, to whom the Lord will have said, as to Lazarus: Come out of that vice to receive the life of grace; but they have not done it; and if they have come to church, appearing to fulfil the annual precept, their resurrection has been apparent, not real and true. So there will be many; and there will not be lacking someone who, taking it ill that he has been admonished in the sermons to approach the sacrament of Penance properly, will have said inwardly what the shade of Samuel said to Saul: Why have you disturbed me, troubling the peace I enjoyed in the tomb of my passions, to make me rise to another life? Is it not so, my brethren? Does this not happen to many? Well, these do not rise as Jesus Christ truly rose.

10. To do so it is indispensable that penance be well done: that the confession of sins be complete, sorrowful, sincere, with the purpose of sinning no more. It is indispensable that those who have seen us dead in iniquity should now see us alive by grace: that those who stole, says St. Paul, steal no more; that those who went after the objects of lust turn towards those of virtue; that those who gave their members to the uncleanness of the flesh give them to the rigours of justice and mortification. It is indispensable that the old man with his acts and works be put off, that is, that the licentious life formerly led be left, and that we put on the new man, who is Jesus, created according to God in holiness and truth. In short, for us to rise truly in Christ our penance must not be feigned, but done with all sincerity of heart. This, in sum, is what we must practise so that our resurrection may be true like that of Jesus Christ.

11. But this Lord's resurrection was also constant, lasting. Christ, rising from the dead, said St. Paul, dies no more; the signs of mortality that placed him in the tomb will no longer be seen in him; death shall no longer have dominion over him. This is what a Christian must do when he rises from the death of sin: never return to it. There is no doubt that if penance is true, with the due purpose of amendment, it will be constant; yet it may well happen that someone has made a well-made confession and nevertheless falls back into the same sins that had been forgiven him. All this is the fruit of our frailty and misery, and of the terrible assaults of our enemies' temptations. Therefore, so that our spiritual resurrection may be as like as possible to that of our divine Master, we must strive for perseverance in the virtue we have begun, giving new firmness to our resolutions every day. For I do not doubt that this Easter many will have come to the confessional truly repentant, will have cast all the Egyptians, that is, all their sins, into the sea of mercy, and, approaching the sacred Eucharistic table, will have washed the robe of their innocence in the blood of the Lamb. I believe it is so; but even these, whose resurrection was true, must strive to make it lasting, persevering faithful to the Lord who, as St. Peter said, has brought them out of darkness to see the light of his grace.

12. For what will it profit the sinner to vomit up his poison if he poisons himself again? What does it profit a sailor to have come through a storm he suffered on the high seas if afterwards his ship is wrecked in port? What a soldier to have begun to defeat his enemy, if then, halfway through the battle, he surrenders to him and hands over his arms? What a woman to have washed her clothes if she then puts them in a stinking sewer? All these comparisons the holy Fathers give us show clearly what St. Ambrose said: that the prize is offered not to those who begin, but to those who finish. It is of no use to the repentant sinner to have taken the antidote for the poison of sin if he commits it again; no use to have escaped the shipwreck of sin on the second plank of penance if he exposes himself again to its waters; no use to have once triumphed over the devil if, before receiving the crown of glory, he enlists again under his banners; no use to have washed his soul in the Jordan of confession if he contracts the stains of sin again; and above all, he will do nothing if he does not persevere in grace so as to be conformed to the Lord's resurrection.

13. The Lord gives us the example for doing so. After he had risen he no longer let himself be seen amid the bustle and crowds of Jerusalem: his dealings in the forty days he spent in the world until his Ascension were confined to his disciples alone, instructing them in what belonged to his Church and the kingdom of God; to teach us that, once converted, we must flee all that can disturb our virtue, and that our conversations must be, not carnal as before, but of God, of Religion and of our state. Jesus Christ did more. St. John says that, the Lord having risen, he did not see him in the tomb, but saw that he had left in it the sheet, the face-cloth and everything that had served for his shroud. This shows us that, risen with Christ, we must now abandon everything that had contributed to the death of our soul. Here each one can think what was the occasion of his falling into sin, so as to flee it constantly. The Saviour did more still: not only did he rise, said the Angels, but he left the tomb: *surrexit, non est hic*.

14. Ah, my brethren, what happiness it would be for your parish priest, and what a sign that your conversion was true and constant, if, going to those gaming houses where the fortune and spiritual life of many are lost, and asking for that man who used always to be shut up there, they answered me: No, that man is not here any

longer; he has risen to a new life! What joy, if, passing along those streets where nothing was heard but obscene, provocative and insulting words, they told me: Those blasphemers, backbiters or lewd men are not here any longer; this Lent they have repented of their sins! What consolation for my soul if, asking that poor married woman about her husband, continually shut up in the tavern and afterwards making the unhappy woman suffer a thousand torments because of his drunkenness, she answered me: He is not what he was; he no longer goes to those places of dissipation and intemperance; he has come out of his excesses! *Surrexit, non est hic.* In short, gentlemen, whoever has risen like the Saviour must say with the Apostle: It is no longer I who live; it is Jesus Christ who lives in me.

15. Would that it may be so! May God, in his infinite goodness and mercy, give you light and knowledge so that, if you have been for some time dead in sin, you may rise truly and constantly to the life of grace. Lastly, I exhort you with the words of St. Paul: If you have risen with Christ, seek nothing now but what is in heaven; have no tastes but for heaven; do not develop a craving for the things of earth, which are bitter and fickle; desire only to reign with Jesus in eternal glory. Amen.

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[2] Rom. 6:4; compare 1 Cor. 15:49. The printed margin gives Rom. 4 (for “rose for our justification”, Rom. 4:25).

[1] Rom. 4:25.

23. Second Sunday after Easter: On the Ninth Article of the Creed, “I Believe in the Holy Catholic Church”

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 23, pp. 213–222. Gospel: John 10:11–16. Original preacher not named.

Ego sum Pastor bonus (John 10:14).

I am the good Shepherd.

The Gospel of this day is from the tenth chapter of St. John, and it reads thus:

1. “I am (Jesus said to the Pharisees) the good shepherd par excellence. The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep. But the hireling, he who is not the true shepherd, and whose own the sheep are not, as soon as he sees the wolf coming, abandons the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters the flock. The hireling flees in this way because he is a hireling and has no care for the sheep, since he looks only to his own interests. I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and my sheep know me, as my Father knows me and I know my Father; and as this mutual knowledge produces in us an infinite love, so the knowledge I have of my sheep inspires in me so ardent a love for them that I give my life for my sheep, not only for those of my own people, but also for those of other nations. For I have other sheep too, that are not of this fold, and I must bring them, and they will hear my voice, and there will be but one fold and one shepherd.” This is the Gospel.

2. Before the coming of Jesus Christ, men were divided into only two bodies, Jews and Gentiles. The first adored the true God according to the laws he had made known to them through Moses: these made up the Synagogue. The second worshipped idols, the work of men’s own hands. The true Messiah came, the loving shepherd of souls, and made one flock composed of both nations. At the cost of his labour and suffering he planted a new Church. He himself called the Jews to it by his preaching, doctrine and miracles, gathering the scattered sheep of the house of Israel, so that they might worship one Shepherd and Bishop of their souls; and the Gentiles, sometimes by himself, sometimes through his Apostles and disciples, as he announced in this Gospel when he said: I have other sheep that are not of this flock, and I must draw them into it, and so there will be but one flock and one shepherd. Happy flock, ruled by Jesus the good shepherd, for he is goodness itself; a careful shepherd, who came from heaven to seek the sheep that had strayed. Thanks to his infinite mercy, which, without any merit of mine, has placed me in this fold and made me one of the members of his Church. See here figured the Church of the Saviour, governed and ruled by himself, which is set before us in

the ninth article of the Creed in these words: I believe in the holy Catholic Church. I am going, then, to speak of her today. In my first part I shall explain this article of our belief, I believe in the holy Catholic Church; and in the second, what our gratitude to God must be for having placed us in her.

First Part

3. What is the Church? Let us not understand, my brethren, by the name of Church, as it is proposed to us for belief, these magnificent buildings we call churches, which are no more than temples where the faithful gather to address their prayers to God, offer sacrifices, receive the Sacraments and hear the divine word. And it should be noted, to remove any error, that the name Church is often taken for the place where the faithful gather, and at other times for this very calling-together or congregation of them. When we say that the Roman Church is the mother of all churches, we must understand the congregation of the faithful who are in Rome; and when we say that the church of St. Peter in Rome surpasses all the churches of the world in splendour, the basilica or temple of St. Peter is meant, to which the whole Roman people usually go for their religious exercises.

4. Then what is the true Church of which we speak here? It is the congregation of all the baptised faithful who profess the faith and doctrine of Jesus Christ, governed on earth by the Supreme Pontiff, the universal shepherd, as vicar of Jesus Christ, who governs her from heaven: the congregation of all the faithful whom God in his infinite mercy, through the ministry of his preachers and teachers, has called to his worship and to the true knowledge of eternal things, in this world by faith and in the next by the clear vision of God himself. And this congregation must be made up only of those who are baptised; for we men are not born children of the Church, nor do our parents beget us as Christians, since what is born of flesh, said St. John, can only be flesh. We enter the Church and form this holy congregation by holy Baptism, which is the only door for entering her; and so the unbaptised person does not belong to the Catholic Church, nor is he a sheep of the flock of Jesus Christ. Sinners, yes: these are in and belong to the Church; for she, compared to the ark of the flood, contains clean and unclean animals, that is, the just and sinners; and they will remain in her until the day of judgment, when the Angels will go out and separate the wicked from among the good, so that these alone may enter the Church triumphant, which tolerates no stain. The excommunicated, though Christians, are separated from the body of the Church; and as a vine shoot, though it belongs to a vine, does not share its sap once cut off from it, so the excommunicated, whom the Church has separated from herself for some grave crime, do not share in the priceless goods of which she is the trustee. You will often have heard people say “the Church of the schismatics, of the heretics, of the Protestants”; but you must know that these are not true churches, but conventicles or unlawful assemblies, a congregation of unbelievers plotting against the true Church in which we live. And how shall we recognise this true Church? There are four notes or marks for recognising her, and the Creed we sing at Mass states them: that she is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. A Church that lacks these marks is not the true one. Let us explain them briefly, following the catechism.

5. The true Church is one. In every place where this Bride of the Lamb is found, the same faith is kept, the same commandments observed, the same sacrifice offered, the same Sacraments received, and the supreme Shepherd who governs them is one. One shepherd, who is the Roman Pontiff: For this reason, says St. Jerome, one alone was chosen, to remove every source of discord, division or schism.[1] St. Paul compares the Church to the human body: the body is governed by one head alone, and though there is great diversity of members, all are subordinate to it and all cooperate for the common good of the body, without hindering one another in their functions. So the Church, which is one, a single body, has one head, which is Christ in heaven and his vicar the Pontiff on earth. We all depend on his authority if we are to belong to this mystical body; we must all be joined to him, all obey him, all love him, all be in communion with him, without falling into discord with one another over Religion, as sheep all of one flock ruled by one shepherd. Jesus Christ appointed this shepherd before he went up to heaven, to act in his stead in the world. He did so, then, in

St. Peter, when he said to him: You are Peter, which means rock, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and then this divine Shepherd entrusted his whole flock to him, to govern it all in his name, saying to him: Feed my lambs, which were all the subjects, and feed my sheep, which are all the particular prelates; as if to say: You are the first shepherd, the head shepherd of the flock, and you are to govern all the faithful joined to it and the particular shepherds themselves, such as patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, parish priests and the others to whom some portion of this flock is assigned, but all subject to the first Prelate, so that there may be one fold and one shepherd. What the Lord said to St. Peter he said to all his successors whom he should appoint to the ministry.

6. Holy. This Church also has as her device that she is holy: first, because she is consecrated to God, and in this sense St. Paul calls the faithful who dedicate themselves to the Lord saints;[2] second, she is holy because her head, Christ, is holy, holiness itself and the source of all holiness, and therefore he willed that his Bride should be holy, without spot or wrinkle, wholly pure and immaculate; so the Apostle to the Ephesians. And as among mortals the one with the most beautiful features is called handsome even if he suffers a defect in some limb, so, though there are sinners in the Church, she is called holy because her head is holy. Third, because in her all is holy: the Sacraments, the sacrifice, her laws. In other, heretical churches some semblance of holiness may be found, but not true holiness. And in this the Catholic Church is distinguished from the congregations and sects of pagans, Jews, heretics and schismatics, for there is none whose laws do not contain absurdities and monstrous errors, either in dogma or in morals: so said St. Ambrose and St. Augustine. But how can holiness be a mark of the Catholic Church, since it is invisible? Our soul is also invisible, and we know by its effects that it exists in us. So, although holiness is not seen, because it resides in the soul, yet by the uprightness of Christians' actions, the miracles some have performed, the prophecies by which they have foretold the future, and by other means, we know the holiness that reigns in the faithful, without which they would not do these things.

7. Catholic. This means that the Church is universal. And she is universal, first, because she receives all men, of whatever age, state or condition they may be. The Church of the Saviour is not bound to one particular family, as that of the Old Testament was to the family of Jacob: here there is no distinction of Greek or Jew. Anyone may be in the Church, even from the ends of the earth, provided he enters by her door, which is holy Baptism. She is also catholic because she is spread throughout the whole world. Other sects are not universal: some prevail in one province, others in another; and even in one and the same province it is not only one that rules: Calvinists, Lutherans, Jews and others are usually found there, who have no communion with one another in anything. Ours is catholic because in every age the same doctrine, the same faith, the same rites and ceremonies have flourished. It would be very easy for me to show you the succession of the true Church from Abel to Jesus, and from him to us. None of the sects of error has this universality.

8. Apostolic. She is called so because she was founded through the ministry of the Apostles, and governed from then on by the prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, and his legitimate successors the Roman Pontiffs. In this Church alone is seen the clear succession of Pontiffs, bishops and prelates from the sacred Apostles; and so only those are to be held as priests of the true Church, says St. Irenaeus,[3] who draw their origin from the Apostles, to whom alone the deposit of truth was entrusted. So, my brethren, our Church is called apostolic absolutely, because she draws her origin from Peter, on whose firm rock Jesus Christ built her, and through an unbroken succession of legitimate shepherds we always go back to the origin of the rock, as streams to the spring, the branches of the tree to the root, and the rays of light to the sun. So, then, only that Church is, and must be called, the true Church which is one, holy, catholic and apostolic; and this is what we believe and confess in the ninth article, I believe in the holy Catholic Church. Let us see what our gratitude must be for belonging to her; this we shall see in the

Second Part

9. Who, then, will not count himself happy to be included in this flock and to be one of the members of this holy Church? And what must his gratitude to God be for the priceless benefit he has done him, bringing him within the walls of this militant Jerusalem to share in the goods of the sanctuary, so as afterwards to receive the delights of the triumphant one? Ah, my brethren! If a man, by his efforts and at his own expense, drew us away from the company of flatterers who, under the mask of friends, were going to deliver us into the hands of our enemies; if he showed us a road that would lead us safely to port, steering us away from a thousand reefs that would have thrown us to destruction: what would we do with a benefactor of this kind, who showed us such love and took such interest in our fortune? Certainly, our heart filled with the greatest joy at seeing ourselves free from our ruin, we would find nothing with which to repay sufficiently the one who had been the cause of our being preserved from it. The young Tobias could find nothing with which to thank the archangel St. Raphael, who accompanied him on his journey: he freed him from the fish that wanted to devour him, provided him with a wife who was a most holy maiden, freeing her from the devil, and brought him back safe to the sight of his parents after so many dangers that had exposed his life.

10. All this, then, is nothing in comparison with the benefit the Lord did us when through Jesus Christ he brought us out of the darkness of error, says St. Peter, to know the wonderful brightness of his faith through Baptism. At the cost of his peace, life and honour the Saviour established his holy Church, in which he frees us from the evils we would have suffered outside her. In the Church we find ourselves safe from the attacks of idolatry and superstition, by which the sectaries, with the flattering offer of a pleasant life, less harsh than that of Christians, lead us into the hands of the devil, so that our lot may be eternally unhappy. In the Church we are taught the way of truth; we are given holy laws, the keeping of which turns us away from the paths of perdition in which countless men are sunk; and, giving us countless helps through her gifts, her Sacraments and her counsels, little by little they lead us to the heavenly homeland for which we were created. In the Church we have a tower of David, from which, according to Scripture, hang a thousand shields and all the armour of the valiant, to defend us from the enemies who continually fight against us to bring us to destruction. In the Church we have careful shepherds who, leading us to the wholesome pastures of the true doctrine of the Gospel, give us weapons to keep away from the raging wolf of the abyss that tries to devour us. In the Church we are given a harbour of refuge to protect us from the corrupt waters of this great sea of the world, in which so many unbelievers and pagans live submerged for not having taken refuge in her. Oh, what an inexpressible favour! For this alone our great God deserves all our gratitude.

11. As soon as Noah came out of the ark the Lord had provided to save him from the waters of the universal flood, prostrate on the ground he offered a sacrifice of sweet odour, thanking the Almighty for the kind favour he had granted to him and all his family. A just gratitude! He had seen the havoc the waters wrought among those wretches who, mocking his labours in building that vessel, did not believe his words and therefore would not shelter in it. One groaned, another despaired, another went under, and all were drowned, for outside the ark there was no place of help. For all this Noah lived grateful to his deliverer. See here, my brethren, a symbol of the reason for our gratitude for the benefit of our call to the Church. She is represented, according to St. Peter, by Noah's ark, outside of which there is no salvation.[1] There only eight persons were saved, but in the Church countless numbers. We, without merit of our own, solely by an effect of the divine goodness, have taken refuge in the ark of this Church, which Jesus Christ our Saviour, who is the divine wisdom, built as his house to save the nations. From her we see countless people who, for not believing the promises of the heavenly Master, have remained outside her, the plaything of the waves of the most brutish passions. We see some adoring the sun, the moon, the planets, clay, unclean animals, which they venerate as gods, though they are only works of the very God they ought to adore. Others given over to monstrous errors which nature itself detests and abhors. Others adore nothing but the passions that flatter them, thinking that their soul has no more existence than their bodies; and in the end all of them drowned in the flood of the abyss. What happiness, then, is ours, when we can say with David: The Lord looked on me from on high and received me as his own in his house; he drew me out of the many waters of error and brought me into the

broad place of his Church, to fill me with favours under the sweet yoke of his law and afterwards crown me with glory in heaven; and this only because he loved me, because he loved me among so many peoples who, if they had been called to the Gospel as I was, might perhaps have been more faithful to his divine call?

12. This benefit, then, my brethren, demands our continual gratitude. “So, Lord,” said my great mother St. Teresa of Jesus at the hour of her death, “so, Lord, I am a daughter of your Church!” As if to say: How grateful I must be to you, Lord, that you have joined me to the number of your faithful! What would become of me at this hour of my death if you had had me born in a land of pagans, where I would not have known you, where my soul, following a barbarous law, would now be full of anguish, awaiting an eternal fire? But no, most loving God, I am a daughter of your Church! This kindly mother received me into her bosom, washed me from original sin with the waters of regeneration; if I have sinned, she gave me the medicine in the sacrament of Penance; she has fed me with the very body and blood of my God, and with the virtues she sets before me and which I have tried to practise; now I have the sweet satisfaction that I shall see the God of gods for an eternity in the heavenly Sion. All this, and much more, contained in these few words of St. Teresa’s grateful heart, “So I am a daughter of your Church,” must be engraved on the heart of every Christian, so that he may show himself grateful to God for being one of the members of this mystical body, a branch of this vine, a soldier of this army and a sheep of this flock, governed by the Prince of shepherds.

13. But this gratitude must be founded especially on always doing what this holy Catholic Church commands and teaches us. If you are children of Abraham, said St. Paul, do what Abraham did.[2] We must join, he says, the faith this Church teaches us with a good conscience; for many who stained their conscience with works contrary to the faith made shipwreck of it: they fell from the ship, they left the ark, they went out of the Church by unbelief. And we must keep not only the divine commandments which this Church sets before us as given by God himself, but also those she gives us as her own. The Church is our lawgiver in spiritual things; she has authority to lay laws and commandments on us, and in vain would she have authority to command us if we had no obligation to obey her. Far from you, my brethren, those voices we have heard in these recent times, those perverse doctrines which taught that we had no obligation to keep the commandments of the Church, since they were precepts given by men and men could take them away: far, I say, from my parishioners so detestable a doctrine. They are men, no doubt, who make up the Church; a man is the Supreme Pontiff, men the members of the Councils, men those who have given us the precepts of fasting, hearing Mass, confessing and communicating at Easter, and paying tithes and first fruits; men, it is true, but men who act in the place of the first shepherd, Jesus Christ, who assured them that he would be with them until the end of the ages, that his sovereign Spirit would be there to guide their commands aright, and that what they do God himself does through his most holy Son, who says in his Gospel: He who hears you hears me, and he who despises you despises me. Who, then, will dare to amend the work of God? Only God himself, through the shepherds appointed by him, may change or alter any of his commands. That is, only the Church of Jesus Christ has power, in God’s name, to vary her laws. Whoever says the contrary seems to want to set up batteries against this holy Sion placed on the summit of the mountain, as a prophet described her; but let them strike the Church as many blows as they like, she will last for ever; the gates of hell will not prevail against her. The waves of error and the winds of iniquity, says the Gospel, will blow against this house of God, but it will not fall, no: it is founded on the firm rock, Christ, and on the rock of Peter and his legitimate successors. See, my children, what the Church is, and what our gratitude must be at seeing that we have been called into her. This is my subject.

14. My God, most lovable Father, my heart is filled with jubilation and clothed with the most respectful gratitude when I consider that, among thousands upon thousands of souls who do not know you, you have granted me the grace of being born in the heart and centre of the Church founded by your most holy Son and enriched with his blood. I believe, Lord, that there is one Church which, being one, holy, catholic and apostolic, has all the marks that show me she is the true one. I promise not to depart from her laws and

doctrine. I will do what I can, by my example and my words, to overcome all her enemies, both the outward ones who attack her maxims and the inward ones, which are my passions, that inspire in me the contrary of what she teaches me. What shall I gain by winning the whole world if my poor soul suffers loss? It will certainly suffer it if I am not a faithful son of your Church, and do not obey her laws and honour her shepherds: in that case I am outside your flock; I shall be like a kid set on the left at your judgment, and, cursed by you, I shall be cast into the abyss. I want to be your sheep, to hear your voice, to follow your steps, so that in this way I may receive on the last day your loving blessing, and you may lead me to the fold of your glory. Amen.

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[3] The printed margin gives *Cont. Jovin.* (St. Jerome, *Against Jovinian* I, 26).

[4] The printed margin gives 1 Cor. (compare 1 Cor. 1:2).

[5] The printed margin gives *Lib. III, c. 3* (St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III, 3).

[1] 1 Pet. 3:20–21.

[2] John 8:39 (the words are Christ's; the source attributes them to St. Paul, compare Rom. 4 and Gal. 3:7). The next sentence is 1 Tim. 1:19.

24. Third Sunday after Easter: On the Third Petition of the Our Father, "Thy Will Be Done"

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 24, pp. 223–230. Gospel: John 16:16–22. Original preacher not named.

Tristitia vestra convertetur in gaudium (John 16:20).

Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

The Gospel of this day is from the sixteenth chapter of St. John, and it reads thus:

1. "Jesus said to his disciples: A little while, and you will no longer see me; and again a little while, and you will see me, because I go to my Father. Then some of his disciples said to one another: What does he mean by this?… We do not understand what he is saying. But Jesus, knowing that they wanted to ask him about this, said to them: You are asking one another what I meant when I said: A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me. Amen I say to you: the time is coming when you will weep and lament, and the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labour, has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the anguish she was in, for joy that she has brought a man into the world. So you also now indeed have sorrow, because of the sufferings I am soon to undergo, in which you will have a great share; but I will see you again, after I have risen, and your heart will rejoice to see the glory I shall receive for having fulfilled my Father's will in my passion and death; and no one will take your joy from you, because your life will be immortal." This is the Gospel.

2. What profitable instruction our divine Master gives us in it, to resign ourselves to God's good pleasure when we find ourselves weighed down by tribulations! With what conformity we must then pray to him with the third petition of the Our Father, saying, Thy will be done, considering the fruit we draw from trials borne with patience, as coming from the hand of a God who loves us and holds in reserve for us a reward even for what we must unavoidably suffer by his disposition. Our Saviour was obedient to his eternal Father unto the death of the cross. The bitter chalice of his sorrowful passion was repugnant to his flesh; yet his spirit was ready, and he said to the Lord: Not my will, but yours be done. And for this resignation and conformity God exalted him to the highest glory, seeing how gladly he had fulfilled his commands. This is what Jesus Christ was giving his disciples to understand today, and in them all of us, to spur us on to do what God commands us, desiring that even in tribulations his divine will may always be done, sure that as the reward of this conformity he will give us eternal joy, which worldly people, who rejoice at our troubles and mock our patience, will not be able to snatch from us. I am going, then, to explain this petition, Thy will be done, in

this way: we must bear the trials of this life with patience, first because God sends them and it is his will that we suffer them (first part); second, because of the hope of the reward that is to repay this conformity with the divine will (second part).

First Part

3. This petition of the Our Father of which we speak extends to a great deal. In it we ask, in the first place, for our sanctification. This is the will of God, said St. Peter, your sanctification.[1] So we beg the Lord to grant us help to fulfil all his precepts, which are like a letter the supreme King addresses to us, making known to us his will and the works in which he wishes us to serve him; that he may not allow us to follow the allurements of the world, the devil and the flesh, which put a thousand obstacles in the way of fulfilling our duties and incite us to transgress the holy law, following our appetites and concupiscences and going against the divine will; that through the whole course of prosperity and hardship we may always be conformed to the divine good pleasure, neither exalted in good fortune nor excessively afflicted in humiliations. All this we ask. But knowing that to be conformed in a state of prosperity no great effort is needed, but that it is needed when we find ourselves in tribulation, I wish to limit myself in this plática to showing the resignation to the will of God we must have in the trials we must unavoidably experience. God, the just judge, condemned us to tribulations as the punishment of the first sin; for although through holy Baptism he forgave us original sin, he nevertheless willed that certain remnants of it should remain in us even after it, among which are trials and hardships, so that by bearing them rightly we might work out our salvation. The Only-begotten of God, who clothed himself with the mortality of our clay and made himself capable of suffering, gave us an example of patience and of resignation to the will of his eternal Father, who sent him into the world to suffer for men. So he himself said: I do everything as my Father commanded me. The Lord commands us the same, in imitation of his Son; for it is certain that to be predestined we must be made conformable to the image of Jesus Christ, says his Apostle. So, Lord, we say: Thy will be done: here I am, ready to bear whatever you wish me to suffer.

4. Never, even when most afflicted, must we put away from us this thought: God sends trials; this is his most holy will. Shall there be evil in the city which God has not done? So spoke the prophet Nahum, showing by this that everything painful is done by God, either by his command or by his permission.[2] Yes, my brethren. Poverty, griefs, storms, droughts, persecutions, the misfortunes of our relatives and friends, sickness and death: all comes from that Lord without whose will not a leaf of the tree moves, in whose hands are poverty and riches, sickness and health, the life and death of men, and to whose command all is subject, says his Scripture. All comes from God, though all is directed to our eternal good. Men, it is true, can trouble us; the stars, the elements, beasts and even the devil himself can bring us tribulations; but all their efforts are useless when God wishes to preserve us. Pharaoh gives orders to kill all the newborn Hebrew boys, but does not succeed: God moves the hearts of the midwives of Egypt to save them; and the more that wicked man tried to destroy the people of God, the more it multiplied. Nebuchadnezzar orders the three young men Ananias, Azarias and Misael to be burned in a terrible furnace: he does not succeed; God takes away the fire's force, and they, unharmed, sing praises to the Lord. Holofernes orders Bethulia to be wiped out: he does not succeed; God fills Judith with extraordinary courage, and by cutting off that general's head she gives the victory to her people. That is to say, it is the divine will alone that presents us with trials when it judges fitting, and they come upon us from its mysterious hand.

5. And if they come from God, can we resist his will? In vain do we kick against the goad that pricks us, said St. Paul, unless we wish to feel sharper stings as the punishment of our rebellion. Ah, with what readiness the just bore the adversities that weighed on them, considering that they were gifts from their God, whose will they could not resist! David would not punish a slave who insulted him with abuse as he fled in Absalom's persecution, and to those who urged him to punish him he answered: The Lord commanded Shimei to curse

David. Jacob's son, when he saw his brothers in Egypt afraid of an unhappy fate because of the sufferings they had inflicted on that little brother of theirs whom they now saw set on the throne, calmed them, saying: Do not be afraid, no; in my misfortunes you have had no other part than to be instruments of God, who through my humiliations had prepared for me my exaltation and the post I now hold. St. Paul, when most deeply plunged in persecutions, said in the name of all Christians: They curse us, and we bless them; they blaspheme against us, and we pray for them… So great are our tribulations that we have become like the scouring rags of the world; but we rise above all trials, considering that we must suffer them as sent by that Lord who loved us so much.

6. What a reflection this is! The one who gives us trials is the very one who loves us, and who on the other hand heaps favours on us. Holy Job used this to rebuke his wife, who reproached his patience in the wretched state he was in. Woman, he said to her, if we have received good things from the hand of God, why should we not receive evil ones? Make this same reflection, my Christian, in your anguish: If God created me in his likeness and preserves me by his providence; if he had me born in the heart of the Church; if every day he gives me light with his sun and feeds me with the fruits of the earth; if he has preserved me from many ailments and setbacks that others of my brethren suffer; in short, if the benefits I continually receive from his kindly hand are without number, why should I not now conform myself to his divine will, on seeing my interests lost, the son I loved most die, myself laid on a bed with illness, and disconsolate and afflicted? In short, if I was resigned in the time of prosperity, why should I not be so in the time of tribulation, considering that I have it by the will of God, and that by patience and resignation I merit an eternal reward? See already in these words the subject of the

Second Part

7. God, seeing his children submissive to his wise dispositions, does not abandon them, and infinite recompenses are the reward of the least service done him; and this is a powerful motive for desiring that his most holy will be fulfilled in us. The Lord's hand that strikes us does not wish to hurt us, and never, says Isaiah, does it finish breaking the bruised reed. Even in this world we see rewarded with unspeakable favours those who in the midst of tribulation have said to the Lord, Thy will be done, resigned to their God's pleasure. The Israelites suffer for the Lord's name the most terrible persecution from the Egyptians; the moment comes when they find themselves between a sea they could not ford and the arms of their adversaries; but the Lord divides the waters, and they pass over dry-shod, while their persecutors are drowned. Susanna finds herself falsely accused of a crime of which only her accusers themselves were guilty; and when she was already on the scaffold to expiate her supposed crime, God takes up the cause of her honour, and through the young Daniel her innocence and the treachery of her slanderers are made public. Job… But this is nothing. An eternal reward and a joy that no one will be able to take from us: that is the recompense of those who in this world have conformed themselves to the will of God, suffering with patience the trials he had sent them.

8. Read the beatitudes: there you will see the reward the Lord has prepared in glory for those who suffer tribulations, hunger, persecutions and every kind of trial. The world laughs now to see them cast down; but a time will come, Jesus Christ says today, when it will weep and the just will be filled with joy. God never abandons his own when he afflicts them; he does, indeed, make certain trials of their fidelity and resignation, so as to crown them when he sees them victorious in the combats of trials. Let us look at the story of the just Joseph of old. This innocent man finds himself wronged by his brothers, accused of being a dreamer and a liar, thrown into a cistern, sold to some Ishmaelites, a slave in Egypt, unjustly chained in a prison… What is this? Has the Lord forgotten this just man? Certainly not. The Lord did not forsake this just man when he was sold, says the Wise Man; he went down with him into the pit, to be a witness of his patience; and if the divine will permitted the outrages done him, it was to refine him until it gave him the sceptre of the kingdom and

power over the very men who had oppressed him. What happiness, my brethren! God watches and heeds us when we suffer the trials he sends us by his will, to reward our resignation with an inexpressible joy, which is the kingdom of heaven, where in return for momentary pains he will give us his divine presence to delight us eternally. Nor is there any other road to heaven than that of tribulation: our divine Master left us no other ladder to glory than the cross, trials, anguish.

9. That is why, when the wife of Zebedee asked him for the seats of his kingdom for her two sons, he said to John and James, for whom their mother had spoken in the request: You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the chalice that I am to drink? As if he said: Do you ask for glory without trials? A kingdom without suffering? It cannot be. I myself shall not enter the glory of my Father without drinking to the dregs the bitter chalice of tribulation and sorrow. This is my Father's will; and it is for those who carry it out that he has prepared the sitting at my right and my left in the kingdom of his glory. Indeed, there is no crown without victory, nor victory without battle. Let us fight, then, with constancy in the bitternesses the divine will dispenses to us, and we shall certainly have the reward. Who are these? an Angel asked St. John in his Apocalypse; who are these who come in white robes and with palms in their hands? Who are they, and where have they come from? And so that St. John should not suppose that this reward had been given them without any merit, the Angel answered himself, saying: These are those who have come out of great tribulations, and have washed their robes, that is, their souls, in the blood of the Lamb; that is, those who, in imitation of the Lamb slain for us, resigned themselves in the trials they received as coming by the will of the Lord.

10. For fulfilling what God wants of us, which was bound to come about in spite of us, for whatever he willed he has done in heaven and on earth, an eternal reward is promised us; and the very thing that fills us with tears here, making us think ourselves unfortunate, is the foundation for acquiring goods able to make us happy for ever. I picture in this what some authors say the emperor Nero did one day on his birthday. The Romans, crowding round this Prince's palace, expected some favour from him because of the festivity of his birthday. Nero threw them some sticks. They took this action badly, as he seemed to be treating them like dogs. But there was someone more observant who, looking carefully at those sticks, saw that on them was written an order of payment on the royal treasury; and they then realised that those signs of contempt and mortification were goods with which their Emperor was benefiting them. Would that we considered this very thing when we find ourselves oppressed by trials! When you see, my Christian, that God takes away the goods you enjoyed; when that friend who passed himself off to you as faithful and affectionate turns his back on you or seeks your ruin; when you find yourself laid on a bed by a troublesome illness; in short, when you see yourself become an object of pity, do not think that these trials are sticks with which your King, your God and your Lord wishes to mortify you; certainly not. Far from you be thoughts so unworthy of his goodness and so ill-suited to his mercy. On these his will has written an order of payment for the goods of heaven; in these rods, of sorrow as they seem, the just Judge has set all your happiness, and the channel by which he wishes you to attain the riches of his glory, in which there will be no pain or weeping, fear or contradiction. The world, which St. Paul calls wicked, will delight in earthly and fleeting goods; it will laugh in its profane amusements, its theatres, its dances, its delights, and will even mock your resignation at the sight of your trials. But ah, the joy of sinners will vanish like smoke, and the just, embracing the cross with which the heavenly Monarch honours them, will enjoy a reward that will cause furious envy in those who mocked their misfortunes. Oh, what a consideration this is, my brethren, to humble us in the Lord's presence, thanking him continually for the priceless benefit we receive from his hand when, by the judgments of his wise providence, he afflicts us with griefs and bestows afflictions on us as gifts! We must, then, bear them with constant patience and desire that the Lord's will be fulfilled in us: both because it is he himself who sends trials, who commands them to come upon us, and his words and decrees will not fail or go unfulfilled, though heaven and earth should fail; and also because tribulations, if we bear them with resignation, are the only means of acquiring immortal glory. This was my subject.

11. Yes, my God: this petition, which you taught me in the prayer of the Our Father, shall never fall from my mouth or my heart: Thy will be done. I am certain, most lovable Father of my soul, that you order everything for your honour and glory and for my use and profit; and should I resist your divine will? What would I gain by refusing to accept the trials with which you are pleased to favour me? Would I avoid suffering them? By no means. Teach me, then, my God, I will say with the royal Prophet, to do your will. In this way, by fulfilling your commands, I make my reward secure. You are the one who puts to death, but also the one who gives life; who humbles, and who exalts; who casts a just man into the abyss of tribulation, and who draws him out of it to set him among the Princes of his kingdom. Therefore I do not doubt that, if I bear with conformity the mortifications with which you deign to humble me on earth, you will dry my tears, giving me the joy of glory. Amen.

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[1] The words are St. Paul's (1 Thess. 4:3); the source gives St. Peter.

[2] Amos 3:6 (the source names Nahum).

25. Fourth Sunday after Easter: On the Sacrament of Confirmation

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 25, pp. 231–239. Gospel: John 16:5–14. Original preacher not named.

Mittam Paraclitum ad vos (John 16:7).

I will send you the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel of this day is from the sixteenth chapter of St. John, and it reads thus:

1. "Jesus said to his disciples: I am going to him who sent me into the world, and none of you asks me, Where are you going? But because I have told you these things, and you do not know what is good for you, sorrow has filled your heart. But I tell you the truth: it is good for you that I go to the Father; for if I do not go, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes he will convince the world of sin, of justice and of judgment. Of the sin men committed, because they did not believe in me. Of the justice of my cause and of my innocence, because I go to the Father, and you will no longer see me in the world, forsaken, but full of glory: proofs that I am justified. And of judgment, because the devil, the prince of this world, is already judged and condemned, and his empire will be destroyed by the preaching of my Gospel. I have yet many things to tell you, but you cannot understand them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will teach you all truth; for he will not speak of himself, like the false prophets, but will say all that he has heard from the Father and from the Son, from whom he proceeds, and will truly announce to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will receive of what is mine and will announce it to you." This is the Gospel.

2. In it Jesus Christ makes his disciples the most magnificent promise. The Saviour saw that, when he told them that his death was now unavoidable, and that he must go to the glory of his Father, who had made him become incarnate to redeem the world, they had been filled with grief, because their Master, their Redeemer and their Shepherd was leaving them, and they would be exposed to the fury of their enemies like scattered and straying sheep. But the Saviour, full of compassion, tries to remove all fear from their hearts, telling them that his departure is very much to their advantage, because until he was seated at his Father's right hand the Holy Spirit could not come upon them, who was to comfort them and make clear to them the mysteries he had announced to them; that from glory he would send them his Spirit, who was one and the same thing with him and the Father, and who would strengthen the building of Religion he had planted, making clear to them the truths they were to believe and preach, and giving them strength and power to uphold them. Jesus kept his word on the day of Pentecost, on which not only did the Apostles receive this sovereign Spirit and his gifts, but all men also receive him, to whom he distributes them. And when do we receive the Holy Spirit? In the sacrament of Confirmation, in which, by the laying on of hands and the holy anointing which the bishop

performs on us, he is communicated to us who are baptised, strengthening us and giving us vigour to follow and defend the law that was made known to us in Baptism. A most sweet Sacrament, as useful as it is neglected by men, who perhaps look on it with indifference. That is why I have thought it fitting to explain it today, both so that those who have received it may see the obligations it lays on them, and so that those who have not obtained this grace may prepare themselves worthily to receive it. What is the sacrament of Confirmation? I shall say in the first part. What obligations do those who receive it take on? I shall say in the second.

First Part

3. Confirmation is a Sacrament of the law of grace, instituted, like all of them, by Christ our Lord, conferred on the baptised by the laying on of the hands of the minister, who are the Bishops, and the anointing with sacred chrism, with a certain form of words; by which the Holy Spirit is poured into them to give them courage to confess and defend the Christian faith they received in Baptism. Merely by explaining these words there is enough to make the essence and effects of this Sacrament understood. It says first that it is a Sacrament. St. Augustine and many Fathers, whom Bellarmine cites, clearly show it, adding that it is as sacred as Baptism. And the holy council of Trent expressly defines it as of faith. And although it is true that many heretics do not give this honour to Confirmation, because in their opinion it is not expressly declared in Scripture, these enemies of true worship do not consider that not everything proposed to us as an object of our belief is written in the sacred Books, but some has been handed down to us by a constant tradition coming from the holy Apostles, who learned it from the mouth of their divine Master and Saviour of the world, as is clear from the unanimous consent of the whole Catholic Church, whose traditions we must believe and confess no less than what has come to us in writing in the Old and New Testaments. So St. Paul commands in the second chapter of his letter to the Thessalonians: Hold fast, he says, the traditions you have learned, whether by word or by writing. Besides which, there are various passages of Scripture from which it can be proved to evidence, if not the express institution of this Sacrament, at least the promise of it the Lord made us through his Prophets. In the last days, he said through Joel, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh: words which the apostle St. Peter interprets of the Holy Spirit whom the Apostles had received in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost, and whom he himself preached that all who received this Sacrament would receive, and whom the Redeemer Jesus promised all believers would receive. Moved by this, the Apostles administered it several times, a thing they would not unanimously have done on their own whim if Christ had not instituted it. It is, then, a Sacrament the Saviour instituted on the night of the supper, according to various authors, especially the pontiff St. Fabian writing to the Bishops of the East. He instituted it only by way of promise, offering to send his comforting Spirit, as today's Gospel also says, because he could not yet give them the Spirit until he was glorified, as St. John says. All this doctrine is from my Angelic doctor St. Thomas.

4. This Sacrament must be conferred only on those who are baptised, for Baptism is the first of the Sacraments and the door to receiving all those of the law of grace. It is conferred by the laying on of the hands of the minister, whose ordinary minister, as I have said, is the bishop, and the anointing he performs with the sacred chrism. That the bishop alone is the ordinary minister of Confirmation is clearly gathered from Scripture, from tradition and from the decisions of the Church. For it appears in the Acts of the Apostles that when Philip the deacon had baptised many people in Samaria, it became necessary for the Apostles to send Peter and John there to confirm them and give them the Holy Spirit, for he had come upon none of them: a proof, says Innocent I, that this ministry was reserved to the Bishops, the successors of the Apostles. The constant and perpetual practice of the Church shows the same, as does the testimony of St. Augustine, St. Leo and many others; and the Church herself has so decided, as a point of faith, in various councils, especially that of Trent.[1] And this decision is not without foundation; for the bishop, by the fullness of power he has over all the Sacraments, is the image of Jesus Christ and uses all his power in carrying out

his ministry and office, which the other, lower ministers do not, as they do nothing except in dependence on their bishop. Further: in a building, it belongs to the lower workmen to prepare the materials that are to be used in its construction, and to the master craftsman or architect to finish it. Likewise, writing a letter belongs to the clerk, but signing and sealing it to the one who authorises it. Under these symbols or figures of the building and the letter the Fathers show that finishing the spiritual building, and sealing with the Spirit of God the letter which the lower ministers, the priests, began in administering Baptism, belongs to the higher craftsmen and ministers, the Bishops; and they do it by administering Confirmation.

5. They do it by the laying on of hands and anointing with the holy chrism. The laying on of hands signifies reconciliation and union with God. But it should be noted that there are different layings on of hands, as is seen in sacred Scripture. One was called reconciliatory, and was used in ancient times as a sign of the ecclesiastical union given to converted heretics when they were readmitted to the bosom of the Church; hence it was called reconciliatory. All this is clear from canon 3 of the first council of Orange. Another laying on of hands was called curative, of which St. Mark says that the disciples of Jesus would lay their hands on the sick and they would be healed of their ailments. So Ananias did, laying them on the eyes of the blind Saul.[2] Another is done in conferring holy orders, of which the Apostle said to Timothy: Do not lay hands on anyone hastily. But this one of which we speak is confirmatory, so that by it the soul may be enlightened with the light of the Holy Spirit, as Tertullian said: whether this laying on of hands is that which the bishop makes over the faithful who are to receive this Sacrament, praying God to forgive their sins and give them his Spirit; or that which he makes in the very act of anointing their foreheads, which cannot be done without touching them. From both, this Sacrament took the name of the laying on of hands, by which it was called for many years. And leaving aside disputes as to which is essential, it is enough to know that the laying on of hands and anointing with the holy chrism are necessary. Chrism is an ointment made of olive oil and balsam, all consecrated by the bishop. The prelate usually performs this consecration on Holy Thursday. So the pope St. Fabian asserts, saying that on the night of the supper Jesus Christ taught his Apostles the way of making the holy chrism, as, he says, we have received it by tradition coming from the Apostles themselves and their legitimate successors. The Apostles used anointing with holy chrism in the sacrament of Confirmation, according to St. Dionysius the Areopagite. Oh, how worthy of our veneration and care this sacred chrism must be! Once the bishop has consecrated it, we must no longer regard it as merely a mixture of oil and balsam, but as a holy thing, a sacred chrism, deserving our respect. Just as (and this is a comparison of the Father St. Cyril) the host that is to serve for the sacrament of the Eucharist, once the venerable words of consecration have been said, is no longer material bread, as it was before, but divine bread, the most holy body of the Lord; so the consecrated chrism is no longer an earthly ointment, but an instrument that by the power of Jesus Christ works the grace of the Holy Spirit, receiving from him its grace and efficacy.

6. The laying on of hands and the anointing with sacred chrism must be accompanied by certain words which the minister of this Sacrament says, and which are its form. They are these: N., I sign you with the sign of the cross, and I confirm you with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. These sacramental words are not found in sacred Scripture, it is true, though St. Paul already hints at them in his second letter to the Corinthians. But this is not surprising, for, in the opinion of St. Dionysius, it was not fitting to set down in writing many of the mysteries of Religion, so as not to expose them to the ridicule and mockery of unbelievers; and so they are known only by tradition. And the holy Fathers, especially St. Ambrose, St. Anselm, Theodoret and many others, bear witness that these words, which make up the form of Confirmation, have been used since the time of the Apostles.

7. This Sacrament is not necessary for obtaining eternal life, as Baptism is, as the pope St. Melchiades expressly says,[3] in the sense of being an indispensable means for a man to be saved, unless he fails to receive it out of contempt. Yet Christians must do all they can not to deprive themselves of this admirable

Sacrament. That is why fathers of families and the prelates of the Church must spare no effort not to defraud children of this gift of God. To receive this Sacrament those who receive it must be in grace, because it is a Sacrament of the living. For this, adults must first prepare themselves by the sacramental confession of their sins, with the dispositions it requires, and so make ready to receive the priceless effects Confirmation produces in the soul. It gives a great increase of grace and a most special strength of the Holy Spirit to persevere easily in the innocence we received in Baptism, making us sturdier and stronger to overcome the world, the devil and the flesh, and, as fearless soldiers of Jesus Christ, to despise all fear and shame in confessing and defending the Religion into whose bosom we have been gathered by the Lord's mercy. It also forgives venial sins, and even mortal sins not confessed through involuntary oversight. In short, as in the natural order a man receives being at birth, but remains then a feeble infant until, growing, he becomes a robust man; so the Christian who receives a spiritual being in Baptism is like a newborn infant, full of weakness, indiscretion and fear; by the power he receives in Confirmation he is strengthened and becomes a strong and perfect man, says the Apostle, to bear witness to Jesus Christ with freedom and spirit; like the Lord's disciples, who on the day of Pentecost received the effects of Confirmation, which gave them strength to preach the faith and seal it with their blood. But ah, my children, what obligations we take on when we share in this Sacrament! I shall say it in the

Second Part

8. I cannot show you better the duties we take on in the sacrament of Confirmation than by explaining the mysterious meaning of the ceremonies with which it is administered; so that, through the indelible character it imprints on our soul, we may always keep in mind the memory of so priceless a benefit and never renounce the gifts of the sovereign Spirit poured into us. I shall briefly describe some of the chief ones. The laying on of hands which the bishop makes over the one being confirmed signifies that, placed under the almighty hand of God, he will henceforth be our protector, an impregnable shield to defend us from the darts of the enemies who conspire against our faith and religious conduct. This must always remind us that we are soldiers of Christ, and that we are obliged to fight with constancy until we come out victorious with the Lord's help, in imitation of Jesus, the general of the whole Christian army. For this we must cast away from us, as St. Paul commands, the works of darkness, which are sins, and put on the armour of light, that is, the holy virtues, so as to triumph over the shadows of eternal death.

9. Then the forehead is anointed with holy chrism, this anointing being made in the form of a cross, the minister signing him with this holy sign and confirming him with the chrism of salvation. What a mysterious meaning, worthy to be engraved in the depths of our hearts! The chrism, as I have said, is made of olive oil and balsam. By the oil, whose effect is to nourish, to soothe and to preserve from corruption, is shown the power and efficacy of Confirmation, which gives strength to our spirit against the enemies of our soul; and therefore we must never let this vigour and fortitude communicated to us be lost, nor allow sloth and inaction to make us give way to the temptations that would assail us. In ancient times, in the Olympic games, wrestlers were anointed with olive oil to free their limbs for the struggle, and the victors were presented with an olive branch. So we are anointed with the same oil to make us ready for spiritual combats, and if we triumph we are offered the crown of glory. The balsam, being fragrant, lays on us the obligation of giving our brethren examples of virtue by our good conduct, so that we may say: We are a good odour of Christ at all times. After the anointing, the forehead of the one confirmed is bound with a band,[1] both out of reverence for the holy chrism itself and especially to show that we wear the badge or cockade of the Saviour of the world and captain of the house of Israel; that we now belong to his standards, from which we must not desert by breaking his commands; and that we must no longer be ashamed to be and to appear his in our words and actions, even in the presence of those who hate his name. But at the same time this binding gives us to understand that we must not wipe out the grace we have received through this holy anointing, fulfilling what the Lord commands us in the first epistle of St. John when he says: Let the anointing you have received

remain always in you.

10. The bishop then gives the newly confirmed a slap on the cheek, to give us to understand that we are no longer treated as children newly born to grace by Baptism, but as strong men who, from the moment we have been confirmed, must be strong athletes, unmoved by any adversity; that this Sacrament is not given us to take revenge on our enemies, returning evil for evil, but so that we may be peaceable and submissive, bearing with patience the blows of those who afflict us, doing good to those who wrong us, and even praying for those who persecute us. This is what Jesus Christ commanded his disciples, and this is what is charged on us in Confirmation, when our cheeks are struck and peace is enjoined on us in all our tribulations.

11. In this Sacrament, as in Baptism, it is the custom to give sponsors to those who receive it: both because, as the two Sacraments were formerly given at the same time, sponsors were then assigned to instruct the neophytes and take charge of their care; and also so that the Christian may know that, though he has received perfection through the grace of the Holy Spirit, he must not trust himself in preserving these gifts, but must listen to the instruction and counsel of those already perfect, and humbly submit to the Christian and pious maxims his sponsors give him, who are the teachers the Church has appointed for him on the spiritual road; and they must do this if they are to fulfil their duties.

12. See, my brethren, though briefly explained, what the sacrament of Confirmation is, its matter, its form, its minister, its effects and the dispositions for receiving it. But at the same time you must reflect on the obligations it lays on us, considering the mystical meaning of the ceremonies with which it is administered; for each one is a lesson teaching us what we must do after receiving it, so that it may never be said of us that we have received in vain the grace of the Holy Spirit communicated in this Sacrament. It is given us to confirm us in the faith and to strengthen us to fight manfully in defence of the Religion we profess, triumphing by our good conduct, our patience and our teaching over all the enemies of true worship, who unhappily are countless. May God in his infinite mercy make us know the perfect gift we share from the sovereign Father of lights, so that we may never resist him, but rather act with courage to preserve with him the grace that will lead us to blessedness. Amen.

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[2] The printed margin gives Innocent I, *Epist. ad Decentium*, and Trent, Session VII (*De confirmatione*, can. 3).

[3] Acts 9:17.

[4] The printed margin gives *Dist. 5 de consec.* (Gratian's *Decretum*).

[1] *venda*.

26. Fifth Sunday after Easter: On the Second Commandment of the Decalogue

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 26, pp. 240–248. Gospel: John 16:23–30. Original preacher not named.

> *Amen, amen dico vobis… (John 16:23).*
>
> *Amen, amen, I say to you…*

The Gospel of this day is from the sixteenth chapter of St. John, and it reads thus:

1. "Amen (Jesus said to his disciples), amen I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in my name, that is, through my merits and as you ought, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name: ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. I have told you these things in parables; the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in parables, but will tell you plainly of my Father. On that day you will ask in my name; and I do not say to you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came forth from God. I came forth from my Father and came into the world; and now I leave the world and go to my Father. His disciples said to him: Behold, now you speak plainly and use no parable. Now we know that you know all things, and that no one needs to question you; by this we know that you came forth from God." This is the Gospel.

2. The Saviour had repeatedly commanded his disciples to pray to their heavenly Father to obtain help in the many needs that surround us since the transgression of Adam. He had taught them even the way they were to make their prayer, dictating to them the very words in which they were to frame their petitions, and he had charged them always to ask the Father in his name and through his merits, sure of obtaining through the mediation of his Only-begotten all they needed. But the disciples seem not to have been quite sure of their divine Master's promise, for, as he says today, they had asked the Father nothing in his name; and now that he was going to leave the world and return to the Father from whom he had come, he assures them of the same promise, giving his words greater force and efficacy: Amen, amen I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name will be given you. This repeated word, amen, amen, is equivalent to an oath, according to the explanation of St. Cyril and Cardinal Hugh; as if he said: I swear by myself, who am infallible truth, that your petitions will succeed when you make them through my intercession. The disciples' distrust and weakness obliged the Saviour to make this holy and just oath; for, besides the need there was to make it and the prudence and judgment with which he made it, he did not mean to deceive them, but fulfilled, and will fulfil eternally, all he offered us in it. Would that all who swear to assure either their words or their promises adorned their oaths with all the circumstances with which our adorable Saviour made his! So countless oaths would be avoided that are false, or made without discretion and prudence and with a detestable ease. What sorrow! An act by which God can be honoured and given due worship turned into a crime, such as taking the most holy name of God vainly upon one's lips, perhaps to back up a lie or a rash word! This is what moves me today to explain the second commandment of the Decalogue, which says: You shall not take the holy name of God in vain. For greater clarity I shall explain what an oath is, and the circumstances that must accompany it for it to be lawful: first part. How greatly he wrongs God who makes his oaths without the conditions that justify them: second part.

First Part

3. An oath is calling God to witness to confirm the truth. As in the first commandment of the Lord's law we are commanded to adore and revere him inwardly, which is done with the spirit and an inner disposition of the soul, because the God who is adored is spirit; so in this second one it is ordered that he be named holily and reverently, and every abuse in invoking his most holy name is forbidden. The name of God, then, is honoured by a just and lawful oath, and dishonoured by a false, rash and imprudent one. For a better explanation of this matter we must know that to swear it is not necessary to pronounce the name of God expressly. It is enough that, to make others believe what we are trying to persuade them of, we swear by some creature in which God shines in a special way; for as everything comes from God, everything subsists in him and everything is ordered to his glory and praise, it is the same to call any created thing to witness to our truth as to invoke the name of the Lord for it. So our divine Master showed, who, to banish the excessive and vicious habit of mixing oaths into our conversations, said to us in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew: I command you not to swear at all, that is, without necessity: neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of a great King; nor by our head, for we cannot make one hair white or black. And in the twenty-third chapter of the same he says: He who swears by the altar swears by it and by all that is on it; and he who swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it; and he who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it. In a word, whatever thing is named in an oath, one swears by the name of God, because everything is his and everything depends on his omnipotence; and so with greater reason when one swears by the holy Gospels, the cross, relics of the Saints or similar things, for it is not they that give authority to our words, but God, whose majesty shines in them.

4. An oath may be assertory, promissory, or execratory, that is, imprecatory. It is assertory when we swear to assure the truth of a present or past thing. Such was the one the apostle St. Paul made when he said to the Philippians: God is my witness how tenderly I love you. Promissory or comminatory, to confirm a promise

we make, or a threat made to someone. Such was the one King David made to assure his wife Bathsheba that her son Solomon would succeed him on the throne; and when he swore to wipe out the whole house of Nabal for the discourtesy he had shown him. The execratory or imprecatory oath is when we ask God for some punishment if what we assert by it is not true. Such was the one St. Paul made, saying: I call God to witness against my soul.[1] In this oath a man is not content to call God as witness to the truth he utters, but submits himself to his judgment as avenger of falsehood. But for an oath of any of the kinds explained to be lawful, and an act of the virtue of religion, it must be accompanied by three circumstances, which are truth, judgment (necessity) and justice. So the Lord declared in the fourth chapter of Jeremiah, saying: You shall swear, As the Lord lives, in truth, in judgment and in justice.[2] Let us briefly explain these three conditions.

5. Truth. One swears with truth when one states simply and openly, without artifice or equivocation, what is exactly true, and the one who affirms it holds it to be so, not moved by slight conjectures, but by solid proofs that make him certain of the truth he utters. Consequently, nothing should be the matter of an oath except what is known with a certainty that excludes all doubt and even every reason for doubt. In the promissory oath still more is required. As the one who affirms something on oath must know for certain what he affirms, so the one who makes a promise on oath must be resolved, at the time of promising, to fulfil it, otherwise he gravely fails against the truth of the oath; and afterwards he must carry out what he has promised, sinning if he does not do so, according to the gravity of what was offered. The promissory oath is made up of both truths, so that what David said of the just soul may be fulfilled: he swore to his neighbour and did not deceive him.

6. Judgment. By this word it is understood that one must not swear indiscreetly and rashly, but with prudence and judgment, and only when there is need to do so, because our words are not believed and it matters greatly that they should be. I swear, said St. Augustine,[3] when I am compelled to it by grave necessity: when I see that I am not believed, and it is important for the one I am speaking to that he believe me; then, having considered and thought everything over, though with fear and trembling, I say… God is my witness, or, Jesus Christ knows that I speak sincerely. There must, then, be necessity for swearing, and even then one must be very circumspect and prudent in one's oaths, especially promissory ones, reflecting carefully whether one will be able to fulfil what one promises, lest one fall into two reefs we must avoid: either breaking one's word through a change of mind, as David did when he spared Nabal the punishment with which he had threatened him on oath; or being unable to fulfil what was promised without offending the Lord, as Herod did in keeping the oath he made to Herodias's daughter to give her whatever she asked, thinking himself obliged by it to give her the Baptist's head, adding to his rash oath a horrible crime, the death of an innocent man.

7. Justice. One swears with justice, especially in promissory or comminatory oaths, when what is offered is just. If it is unjust, besides the oath being null and sinful, it is a most grievous sin. For if one sins by doing what God forbids in his holy law, how much greater a crime will it be to bind oneself to do it by the religion of an oath, bringing God in as witness to iniquity? Such was the oath the Jews made not to eat or drink until they had taken St. Paul's life.[4] A cruel promise! A promise they could not fulfil, and they became guilty of the injustice they had planned. It is an error to persuade oneself that there is an obligation to fulfil an unjust or sinful oath. In that case a man must repent of having made it; not of the truth of the oath, but of having made it unjustly and rashly.

8. An oath with these three conditions of truth, necessity and justice is lawful, and the supreme Majesty is honoured by it. God himself commands us to make it in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, saying: You shall swear by the name of your God. And David in Psalm 62 says that all who swear by him shall be praised. The Angel of the Apocalypse swore by him who lives for ever and ever. St. Paul did in many of his epistles. And God himself swore by himself, because, as the Apostle says, he had no one greater by whom to swear.[5] If swearing with the said conditions is a virtuous act, so much so that God himself did it, how great a crime will

it be to swear without them, and how much irreverence is done to God in this? We shall see it in the

Second Part

9. As by a lawful oath honour is given to God, his most holy name is blessed and magnified, and a profession of faith is made, confessing the Lord as true and able to authorise the truths we utter, as St. Jerome says; so on the contrary he who swears either falsely or rashly wrongs him, and as far as lies in him dishonours the venerable name of God; and so execrable a crime will not go unpunished. God will not hold him guiltless, says the twentieth chapter of Exodus, who takes his holy name in vain. And who are these? He who swears falsely, or asserts on oath what is not so, or what, though it may be so, he himself judges to be a lie; for by calling God as witness to a falsehood he gives to understand, says St. Thomas my master,[1] either that God does not know the truth or that he is willing to testify to a lie, and consequently he sacrilegiously profanes the name of God. And this is what we call perjury: a sin of its nature mortal and most grievous. And a sin that so offends the Lord we must avoid with the greatest care and diligence, both in ourselves and in others, not requiring an oath of them when we judge it probable that they will perjure themselves in it. This, says St. Augustine,[2] is to be the executioner of one's brother; for if he who swears falsely kills himself, he who forces another to perjure himself guides his hand to kill himself. This false swearing can be committed in various ways. Not only does one swear falsely when one asserts a lie on oath, as I have said, but also he who, against God's prohibition, swears by false gods, such as Bacchus, Jupiter, Saturn, etc. There can be no greater insult to the Lord than to compare him with false divinities, nor anything more contrary to the truth than to call as witnesses to it lying and feigned gods, as if they were the true God. For it should be noted, my brethren, that he who swears states one truth and presupposes another: for by calling another as witness to what he affirms, he gives to understand that the witness is truthful, since he wants to be believed in the truth he puts forward on the witness's authority and truthfulness. And what could be more absurd and more insulting to the true God than to presuppose that the gods by whom one swears are true gods? To avoid this crime, with what care must we see that truth is always joined to our oaths, both at the moment of uttering them and also, if they are promissory, at the time of fulfilling the promise we may have made by them to God and to our brother! What an example of this Joshua gave! When his troops complained that he had spared the lives of the Gibeonites, he answered them: We swore this favour to them in the name of the Lord; and why should we not keep the oath? It is true that circumstances may change so as to make it impossible to carry out a promise made on oath, in which case there is no obligation to carry it out, and at times it might be sinful.

10. But ah, how often God is wronged by the detestable vice of perjury! A son of the family, or a servant, who foresees the master's or the father's anger for having done something contrary to what he had ordered: how easily they perjure themselves, saying: The devil take me if I did this; may God not forgive me if I went to such a place; God is my witness that I did not eat such a thing! Words as frequent as they are detestable, and which so blacken the holiness of the most sweet name of our God. And what shall we say of those who swear to commit some crime, for example: I swear by this holy cross that I will not give alms to the poor, however rich I may be; I swear to God that I will kill whoever comes into my garden? Ah, what an execrable insult such people do the Lord, making him stand surety for a crime so contrary to his love and his beneficence! Do they call as witness, so as to refuse mercy to the needy, a God who, despite our ingratitude, makes the sun rise every day on the good and the wicked, and sends rain without distinction on the fields of the just and of sinners? Do they set up the most holy cross on which the Saviour expired as guarantor of a vengeance, when that divine instrument was the means of reconciling man with his God, justly angered against him; the altar on which the Only-begotten of the Father was sacrificed for the salvation of his very enemies; and the banner that announced peace to the whole universe? Let the bold man be ashamed to open his lips invoking the name of his God to back up a criminal threat against his neighbour.

11. But where it seems to me that God is most wronged, though in another way, is in the ease with which people swear without necessity, without thought, without discretion, without judgment, the habit of swearing (even if not falsely) becoming like a fashion, or like the salt and wit of every conversation. In houses, in squares, at social gatherings, at games, at banquets, in familiar talk, nothing is heard but the sacrilegious invocation of the name of God, many men mixing oaths into every word. These offend God and sin gravely, by exposing themselves to a proximate danger of perjury; for if, as Scripture says, he who talks much will not escape sinning, how will there be no sin in swearing much, even when one thinks one is doing it truthfully? That is why Ecclesiasticus said: Do not be quick to put the name of God in your mouth with oaths, for you will not be free from sin. The rashness and indiscretion of many Christians who, as St. Augustine says,[3] without necessity, without being compelled to do it, and without what they affirm deserving to be confirmed by invoking the name of the Lord, are continually swearing: this is the reason why there are men who never put God in their mouths except to insult him, making him serve as a shield for their whims. Their Creed, their Salve, their prayers are nothing but saying again and again: By God's life, by the nails of Jesus, by the consecrated host, and other such expressions, which are usually accompanied by curses and blasphemies. How great an insult would it be to an earthly prince if at every step his name were pronounced to vouch for any trifle or whim? Far greater irreverence is done in this to the King of kings and the Lord of lords. I am well aware that it is difficult to root out of the mouth of a man corrupted in this matter so accursed a habit as swearing by God at every step, all the easier to commit, says St. Augustine, as it is done with so mobile a member as the tongue. But let us hear the remedy the same Saint gives for it: The more easily the tongue moves, the greater must be your care to bridle it. You will tame it if you live watchfully; you will watch if you fear God; and you will fear him if you are a Christian.

12. I would not wish to go on at length, though this subject would need as many pláticas as there are crimes committed against this second commandment of the Decalogue. I have said, though briefly, what an oath is and its kinds, and the circumstances that must accompany it for it to be lawful and even virtuous. At the same time I have touched on some of the sins by which God is wronged in oaths, through not clothing them with the conditions that make them upright and sometimes necessary. It only remains, my brethren, to exhort you with the very words with which the Lord gave this commandment: Do not take the name of the Lord in vain. Swear, yes, but with truth, necessity and justice. Invoke the name of God, not to ridicule him and make him a cloak for your wickedness, but to praise him, bless him and ask his help in your needs: He is near to all who call upon him in truth and spirit. Invoke the name of Jesus, not to blaspheme him and call him as witness to your lies or your whims, but to set him as mediator with the eternal Father; for no other name has been given to men able to save us and bring us into glory. Amen.

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[4] The printed margin gives Phil. 1:8 and 2 Cor. 1:23.

[5] Jer. 4:2.

[6] The printed margin gives *Serm. CLXXX*, c. 9.

[7] The printed margin gives Acts 23:12–13.

[8] The printed margin gives Apoc. 10:6 and Heb. 6 (6:13). "Psalm 62" is Vulgate numbering (Ps. 63:12 in modern Bibles).

[1] The printed margin gives *Summa* II-II, q. 98, a. 2.

[2] The printed margin gives *Serm. CLXXX*, c. 10.

[3] The printed margin gives *Serm. XXX*.

27. Sunday after the Ascension: On the Name of Christian and the Obligations It Imposes

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 27, pp. 249–257. Gospel: John 15:26–16:4. Original preacher not named.

Ab initio mecum estis (John 15:27).

You have been with me from the beginning.

The Gospel of this day is from the fifteenth chapter of St. John, and it reads thus:

1. “When the Comforter comes,” Jesus said to his disciples, “whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from me as from the Father, he will bear witness to me and will make me known to the world as the Son of God; and you also will bear witness to me, because you have been with me from the beginning. I have told you these things to keep you from the scandals that the cruel persecutions you will suffer for my name may cause you. They will put you out of the Synagogue; and the time is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering a service pleasing to God. And they will kill you so, because they have not known my Father nor me. But I have told you these things so that when the time comes for them to happen you may remember that I told you of them.” This is the Gospel.

2. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, came upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost and enlightened them to know the truths Jesus Christ had taught them since, in his infinite mercy, he set them apart from the rest of men as his disciples. This Spirit of truth bore witness to Jesus Christ before the Apostles, so that they might assent to his doctrine and announce it to the world; and that is why the Saviour told them in this Gospel: You will bear witness to me, because you have been with me from the beginning of my preaching, testifying to the world by your example and teaching that my faith is true, and the religion I have planted, which you must spread through the whole universe. To us, my children, to us also these same words are addressed: You will bear witness to me, because you have been with me from the beginning of your calling. In holy Baptism we were enrolled under the banners of Christ, and for that reason we were given the name of Christians, which we mercifully enjoy. That is why, to ask whether a child is being baptised, people often say: When are they making him a Christian? We are made Christians at the baptismal font, because there we are made disciples of Christ. A name worthy of all excellence, dignity and glory; a name above every name, surpassing those that distinguish the most illustrious heroes. But ah, my brethren, this is a name that imposes on us the gravest obligations if we are to live up to its meaning. All of us who since the beginning of our spiritual regeneration have stood at the side of Jesus Christ, sharing his faith and example, must bear witness to Jesus Christ before the world, so that by our words and works all may know which side we belong to, and that we are children of the Saviour by our conduct as we are by name. This is what I mean to persuade you of today. What does this name Christian mean? I shall say in the first part. To what does this name Christian oblige us? I shall say in the second.

First Part

3. The disciples Jesus Christ has had since his law full of grace began to be proclaimed have not always been called in the same way; but they were always given a name that clearly indicated the holy Religion they professed. First they were called disciples, because they themselves confessed by their words and actions that they were followers of the doctrine taught by Jesus, the Master sent from heaven, the Teacher of justice and the Angel of good counsel, whom the prophet Isaiah had already announced, saying: Your eyes shall see your Teacher, and your ears shall hear him who says to you: This is the way, walk in it. These words speak of Christ, who taught them visibly; at his feet the first faithful received the instruction needed for their eternal salvation, and rightly they were called his disciples. Then they were called brethren. The Lord himself often impressed on them in his sermons that all were brothers, all children of one father, who is the God who dwells in the heights of the empyrean; and they showed this brotherhood in the mutual love they bore one another, so that, as is said in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, among the believers in Jesus there was but one heart and one soul: such was the love they had for one another. This was the special mark by which the Saviour’s disciples were distinguished, and so he himself said to them: By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. So that men of different kingdoms and different tongues all seemed born of the same father and the same mother; and this union and love caused such admiration in those outside the

law that they said to one another, speaking of the disciples of Jesus: See how they love one another! So St. Ambrose[1] relates the holy contest that took place at Antioch between the virgin Theodora and a Christian soldier. She had been condemned, for following Christ, to be prostituted; and the soldier, to defend her honour, exchanged clothes with her; she fled disguised as a soldier, and he was led to execution in her place. But the holy virgin, learning of the sentence, presented herself to the judge, saying that it was she who was guilty of death, not the soldier; and in the end both suffered martyrdom.

4. In the third place they were called Galileans, which means pilgrims; and this name rightly belonged to those who had learned from their divine Master that we are in this world as men setting out for the heavenly homeland, and that in the world, as St. Paul said, we have no lasting city, but seek, and must always seek, the city to come. This name the Angels gave to all the Apostles and disciples of the Lord when, on the day he ascended into heaven, they stood with their eyes fixed on him whose loss so grieved them. Men of Galilee, they said to them, why do you stand looking up to heaven? This Jesus, whom you now see going up to heaven, will come again, when he comes to judge the world, with the same majesty and glory with which you see him go up. And this title, though in mockery, was also given to the Saviour by Julian the Apostate, who had abandoned the Christian law he had received; when he saw himself terribly punished by Jesus for his apostasy, at the moment he was about to expire, he turned to the Lord and said: You have conquered, Galilean, you have conquered.

5. Finally the disciples of Jesus Christ began to be called Christians in the city of Antioch. This name derives from the name Christ, just as those who follow the laws of Mohammed's Koran are called Mohammedans, those who follow Calvin's Calvinists, those who follow Luther's Lutherans, etc. The name Christian denotes that we share in the sacred anointing of Jesus Christ. For as the oil with which Aaron was anointed, as David said in Psalm 132, not only ran down from his head to his beard but even reached to bathe the hem of his garments; so the spiritual grace with which our adorable Jesus Christ, the true Aaron and head of the body of his Church, was anointed by the fullness of the Holy Spirit (for that is what Christ means) reaches to the hem of his garment; that is, the very least of his faithful comes to share in this anointing and grace, and so with good reason all are called Christians. For this reason the most sweet Father St. Bernard, in one of his sermons, said to Jesus: Your name is oil poured out, O Spouse of my soul! Be it Jesus, be it Christ, both titles have been poured upon us men who, rotting in our dung like beasts of burden, have shared in your anointing and your salvation. It does not detract from our being called Christians that the members of the religious Orders take different names, such as Carmelites, Franciscans, Benedictines, Dominicans, etc.; nor is this dividing Christ, as the heretics perversely slander us. Certainly not: all the holy founders are captains under one and the same general, who is Christ, establishing their families, which make the same law and doctrine of the Saviour be observed more perfectly, and make their subjects perfect Christians, or aspirants to be so. These are not divided either in faith, or in doctrine, or in Christian charity. The diversity of their habits, their name, their way of life causes no deformity; rather it adorns the Spouse of Jesus Christ. They are the various colours of the many-coloured tunic of the true Joseph,[2] the various flowers of the Spouse's garden, and different members of the same mystical body. Their founders begot these many children, not for themselves but for Jesus Christ. And as in the heavenly Jerusalem all the Angels are ministers of one and the same God, but some enlighten, others attend at God's throne, others are sent to announce his mysteries, yet all are Angels of the same Lord; so in the Church militant there are Christians who by their profession are occupied, some in retirement and divine contemplation, others in singing the divine praises, others in the ministry of the word, others in caring for the sick; but all serve Jesus Christ, keep his laws and are Christians.

6. How precious is this name! Hermenegild prized it more than the crown, and, rather than give it up, suffered the martyrdom ordered by his own Arian father. St. Louis, king of France, said that the place where he had been baptised and had received the name of Christian, with its anointing and gifts, was incomparably more precious to him than the place where he had been anointed monarch and given the crown and title of

king. The holy deacon,[3] when the tyrants, amid the greatest torments, asked him his name, his lineage and his country, answered every question: My name is Christian, my lineage Christian, my country Christian; I have nothing and am worth nothing except being a Christian. With this word, uttering no other, he expired in martyrdom. This is what Christian means. But to what is a man obliged by this title? We shall see it in the

Second Part

7. Many are the obligations we contract by having been given the name and dignity of Christian through the Sacrament of regeneration. In the first place, each time we consider that we are Christians, this title should be a spur moving us to gratitude for so singular a benefit as having been chosen to belong to the faith of Jesus Christ, when so many thousands of men are sunk in the shadows and errors of unbelief. To this acknowledgment and gratitude to God the apostle St. Paul exhorts us in his epistle to the Colossians, saying: Give thanks to God, who has made us worthy to share in the lot of the Saints in light. With reason this Doctor of the gentiles calls the happy state of Christians a lot. In casting lots no account is taken of the persons among whom it is cast; the lot does not fall on one because he is wise, rich, noble or virtuous; it may equally fall to the ignorant, the commoner, the poor or the vicious. So, my brethren, it has fallen to us as if by lot, but a lot guided by the merciful hand of the Lord, like that which added Matthias to the apostolic college, that we were not born among Turks, Jews or heretics, but among Christians, where we could become Christians. There was no reason or merit at all on our part for it; only the goodness of that Lord in whose hands are our lots, who willed to grant us this singular grace he has denied to millions upon millions of creatures. This is what stirred the grateful heart of St. Augustine when, in his exposition of Psalm 30,[1] where those words are found, he says: In your hands are my lots. I see no merit of mine, Lord, for which you should choose me for the state of attaining salvation, drawing me out of the universal impiety of the human race, and that by lot I should have come to touch the tunic, that is, the faith, of my Lord Jesus Christ. So it is: in the very hour we were born the Lord would be drawing countless souls out of nothing, and while some were born in the shadows of error, his omnipotence willed that we should receive our being in his Church, where we have God for our Father, his Son for our Redeemer, priceless Sacraments for our medicine, for our food the living bread that came down from heaven, and for our bosom a loving mother, the lap of the Catholic Church. Oh, how grateful we ought to be every day of our lives for this name of Christian we enjoy, which is a fountain of the greatest blessings!

8. But besides this the Christian must form in himself the image of Christ, whose name has been given him. Being a Christian, says the catechism, means being a disciple of Christ, and this obliges him to follow his law and imitate his virtues. My brethren, we bear a name that represents to us a Lord humble, chaste, charitable, obedient unto death; in short, the sum of all virtues. It tells us that we are called to follow, not the darkness of sin, but the light of holiness. Cornelius Tacitus relates of the most wise Seneca that, being about to die, he called his friends together, and since he had nothing to leave them, said to them: The precious legacy I bequeath you is the image of my life, that you may imitate it. This testament Jesus Christ left us: the imitation of his life; and this is necessary to the Christian if he is to be saved. Those whom the Lord predestined for heaven, said St. Paul, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. In ancient times sons wore hanging from the neck a medal engraved with the image of their father, as a continual reminder of his virtues, so that they might imitate them in their conduct; and from him who did not match by his actions the virtuous deeds of the one who had given him being, it was taken from his neck with the greatest disgrace. So the Roman Senate did with a Scipio, called infamous or disinherited, because, far from following in the honourable footsteps of his father, he had degenerated into a vicious and criminal son. The Christian, then, must bear, not only hanging at his neck but engraved in his heart, the image of his Father, his God, his Redeemer, his divine Master.

9. But ah, my brethren! Of how many who glory in the priceless name of Christians could one say, in due proportion, what was said to a bishop in the Apocalypse: You have the name of being alive, but you are dead, for I do not find your works full of merit in the sight of God! There is no doubt that the name of Christian, for one who lives up to it in his actions, imitating in them his original, Jesus, is a name that, filling him with grace in life, will give him eternal life at his death. But it will not make many live eternally, because they degenerate from the name given them in Baptism, going against the laws laid on them there. They enlisted in the Saviour's army to labour as soldiers of Jesus Christ, as the Apostle commanded; but in their works one sees neither humility, nor purity, nor mortification of the flesh, nor the other virtues that are the arms of their warfare. They carry with them the name of Christ, but no action proper to the Saviour is seen in them. What would we say if we saw painted on a wall a horrible image of the devil, and beneath it an inscription saying: True image of Jesus Christ? What an absurdity, we would say! Either wipe out the title or remove the image. Well, this is what happens with the man who, bearing the title of Christian, which means image of Jesus, forms by his conduct the likeness of Satan with his iniquities. Let him strip himself, then, of the name of Christian, or conform his life to that of Jesus Christ.

10. Not all who are of Israel, said St. Paul, are Israelites, nor are all who descend from the seed of Abraham his children. The Apostle said this alluding to the difference found among the children of Israel themselves: some descended from the most holy Patriarchs only according to the flesh, others according to virtue and piety. Some were true Israelites, because they imitated not only the faith but also the works of their forefathers; but others were so only by lineage, departing from the laws and precepts of their people. So too we can say that there are two kinds of Christians. Some are Christians according to the flesh, because, being children of Christians, they were baptised and entered by this door into the holy people, the chosen race of the royal priesthood; but they have nothing of Christians except the name. Speaking of these, the great Father St. John Chrysostom[2] says: Tell me, by what shall I know that you are a Christian? By the place? By the dress? By the words? By the food? Or by the business? Answer me, my brother: which is the place you frequent most? Is it the temple of God, to which every Christian should go to offer his prayers and learn the doctrine of Jesus Christ; or is it the gaming house, the square or the tavern? Are your clothes modest, decent and expressive of the humility of your divine Master, or are they provocative, indecent or adorned with scandalous luxury? Do you use your tongue to honour God, praise his name, teach and instruct your neighbour? Or in oaths, blasphemies, detraction, flattery and lies? Does temperance reign at your table, sobriety, and, when commanded, abstinence and fasting? Or gluttony, drunkenness and other excesses proper to the disciples of Epicurus? In your dealings and business are equity, truth and justice seen? Or intrigue, deceit, fraud and robbery? If so, you present no testimony at all to show that you are a Christian and the portrait of that Lord who in works and words was the exemplar and model of all holiness. Do you want to know what those Christians are like who, confessing themselves such, contradict it by their works? See the likenesses the holy Fathers make of them. They are like that altar described in Exodus, full of very brilliant outward show but empty within; like that fig tree the Saviour cursed because he saw on it nothing but green leaves and no fruit at all; like… But let us not weary ourselves: a Christian who is content with the outward appearance of his name, without the fruit of holiness the name itself demands, will be fit only for eternal fire.

11. There are others whom we can call half-Christians, who at one and the same time want to look at heaven and at earth; who bend one knee to the holy ark and the other to the idol Dagon. These boast of keeping some of the Lord's commandments, but refuse to fulfil them all. For example, they hear Mass on feast days, go to hear an occasional sermon, give some alms to the needy, pray the holy Rosary. But speak to them of fasting in Lent and on the days prescribed by the Church, of forgiving the injury their neighbour did them, of being reconciled with their enemies, of bridling the tongue, of taming the flesh with its vices and lusts, of fleeing certain flattering occasions… Let there be no talk of that! Thus far we are Christians, but not to put up with so many troubles! That is to say, they accompany Christ in the sweetness of Tabor, but they do not want to taste his chalice because it is bitter, nor go to Calvary to imitate Christ in his passion. All this is a reflection

of the venerable Fr. Luis of Granada. But, my brethren, no one can serve two masters, and Christ does not accept the heart unless it is whole. The name of Christian does not include only the fulfilment of a few commandments, but of the whole law. In Baptism, when the character of children of Jesus Christ was imprinted on us, we were made to renounce the devil and all his works; all, it excludes none. And woe to us if, when we present ourselves at the divine tribunal with the character of Christians, which is not effaced either in this life or in the next, it is not adorned with the works of Christians that correspond to it. Unhappy and wretched… Enough.

12. I have explained, though not at the length I would wish, the meaning of this name Christian, and how worthy it is of our esteem for marking us out as disciples of the Only-begotten of the Father, made man for our salvation and healing. But at the same time I have set before you the many obligations we contracted on entering under the banners of Christ and taking his name. Some day perhaps I shall dwell further on this matter, speaking of living faith. Now I wish to conclude with the words the great Father St. Leo spoke on this subject in a sermon he preached on the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ: O Christian, he says, recognise your dignity, and, having been made a partaker of the divine nature through Baptism, do not return to your former baseness by a conduct unworthy of your dignity. Remember of what head you are a member, and that, having been rescued from the power of darkness, you were brought into the light of God and into his kingdom. Do not hand yourself over a second time to the slavery of the devil; remember that the price with which you were redeemed from him was nothing less than the blood of Jesus Christ.[3] May this consideration make us act as Christians, so as to gain its fruits, which are those of eternal life. Amen.

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[4] The printed margin gives St. Ambrose, *De virginibus*, Book II.

[5] Gen. 37:3.

[6] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* V.1.

[1] Vulgate numbering (Ps. 31:16 in modern Bibles). Similarly “Psalm 132” above is Ps. 133:2.

[2] The printed margin gives *Hom. II ad populum Antiochenum.*

[3] St. Leo the Great, *Sermo 21* (*In Nativitate Domini* I), 3; quoted in.

28. Pentecost Sunday: On the Mystery

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 28, pp. 258–266. Gospel: John 14:23–31. Original preacher not named.

> *Pater meus diliget eum; et ad eum veniemus, et mansionem apud eum faciemus (John 14:23).*
>
> *My Father will love him; and we will come to him, and we will abide in him.*

The Gospel of this day is from chapter 14 of St. John, and reads thus:

1. “Jesus said to his disciples: If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, my teaching, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling in him. He who does not love me does not keep my words. The word that you have heard from me in my preaching is not mine, but the Father’s, who sent me to preach the truth. I have told you these things while I am still with you. But the Comforter, the Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of all that I have told you. I leave you peace; I give you my peace; I do not give it to you as the deceiving world gives it. Let not your heart be troubled nor lose courage at my absence. You heard me tell you: I am going away, and I am coming to you. If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I, as regards my humanity. And I have told you now before it happens, so that when it has happened you may believe, and rejoice because I am going to heaven. I will no longer speak much with you, for behold, the prince of this world, the devil, is coming to exercise his tyranny over me through my death, although in me he has nothing that belongs to him. But it is so that the world may know that I love the Father, and that I do what the Father commands me, which is to suffer and die for you.” This is the Gospel.

2. When the Holy Spirit comes, the Spirit, the Comforter, whom the Father will send in the name of Jesus Christ, he will teach all things and remind us of all that Jesus himself preached. Sweet words, consoling promise, which saw its fulfilment on this day of Pentecost! Happy day, says St. Leo, a day full of mysteries, of Sacraments and of blessings; a day, says St. Augustine, on which the Holy Spirit, descending upon the Apostles in tongues of fire, preceded by a thunderous noise, filled them with graces, gifts and privileges. On it they saw that Jesus kept his word, and that, having taken a man up to heaven in his Ascension, today he brings down a whole God upon the earth, to instruct them, to kindle them with his love, and to strengthen them to carry out the ministry to which he had appointed them. *All the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit*, sings the Church today. But this Spirit, the Comforter, did not fill the Apostles alone with his gifts: with them he also filled the whole Church founded by Jesus Christ and planted by the Apostles themselves, and he pours his gifts into her and will communicate them to her until the end of the ages. *The Spirit of the Lord*, says Isaiah,[1] *has filled the whole world.* Here, my brethren, is the object of this feast and of my subject. What the Holy Spirit wrought in the Apostles on this day I shall show in the first part; what he works and will work in the Church which the Apostles planted, I shall show in the second. All of it briefly; it cannot be otherwise.[2]

First Part

3. What did the Holy Spirit work in the Apostles on the day of Pentecost? Ah! He taught them when they were ignorant, he sanctified them when they were imperfect, he strengthened them when they were weak. Let us speak of each in turn.

4. He taught them. Before the Holy Spirit came upon them, the Apostles were rough men, without birth, without upbringing, ignorant. It seems that Jesus Christ, that Teacher of justice and Angel of good counsel, had spent all his instruction on them in vain, for they were incapable of understanding his teaching. They took all his oracles for paradoxes, the mysteries he announced to them for riddles; the clearest words were for them an unknown language. The Saviour himself had several times called them ignorant, *nescitis*, and refrained from announcing certain truths to them because they were not capable of them. Come, then, Holy Spirit, and send from heaven a ray of light to dispel the darkness from the minds of those men who are to be your oracles and interpreters in the world: *Veni… et emitte caelitus lucis tuae radium*. So he does, according to the word of Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes upon them and teaches them all truths, the truths of faith and of conduct: that is, he teaches them all that they must believe, all that they must do, and even all that they must teach. The mysteries and maxims of the new religion they were to plant in the world, which had seemed so obscure to them, are revealed to them in a way they can understand and put into practice. This Spirit, the Comforter, tears away the veil that hid from them what their divine Master had taught them, and reveals to these ignorant servants the secret of the seven seals of the mysterious book, of which until then they had been able to understand nothing. Now, then, they are scribes learned in the kingdom of heaven, and they see as though with bodily eyes, though only with those of faith, that Jesus had triumphed over death in confirmation of his teaching. Nothing of all the Lord had preached to them now seemed doubtful, and the Holy Spirit brings back to their memory all that he had told them. What prodigious instruction!

5. They needed more: he sanctifies them. Although the Apostles had left all they had to follow the Messiah, and had become his disciples, they had not yet freed themselves from all their passions. They were ambitious, and quarrelled over the interests of a frivolous precedence; proud, longing for the first posts in the imaginary kingdom they had pictured, thinking that their Master was going to reign in a temporal way, the time having come when he would restore the kingdom of Israel to the son of David; full of self-love, for they even tried to dissuade Jesus Christ from his passion and death, moved by the spirit of Satan, as he told Peter, because of what might befall themselves; and with all the affection they showed the Saviour, it did not, it seems, rise above the level of the earthly and the sensible. Come, then, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your

faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love. So it happens: the Holy Spirit comes down as a tongue, and a tongue of fire; he sets them ablaze, fills them with his grace, sanctifies them and confirms them in it, according to the teaching of many holy Fathers. He makes them saints; but for this he first prepares them, and since it is the property of fire to consume all dross, he takes away all there was in their souls, so that they might remain pure vessels, worthy receptacles of the blessings of heaven, in whom might rest the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of knowledge and of piety, and the Spirit of the holy fear of the Lord. All this had been prophesied in chapter 11 of Isaiah.[1] See them now made heroes of holiness: the haughty humble, the lukewarm fervent, the quarrelsome peaceable; in short, the imperfect virtuous. All this is the teaching of St. Augustine and St. Gregory.[2]

6. Lastly, he strengthens them. The Apostles were timid, cowardly, full of fright at the sight of their enemies and those of their divine Master. They had never dared to speak a word in his defence. None of them had been willing to bear witness to his innocence when he was insulted in public; and even when Jesus Christ rebuked the Pharisees with certain words, they, fearing this might stir up the hatred and persecution of those men, would say to their Master: *Lord, do not say such things, for when the Pharisees hear them they will be scandalized.* Not only this: the time of Jesus' arrest comes; they abandon him, flee headlong, and look for a shameful refuge to preserve them from the fury of their persecutors. Go to the upper room \[*cenáculo*\], and there you will see them hidden since the Lord's Ascension, for the fear they had conceived of the Jews. I picture the upper room as a tomb in which lay so many men, with the appearance of the living, but sunk in a spiritual death. Come, then, Holy Spirit, I shall say with Ezekiel,[3] *breathe upon these dead that they may receive new life*, and let there be formed from them, as from the dry bones of the plain of Shinar, a terrible army to defend your cause. So it happens. The Holy Spirit descends upon the Apostles, gives them the spirit and gift of fortitude, and out of weak reeds, which bent at the least wind of persecution, he makes columns of iron and bronze, unconquerable in every combat.

7. Once they have received this gift, the upper room is too small an enclosure to contain their zeal; they want to make known to the world the truths that had been communicated to them, and they kindle men with the same fire that was already consuming them. They open the doors and present themselves without fear in the squares of Jerusalem. There they found themselves surrounded by the doctors of the law, by all the people and by countless foreigners, in sight of the very men who hated Jesus and had just put him to death. For all that, those who before had not dared to proclaim his teaching in their own language now, by the gift of tongues that had been granted them, speak in every language, throwing their crime in their faces, and say: *The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob has vindicated the honour of his Son. You, preferring a seditious man and a murderer, Barabbas, to Jesus, who was innocence itself, handed him over to Pilate to crucify him, when Pilate judged him guiltless, and you put to death the very Author of life. God raised him, bringing him out of the horrors of the tomb: we, we are witnesses of his resurrection.*[4] God bless me \[*¡Válgame Dios!*\]! What courage! Peter, who at the voice of a serving girl had in his cowardice denied his divine Master, now speaks with such fortitude that in one sermon he, with his companions, converts to the faith of Jesus Christ three thousand Jews in one day and five thousand on another. What is this! Is this Peter? Are these the timid Apostles? How do they make those hands, on which the blood of a God-Man was still smoking, now take up the censer to pay homage to the very one they crucified? How can they make those mouths, from which a few days ago came those bloodthirsty words, *Let him die, crucify him*, now say with the Apocalypse: *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honour, praise and thanksgiving*? What is this? What can it be? It was not the Apostles who spoke, but the Spirit of the heavenly Father who spoke through their mouths. The Holy Spirit strengthens them to preach a new Gospel, not only in Jerusalem but in the whole world, where the same Spirit distributes them. Through them he brings about the conversion of the world and the planting of the Church, even to watering her with their blood, which, in Tertullian's judgement, was a holy seed that made the Bride of the Lamb fruitful with countless worshippers of the Lord in truth and spirit.[5] In short, on this day the Holy Spirit taught the ignorant, sanctified the imperfect, strengthened the weak: this is what he

wrought in the Apostles on the day of Pentecost.

Second Part

8. But if the Apostles were on this day filled with the Holy Spirit, so also is and will be, until the end of the world, the Church of the Saviour, which the Apostles planted by the same Holy Spirit. Let us see it. The Church, this congregation of the baptized faithful who, according to the law of Christ, are under the direction of Christ, who according to St. Paul is her head, though now invisible, and of the Roman Pontiff, who is her visible head and the vicar of Christ himself in her, receives and will receive the charisms and gifts of the sovereign Spirit, who teaches her all truths, sanctifies her and gives her strength to defend herself from the attacks of her enemies. But we must consider this Church under different aspects: in her head and in her members; and among the members we must distinguish the living members, who are the just, and the dead, who are the sinners. To all of them the Holy Spirit communicates himself, though in different ways. Let us speak of each in turn.

9. The head of the Church, as I have said, is the Roman Pontiff. It was to him, in the person of Peter, above all the Apostles, that the Saviour said: *Feed my lambs, feed my sheep*; that is, take care as chief shepherd \[*mayoral*\] of all my flock, which is my Church; of all of it, not only of the lambs, who are all the faithful, but of the sheep, that is, of the fathers and the other lesser pastors. Nevertheless, the Councils assembled of all the Bishops, with the approval of the universal head, can and must be called head of the Church. This head the Holy Spirit assists, enlightens, sanctifies and strengthens; and that Lord who promised not to leave us until the end of the ages sends his Spirit, the Comforter, in every age. He teaches her, inspires and reveals to her all truths, to propose them to the whole body of the Church as the object of its belief, since she enjoys infallibility in proposing her dogmas and in teaching morals. All the decisions that the head of the Church makes as such are infallible, as dictated by the Holy Spirit. So the Apostles said in their first council: *It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us*, in what we decree. And whoever despises this head of the Church despises God himself, who speaks through it. So, my brethren, if you see anyone who holds the decrees of the Church to be human inventions, and does not listen to them or keep them, regard him as opposed to the Holy Spirit, as a heathen, a publican, a heretic: so Jesus Christ commands in his Gospel: *Si Ecclesiam non audierit, sit tibi sicut ethnicus et publicanus.* This Church will not cease to suffer attacks from the spirit of lies, but the gates of hell will not be able to prevail against her, according to the promise of her divine Founder. She is a ship that will come to the brink of shipwreck, like the Apostles' boat on the Sea of Galilee; but there is no need to fear, says St. Ambrose: the Holy Spirit steers her helm, and so she will never be sunk.

10. Let us pass to her members. The just receive in full the gifts of the Holy Spirit, who was given to them, says the Apostle, when charity was poured into them through the sacrament of Baptism and of Penance, and who was confirmed and increased by the other sacraments, all of them steeped in the same life-giving Spirit.[1] It is he who makes them advance in virtue, and only with his help can men perform any meritorious action. Only those, said St. Paul, are children of God who act moved by the Spirit of the Lord: *Quicumque Spiritu Dei aguntur, hi sunt filii Dei.* Do you see, my brethren, that man who withdraws to a wilderness, to a cloister, to the service of the Church, repudiating everything that is of the world, counting riches as dung, posts of honour as will-o'-the-wisps \[*fuegos fatuos*\], the delights of the senses as a wandering and fleeting star? That is the Holy Spirit, who, just as he led Jesus Christ into the desert to triumph over the temptations of the devil, leads them into retirement to overcome the world, the devil and the flesh. Do you see that other one who, in the state of life in the world, fulfils all his duties exactly, and even in the midst of this Babylon goes up from virtue to virtue, longing to see God in the heavenly Zion? That is the Holy Spirit, who preserves him from corruption and from the flames of crime, as he preserved the three young men from the fire into which Nebuchadnezzar threw them. Do you see that countless multitude of Martyrs, among them so many innocent children and tender maidens, who triumphed over the flatteries, persuasions and torments of the tyrants? That

is the Holy Spirit, who with his irresistible strength raised them above their age, sex and weakness, making them burn with the flames of divine love more than with those that consumed their flesh. So does the sovereign Spirit fill the souls of the just.

11. But sinners too receive his influence. Sinners? What, does the Holy Spirit dwell in souls that transgress the law? Does not the book of Wisdom say that the Lord does not make his dwelling in a malicious soul, nor in a body subject to sin? True: the Holy Spirit does not dwell in them, no; he is incompatible with sin; but he does move the sinner with his helps \[*auxilios*\] to repent of his crimes.[2] Whoever has fallen into sin cannot get out of it unless the Spirit of the Lord gives him his hand; that is why a prophet said: *Lord, turn me to you, and I shall be turned.* Convert me with your helps, and I shall be converted with tears of penance. This the Holy Spirit does, like the shepherd in the Gospel: he seeks the lost sheep to bring it back to the fold, so that, repentant, it may worship the shepherd of its soul. Have you not received the Holy Spirit in this way, my sinner? Ah! I should not like you to answer me what the Ephesians answered the Apostle to this question: *We have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.* No, my brethren, do not say this: there is a Holy Spirit, and he comes to you continually. *The Spirit,* says Scripture, *breathes where he will, and you hear his voice.* The misfortune is that you have received the Holy Spirit and do not give ear to his voice. What voice? Listen to me. When you are most deeply sunk, like Herod, in the mire of your iniquities, have you not felt within a secret light saying to you, as the Baptist said to that impure man: Look, those actions you perform are not lawful for you, nor those words you utter, nor those thoughts with which you entertain your mind? That is the voice of the Holy Spirit. Have you heard it? You cannot have failed to; your fear and alarm bear witness to it. Have you answered? Certainly not: that inspiration was a light; you blew on it with your resistance, and it went out. More: have you not heard the preachers who again and again called you to penance and invited you to the grace with which the Lord wished to enrich you, saying to you with the Wise Man: *Come to me, all you who are weary and oppressed with the weight of sins, and I will refresh you*?[3] It was the Holy Spirit who spoke through their mouths. Have you heard them? No doubt. Have you cooperated with what they intended? Certainly not. Those Gospel words were the fire of the Holy Spirit; you threw on it the earth of your crooked inclinations, and it was smothered. Finally, have you not seen countless warnings \[*escarmientos*\] in other sinners, whose sudden deaths in the midst of their wickedness dismayed your heart for a few moments? That was the voice of the sovereign Spirit, who, to make you come to yourself, put that sad spectacle before you, filling you with fear lest the same should befall you. Have you had any good movement of heart \[*buen afecto*\] in your soul? Certainly not. *You always resist the Holy Spirit.* But he who, coming down upon the Apostles, made them wise, holy and strong, that same Spirit assists with his gifts the Church and all her members, just and sinners, so that it may be verified that *the Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world.*

12. Sovereign Spirit, come down upon us; come, Father of the poor, sweet guest of the soul, great comforter, sweet refreshment. Heal what is wounded in us, wash what is soiled, water what is dry, straighten what is crooked, strengthen what is weak. Grant to these your faithful, who trust in you, to keep this septenary with fruit: give them courage for virtue, give them a happy death, give them the reward of glory. Amen.

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[4] Source note: Cap. xi (so printed; the text is Wisdom 1:7, *Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum*, the Introit of Pentecost).

[5] *Del misterio*.

[6] Isaiah 11:2–3, the source of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit:.

[7] Source note: XXX \[Gregory, *Homilies on the Gospels*, 30, for Pentecost\].

[8] Source note: Cap. xxxvii \[Ezekiel 37:9\].

[9] Acts 3:13–15, freely joined with Peter's Pentecost speech (Acts 2). The 3,000 and 5,000 converts: Acts 2:41; 4:4.

[10] Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 50: "the blood of Christians is seed".

[1] Rom. 5:5.

[2] Wisdom 1:4.

[3] Matt. 11:28 (attributed here to "the Wise Man", probably by confusion with Sirach 24:19).

29. First Sunday after Pentecost: On the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 29, pp. 267–275. Gospel: Matthew 28:18–20. Original preacher not named.

Baptizantes eos in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti (Matthew 28:19).

Baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel of this day is from the twenty-eighth chapter of St. Matthew, and it reads thus:

1. "Jesus said to his disciples: All power has been given me in heaven and on earth. Go, then, on my behalf, and instruct all nations in the truths of salvation, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them, by your words and actions, all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the consummation of the ages." This is the Gospel. And although there is another belonging to the Sunday, which is the first after the Pasch of the Holy Spirit, since the mystery of the most Holy Trinity is always celebrated on it, it has seemed best to omit the explanation of that one and speak of the mystery, which is the foundation of all.[1]

2. In the few words Jesus Christ speaks indicating the form his disciples were to use when they baptised all nations, namely, In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, there is shown the purpose of the mission of the Son of God: the revelation of the truths necessary for salvation, communicated to the peoples by the instruction of the Apostles, and above all the knowledge of God, in a certain way unknown until then; that is, of one God subsisting in three really distinct persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which gives us the highest idea of the supreme Being by the incomprehensibility of the mystery it contains, that of the most blessed Trinity, which we venerate this day. By saying in the name and not in the names, Jesus declares the unity of the divine essence; and by adding of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, the distinction of the persons in one divine essence and nature. We already confess this truth in the first article of the Creed, which says: I believe in God the Father; for if there is God the Father, there must necessarily be God the Son; and as these must love each other, this love we call the Holy Spirit. This mystery is incomprehensible, no doubt, but it is credible on the authority of God who reveals it; and so, setting aside its incomprehensibility, we must believe and adore it, though we must venerate it not so much with the understanding as with the will. Those two heavenly spirits who, a prophecy says, proclaimed this mystery singing: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory, were not Cherubim, to whom knowledge is attributed, but Seraphim, inflamed with love. So we must believe it with the understanding; but we must above all use our will to give thanks to the most Holy Trinity for the unspeakable benefits with which it has enriched us. See, then, my purpose in this plática: we must believe the mystery of the Trinity, though we cannot comprehend it: first part. We must venerate it with thanksgiving for the good things it has communicated to us: second part.

First Part

3. In what does the mystery of the most Holy Trinity consist? It consists in this, that God, being one in essence, is three in persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One in the divine essence and nature. Nothing is more express in sacred Scripture, both of the Old and of the New Testament, than that there is only one God, and that there can be only one. Two absolutely infinite beings, with nothing in which to differ or be distinguished from each other; two universal sources of all perfections, imply a contradiction, because, being equally free and omnipotent, they would destroy each other. There cannot be more than one God, or there is no God: so Tertullian reasoned. That is why polytheism, which is the worship of many gods, is essentially atheism, which is the denial of them all. One God, but with three really distinct persons, equal in perfections and attributes, for the three are one alone. They are one God; but the Father, whose understanding is fruitful, begets by it a substantial image of himself, and this is the Son. But as the will of both is one and the same, and they love each other with an infinite love, from this there proceeds by way of the will another, third

person, whom we call the Holy Spirit; for, though this name is common to the three divine Persons, since there is no special name by which to call him, the common name of Holy Spirit is given to him. There are three who bear witness in heaven, says the evangelist St. John, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.[1] One; yes, my brethren. Everything in the three is the same as regards essence and attributes; they differ only in the relations they bear to one another, whose terms, which are substantial, constitute the three divine Persons.

4. This will seem incomprehensible to you, no doubt; and if we could comprehend it perfectly, either we would be that God, or he whose nature we declared as it is in itself would not be God. What would be precious in the incomprehensible Divinity, says Eusebius of Emesa, if human wisdom could comprehend that Lord who dwells on high, whom the clouds serve as a veil, and who is infinitely above all the knowledge of men? So the Wise man said. The holy Fathers propose to us some figures or likenesses to help us understand it; but they do not take away the obscurity of this mystery: they are like the stars on a clear night, which give us some light, but are never able to turn night into day. They present this mystery to us like the three Angels Abraham saw, who, venerating the three, worshipped one alone in the three; like the ark of the covenant, which, being one, held within it the rod of Aaron, symbol of the omnipotence of the Father; the tables of the law, of the wisdom of the Son; and the manna, of the anointing and grace of the Holy Spirit; like the sun, which, being one, produces light, and both produce heat; like the spring from which the stream flows, and from both a lake or river is formed; and above all like our rational soul, which, being one, has three distinct powers, memory, understanding and will; and I know not what other likenesses! But all these are slight and inadequate to declare this mystery, though they give us some idea of it, because none of the things mentioned communicates to the other its very nature and essence, as the eternal Father communicates it to his Son, and both to the Holy Spirit. But why do we wonder at being unable to comprehend what is above our natural reason, when even in the natural things we see and touch every day we cannot fully search out the secret nature hides in them? Let us take some examples. How does the basilisk kill with its look alone? How does the remora, clinging to a ship, stop it in the middle of its course when it is cutting the waves most swiftly? How does the magnet draw iron to itself? How does the bee build its honeycomb? How does the silkworm spin its cocoon? If these have not yet come within our knowledge, though they are all natural things, how shall we comprehend the supernatural mystery we venerate? It would be easier to put the whole sea into a little hole dug in the ground than to reach the secret of the most Holy Trinity by our reason alone. So an Angel said to the great Augustine when he was wearying himself trying to penetrate this mystery.

5. But ah, this is not comprehensible, yet we must believe it more surely than if we saw it with our own eyes, which can fail; whereas the authority that has revealed it to us cannot, for it is a God most wise, who cannot be deceived, and a God truthful by essence, incapable of misleading us. We have also the testimony of a Church which is the pillar of truth, and which, inspired by the Holy Spirit, proposes this object of our belief to us. Now then, my brethren, if we believe that there are Rome, Paris, Madrid and other cities, though we have not seen them, and many of us could easily see them, and this only because men of judgment and truthfulness say so, why should we not believe a mystery which we neither penetrate nor can comprehend, when the Church tells us that God himself has revealed it? If we accept the testimony of men, I shall say with Scripture, the testimony of God is greater. Away, then, with doubts, my brethren: let us take our understanding captive in obedience to the faith, says St. Paul. He who would search into the majesty of God will be overwhelmed by the rays of his glory, says the Wise man; like the moth which, wanting to come near and examine the light, becomes the victim of its fire. This mystery, if it must be believed, though it be incomprehensible to us, we must venerate, not so much with the understanding as with the will, adoring it and giving it thanks for the benefits it has communicated to us, which is the subject of the

Second Part

6. All three divine Persons demand of our heart sentiments of piety and gratitude. All equally; for in this Trinity there is no greater or lesser, first or after; all are co-eternal and co-equal, says St. Athanasius in his creed.[1] What a beautiful reflection St. Augustine and St. Thomas make on those words of St. Paul: For from him, through him and in him all things are made; to him be glory for ever! These Fathers say that in the most blessed Trinity we must consider two things. The first is its power and might to act, which is one in all of them. All things were created by its omnipotence, ordered by its wisdom and preserved by its love; but in this way: all the things that were, are and will be were created by the omnipotence of the Son and of the Holy Spirit no less than by that of the Father; ordered by the wisdom of the Father and of the Holy Spirit no less than by that of the Son; and preserved by the love of the Father and of the Son no less than by that of the Holy Spirit. And since all that was done, is done and will be done for our use and profit was done by its omnipotence, wisdom and love, we must give it praise and glory. But as regards the operations theologians call *ad extra*, that is, as regards created and produced things, we must give certain distinct attributions to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

7. Let us make this a little plainer, showing what we owe to each of the three divine Persons, though in reality we owe everything to all, since they are one and the same thing. What do we owe to the Father? I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth: this we say in the Creed. To the Father we attribute the works of omnipotence, the creation of all that exists. What a deep abyss opens before us here! What has God created for me in heaven? said the royal Prophet. There he made for us a blessed tabernacle, not made by the hands of men, says St. Paul, to serve as the dwelling of our glory after our course in this life is finished. There he created a multitude of Angels to serve as our guardians and announce to us the divine mysteries, the Lord sending them, according to the Apostle, to minister to those who are to obtain the inheritance of salvation; a multitude so countless, as I shall say another day, that from the last choir alone of the three hierarchies that make them up, Guardian Angels are assigned to all men; and from Adam to Antichrist, an angel who has had charge of one will not have charge of another. What a multitude! Then he created the heavens and ordered their motion, and if it ceased our life would cease. He created the sun, the moon and the other stars to give us light and influence our preservation; he created the elements, without which we could not subsist; he created the animals and plants for our sustenance, medicine and recreation; and this done, he formed man in his own likeness and set him over all the works of his hands.

8. This, and much more, the eternal Father did for us; and how must we thank him? Ah! In the first place we must use this world he created for us as if we did not use it; that is, we must not believe that it is a permanent dwelling for us, but must always aspire to the one to come, not placing our last end in these earthly things, but making of them a kind of ladder to rise to the contemplation of glory, which is the end of our creation. In the second place we must, says Chrysostom, fear the omnipotence of God, who can punish our crimes. The Lord made all things that we might fear him, says Ecclesiastes. If we tremble at the power of a temporal prince because he can punish our body, how much more, said Jesus Christ, must we fear him who can cast both soul and body into the abyss? In the third place we must often consider the works of the Creator so as to praise his love and his beneficence towards us. Woe to you, said the prophet Isaiah, for you do not regard the work of God, nor consider with reflection the works of his hands. Let us not be ungrateful. No, my God: henceforth the chief occupation of my life will be to contemplate nature and all you have created in it for me. The sun that gives me light, the air I breathe, the earth that sustains me, the clothing that covers me, the bed in which I sleep and rest, all nature ordered to my needs and pleasures, demand of me the most loving gratitude to him by whom all was made: to him be the glory.

9. What do we owe to the second Person of the Trinity? There is no doubt that we owe the works of creation to the Son as to the Father: all things were made through him, says St. John, and without him nothing was made. But because the divine Word became incarnate, uniting himself by the hypostatic union with human nature, the works of the redemption of the human race are attributed to him. Oh, what a vast field of favours

opens to our consideration with this one word! The Son of God is our Redeemer. Indeed, my brethren, Jesus Christ, who is the second person of the most Holy Trinity, moved by the love he bore us, became man for us and for our salvation; he came down from heaven, was born in a stable, lay in a manger, and willingly made himself subject to our miseries. He taught us the way of truth by those words of eternal life that came from his mouth. He founded the holy Church we enjoy, doing away with the laws of terror the Synagogue had. He instituted admirable Sacraments as medicine for our sins, and especially left us the most sacred one of his body and blood to nourish us spiritually. Finally, made the reproach of the world and the scorn of the rabble, he died on a shameful gibbet to give us life, and ascended into heaven, whence he rules us with his power and shelters us with his protection.

10. How grateful we must be for these benefits! But the most pleasing thanks we can give to this God the Son is the exact fulfilment of the laws he left us written in his Gospel. In vain did this sacred Lawgiver toil, if we, despising his commands, follow what the world, the devil and the flesh suggest to us, walking, as a prophet said, in ways of iniquity, hard and rough, that lead us to the precipice. We must often bring to mind, by serious meditation, the passion and death of our most lovable Saviour, and, in proof of our gratitude, say with the Apocalypse: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain for us to receive glory, praise and thanksgiving.

11. What do we owe to the Holy Spirit? In the first place we owe him, as we owe the Father, the works of creation, for the Spirit of God wrought all things, says the Apostle. We owe him also the work of our redemption, in which the three divine Persons cooperated in general; for it was the Father who so loved the world, says St. John, that he sent his only-begotten Son to redeem it; and the Holy Spirit formed the Saviour's body in the womb of most holy Mary, so that this Lady should be the Virgin who conceived and bore, as Isaiah said. Yet, this third Person being all love, the works of love and the outpouring of graces are attributed to him. Had I not explained in my previous plática what the Holy Spirit did for our benefit in the ignorant and timid Apostles, and what he continually works in us, who can do nothing good, nor even name Jesus, without the power and grace of this Spirit, I would stop to prove it now; but let what is said there be meditated on with reflection, and this is enough to assure us of the gifts we continually receive from this third Person of the most Holy Trinity.

12. And what shall we do to thank him for them? We must respond faithfully to the secret voices by which he wishes to turn us from evil so that we may do good, not resisting his inner warnings, lest it be said to us what St. Stephen said to others of his time: You always resist the Holy Spirit. He is a fire that consumes the dross of iniquity that tarnishes our hearts; if we throw on him the earth of our appetites, he will be smothered in it. He is a light that shows us how to act rightly; if we blow on it with our contempt, it will be put out, and we shall be left in the darkness of sin. Let us glorify, then, this divine Comforter, the sweet guest of the soul, who leads it to glory.

13. Let us bless, then, my brethren, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as the Church charges us, for this God, one, and distinct in Persons, has shown his mercy to us. He has shown his mercy; for every good thing we have flows from that Lord, three and one. If our parents were joined by the bond of matrimony to beget us; if we are born again by the sacrament of Baptism; if we are strengthened by that of Confirmation; if in that of Penance our sins are forgiven; if we receive the priestly character: all, all is in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. If we celebrate the venerable sacrifice of the altar, to feed on the Lord's body and blood, it is begun, continued and ended in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. If at the end of life we are anointed with the holy oil to wipe out the remains of our sins, at each sense that is anointed the Lord is asked to forgive us, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The minister who helps us in the dreadful hour of death says to us: Go forth, Christian soul, from this world, in the name of the Father who created you, of the Son who redeemed you, and of the Holy Spirit who poured his graces into you. And he himself then entreats the Lord, saying: Have mercy, Lord, on this poor soul, who, though he sinned, yet did not deny the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

14. Let us bless him in this mystery with the *Gloria Patri*, with which we usually conclude our prayers. Let us give glory with understanding, memory and will to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; let us give it with words, works and thoughts, with faith, hope and charity, as it was in the beginning, already in eternity, where these divine Persons praised one another, and at the beginning of the world the heavenly spirits; and as just souls do now and always will, to the consummation of the ages; and afterwards, through his infinite mercy, we shall do it in glory for all eternity. So be it.

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[2] Luke 6:36–42.

[3] 1 John 5:7, the "Johannine comma", then read in the Vulgate.

[1] *Quicumque*.

30. Second Sunday after Pentecost, within the Octave of Corpus Christi: On the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 30, pp. 276–285. Gospel: Luke 14:16–24. Original preacher not named.

> *Homo quidam fecit coenam magnam (Luke 14:16).*
>
> *A certain man gave a great supper.*

The Gospel of this day is from the fourteenth chapter of St. Luke, and it reads thus:

1. "Jesus told his disciples this parable: A man prepared a great supper and invited many to it. And at the hour for supper he sent a servant of his to tell those invited to come, for everything was now ready; and all, as if by agreement, began to excuse themselves. The first said: I have bought a farm, and I must go and see it; I pray you, hold me excused. And another said: I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them. And another said: I have married, and so I cannot come. And the servant returned and reported all these excuses to his master. Then the father of the family, angry, said to his servant: Go out quickly into the squares and streets of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed, the lame and the blind. And the servant, having carried out the order, said to him: Lord, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room to spare. And the lord said to the servant: Go out into the roads and hedges, and compel all you find to come in, that my house may be filled; for I assure you that none of those whom I invited and who excused themselves shall taste my supper." This is the Gospel.

2. Many Fathers of the Church interpret it of that heavenly banquet God has prepared in his glory for all his elect, at which no earthly dishes are served, but that which delights God himself: the contemplation, fruition and joy of his divine essence. This is the one Jesus Christ announced to his disciples when he said to them: I appoint for you a banquet… that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.[1] But most of the holy Doctors say that this great supper is the admirable Sacrament of the altar, which Jesus Christ our Redeemer, God and man together, instituted as food for our soul, so that, receiving it with due dispositions, we may enjoy for all eternity the great banquet he has prepared in the kingdom of heaven from the beginning of the world. So St. Augustine. This is the great supper set before us today: great by its Author, who is the immortal Prince of the ages; great by the universality of the banquet, for he does not call many but all Christians, to whom he says: Take and eat, all of you; great by the food that is served, which is the whole Christ, true God and true man, author of all graces, fountain of all our delights, and sacred bread of life. And will there be anyone who refuses to approach this table and share in this great supper, instituted on the night when Jesus Christ himself was about to die for us? Yes, my brethren. Many of those invited in our Gospel excused themselves from attending the father of the family's supper because they were entangled in the charms of the earth, and they were shut out from sharing in his graces. And many Christians, though they approach that venerable table, eat of that bread and drink of that consecrated wine, will not receive its fruit, because they come to it clothed in earthly affections; rather they will eat their own judgment and eternal condemnation; so

St. Paul spoke. See, then, what I mean to show you this day, setting before you one of the chief dogmas of our true faith: the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the altar, which is the food of this supper. In my first part I shall show what there is in the consecrated host; and in the second, who are those excluded from sharing in the good things this sacred meal contains.

First Part

3. What a majestic banquet Ahasuerus gave at Susa! Worthy of a king who ruled over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, and who, according to the first chapter of the book of Esther, had arranged it to make a display of the abundance of the riches of his kingdom and the greatness of his power. He invited to it the princes of the Persians and Medes and all the magistrates and grandees of his empire; and in a most delightful place, with the richest table service, he set before them exquisite dishes and a wine worthy of royal magnificence: a banquet that lasted a hundred and eighty days. A great supper, but nothing in comparison with the one the King of kings, the Lord of the whole universe, prepares until the consummation of the ages, not only for the kings and princes of the world but for all Christians: this is that sacred table and eucharistic Sacrament. The dishes set on Ahasuerus's table were only earthly, carnal and corruptible; but what does the holy Eucharist contain, the supper the Saviour left us? Ah, come near to that sacred table: all the appointments that adorn it are only sad clouds, like those the Prophet saw, hiding the divine Sun of justice. There you will see with bodily eyes a little bread; but consult your faith, and it will tell you that under the species of bread and wine are contained the living body and blood of Jesus Christ, adorned with his divinity, accompanied by the Father and the Holy Spirit, and surrounded by countless Seraphim. A dogma established by the Church in various councils against Wyclif, Nestorius and Berengar; a dogma the Saviour himself set before us when, giving communion to his disciples on the night of the legal supper, he said to them: Take and eat, all of you, for this is my body; take and drink, all of you, for this is my blood. What is this? So we must all cry out; not doubting, like those who, according to St. John, held this mystery to be incredible, but full of wonder and gratitude: What is this? How can this Lord give us his own flesh to eat? How is it to be? By multiplying miracles. There are many that show the real presence of Jesus in the Sacrament.

4. Here we find that, by virtue of the words the priest pronounces in the name of Christ at the consecration, the whole substance of the bread and wine is changed into the substance of the Saviour's body and blood;[1] a miracle exceedingly greater than that of Aaron's rod, which, thrown on the ground, was changed into a serpent, and, taken back into the hand, recovered its first nature. Here we find accidents without a subject in which they inhere; as if we said, here there is whiteness without a wall or any body to support it, our senses being deceived and judging what is not. What happened to Isaac at the time of his death happens in this divine Sacrament. As his senses were already dulled, his sight deceived him, judging that Jacob was Esau; his taste deceived him, so that what he ate seemed to be what his firstborn had hunted; his touch deceived him, judging that some kid skins were Esau's hairy hands. Only his hearing was faithful, for he knew by the voice that it was Jacob, and so he said: The hands are the hands of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob. So in this most august Sacrament taste, touch, sight and the other senses deceive us, judging to be bread and wine what is a more divine thing; only hearing is not deceived, for by faith we hear the voice of our divine Jacob, who says: This is my body, this is my blood. The voice of Jacob, and the hands of Esau.

5. Here we find that the whole Christ is in the whole host, and whole in each part of it, with all his body, as he lived in the world and as he died on a tree, with all his perfections and all his quantity, if not actual, because a divine power prevents it, at least aptitudinal; that is, he is there sacramentally. Here we find that when countless people receive holy Communion at the same time, all receive the body of Christ, not diminished and broken but whole. Something happens, in due proportion, like what happens with our words: we pronounce a word, and though it spreads through the air, all who hear it receive it whole as it was pronounced. Here we find…

6. But I should never finish if I tried to show you the unspeakable miracles the Lord works every day of the world to give himself to us as food in this great supper prepared by his love. But what shall I say of the other wonders he is working for our consolation in that admirable Sacrament? In it Jesus Christ shows forth all the attributes that adorn his divinity. Omnipotence: what could be more astounding than that God himself should obey the voice of man, better than in the time of Joshua, placing the divine Sun of justice in corruptible hands? Wisdom: this, says Scripture, built itself a house, mixed the wine and set the table. See here this mystery devised by divine wisdom to unite the two extremes: departing to the Father and remaining with us until the end of the world. Love: this is, says my angelic Master, the Sacrament of love, and the Lord could not show it more than by giving us his own flesh to eat. His justice: for if for eating of the forbidden tree the Lord decreed the death of all men, for the morsel of this sacred supper he decrees life and resurrection for us. In short, Christ present in the Eucharist displays all his attributes.

7. But his affection goes further; and so that nothing might be lacking to us of all that delighted men when he visited them from on high, in this one food in which he himself is present he renews on that altar all the mysteries he wrought in his life. Here the mystery of the incarnation is renewed: for each time the priest pronounces the awesome words of his ministry, the flesh and blood of the Lord are made present again in his hands, and we can say: The Word was made flesh. That of the nativity: for what is the church, says a holy Father, but a new Bethlehem, which means house of bread? What is the altar but the manger? What are the corporals but the swaddling clothes in which Jesus was wrapped? What is the homage he receives here but the adoration of the shepherds and kings? That of the presentation in the temple: for here we present, in propitiation for our sins, this holy host and victim in whom the eternal Father is well pleased. That of the passion and death of Jesus Christ: for this host, as a sacrifice, represents the one he offered on Calvary, and he himself said to us: Each time you do this, do it in memory of what I suffered for you. In short, all the mysteries are renewed here; that is why in the canon of the Mass we say: Lord, receive this sacrifice in memory of the passion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ our Lord. This, my brethren, is what we enjoy through the presence of the Saviour on those altars. This is the most sweet food set before us at that table; this the banquet that this God-Man gives us in his great supper. Would that all received its fruits! But does that happen? We shall see in my

Second Part

8. What would you say, so spoke the Father St. Gregory,[1] what would you say of a rich merchant who, travelling along a dangerous road, carried all his riches and treasures in plain view? Without doubt you would judge that this man was so neglecting his goods that he showed a wish to have them all stolen. Ah! If we were not firmly persuaded by faith that Jesus Christ our Redeemer is uncreated wisdom, which foresees everything, does nothing by chance, and rules all things by his high and divine providence, it would seem that in instituting this admirable Sacrament he was a prodigal of his goods and wished to see himself defrauded by men. He is that wise merchant who gave all he had, soul, body, divinity and all his gifts, to buy and acquire that priceless pearl; the merchant who, as Solomon said, brought in the ship of his humanity the finest bread of life to feed his children. In this bread, more precious than all pearls, he has placed all the riches of heaven that the Father put into his hands, and he invites all to share in them. But since there are so many ungrateful people who, through attachment to the goods of a seductive world, would despise this august Sacrament or outrage it by their unworthy reception, he seems to expose this treasure to being stolen, this Lord being defrauded in his beneficent intentions.

9. Who, then, are the thoughtless ones who render useless the saving effects of this divine supper? Ah, I have already said before that all who eat of this bread and drink of this wine unworthily, that is, with consciousness of mortal sin, not only do not share in its sovereign effects but become guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, says his Apostle, and frustrate the designs of Jesus Christ. All sins come down to three

classes, which are impurity, covetousness and pride or haughtiness. All that is in the world, said St. John, is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life. All who come to receive the Sacrament in this state are excluded from enjoying the great supper of glory, for they do not receive the fruits of this eucharistic supper, symbolised, says St. Augustine,[2] in those invited to the supper of the father of the family of which the present parable speaks. Let us go through them briefly in the order the Gospel gives. The pride of life: the first guest excluded from the heavenly banquet was possessed by pride. I have bought a farm, he said, and I must go and take possession of it. See, says St. Augustine, how in these words, I have bought a farm, he indicates the ambition and pride of lordship. What greater obstacle can there be to enjoying the delights of that sacred table than to be clothed in conceit and pride at the sight of the honours and distinctions one enjoys? To come to receive the most humble one with a haughty heart! To come to eat of that Lord who, as St. Paul said, laid aside the equality he had with God the Father, making himself a wretched slave, with one's head turned by the vapours rising from the noble blood that flows in one's veins! To come to him who is the Lord of lords and God of all gods with a spirit of pride in the posts and offices one holds, making oneself by them an idol whom all must adore! To come to him who at this very moment is hiding the grandeur that adorns him under the humble species of bread and wine, while approaching even those altars decked in the pompous finery of luxury and vanity, to play a part that perhaps does not belong to one! To come to that banquet to receive the Lord who said in his Gospel: When you are invited, choose the last place, while so steeped in a spirit of superiority as to want to be distinguished even at the communion rail itself! Such a one cannot share fruitfully in that food: He shall not taste my supper, says Jesus Christ. This Lord willed to be the son of Mary, a humble mother, to be born in a stable, lie in a manger and die on a scaffold; and will he become one thing, through this Sacrament, with one who longs for nothing but honours, posts, deference, incense and praise? It is not possible.

10. But I notice that the guest referred to in our Gospel shows humility, for he says to the father of the family: Lord, I pray you, hold me excused. But ah! It is not the same thing, says the Father St. Gregory,[3] for words to sound humble as for actions to be so. That man showed submission, but in the end he excuses himself so as to play the lord on his farm. Many come to Communion with shows of submission; but beware: if there and then something is done or a word said that in their opinion humbles them, they will quickly reveal their pride. To these may be said what Jesus Christ said to the puffed-up Pharisees who approached him calling him Master with humility: This people, he said, honours me with their lips, but their proud heart is far from me.

11. Covetousness: see here the reason why the second guest excused himself from the supper. I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I must go and try them. This is, says St. Augustine, the concupiscence of the eyes. Love of earthly goods is one of the greatest obstacles to enjoying the delights of a sacred supper which, as one of its marvellous effects, communicates detachment from everything earthly. I see another banquet given in the book of the Apocalypse. An Angel, says St. John, cried with a loud voice to all the birds of the sky, saying: Come, gather for the great supper of God. He invites them all; none is excluded; and why? Because they are birds which, if they come down to earth, do so only to take from it what is necessary, but then fly up on high, which is the place for which the Most High destined them. This supper to which the Angel invites is, according to the abbot Rupert, the same to which Christ invites; and though he invites men to it, he invites them to attend it as birds, that is, detached from all earthly affections, taking from the earth what is needed but cleansing the heart of covetousness; content with a single yoke, which is the one God laid on all the children of Adam to provide their food and clothing, but not five superfluous ones like the man excluded from the great supper; that is, without craving goods which either thieves will carry off, says the Gospel, or the moth will eat. But ah, how many will be excluded from sharing in the good things of that divine table where the poorest of the sons of men gives himself to us, slaves as they are of covetousness! How many whose heart is never sated with temporal goods, and for whom everything is too little to store in their drawers or their granaries! How many come to Communion laden with property not restored, debts unpaid, wages unsatisfied! The Father St. John Chrysostom[4] marvels to see many ravening wolves, who want to amass

treasure on the ruin of their brethren, come to receive that Lamb who gave himself wholly and without reserve for love of us. But one could wish that they imitated the wolf itself in the property it has, according to the naturalists: wolves eat earth when hunger presses them, but if they eat a lamb they then vomit up the earth. If the avaricious did this, we would see holy Communion make them cast out of their souls the covetousness for earthly goods that masters them.

12. Lust: see here the last obstacle to receiving that divine Sacrament fruitfully. This is the one the third guest put forward, refusing to attend the great supper, and refusing insolently: I have married, he said, and I cannot come. Here, says St. Augustine, the concupiscence of the flesh comes in. He is not speaking here of lawful marriage, although in that too a certain purity is required for the worthy reception of this mystery; but by these words, says the Father St. Gregory, sensuality is shown. How can a heart possessed by the love of carnal pleasures enjoy the spiritual delights of this most holy table, which is the bread of the elect and the wine that brings forth virgins? Jesus Christ our Lord is he whom his enemies, while charging him with the greatest crimes, never dared to accuse of impurity; and even the Pharisee, when he saw the Magdalen speaking with him close by, said: Surely this man does not know that this is a public woman; for if he knew it, he would not let her touch him. And he himself is present in the Sacrament of the altar in a most pure manner, for, being there with his body, he is there as if outside the body. How, then, will he unite himself with a carnal heart? What fellowship can there be between light and darkness? It is impossible.

13. David showed it in prophecy when he said that the Lord gives food to the young ravens that call upon him. He feeds all alike, but the raven chicks with some special care: because they are born white, their parents, who are black, abandon them, and God keeps them alive with dew. What a fitting symbol! To the grown ravens he does not give the dew, because they give themselves up to dead flesh, as was seen in the raven from the ark, which did not return to it because it was gorging on the corpses the flood had left; but their young, who have whiteness, the symbol of purity, and know nothing of feeding on flesh, he sustains miraculously. Let all men know that they will share in the heavenly dew contained in that sacred supper only when they flee the dead works of the flesh. What purity the Lord requires even in the vestments and vessels that are to serve the Sacrament! How much more, says St. John Chrysostom, will he require of the living vessels that are to receive him into their souls! It is a wonderful case that ecclesiastical history tells in the life of St. Theodore the Archimandrite. He sent an archdeacon of his to buy a silver chalice, and hardly had he taken it in his hands when it turned black and hideous. He went back to the silversmith, who then remembered that he had made it from jewels he had bought from a prostitute. If Jesus Christ is so jealous of his honour that he will not dwell in vessels that impurity had touched, ah priests, ah Christian people, how will the Lord be willing to dwell in a heart given over to the pleasures of the flesh? Enough.

14. When you sit at table, so spoke the Wise man, to eat with a prince, consider carefully what kind of dishes are set before you; so that thus, says St. Gregory, you may better prepare yourself. I have already shown you what is set before us at the great supper the Prince of eternities gives us in the holy Eucharist: it is God himself, filling us with the gifts of his love. Take care, then, that the love of the world, which leads to the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life, does not make that heavenly morsel bring you death because your heart is full of love for earthly things. We see a king’s child fed with care and served exquisite dishes; far from being nourished and growing, he grows thin, loses strength, and his sallow colour announces approaching ruin. What is the matter with him? This child, says a physician, must be secretly eating earth; that will kill him if he does not stop. The Sacrament with which the supreme King feeds his children cannot produce in them the effects of life it contains if we feed on the earth and its affections. My God, God in the Sacrament, heavenly banquet in which Jesus Christ himself is eaten and drunk, banish from our souls all love of the world, fill us with grace, for you are the pledge of glory. Amen.

[5] The printed margin gives Luke 22 (22:29–30).

[6] Transubstantiation; Council of Trent, Session XIII.

[1] The printed margin gives *Hom. XI in Evang.*

[2] The printed margin gives *Serm. XXV* (Augustine, Sermon 112 in modern numbering).

[3] The printed margin gives *Hom. XXXVI* (*in Evang.*).

[4] The printed margin gives *Hom. LX ad Pop.*

31. Third Sunday after Pentecost: On the Attribute of God's Mercy and the Sinner's Abuse of It

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 31, pp. 286–295. Gospel: Luke 15:1–10. Original preacher not named.

Hic peccatores recipit (Luke 15:2).

This man receives sinners.

The Gospel of this day is from the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke, and it reads thus:

1. "As the publicans and men of evil life were drawing near to Jesus to hear him, the scribes and Pharisees murmured, saying: This man receives men of evil life and eats with them. On this Jesus put to them this parable: Which of you, having a hundred sheep and having lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one he has lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing, and coming home he calls together his friends and neighbours and says to them: Rejoice with me, for I have found the sheep that was lost. Even so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who does penance than over ninety-nine just who have no need of it. Or what woman, having ten drachmas and having lost one, does not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours and says to them: Rejoice with me, for I have found the drachma I had lost. Even so, I tell you, there will be very great joy among the Angels of God over one sinner who does penance." This is the Gospel.

2. In no other is the mercy of God shown more clearly. Mercy is one of the attributes of God, as are his infinity, his eternity, his goodness, his justice, etc. These attributes are all substantial, for all constitute one single divine essence and nature. All are equal, for all are infinite as God himself is. Nevertheless, to our way of understanding, one of his attributes shines more than another: such is mercy, and sacred Scripture even says that his mercy is above all the works of God. Such is the mercy Jesus Christ shows in the parable he spoke in answer to the murmurings of the Pharisees when they saw him commonly accompanied by publicans and sinners, his purpose being to draw them to himself in order to forgive their crimes. Mercy is a virtue which springs either from that feeling of sadness which our compassion stirs at the sight of others' miseries, or from the will we have to relieve them. In the first sense there can be no mercy in God, because he is incapable of sadness; but there is in the second way, through the infinite will he has to shelter us. All this is the doctrine of my angelic master St. Thomas Aquinas.[1] Indeed, that Lord of whom David says that he fills the whole earth with his mercy makes this attribute shine, according to the same, above all others; and today he gives us to understand it, presenting himself as a shepherd who seeks his lost sheep with the greatest solicitude, and as a woman who does not rest until she finds her lost treasure. Sinners, the Gospel speaks to you, and it is with you that the most kind God seems to exercise his mercy most especially, seeking you, so that, responding to his divine and beneficent calls, you may receive from him the pardon of your sins and give a day of rejoicing to the whole heavenly court. But how do you answer his voice? Do you make fruitful use of the effects of his mercy? Would that it were so, and that the Lord had the satisfaction of finding all the sheep he has astray, and all the precious souls buried in the earth! But the misfortune is that we see the contrary, and that great is the resistance sinful man puts up against the merciful whistles God gives to find him. This will be the subject of my plática today, applying to it the attribute of mercy. How God seeks the sinner to convert him: first part. How the sinner resists the calls of a God who calls him with his mercy: second part.

First Part

3. In many works of God the attribute of his infinite mercy is revealed, showing the desire and will to relieve our needs. Mercy in bodily necessities… but let us leave this aside for now. A great mercy it was to send his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to accomplish the redemption of the world, breaking by his suffering the chains in which the devil had held us captive since the sin of Adam. Mercy, that this Son of God embraced the eternal Father's bloody decree on the way in which he was to redeem us, becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross, says St. Paul. Mercy, to have left us Sacraments enriched with the priceless price of his blood, either to forgive us our sins or to give us various increases of grace; and countless other works of beneficence. But the mercy most worthy of our consideration, in my judgment, is that, although the sinner has repeatedly despised the merciful means he gave him for his eternal salvation, he does not cease to call him to penance, and does not cast him into the abyss the very instant he becomes guilty. It is an effect of his mercy, says the prophet Jeremiah, that we are not consumed and annihilated. That we do not suffer, at the very moment we sin, the punishment of Korah and Dathan, being swallowed alive by the earth; that we are not turned into pillars of salt like Lot's wife when we criminally look back towards worldly pleasures, turning our backs on the ways of virtue: all this we owe to the mercy of the Lord. He waits, as a prophet says, so as to use his compassion and clemency towards us, calling us in various ways to a conversion of life.

4. There is no reason to wonder at it. The rational soul is the object of his love. It is that most precious jewel whose value the divine Jeweller knew well, for he gave all he had, honour, peace, rest, blood and life, to recover it from the hands of his enemy, who had usurped it. It is the sheep, strayed through its own fault, for whose finding and return to the fold he came down from heaven to earth and suffered unspeakable torments. What wonder, then, that when he sees it lost once again and in the hands of the wolf of the abyss, he has mercy on it and seeks it with solicitude, giving it loving whistles to draw it back to himself! I, he says himself in his Scripture, I will call it to save it from the precipice. And what whistles are these, my brethren, that God gives to a sinful soul? They are voices, now inner, now outward, which he gives to the soul that transgresses his law, so that, abandoning the ways of perdition in which it finds itself, it may return to its God with tears of repentance and receive the pardon of a Father full of mercy. The means he uses to call the sinner are various. I shall mention some.

5. Remorse of one's own conscience. This is a secret voice God puts into the sinful man to convert him. The verdict of conscience is what says to us: Turn away from evil and do good. It is a prosecutor who is continually reproaching us in spite of ourselves and setting our iniquities before us so that we may give them a bill of divorce. My sin, said David, is always before me. It is a second Baptist who, when we are most deeply sunk in criminal pleasures, keeps saying to us: *Non tibi licet*. Look, man, those thoughts with which you entertain your imagination are not lawful for you; those words you utter against God or your neighbour; those actions you carry out without fear: it is not lawful for you. Is it not so, my brethren? Have you not many times heard within you this voice of your conscience, by which God, with his accustomed mercy, was calling you to himself? It cannot be otherwise. The sinner is very timid, and the rustle of a leaf frightens him, says the Wise man. To a guilty soul everything is alarming, everything frightening, and it always imagines that the cruellest thing that can befall it is about to come upon it: *Semper praesumit saeva perturbata conscientia* \[a troubled conscience always forecasts grievous things\].[1] St. Augustine says it of himself in the book of his Confessions: Fleeing from the light that followed me, that is, my conscience, I wandered from iniquity to iniquity… I looked everywhere and found rest nowhere; nor did I know where to put a soul torn by the bloody remorse of my conscience. Would that all of us who so often hear this voice of God's mercy answered it like this penitent Doctor!

6. This is not the only voice the Father of mercies gives us that we may leave our sins: he gives us also that of his divine inspirations. Divine inspiration is a hidden light the Lord kindles in our souls, which enlightens, softens and converts them if it meets no resistance. By it he speaks to our heart; and what does he say?

Sometimes he cries out, saying: Sinner, see, life is short and you do not know the number of the days you will live; God alone knows it. You are in sin, and if you die so you go to an eternal fire. At other times he places within him those words: Come to me, all you who are weary and weighed down by the burden of your crimes, and I will refresh you. Ask Paul and other sinners like you, and they will tell you that my mercy is so great that I forgave them all their crimes as soon as they came to me begging forgiveness with sorrow. O holy inspirations! Sharp arrows, says David, of irresistible force, able to pierce the heart of the enemies of the supreme King, however hardened they may be! Peter denies his divine Master three times in the high priest's house; Jesus looks at him, not with bodily eyes but with his divine inspiration, and, responding to it promptly, Peter goes out of the palace, the scene of his fall, and weeps bitterly for his crime. Magdalen… But let us go on to another merciful voice, which is trials.

7. This voice is outward: a voice of his justice and of his mercy alike. The kings of the world, to keep their beloved subjects within the limits of their respective duties, place ministers of their justice in their kingdom; they have prisons, penal garrisons, whips, scaffolds, both to prevent crimes and to punish them, making their subjects open their eyes so as to check their errors and not suffer their punishments. So the almighty King, to bring back the sinner even while punishing him, has for that purpose plagues, poverty, droughts, wars, the collapse of buildings, the destruction of property. And so a man who in time of prosperity and quiet rarely remembers his God and lives untroubled in the midst of his wickedness, on seeing that he has lost his fortune, that the son he loved most has died, that he is laid on a sickbed, a rack perhaps deserved by his crimes, turns to look at God and ask pardon for his sins, which have perhaps caused his misfortunes. Oh, how effective this whistle of divine mercy usually is in bringing back a strayed sheep! The trials Manasseh suffered made him recognise the hand of God, which by them was calling him to penance. Shipwreck made Jonah obedient to the commands of the Lord, which he had cravenly despised. And poverty and ignominy made the prodigal son seek with the greatest longing reconciliation with his good, offended father.

8. Another voice of no less efficacy which God's mercy gives to the transgressing man is the divine word announced by his ministers. The divine word, sermons, are a voice of power to convert the sinner. Scripture compares it to a hammer, which, striking a flint, breaks it in pieces; like the rod of Aaron, with which a rock was struck and abundant water came out of it to satisfy a numerous and thirsty people.[2] Sermons, being the very voice of God spoken by the mouth of his priests, have power to soften the most petrified hearts and make fountains of tears spring forth that show sorrow and repentance. In them God speaks, and says: Unless you do penance you will all perish… Do not delay to turn to the Lord, for suddenly his wrath will come upon you. Ah, what an effective voice! A sermon converted the Samaritan woman, another Mary Magdalen, others preached by St. Ambrose St. Augustine; and countless others have brought back innumerable sinners, who recognised in them the infinite mercy of God, which uses various means to draw guilty souls out of the misery of sin. These I have set out are enough to prove my first reflection.

Second Part

9. How many are there who, when God in his infinite mercy calls them to true penance, hear his voice and respond to it? There are many, certainly, and the Church is full of penitent Saints who at the echo of the divine Shepherd abandoned their wanderings and returned to the flock of his children. But the transgression we see in the world, the laxity of morals noticed in almost every state of life, and the scandals that horrify virtuous souls are an authentic proof of the resistance sinners put up against God, whose mercy does not cease to call them to convert them. He calls them; but far from yielding to his voice, like Saul on the road to Damascus, saying, Lord, what will you have me do? they despise his call, forcing him to renew the complaint he once made through his Prophet, saying: All the day long I stretched out my arms to receive my repentant people, but they either did not believe my promises or opposed my designs. Let us see the practical answer sinners give to the merciful voices with which the Lord calls them.

10. My sinner, how have you responded to the prickings of your conscience, the first loving voice of your God? There is no doubt that you have heard them; you cannot deny it. A storm threatening thunderbolts, it was your conscience saying to you what was said to Adam in paradise: Where are you, Adam? to make you come to yourself and grieve for your sins. But you, like him, hid and fled, without presenting yourself, repentant, to him who would at once have forgiven you. You heard your conscience; and however much you closed your ears to its voices, you always felt them within you. You have certainly tried to kill this gnawing worm that devours you. You went to public shows, in case some pleasing sight might distract you from your inner anxieties; you went out into the country to divert your melancholy thoughts; you took up the cards so as to think only of what flattered you. In short, you left no means untried, whether of amusement or of iniquity, that might blot out the dismal idea of your sins that conscience kept engraving on your memory, so as to deaden your remorse. But you have not been able; confess it frankly, you have not been able, because the worm of sinners never dies, says the Wise man.[1] But you tried to resist the mercy of God, which by means of conscience was calling you to repentance.

11. Yet he does not cease to seek you for all that; and just as, to bring down the city of Jericho, God commanded the priests to go round it many times sounding the trumpets of jubilee, in case its inhabitants should humble themselves, so the Lord surrounds the sinful soul, giving it repeated calls of pardon to make sure of its conquest. I said that, besides one's own remorse, God called it by means of his inspirations. How many you must have experienced, my brother! Now in Lent, now on seeing a friend die, now when a criminal was being executed! What calls these were! Were they not urging you to go to the feet of a confessor and purify your soul with the Sacrament of reconciliation? Was the Lord not calling you to himself by these secret words? So it is. But what did you do? Ah! The inspirations were a hidden light; you blew on it with your resistance, and it went out. Not leaving the object of your criminal pleasures; the fear of being made to break those usurious contracts by which you are growing rich; the distaste you feel at restoring what was ill-gotten; in short, the horror you feel at having to begin a new life wholly contrary to the licentious one you were leading: all this smothered the fire the divine inspirations were already kindling in your soul. And so, however strong these may be, falling on a heart gangrened by vicious habits, they make no impression at all; as the Father St. John Chrysostom said with regard to Judas, when that traitor refused to respond to the inspirations by which Jesus sought the conversion of that ungrateful disciple.

12. No better heeded is the voice of a God who is all mercy when he calls the sinner by means of trials. In many is fulfilled what Scripture says of a wicked man, that in the time of his distress he increased his contempt of the Lord.[2] The Lord sees a man given over to avarice, pleasure and pride, which are, according to St. John, the three apparent goods the world has for ruining its followers: the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life. And to direct him onto the way of truth, he permits his ambitions and business to fail, his crops to be destroyed by the blow of a storm or a terrible frost, himself to be laid on a sickbed with troublesome ailments; in short, he lashes him with the whip of adversities, effects of his justice, so that he may turn and look at the hand that strikes him, as we commonly give a pat on the shoulder to someone who is not looking at us when we want him to listen. But ah! He does not recognise these blows as calls of God's mercy summoning him to penance, but attributes them all to chance, as if for God there were accidents, and he did not dispose all of them for our good and that of the whole universe. He despises the Lord in the midst of his trials and increases his crimes, saying perhaps what others said, as Job relates:[3] The Lord dwells on high, the clouds are his veil, and he cannot consider or see our distress; everything comes from fortune. And even granting that he recognises that the tribulation comes to him from God, he blasphemes his sovereign decrees, invokes Beelzebub, as a wicked king in Samaria did, for which Elijah rebuked him, and calls cruel him who is mercy itself, whose hand, if it strikes us, does not mean to hurt us much, but to bring us back, as it did Jonah, to obedience to his commands.

13. And is the word of God announced by his preachers heard with fruit by sinners, so that they give up their abominations? It is true that it is effective for that, as I said in my first part; and if they do not listen to the Prophets, that is, to the ministers of preaching, so as to repent, even if the dead rose they would not be able to convert them. So Abraham spoke to the rich glutton when he begged him to send Lazarus into the world to preach to his brothers, so that they might not come to that place of torments in which he saw himself tormented. But the insensible sinner has too hardened a heart to be receptive to the truths announced from the pulpits. For either they do not hear sermons, which is most common; or if they do, since as a rule it is with boredom and distaste, they do not grasp the sense of the words, and by the time they go out into the street the little effect they might have had on their soul has already vanished. Moreover, people ordinarily attend pláticas and sermons not with the holy purpose of profiting by the instructions parish priests and other ministers of the Gospel give them, but either to delight in the eloquence, style and wit of the preacher, or to stone them with their gibes and threats if what has been preached does not suit them. In a word, the most that is drawn from sermons at present is what the Jews drew from those Jesus Christ, eternal wisdom, preached to them; which was, according to St. Augustine, to be astonished at so much sweetness and eloquence; but they remained in their iniquities, without responding contritely to this voice of divine mercy. They marvelled, but they were not converted.

14. What is this, my brethren? Do we so despise the voices of a God who makes his compassion shine so brightly, calling us, though he is the one offended, to give us pardon for all our sins? Are neither the loving whistles he gives us through the remorse of our conscience, nor the divine inspirations by which he invites us to receive his grace, nor the trials with which he afflicts us so that we may look to heaven, nor the doctrine and warnings by which he sets before us, through his ministers, his rewards and his threats, to be enough to bring us back; is nothing to be enough to make us hear his voice and follow his steps? Ah, what a fatal sign this is for sinners! Hear how Jesus Christ himself speaks in his Gospel: My sheep hear my voice and follow me; and if you do not hear me, it is because you are not of my flock: you are not mine; you have the devil for your father. Therefore whoever becomes insensible to the divine commands, whoever despises the calls his mercy gives to convert him, does not belong to God; he is a member of Satan; his damnation is certain. A conclusion drawn from the very words of the Father of mercies, who for those who abuse his mercy is a Lord full of justice, and will know how to cast into the abyss those who do not follow him when he calls them to forgive them.

I shall not be, my God, of the number of those who rebel against your loving calls. I have been until now; and though my conscience accused me, adversities called me, your secret warnings invited me to pardon, and preachers threatened me with your justice, I have heard nothing, loving and merciful God, in a way capable of converting me. But, Lord, there is still time; it is still the acceptable time; you still give me calls of mercy, and all the words of this plática are such. I hear you, Father of my soul, and I promise with all my heart to be henceforth one of your sheep, turning away from the paths of perdition along which I have directed my steps. In this way I shall obtain to stand at your right hand in the judgment you will make of the world on the last of days; and as such I shall receive the blessing that assures me of eternal life. Amen.

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[4] The printed margin gives *Summa* I, q. 21, a. 3.

[5] Wis. 17:10 (Vulgate 17:10, *semper enim praesumit saeva perturbata conscientia*).

[6] Jer. 23:29. Num. 20:8–11.

[1] Isa. 66:24 and Mark 9:47; the source attributes it to “the Wise man”.

[2] 2 Chron. 28:22, of King Ahaz.

[3] Job 22:13–14.

32. Fourth Sunday after Pentecost: On the Conditions for a Good Confession

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 32, pp. 296–306. Gospel: Luke 5:1–11. Original preacher not named.

Laxate retia vestra in capturam (Luke 5:4).

Let down your nets for a catch.

The Gospel of this day is from the fifth chapter of St. Luke, and it reads thus:

1. “It happened one day that Jesus was on the shore of the lake of Gennesaret, and was hard pressed by the crowd of people, who were jostling to get near him and hear the word of God. He saw two boats at the edge of the lake, whose fishermen had got out on land and were washing their nets. So he got into one of these boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little from the land; and sitting down he taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking he said to Simon: Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a catch. And Simon answered him: Master, we have been toiling all night and have caught nothing; but at your word I will let down the net. And when they had let it down, they caught such a great number of fish that the net was breaking, and they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came, and filled both boats with fish so that they were almost sinking. And when Simon Peter saw this, he threw himself at Jesus’ feet, saying: Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man, unworthy of your company; for he and all who were with him were filled with amazement at the catch they had just made. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners, were equally astonished. But Jesus said to Simon: Do not be afraid; you who until now have been a fisher of fish, to give them death, will from today be a fisher of men, to give them life. And bringing their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.” This is the Gospel.

2. The holy Fathers interpret it in many ways, though the most common explanation is that on this occasion the Saviour charged St. Peter and his successors with the preaching of his new law, to draw all nations to the knowledge of the truth, using the metaphor of nets and of fishers of men, and making use of the very trade they practised to appoint them to another, greater and spiritual one. Nevertheless, the following explanation seems to me not unfitting, and it agrees with the idea I have proposed for today. The sea where the Apostles fished is the world: David calls it a great sea. The fish are sinners, plunged in the waves of criminal pleasures. Simon’s boat is the sacrament of Penance, or sacramental Confession, which according to the Councils is a second plank by which we can escape the shipwreck of sin after the ship of Baptism has been broken up.[1] Simon’s catching the fruit of his labour when Jesus gave him instructions how and where to let down the nets shows that only when we make our confession in the way and with the conditions the Lord commands do we draw from it the fruit we desire. And consequently, the Apostles’ having toiled all night in vain, because they had not done it according to the Lord’s orders, shows the multitude of sinners who during life, which is a true night, come and go to the confessional, frequent this Sacrament, and do not draw from it the fruit for which it is instituted, which is grace, because they do not use the means God commands nor adorn it with the conditions required for it to be fruitful. Therefore, though I have spoken several times of sacramental confession, it has seemed to me fitting to speak today of so important a subject, one on which my great mother St. Teresa of Jesus bids me preach often, assuring me in her writings that bad confessions are what fill hell with souls. How many the conditions for a confession are, and the misfortune of countless souls who lose the fruit of confession by not conforming to them, will be the whole subject of my plática; reversing somewhat the order I follow in the others, for the better understanding of the faithful.

Single Section

3. The acts the penitent must make for a good confession are three, according to the council of Trent: contrition of heart, confession of mouth and satisfaction in deed.[1] Our catechisms explain them somewhat more fully, setting out five conditions for this Sacrament: namely, examination, sorrow, purpose of amendment, confession and satisfaction. It is all the same; for though the Council does not name examination or purpose, they are included in sorrow and confession, since ordinarily confession of mouth cannot be made complete without a previous examination of conscience, nor is there contrition of heart unless it excludes the

will to sin in future, which is the purpose of amendment. I shall follow, then, the explanation of the conditions of confession as the catechism gives them, explaining each one separately.

Examination

4. Examination, according to the Council, is an exact and formal inquiry a man makes into all his steps and ways, noting in his memory whatever he has done wrong in them, so as to confess it afterwards. There is no precept that directly commands this examination; but there is the divine one that commands us to make a complete confession. And how will this be done if one does not first think over the sins one has committed since the last confession that was rightly made? It is true that our obligation, according to the said Council, is to tell all the sins which, after a diligent examination, we find we have not previously confessed. But just as, after this diligent examination has been made, it is not a sin to leave one out through ignorance, so it is a sin, and a grave one, not to make it as one should, deliberately exposing oneself, through sloth or criminal negligence, to failing in the completeness owed to confession. And how should this examination be made? First, a man should seek a retired place for it, for it is in solitude that God speaks to the heart; and as we can do nothing good without divine help, we must with the greatest humility ask him for light to know the number and gravity of our sins, so as to detest them. Turn to me, he tells us through a prophet, and I will turn to you. To begin to examine our conscience, we must set before us the book of the law and see where the book of our conduct disagrees with it. The book of the law is, in the first place, the commandments of God, without the fulfilment of which we cannot enter eternal life, said Jesus Christ in his Gospel. Then those of holy Church, which is our lawgiver in spiritual matters. We must also attend to the particular obligations of our state, class and condition. We must not confess only as Christians, but as priest, married man, mayor, lawyer, etc.; for to each class, says David, God gave particular laws; and so we must examine how far we have failed in each of our obligations. Each of them we must meditate on, and examine our conscience to see in what we have broken them. This is necessary if our confession is to be as it should. Confession without examination is going blindly: the same as going without a light to look for a jewel lost at night; the same as going to defend a lawsuit without having seen what the documents of the case contain; the same as going to render accounts to one's employer without bringing the items of debit and credit noted down. All these would come away disappointed: the one would not find the lost jewel, the other would lose the suit, and the other would come off badly in the accounts. So he who wilfully omitted the examination of conscience would wilfully also expose himself to a sacrilegious confession. And how much time should be spent in the examination? No fixed rule can be given for everyone. In the first place it depends on the penitent's memory: one who has a good one needs less time than one whose memory is very slow and confused. Also on how long it has been since he last confessed: clothes that are often washed need little washing. And on the affairs of the person examining himself: a head with little hair needs less combing than one with a thick and tangled mane. A farmer, for example, who has no other concern than the work of his fields and the care of his family, will need less time to examine himself than a merchant, a superior, a lawyer and others involved in business. In short, one should spend the time that, all circumstances considered, one would spend on a matter of the greatest gravity and importance. But to go to the confessional, perhaps after a year without confession, with an examination of a quarter of an hour or less: it is morally impossible that such people can confess rightly.

Sorrow

5. Sorrow, say the councils of Trent and Florence, is a grief of the soul for having offended God. When a man knows by the examination the misery to which his sin has brought him, and the great offence he has given the Lord, who is worthy of all his reverence, there follows grief and regret at having wronged him by his sins. To discover one's sins by examination and not weep over them is the same as for a shepherd to discover the wolf coming to devour the flock and not shout, set the dogs on it and take aim at it. He would gain little from the discovery: the wolf will come, enter the fold and take its prey, for there is no one to stop it. Tobias was not content with discovering the great fish that wanted to swallow him; on the Angel's advice

he drew the fish out of the river, gutted it, took out its heart, burned it, and with the smoke the devil was driven away. It is not enough to see the fish of sin that is able to destroy us; it is necessary to gut it in confession, to break the heart with sorrow for having committed it, and to burn it in the fire of love, so that Satan, who held us possessed, may flee from us and grace may take his place. Sorrow is a feeling of the soul and not of the body, and so it cannot be known outwardly as we know bodily pains; and this the Council commands us to preach to you to remove anxieties: though there may be no tears nor any other outward feeling, the sinner does not for that reason fail to be sorry, if he truly detests his sins and puts his hatred and aversion for them into practice. Sorrow is indispensable for confession, for without it there is no true penance, nor forgiveness of sins. Unless you do penance, said the Saviour, you will perish. Without examination or completeness of confession the sinner can in many cases be justified, but never if he does not repent of his sins. Confession without sorrow is the same as a corpse, a body without a soul; like faith without works; like a gunshot without a ball, says St. Augustine: put fine powder in the gun, take good aim, fire it; but if there is no ball the enemy will be left laughing, because it cannot harm him. So, however many of the other conditions for confession are present, if there is no sorrow the devil will laugh, because in that confession sin is not destroyed. Pharaoh, Antiochus, Saul, Judas and David confessed their sins in the very same words, saying: I have sinned; but only the last was absolved, because he said them with an inner sorrow the others lacked, grieving for merely earthly motives.

6. Sorrow is of two kinds: contrition and attrition. Attrition is regret at having offended God because he can deprive us of eternal glory and punish us with hell, or because of the ugliness that sin brings with it. This sorrow, though it looks, or should look, to God as the source of all justice, with some beginning of love, has in it some self-interest on the sinner’s part, and so outside confession it does not justify the soul. That of contrition is more disinterested: it is to regret having offended God solely because he is who he is, infinite goodness, worthy of being loved above all things. This, since it includes perfect charity, which excludes all sin, justifies by itself, but with the tacit or express intention of confessing, since this is the only means we have in the law of grace for our justification. A comparison will make this distinction clear. You go hunting, and in trying to kill a wild beast you kill a man. Woe is me, you say, the law will catch me, they will bring a case against me, I shall die on the gallows: see here a likeness of the act of attrition. But the man so killed is your father. Alas, you say, what have I done? I have taken the life of my father, of him who gave me being, to whom I owed so many favours! This man no longer thinks of judges, or cases, or scaffolds; he grieves only at having killed his good father: see here the act of contrition. By it we grieve for the offence solely because it is an offence against God, without regard to glory or hell. Either sorrow is sufficient for confession; contrition is not necessary, but attrition is, moved by a supernatural motive. Are you sorry for a sin, for example a murder, a theft, an impurity, only because of the punishment or disgrace that may follow? A null confession, because the sorrow is for temporal and natural losses. More still: are you sorry because you fear burning in hell, and that is why you regret sinning, but not because you offended God, who could punish you with its flames? A null confession, says St. Augustine. The ravening wolf comes to the flock; the shepherds drive it off and it goes away; it withdraws trembling, but it goes away as much a wolf as it came, because fear makes it flee, and it still keeps its desire for the prey. So with him who turns from sin only out of fear of hell, if he keeps his affection for sin.

Purpose of Amendment

7. Sorrow for sins is followed by the purpose of amendment; or rather, this is included in the other, because true sorrow, says the council of Trent, excludes every will to sin; and this is the purpose of amendment, a resolution the soul makes not to return to sin. Wash yourselves, said the Lord through Isaiah, be clean. Does not he who washes become clean, then? This does not always happen in all who confess. They wash, but many become still more stained, because in coming to the sacred washing of penance they do not bring the resolution not to sin in future; and so, far from their soul being made clean, it is stained anew with a grave

sacrilege. Three conditions must accompany the purpose of amendment, says the Council: that it be firm, universal and effective. The catechism also teaches us this.

8. Firm. If even purposes that seem to be made firmly often weaken at times, what will those be that are weak and feeble from the start? St. Augustine makes a very apt comparison on this condition: He who weeps for his sins and commits them again, he says, is like one who washes an unbaked brick: the more he washes it, the more mud he makes. That is, he who confesses without securing his confession with a firm purpose is an unbaked brick or adobe, not baked in the oven of love nor strengthened by firmness of purpose; and so, the more he confesses, the more stained he will be. St. Paul gives us an idea of what this purpose must be like when he says: Who shall separate me from the love of Jesus Christ? I am certain that neither tribulation, nor hunger, nor distress, nor the sword, nor any creature will be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. See, Christian, whether you are resolved not to sin, even if you are pressed to it like Susanna, even if you are threatened like Joseph, even if you are exposed to suffering as many tribulations as Job; and then I will tell you that the purpose of your confession is firm.

9. Universal. This means that we must not resolve to give up only one or another sin, but all we have committed against God. David included them all when he said: I have hated every way of iniquity. This holy penitent did not resolve only to abstain from the adultery and murder he had committed, but from all that is iniquity; had he not made his purpose so, his crimes would not have been forgiven. How many there are who are determined not to commit such a sin, for example impurity, theft or blasphemy, but not to stop detracting, lying, working on feast days! This purpose is not universal. Such people want at the same time to worship God and Belial, the holy ark and the idol Dagon. They want to divide the infant, which is what Solomon proposed in his wise judgment; but the Lord, like the true mother of old, knowing that the whole heart of man belongs to him, does not allow it to be divided with the devil: he wants it all, whole, for himself.

10. Effective. And does the effectiveness of the purpose consist in a man’s not sinning again thereafter? Certainly not. It is one thing to resolve effectively to use every possible means not to fall into sin, and this we must do; and another that, even with this purpose, a man driven by a vehement temptation should fall into sin again; and this does not destroy the effectiveness of the purpose. A general resolves, and effectively, to storm a fortress; he takes every measure he judges fitting for this end; nevertheless, the superior force of the enemy compels him to be defeated. So, though a man may sometimes yield when assailed by the incitements of sin, it is true that he does not fail to sin, because, helped by God, he could triumph over the temptation; but the purpose he made beforehand will not for that reason be ineffective. But it is necessary to use every diligence to fulfil what we have effectively promised. That “I would like not to sin, I would like to avoid this occasion,” and other such purposes, are not enough; they are nothing but velleities, says St. Augustine. You would like to, says the Saint, but you do not will it, because you do not use the means to avoid a relapse. These purposes may be called deceitful. David says it in one of his psalms: You have worked deceit like a sharp razor. How apt! The razor cuts the hair, but though seemingly none is left on the beard or head, in a short time it shows again and grows, because the root remained, and it is that which makes it sprout again. So there are sinners who want to deceive God like a sharp razor, pretending that nothing of the crime has remained in their heart; but a short time after their confession their sins spring up again, because the root remained, their purposes being ineffective.

Confession

11. This, as a condition for receiving the sacrament of Penance, is a sacramental accusation that the sinner makes at the feet of the priest, declaring to him all his sins in order to receive pardon through absolution. And are they forgiven by this alone? Yes, my brethren, if it is done as it ought to be. In other tribunals to confess is the same as to be condemned; but in this tribunal of mercy to confess is already to be freed from the crime. If a murderer or a thief were pardoned merely by declaring his crime to the judge; if a sick man were cured

merely by uncovering his sores to the doctor; neither the judge with the accused nor the physician with his patients would have much to do. This, then, is what happens in confessing our sins; but they must be confessed completely. For this all the grave sins committed since the last confession well made must be told which come to mind after a diligent examination, as I have said before; and this not in a lump and confusedly, but their number, as far as it can be ascertained. Merely to say, I accuse myself of being a great sinner, is the same as if a sick man said to the doctor, I am very ill, without telling him what part of the body hurt. Neither could the doctor in that case give him suitable medicine, nor the confessor form a judgment of the penitent unless he specified his crimes. It is true that when the number of sins cannot be stated exactly, it will be enough to say so many, more or less; and if not even this is possible, he should state the habit and frequency with which they have been committed in a year, month, week or day, in which case the confessor will come to know their number.

12. Doubtful sins must also be told according to the doubt one has; for one may doubt whether one committed such a crime; or, even knowing this, doubt whether it is grave or light; whether it is against this or that virtue; or whether one has confessed it or not. In whichever of these ways one doubts, the doubt should be made known to the confessor. But the confessor must take great care to calm scrupulous souls, who as a rule are always fearful about the validity of their confessions, judging without foundation that they have not confessed some sins when they have in truth already confessed them. The circumstances with which any sin may be clothed must also be confessed. These may change its species, or aggravate the crime within the same species. The first, which are those opposed to distinct virtues or precepts, must without fail be told. For example, you sinned by stealing a sacred thing: it is not enough to say that you have stolen, failing against the seventh commandment; you must state the circumstance that it was a holy thing, for you also sinned against religion by committing a sacrilege. Those that merely aggravate the sin within the same species are, for example, stealing a large amount, detracting in church, etc. These too should be told, according to the more probable opinion, especially those that may change the confessor's judgment for the right choice of penances. Likewise the proximate occasion of sin, habit and vicious habits, all must be told; and likewise the sins of others committed through our fault. The shortness of time obliges me not to dwell longer on this point.

Satisfaction

13. It is not enough for the sinner to take the foregoing steps for the confession of his sins; he must also make satisfaction for them; just as it is not enough for the hand that wrote a mistake on the paper to stop writing, unless it erases what it wrote wrongly: this is the doctrine of the Father St. Gregory. So it is of no use to confess and stop sinning unless one does penance for what one has sinned before. This is called in the council of Trent sacramental satisfaction, which must be promised in confession and afterwards carried out. This penance or satisfaction may be satisfactory and medicinal. The first is imposed to satisfy for the sins committed and confessed; the second, to guard against future ones. Saying a Rosary, giving such an alms, fasting on such days: see the satisfactory. Not entering such a house, not speaking with such a person, praying: see the medicinal. The confessor is obliged to impose these penances, and the penitent to fulfil them; so that if he omits to fulfil the whole of what was imposed on him, however light it may be, he sins mortally, and likewise if he leaves a notable part of it undone; and if at the time of confessing he had the intention of not accepting or not fulfilling the penance, the confession was null. Ah, how unfounded are the complaints of some about the penances the confessor has imposed on them! They tell of the penance, exaggerating its severity; but they are silent about the sins they confessed, which gave the confessor reason to give them penance in that way. If these people read the ancient canons, they would see the terrible public penances imposed for a false oath, a sensual lapse, a blasphemy and the like. God, whom we have offended, requires of us satisfaction for his offences. After having pardoned our first parents, he said to Adam: In the sweat of your face you shall eat your bread; and to Eve: In pain you shall bring forth your children.[2] And all

the calamities we suffer are penances for the first sin. Enough.

14. These, my brethren, are the five conditions necessary for a good confession, lightly explained. Fulfil them, if you want to receive the fruit of the Sacrament. Do not pour poison into the theriac that is to give you health, nor muddy with sacrileges the fountain of the waters of grace that are to give you glory.

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[3] Council of Trent, Session XIV, c. 2 and Session VI, c. 14 ("the second plank after shipwreck", a phrase of Tertullian and St. Jerome).

[1] Council of Trent, Session XIV, c. 3.

[2] The printed margin gives Gen. 3 (3:16–19).

33. Fifth Sunday after Pentecost: On the Fifth Commandment of the Decalogue

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 33, pp. 307–316. Gospel: Matthew 5:20–24. Original preacher not named.

> *Omnis qui irascitur fratri suo, reus erit judicio (Matthew 5:22).*
>
> *Whoever is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment.*

The Gospel of this day is from the fifth chapter of St. Matthew, and it reads thus:

1. "Jesus said to his disciples: I declare to you that unless your justice, or holiness, is greater than that of the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to the men of old: You shall not kill, and whoever kills shall be condemned by the court called the judgment. But I say to you, I command you as your lawgiver, that not only whoever kills, but everyone who becomes angry with his brother with excessive wrath, shall be condemned by the court of judgment; that whoever calls his brother *raca*, or says some insulting word to him, will deserve to be condemned by the court of the council; and whoever calls him fool, dishonouring him publicly, shall be condemned to eternal fire, for God does not tolerate those who fail gravely in charity. So, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, because you have offended him, leave your gift there before the altar, and go first to be reconciled with him, and then come and offer your gift." This is the Gospel.

2. Jesus Christ, the prince of peace, who announced it to the whole universe under the sacred banner of the cross, lays on us today a commandment able to curb every disordered affection of our heart, so that fraternal charity may reign, which binds men with sacred bonds to form a Christian, and even a civil, society. The law of the Gospel forbids three things beyond the law of Moses as regards the fifth commandment of the Decalogue. That ancient law, according to what the Saviour shows today, forbade man only to put his brother or neighbour to death. The law of grace forbids, first, every inner and deliberate movement of anger to harm one's neighbour; second, showing this rancour or anger outwardly by some words which, though insignificant in themselves, as was saying *raca*, according to the common opinion, reveal the hatred and desire for revenge the heart has conceived against one's neighbour; and third, detracting and insulting him with offensive words, dishonouring him as far as lies in one's power. All that Jesus Christ says today to his disciples, teaching them the perfection of charity which ought to shine in them more than in those of the old law, is comprised in the fifth commandment, which says, You shall not kill; and of all of it Jesus Christ makes the capital vice of anger the origin. Therefore I mean to speak of this subject in this plática, to banish, if I can, an evil whose contagion, besides being universal, is the breeding ground of the greatest disasters. What is forbidden us in the fifth commandment of the Decalogue? I shall show it in my first part. How must we bridle anger, the source of the crimes forbidden us in it? I shall say in the second.

First Part

3. In this fifth commandment every unjust killing and shedding of a man's blood is forbidden. With reason it is said unjust killing, for a man may very well be killed without its being unjust, and likewise his limbs

maimed and his blood shed. Thus to the authorities who take the place of God, the sole master of life and death, and who judge the cases of evildoers, it is lawful and even a duty to take life when the law assigns this penalty. The Lord has so commanded in many places of his Scripture; and in the seventh chapter of Joshua we read that God himself commanded a soldier to be stoned for having stolen some valuables at the siege and capture of Jericho against the express order he had given. And indeed, if a physician, whose office is to care for the health of the human body, cuts off with impunity a rotten limb that might infect the whole of it, judges, who are appointed for the preservation and good of the whole people entrusted to their government, are with greater reason obliged to remove from it those members who are harmful to it. Nor do those break this commandment who kill an aggressor who shows signs of attempting their life, observing the rules of moderation that a blameless defence prescribes, and having no other way to escape the death that threatens them. We must not judge so, and so generally, of aggressors against temporal goods. The Church has condemned several propositions asserting that one may take the life of someone who wanted to rob us of a small sum. If the sum is large, it is a fairly probable opinion that the thief may be killed in its defence, and more so if, those goods being lost, the owner would be left without his livelihood, for then robbing him would be the same as killing him. Nevertheless, a man's life is of very great price, and in my judgment it surpasses all temporal riches; and so it is necessary to weigh the circumstances well before killing the unjust aggressor against such goods, of whatever kind they may be. The twenty-second chapter of Exodus distinguishes the thief by night, whose killing it treats as lawful, and who is presumed also to be an aggressor against life, from the thief by day, whom it does not allow private persons to kill. What instruction God gives us in this command!

4. From all this it follows that killing a man is not the same as breaking this commandment, which forbids only homicide or unjust killing, that is, killing him on one's own authority, except in natural defence of life and of other goods, as I have explained. Forbidden, then, are homicide and every unjust maiming of limbs or other bodily harm to the person of one's neighbour, whether by deed, by word expressing the desire, by counsel or by assistance. Homicide is a most grievous sin, the greatest we can commit against our brother; for we take from him whom we must love as ourselves the most precious temporal good he enjoys, which is life. So it is one of the crimes God most detests, and which he punished severely at the very beginning of the world, saying to Cain, the murderer of his little brother: The blood of your brother Abel cries to me from the earth, that is, it asks for vengeance and punishment. Therefore you shall be cursed upon the earth, and the earth too, which is stained with the blood of your brother; and when you till it it will not yield you fruit; and you shall wander upon it a vagabond and a fugitive. This sin, so abominable to God, is so also to men, and the laws condemn the murderer to capital punishment.

5. To proceed clearly in so important a matter, I shall explain various ways in which this commandment is broken. Those sin against it who procure abortion in any way it is done, whether by taking, or giving to a pregnant woman, medicines suited to it, or by mothers wilfully suffocating the fetus. If the fetus is already animated (which is not easy to know), it is already a true homicide, and he who procures it or helps in it incurs irregularity: a rational creature is killed, and the soul of that infant is deprived eternally of the sight of a God who created it in his image and likeness. If the fetus is not yet animated, destroying it is nonetheless a mortal sin, preventing from being a man one who was on the way to being one; and in the view of Tertullian[1] it is an anticipated homicide; for it can be called a man, because the fruit is already in the seed.

6. Those sin against this commandment who take, give or advise medicinal herbs or poisons of sterility so that conception may not take place. This sin is as grave as it is common, and many licentious persons make use of it to give themselves over more freely to lust without fear that their crimes will be outwardly revealed. But the just and avenging God, who permits the effects of a criminal impure passion to be made known by the signs of the womb, often causes the unlawful arts and precautions by which people try with the greatest care to hide them to fail; and at the same time, by the shameful discovery of such crimes, he wills also to

punish the negligence of many parents in the care of their unmarried daughters, against the command of the Wise man, who says to them: Have you daughters? Then guard their bodies, and do not show them a cheerful face; and to avoid their ruin, give them in marriage, and you will do a good work, and give them to a sensible man. As if he said: See that the female sex is in danger of being led astray, and a sin of incontinence is often the tinder of greater ones: by giving daughters in holy matrimony their prostitution and the execrable crime of preventing conception are avoided. Those mothers also sin gravely who, without considering the harm they may cause to the fruit they carry in their womb, give themselves excessively to eating, drinking, dancing and exertions by which the fetus may be endangered and a miscarriage follow. Such was the crime history relates of the sister of the Roman Curius, who, to celebrate a victory of his, gave herself so intemperately to dancing that that same night she miscarried a dead child.

7. Likewise those parents sin who, putting tender infants to bed in their own bed, through their negligence suffocate them, the gravity of this crime being the greater the more culpable the parents' carelessness was. This happens many times, and in the third book of Kings is found a judgment Solomon gave with the greatest wisdom between two mothers on this matter. The Church greatly detests this crime and has imposed most severe penances on those who commit it. See the reply the pontiff Stephen V gave to Humbert, bishop of Mainz, in which among other things he says: If he who destroys by abortion the child in its mother's womb is a true murderer, how much more will he be who suffocates or kills a child already born, even if it is no more than a day old? Who will be able to excuse him of homicide? Those also go against this commandment who give counsel, help or command to kill or wound their neighbour. So Jezebel was guilty of homicide, for though she did not herself put the innocent Naboth to death, she did it through the unjust judges whom she ordered to carry it out. So too David, writing to Joab to put Uriah in the most dangerous place, so that by his dying in battle the adultery he had committed with his wife might remain hidden. So Saul, who tried to put the young shepherd at the front against the Philistines, so that he might be the victim of their arms. Ah! Let each one examine how many times by his words and gibes he has stirred up the anger of his companions to wound or kill his adversary, being himself the cause of discord, quarrels and murders: crimes which as a rule are not weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, nor is there hardly anyone who confesses these indirect homicides, inducing others by his words to commit them.

8. Since homicide, as it is understood in the law of Jesus Christ, does not consist only in actually killing or wounding with weapons or poison or some other material means, nor maiming in cutting off an arm, a leg or another member of the human body, nor in doing so by the indirect means of counsel, command or help that I have explained; but he too is reckoned a murderer who harbours in his heart hatred and rancour against his brother, with the desire and will to wound or kill him: therefore our divine Saviour, on the words by which this crime is marked in the Decalogue, which the Jews understood materially, gave an explanation in the Gospel of this day, pointing out other crimes these words contain: You shall not kill.

9. St. Augustine, explaining the words of Jesus Christ I quoted in the introduction to this plática, sets out three degrees that show the wicked movement anger causes to be conceived in a man's heart, and which are included in the prohibition of this commandment. The first is an urge or desire of the heart to harm one's neighbour, taking revenge for his wrongs. The second is the confused cries of indignation, which Christ expresses by this one, *raca*: many of these are often heard, showing the inner fury and rage conceived against some person. The third is the contumely and abuse with which one insults the neighbour one hates, such as that expressed by the word fool in the Gospel, which in that time signified every reproach that could be said to a man. So that the desire for revenge, the showing of inner fury and offensive words are the seed that produces actual homicide; they are already a homicide begun, and all are forbidden in this fifth commandment, all being as a rule driven by unbridled anger. Therefore to bridle this will doubtless be the most fitting means of not breaking this commandment. And what must we do to put a bridle on this passion? We shall see it briefly in the

Second Part

10. Anger, in so far as it is commonly the root of the crimes forbidden in the fifth commandment, according to the doctrine of Jesus Christ we have explained, is a most grievous sin, deserving that the Christian should use the greatest care and study to repress it. The holy Fathers and interpreters of Scripture suggest various means for this. First, to arm oneself with the virtue of patience. Second, to grasp well its gravity. Third, to consider the punishments God has prepared for the wrathful. Fourth, to look attentively at the example of our divine Master, the meekest and most peaceable of men. These are the special antidotes to preserve us from this vice. Let us explain them a little.

11. Patience. This virtue is the remedy against this sickness that the Saviour left us, and the catechism gives it to us: patience against anger. I read, my brethren, Tertullian, St. Cyprian, St. Basil and other Saints, and I am amazed to see that, just as anger is the root of countless crimes, so patience is the wellspring of the most heroic virtues. According to them, many are the acts this holy virtue produces, all directed to preserving peace and fraternal charity, which form the bond of Christian perfection. They are these: to bear with evenness of mind the ills creatures cause us, considering that everything comes from the hand of the Lord, without whose good pleasure no one could wrong us; to quench the impulse of anger in its first movements, for a weed is easily pulled out of the ground as soon as it springs up, which is more difficult if it has already taken root; to put out every hatred, rancour or ill will that is stirred in the heart against a brother; to return benefits for wrongs; not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good, according to the counsel or command of St. Paul; to seal the lips so as not to complain of the injury received. All these acts are commanded by the virtue of patience, an invincible tower for resisting anger and preventing its harmful effects. The most powerful means of calming the fury of one who is angry with us is patience under the injuries he does us. So we see that when St. Spyridon was called to the palace of Constantine, one of the courtiers struck him on the face on seeing him enter in a torn and stained garment; the Saint, far from being angry with him, turned the other cheek so that he might repeat the insult: an action that so moved the aggressor's heart that, prostrate at his feet, he asked his pardon and recognised his holiness.

12. To grasp the gravity of this crime. This is the second means of bridling it. How grave anger is appears clearly in the terrible words and threats with which the Lord forbids it in various places of his holy Scripture. Everyone who desires to take revenge, he says in the twenty-eighth chapter of Ecclesiasticus,[1] will find the vengeance of the Lord, and he will keep his sins well stored up to punish them. Remember your last things, says the same book, and do not be angry nor hold your brother as an enemy; remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook the injury your neighbour has done you through ignorance. As if he said: Remember the law of God and fear his judgments, and with that you will turn away from anger and every desire for revenge, because the covenant of the Most High forbids it. And finally Ecclesiasticus adds: Keep away from quarrels and strife, and you will lessen your sins; only the wrathful man stirs up disputes. One need only read the Gospel of this day to recognise well, in its severe expressions, the gravity of this crime and see the threats of its punishment. St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans says to them: Brethren, do not defend yourselves against those who wrong you; give place to the anger of your enemies; that is, not being angry with those who have harmed you, leave their punishment to God, for he says: Vengeance is reserved to me; I will give each one what he deserves. So St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine and Theodoret explain this passage of the Apostle. And elsewhere St. Paul says: The works of the flesh are plain, which are enmities, quarrels, dissensions, anger, murders; whoever does such things will not possess the kingdom of heaven. Grave is the crime that condemns us to the loss of glory.

13. Punishment of anger. And God does not keep the punishment of the sins the passion of anger produces until after the life of furious and wrathful men; even in this life he punishes them in a terrible and exemplary way; and this consideration is a fitting means to repress it. It makes one shudder, my brethren, to read in the sacred Books and ecclesiastical histories the scourges divine justice has in all ages brought down on such

offenders. We have already seen the sentence of malediction given to the furious Cain as the penalty for his fratricide, which he dragged with him until his death. Pharaoh, who, driven by his anger, had the children of the Hebrews thrown into the sea,[2] was himself buried in the waters in which he had tried to drown that privileged seed; fulfilling in himself that sentence which says: By what a man sins, by that same he shall be punished. Adonibezek, savage with cruel anger against the kings he had conquered in battle, used the greatest inhumanity with them, cutting off the extremities of their feet and hands and making them eat under his table; but the just Judge arranged, to punish him, that, conquered and taken by Judah, the captain of God's people, he should receive the same punishment, as he himself confesses in the first chapter of the book of Judges, in these words: Seventy kings, with the extremities of their feet and hands cut off, gathered the crumbs of my food under my table; as I have done to others, so God has done to me.[3] Saul, who out of anger against David so many times pursued him to the death, and out of the hatred he bore him burned the city of Nob with all its inhabitants and priests, the Lord punished, causing him to die miserably on the mountains of Gilboa upon his own sword. Uzziah, who, angry with the ministers of the temple for not allowing him to offer incense, an act reserved to the priests, threatened them furiously while snatching the censer from them, was covered with a loathsome leprosy that devoured him until his death, spending the rest of his wretched life in obscurity and separated from the people. Herod, who, full of rage on hearing that the King of the Jews had been born, attempted deicide, and to carry it out made countless children of Bethlehem the victims of his fury, received from God a penalty worthy of his crime, says St. John Chrysostom; for, laid on a bed of pain, he suffered until his death as many and as terrible ills as there were members of his body. Ahithophel… But this would be endless. What has been said is enough for the fear of God's anger to restrain ours, so as to avoid its fatal consequences.

14. The example Jesus Christ gave us on this point. This, finally, is what we must imitate if we are Christians and wish to be saved by imitating him, which is the only means we have of attaining it, as St. Paul said. The imitation of the patience of Jesus against the assaults anger might have made on him at the sight of his persecutors, had he been capable and susceptible of such passions, is the most effective bridle for repressing our angry feelings. The apostle St. Peter in his first epistle tells us: Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps; who, though he committed no sin, and no duplicity or deceit was found on his lips, did not curse those who cursed him, nor, when he suffered wrongs, did he threaten his persecutors. And to encourage us to this forbearance, the same Apostle goes on: This is the grace the Lord gives us, that if anyone has cause for sadness through persecutions, he bears them with patience… For this the Lord called us. This holy Apostle seems to summon all of us Christians to follow the example of our Saviour, not flaring up in fits of anger against those who afflict us. Jesus Christ, from the manger, suffered the hardships and ingratitude of men at the very time he was doing them good. If he preached, they murmured against him and wanted to stone him; if he taught the doctrine he had heard from his heavenly Father, they took him for an impostor; if he worked miracles, they called him possessed. Finally, full of anger against him, they accused him, brought a case against him, sentenced him and placed him on a shameful gibbet. And what did Jesus Christ do to them? Favours, kindnesses, benefits; and he was so far from being angry with them or showing any wish to avenge their wrongs that, on the contrary, when he was in the greatest of his agonies on the tree of the cross, he begged the Father earnestly for pardon for the very men who crucified him, excusing as far as he could that sacrilegious outrage, attributing all they did to ignorance. With this example alone, if imitated, we have the most effective bridle for repressing anger and avoiding the scandalous ravages and crimes it usually produces in those who do not master it.

15. Would, my brethren, that the doctrine I have just explained to you might be engraved in our souls, so that, seeing the harmful effects of this passion, forbidden in the fifth commandment, we may use the means I have suggested to bridle a passion that will deprive us of blessedness.

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[4] The printed margin gives *Apol.* c. 6 (the passage is *Apologeticum* 9).

[1] The source has “chapter 8”; the passages are Sir. 28:1, 28:6–7 and 28:8.

[2] Exodus 1:22 says the river (the Nile), not the sea.

[3] Judges 1:7.

34. Sixth Sunday after Pentecost: On Drunkenness

Vol. II (Second Year), Plática 34, pp. 317–325. Gospel: Mark 8:1–9. Original preacher not named.

Quot panes habetis? (Mark 8:5).

How many loaves have you?

The Gospel of this day is from the eighth chapter of St. Mark, and it reads thus:

1. “As the people had gathered again in great numbers to hear Jesus, and had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples and said to them: I have great compassion on this people, for they have now been with me continually for three days and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away to their homes without having eaten, they will faint on the way, for some of them have come from far off. And his disciples answered him: How can enough bread be found here in the desert to satisfy them? Jesus asked them: How many loaves have you? Seven, they answered. Then he commanded the people to sit down on the ground; he took the seven loaves and, having given thanks to God his Father, broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute, and they distributed them to the people. And they had also a few small fish, and he blessed them and ordered them to be given too. And all ate and were satisfied; and of the pieces left over seven baskets were gathered up. And those who had eaten were about four thousand; and Jesus sent them away.” This is the Gospel.

2. The Gospel relates another occasion like this one, in which the Saviour fed more than five thousand men with five loaves. At all the tables the Lord of the world prepared to sustain those who came to hear his heavenly doctrine, all who had the happiness of enjoying them were satisfied, though the guests were thousands. I do not wonder at it. A table laid by him who feeds the little birds, though they neither sow nor gather into barns; a table at which men looked to God and gave him thanks for his benefits; a table, in short, at which nothing was attended to but relief of the need we inherited from Adam: what wonder that it filled all and left them nothing more to desire? Some of those given over to gluttony, whose God is their belly, who long for nothing but to make their body the tomb of every animal found in sea and on land, and who go to great lengths to find a skilful cook who knows how to please their palate, would perhaps not have been satisfied at the table of Jesus Christ, where there was nothing but bread and a little fish. But let us come to my subject. If many of our own time had been there, for whom no banquet fills their desires unless there are many bottles of wine and spirits to drain glass after glass, until they themselves are filled with what the bottles are emptied of, neither would they have been satisfied at a table where no one spoke of wine, no one asked for it, and it was given to no one. There was no wine in the desert; and even had there been, it was not likely that Jesus would have given it to them: not because wine is bad in itself, for the apostle St. Paul, well instructed in the maxims of Christ, advised it to Timothy as a medicine for his ailments; but because at a banquet man is exposed to falling through it into the detestable vice of drunkenness, as harmful as it is frequent: a vice which, being gluttony in drink, belongs to one of the seven capital vices, and of which I mean to speak today, showing its pernicious effects. What drunkenness is, and how grave, I shall show in a single section, reversing somewhat the order I have set myself.

Single Section

3. Drunkenness is nothing else than the disturbance caused in a man by drinking too much wine or other like liquor. It may be innocent if one drinks inadvertently, without foreseeing the harm of the drink, or not knowing the fatal effects that may come from it: such was that of Noah, according to the expositors of sacred Scripture. But it will be sinful in one who knows by his own or others’ experience the harm that drinking

more than his nature can bear may cause him. This is a mortal sin in itself and in its consequences, being like the wellspring of the greatest disorders. The picture the ancients made of a drunken man, or, to speak in common language, of a drunkard, is the most fitting to signify and make plain both the gravity and the effects of this shameful passion. They painted a child with a woman's face, his breast bare, crowned with vine leaves and fighting with a tiger. How apt! The drunkard is a child, because drunkenness turns the most sensible man into a fool and a braggart. It deprives him of prudence and wisdom, and like a babbling child he cannot articulate his words properly. His legs tremble like those of children who cannot yet walk, and he falls at every step because he cannot hold himself up. And as a child who has nothing thinks himself master of all he sees, so the drunkard, though he be a wretched and miserable creature, seems to himself a mighty man; at least he does not think about his poverty.

4. This painted child had a woman's face, because this vice, as I shall say later, stirs up and kindles lust. Do not get drunk, said St. Paul, for lust will be close by. The child had his breast bare, because a man full of wine keeps nothing reserved in his heart; he discloses and reveals everything, even when revealing a secret is harmful to himself. Like a jar of must that is very full (and this is a comparison of the pagan Seneca),[1] which, fermenting, bursts the vessel and spills, so the drunken man cannot keep anything secret within him; he throws it all out and publishes it. That is why Scripture says: Do not give wine to kings, for there is no secret where there is drunkenness; and a prince will lack a quality precious for the preservation of his kingdom. The head of the child we are sketching was crowned with vine shoots, because the drunkard cheers and makes laugh whoever looks at him. Joy is usually represented with crowns of flowers, leaves and fruits of plants; and the pagans used to crown their gods with those signs of their power; and so Bacchus, the god of drunkards, has his head wreathed with the leaves of the vine, over which he seems to hold sway. Finally, this child was fighting with a tiger. This shows that a drunken man is haughty, proud, wrathful, and always displays strength and daring. What drunkard is not brave? After draining his glasses he gets up to start quarrels and riots, and does not hesitate to rush upon steel and fire, exposing himself to the greatest dangers.

5. According to this expressive picture, what deformities are revealed in the infamous vice of which we speak? How many crimes are gathered in this one action, so frequent in our days? Yes, my brethren, countless crimes spring from this vice, all voluntary in man, since the cause that produces them is voluntary, and all more or less grave according to the kind of excesses he commits in his frenzy. Let us say what the Father St. Augustine says about this, with other Fathers. Drunkenness, he says, is the corruption of the soul, the tempest of the tongue, the shipwreck of chastity, the loss of time, the squandering of goods, the mother of all vices and the torment of all crimes. Let us explain, though briefly, the chief crimes St. Augustine attributes to this sin.

6. The man accustomed to getting drunk loses his temporal goods: he squanders them. He who loves wine, said Solomon in the twenty-first chapter of Proverbs, will not grow rich… He will find himself in the greatest poverty and need. There is no doubt of it; for proof we need only turn our eyes to what is happening. Have you not seen a celebrated craftsman whose works, sought by everyone as perfect in their art, should seemingly have filled his house with doubloons? A merchant who, with the success of his business, should have amassed a fortune? That farmer who sees his fields prosper and his harvests abound? That day labourer who never lacks his daily wage, though it be by the sweat of his brow? Yet most of these can never have even enough to keep their household, living always in misery. What, then, is the remora that stops the course of their prosperity and abundance? Wine. For as the Holy Spirit says: All his labour is for his mouth; words which St. Bonaventure[2] explains thus: All that he gains by his trade, his property, his industry, he drinks it all, consumes it all, finishes it all.

7. The same seraphic Doctor compares those given to gluttony and drunkenness to a torn sack. Put money into it, jewels, wheat, gold, silver: it holds nothing; everything falls to the ground; the sack always stays empty. This can be said of a confirmed drunkard. Grant that this man counts many possessions and that his

house abounds in money: the moment he becomes a slave of this vice, everything falls into a torn sack. He who had a house is left in the street; he who owned fields no longer has a roof over his head. He loses everything, because, besides spending to keep up his vice, he neglects all his interests and has not even the head to manage the affairs of his house. Noah got drunk without fault, and yet, says Genesis, he was then found naked: naked, and with more reason, is he left who wilfully gives himself over to excess of wine. To these could be said what the Athenians said to Callias, who was habitually drunk: seeing him poor and wretched, his companions shouted: This man has been plucked by wine. St. Bernard says that the drunkard's belly is one of those leeches which, according to the Holy Spirit by the mouth of the Wise man, have two daughters, which are excess in eating and in drinking, who are always saying: Bring, bring; *affer, affer*.[3] Such men, once in a tavern, never come out satisfied. They drain a cup: bring, bring more. They empty a jug: bring, bring. Their head is already swimming: bring, bring. In short, as the leech does not leave the spot where it has bitten until it is full of blood, so they do not leave those shrines of Bacchus until there is no more room for wine in their bodies. However much they are admonished, and the loss of health, the ruin of their family and their own disgrace are set before them, nothing is enough: bring, bring, that is their language. In a word, in this way we have seen a well-to-do man afterwards begging alms. Diogenes, when a man of this kind was being turned out of his house so that his debts might be paid by its sale, said shrewdly: This house always smelt of wine to me; it was always drunk, and at last it has vomited up its own master.

8. Through wine, too, a man loses the health of his body, and by his intemperance kills himself, breaking the fifth commandment of the Decalogue. Temperance and moderation lengthen life, as Hippocrates and Galen said, who by it lived, the first a hundred years and the second a hundred and forty. But how many years will a man given to wine and spirits live? Few, and those full of troubles and ailments, as St. John Chrysostom said. Every ship that is loaded beyond what it can bear is exposed to shipwreck: so the health of a man is shipwrecked who loads his belly beyond what his stomach allows. Look at those you know to be touched by this vice, and however robust and agile they may have been, you will see them made useless for everything: the wise man turned into a fool, the brave man into a weakling, the man of robust constitution into a walking hospital, and he who promised a long life hurrying towards the grave. Many, says the thirty-seventh chapter of Ecclesiasticus, have died through gluttony and drunkenness, while he who abstains from these lengthens his life. Merely to look at such men shows us a half-corpse and a spy from the other world. What a crime!

9. But this crime increases, since wine makes such men lose their reputation and good name, which the Holy Spirit so commands us to take care of. A man accustomed to this vice debases himself, degrades himself, blots out the image of God he bears, and becomes an object of scorn and mockery. Read the holy Fathers, and when they speak of this subject they say unanimously that God abhors a drunken man, the Angels despise him, men mock him, the demons confound him, and the beasts trample and insult him. Who does not look at a drunkard with derision and laughter? Merely to look at his appearance is enough to make one detest the vice that has so debased him. The Lacedaemonians, to turn their children away from it, made their slaves drunk, and when this was done set them before their family, so that by their gestures, grimaces, falls, disordered words, fetid froth and other frenzied signs, proper to one possessed by the devil, they might at one and the same time amuse their children and fill them with horror at a spectacle worthy of hatred and contempt. What a crime! That a child of God should make himself the image of the devil; a citizen of heaven the laughing-stock of boys; and a creature full of honour and greatness should see himself abased and dishonoured! So it is; and the Romans expelled such men from the Senate, depriving them of every honourable office as vile men, unfit for posts and even for being witnesses in any matter.

10. Finally, the man who wilfully gets drunk loses grace and all the virtues. We were created, my brethren, to know, love and serve God in this life, and afterwards to enjoy him in the next; not to give ourselves up to worldly pleasures and serve our lusts, but to imitate Christ, fulfil his commands and practise the works of his service. There is no other way to heaven, as the Saviour said: If you would enter into life, keep my

commandments. By fulfilling these we keep grace; and, to speak in the words of David, only he will be blessed who turns away from evil and does good, that is, who practises virtue and abstains from committing sin. All this is overturned by the man who lets himself be mastered by the detestable passion of which we speak; and far from practising the virtues proper to a Christian, he lives as a rule like an atheist; and in the sin of drunkenness lies, as it were, the seed of all the most infamous crimes. Lust is its firstborn daughter. I have already said with St. Paul that where drunkenness is, there lust is found; words which my angelic doctor St. Thomas Aquinas explains by saying that superfluous wine in the body is a cause of sensual incontinence. This made the Father St. Vincent Ferrer, quoting the Father St. Bernard, say that for a man mastered by wine to live chastely is a greater miracle than raising a dead man. Look at the most chaste man, whose actions would never have given suspicion of a criminal sensuality, in the frenzy of his drunken passion: his words, his actions, his immodesty, his provocations already mark him out as the most carnal and indecent of men. There is no modest woman who does not flee such monsters, fearful of some assault on her chastity to which she is exposed. But it not only fosters impurity; this passion is, as it were, the mother of all vices. So St. Augustine said:[4] Drunkenness is the matter of sins, the root of crimes, the origin of vices and the mother of all offences. From it springs irreligion; I have already said that the drunkard lives like an atheist. What act of religion do you see a drunken man perform? On the contrary: he blasphemes God and his Saints, spits, if he takes a fancy to, on sacred images, speaks heresies, mocks the Sacraments, laughs at the venerable mysteries of the Church. And though it is true that he then lacks awareness and does not know at that moment what he is doing, these crimes are nonetheless imputed to him, because they are voluntary in their cause, and he could already foresee that he might commit them when he was drinking to excess. In this way the breaking of all the laws of a Christian is also found in them. From drunkenness spring quarrels, discords, thefts, woundings and even murders. On this the same doctor St. Augustine relates that in the city of Hippo, of which he was bishop, a leading and rich man had a son who was the object of all his affection. To indulge his taste, he allowed him from childhood to give himself to excessive drinking of wine and other liquors, and in a short time he became one of the most notorious drunkards of the city. As the father did not correct this so notable a fault in his son, the son reached such an extreme that one day, in the frenzy of his passion, he killed his father, assaulted his mother while she was with child, mortally wounded two sisters and violated another, whose honour he himself should have defended. So the Saint relates. What a heap of crimes comes from wine alone!

11. That is why the holy Fathers compare the drunkard to a foul pond. This is usually full of frogs, snakes, filth and vermin. So those given to wine, like dirty ponds, give off nothing but impurities, curses, insults, impieties and every kind of sin. The Father St. Gregory says that such men do not commit only the sin of drunkenness, but are stained with all the others, and that a drunkard is all sin, because everything he does is sin. His eyes are sin, because they look lustfully at the other sex; his ears are sin, because they listen with pleasure to lewdness and detraction; his tongue is sin, because it speaks nothing but lies, blasphemies, obscenities and oaths; his spirit is sin, for it never thinks of its God except to insult and offend him. In short, he is all sin. Enough.

12. This being so, I shall conclude my plática with the words of the prophet Joel:[5] Awake, you men given to drunkenness, and weep; wail, all you who drink wine with delight, for it shall perish from your mouth. Awake, my brethren; come out of the lethargy into which your criminal and shameful passion has lulled you; awake, and look thoughtfully at the fatal consequences the excessive drinking that so delights you makes you suffer. See with clear eyes the ruin of your soul, which wine has filled with sins; that of your honour, for it has made you the plaything and amusement even of children and of the lowest people of the town; that of your health, turning your body into a Lazarus full of sores and unbearable illnesses; that of your poor family, who weep inconsolably to see before them a man who dishonours them with his scandals, who deprives them of food because he wholly neglects all his interests and the trade and employment that fed them, who has disturbed the peace and quiet of the house, and whose members feel in themselves the effects of his muddled

head. And considering all this, weep bitterly for your crime with a well-made confession and with a firm resolution to abandon for ever a vice that produces so many evils. Weep, for the sentence of the just and avenging God, pronounced by the apostle St. Paul, threatens you with the loss of glory, together with adulterers, the impious and murderers. Weep, lest, overtaken by death in the midst of your excesses, as has happened to very many, some of whom you may perhaps have seen and of others heard, you find then no room for penance, nor the means to call a confessor, nor the awareness to make any act of virtue that could forgive your sins, and be sentenced to the eternal pains of hell, where you will drink nothing but flames. May God give you the understanding you lack, so that, living soberly and holily, you may enjoy the bread of the elect and the wine that brings forth virgins in blessedness. Amen.

End of the Second Volume.

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[1] The printed margin gives Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium* (Ep. 83).

[2] The printed margin gives *In Dict. salut.* (*Diaeta salutis*, attributed to St. Bonaventure). The text quoted is Eccl. 6:7.

[3] Prov. 30:15.

[4] The printed margin gives *Tract. XVII de sobr.* (again from the pseudo-Augustinian sermons).

[5] The printed margin gives Joel 1:5.

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