St. Anthony Mary Claret

SUNDAY HOMILIES, VOLUME IV

Colección de pláticas dominicales, tercer año

From the Spanish of the first edition (Barcelona, 1859)

English translation

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

---

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About this translation · 4
Front Matter of Volume IV · 4
1. On the Creed, Faith, and the Obligation We Have to Profess It Publicly · 4
2. On These Words: I Believe in God the Father Almighty · 11
3. On These Words: Creator of Heaven and of the Earth · 17
4. On the Creation of Man · 22
5. On the Fall of Adam, and Original Sin · 27
6. On the Need of a Redeemer · 31
7. On the Mystery of the Incarnation · 35
8. On the Birth of Jesus Christ · 39
9. On the Life of Jesus Christ · 43
10. On the Passion of Jesus Christ · 47
11. On the Death of Jesus Christ · 52
12. On the Resurrection of Jesus Christ · 55
Creed: Thirteenth Homily: Jesus Christ's Ascension into Heaven, His Second Coming to Earth, and the Last Judgment · 60
Creed: Fourteenth Homily: The Coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles; the Establishment of the Christian Religion · 65
Creed: Fifteenth Homily: The Church, Her Privileges, and the Marks or Characteristics Distinguishing Her from All Sects That Falsely Claim the Name of Church · 71
Sacraments: First Homily: On the Sacraments in General · 78
Sacraments: Second Homily: On Baptism · 83
Sacraments: Third Homily: On Confirmation · 91
Sacraments: Fourth Homily: On the Eucharist: Its Promise and Institution, the Real Presence, and Transubstantiation · 96
Sacraments: Fifth Homily: On Communion · 103
Sacraments: Sixth Homily: Adoration of Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar · 108
Sacraments: Seventh Homily: On the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass · 114
Sacraments: Eighth Homily: On the Sacrament of Penance: Contrition · 119
Sacraments: Ninth Homily: On Confession and the Examination of Conscience · 124
Sacraments: Tenth Homily: On the Penitent's Satisfaction and the Priest's Absolution · 130
Sacraments: Eleventh Homily: On Indulgences · 137
Sacraments: Twelfth Homily: On Extreme Unction · 142
Sacraments: Thirteenth Homily · 147
On the Sacrament of Holy Orders · 147
Sacraments: Fourteenth Homily: On Matrimony · 153
Decalogue: First Conference: On the Decalogue and the Commandments in General · 159
Decalogue: Second Conference: On the First Commandment · 164
Decalogue: Third Conference: On the Veneration the Church Gives to Saints, Relics and Images · 168
Decalogue: Fourth Conference: On Sins Opposed to the First Commandment, Especially Superstition and Divination · 174
Decalogue: Fifth Conference: On the Second Commandment: Vows · 178
Decalogue: Sixth Conference: On the Second Commandment: Oaths and Blasphemy · 184
Decalogue: Seventh Conference: On the Third Commandment · 190
Decalogue: Eighth Conference · 196
On the Fourth Commandment: Duties of Masters and Servants · 196
Decalogue: Ninth Conference: On the Fifth Commandment: Homicide · 203
Decalogue: Tenth Conference: On Hatred and Enmities · 209
Decalogue: Eleventh Conference: On the Sixth Commandment: The Vice of Impurity · 215
Decalogue: Twelfth Conference: On Gluttony and Drunkenness · 220
Decalogue: Thirteenth Conference: On Dances, Plays and Masquerades · 226
Decalogue: Fourteenth Conference: On Gaming and Gambling · 232

Decalogue: Fifteenth Conference: On the Seventh Commandment: Theft · 237
Decalogue: Sixteenth Conference: On Commerce · 244
Decalogue: Seventeenth Conference · 250
On Usury · 250
Decalogue: Eighteenth Conference · 256
On Restitution · 256
Decalogue: Nineteenth Conference: On Almsgiving · 260
Decalogue: Twentieth Conference: On the Eighth Commandment: False Witness and Lying · 265
Decalogue: Twenty-first Conference: On the Ninth Commandment: Evil Thoughts and Evil Desires · 270
Decalogue: Twenty-second Conference: On the Tenth Commandment: Lawsuits · 275
Index of the Fourth Volume: Index of the Homilies Contained in This Fourth Volume · 281

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 IV, the “Third Year”, complete with its index.

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 IV

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

COLLECTION OF SUNDAY PLÁTICAS.\ VOLUME IV.

Notice (p. \[2\]):

Various Prelates of Spain have granted 2,400 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.\ 1859.

Opening of the text (p. 5):

COLLECTION OF SUNDAY PLÁTICAS.\ THIRD YEAR.

1. On the Creed, Faith, and the Obligation We Have to Profess It Publicly

Vol. IV (Third Year), Plática 1 (Creed series), pp. 5–16. Theme: Romans 10:10. Original preacher not named.

> *Corde creditur ad justitiam, ore autem confessio fit ad salutem (Rom. 10:10).*
>
> *With the heart one believes unto justice, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

1. To believe with the heart and to confess with the mouth are two conditions necessary for our salvation, and two qualities essential to our faith if it is to be meritorious before God. It is not enough to believe in Jesus Christ in the depths of the heart and inwardly; it is also necessary to profess His religion outwardly, and to confess Him with the mouth and by our actions: *Corde creditur ad justitiam, ore autem confessio fit ad salutem.* These words of St. Paul condemn all heretics, ancient and modern, who claim that it is not necessary to confess Religion with the mouth, nor to make public profession of it. Such in former times were the Priscillianists and the Manichees; and such are the heretics of recent centuries, particularly the Socinians. They pretend to be Catholics with Catholics, Lutherans with Lutherans, Calvinists with Calvinists. It is necessary, they say, to accommodate oneself to the outward rites of the peoples among whom one lives, so as not to disturb the order and peace of the commonwealth; but otherwise it is permitted or lawful to believe in the heart the contrary of what one knows the others believe and practise, even though outwardly we are united with them. The Catholic Church looks with horror on all these artifices and disguises; and St. Paul condemns them in a few words when he says that it is necessary to believe with the heart in order to be

justified, and to confess with the mouth in order to be saved. There is no justice if one has not faith in the heart; nor salvation if one does not confess it with the mouth: *Corde enim creditur ad justitiam,* etc. Faith, as St. Augustine says,[1] lays two obligations on us: one, to believe sincerely and with the heart the truths it teaches us; the other, to confess with the mouth what we believe with the heart. These two things are inseparable; the mouth and the heart must not speak two different languages. Those to whom this happens in the world pass for liars and deceivers; those who practise it in Religion must be regarded as impious men who do not know the God of truth. It is not, then, enough to believe inwardly what faith teaches us; it is necessary to confess it publicly, as we are going to explain in this plática.

Q. Since the Symbol is a kind of profession of faith, of which you mean to treat, tell us: what is understood by this word *symbol*? Are there many Symbols in the Church, and which is the one we call the Apostles' Creed?

A. The word *Symbol* comes from the Greek, and means the sign or mark of a thing one wishes to explain. By this word we understand here, with St. Augustine, a rule of faith which instructs us in a few words in the truths we must believe and know: *Symbolum est breviter complexa regula fidei, ut mentem instruat, nec oneret memoriam,* says this Father.[2] There are in the Church three Symbols: that of the Apostles, that of Nicaea, and that of St. Athanasius. That of the Apostles is the oldest, and is said in a low voice; because, as St. Thomas affirms,[3] it was composed in the time of the persecutions, and when the faith was not yet publicly proclaimed. The other two are said aloud: that of Nicaea, which is also called that of Constantinople, because the first general council held in that city added to it a fuller explanation of some articles, is said at Mass; and the one attributed to St. Athanasius is recited at the hour of Prime.

The Apostles' Creed has come down from the Apostles to us by the channel of tradition: they taught it to us by word of mouth, and not in writing, as St. Jerome remarks: *Symbolum fidei et spei nostrae ab Apostolis traditum, non scribitur in charta, sed in tabulis cordis carnalibus.*[4] It contains twelve articles, which are a summary of Christian doctrine. The Apostles composed it before separating to go and preach the Gospel throughout the earth, so that there might be no diversity of opinions among the faithful, and that uniformity of belief might be kept everywhere: *Ut scilicet id ipsum omnes sentirent ac dicerent, neque ulla essent inter eos schismata, sed essent perfecti in eodem sensu et in eadem sententia*.[5] Great care was taken to have this Creed learned by the catechumens—that is, by those who were preparing to receive Baptism; and by this mark Christians have always been distinguished from unbelievers. We shall try to explain the truths it contains: truths which the holy Apostles taught us, which a countless number of Martyrs have sealed with their blood, and which we are bound to believe and defend, even at the cost of our life.

Q. What does the word *I believe* mean, with which we begin the Creed, and why do we begin it in this way?

A. This word *I believe*, with which we begin the Creed, does not mean "I am of the opinion" or "I feel", as people commonly speak in the world. It means: I hold for certain, I consent and submit myself entirely to all that is proposed to me in the Creed: *Non est aestimatio, sed certitudo,* says St. Bernard.[6] This word *I believe* carries with it an entire certainty and a perfect assent to the truths contained in the Creed, whether we understand them or not. I, said St. Augustine, believe even what I do not know, because I make profession of being a believer: *Quia fidelis factus sum, credo quod nescio; et propterea scio, quia scio me nescire quod scio.*[7]

We begin the Creed with the word *I believe* because faith, without which it is impossible to please God,[8] is the first thing Jesus Christ requires of us in order to enter His Church and have a share in His promises. That is why the Apostle calls faith the foundation of the things we hope for and a full conviction of the things we do not see: *Est autem fides sperandarum substantia rerum, argumentum non apparentium*.[9] Our Religion, according to St. Augustine, is reduced in particular to three virtues, which are faith, hope and charity—virtues called theological because they look directly to God and refer immediately to Him. By faith

we believe in God; by hope we hope to possess Him; and we love Him by charity: *Domus Dei credendo fundatur, sperando erigitur, diligendo perficitur*.[10] By faith the work of our salvation begins; it is the foundation and the root of our justification, as the Council of Trent says: *Fides humanae salutis initium, fundamentum et radix omnis justificationis*. So if an unbeliever presented himself to us to receive Baptism and become a Christian, it would be necessary to say to him what the deacon St. Philip said to the eunuch, servant of Candace, queen of Ethiopia: If you believe with all your heart, you may receive what you ask: *Si credis ex toto corde, licet*.[11] See why we begin the Creed with the word *I believe*. To be a Christian it is necessary to begin by believing, and whoever has refused to believe will be condemned, as Jesus Christ says: *Qui vero non crediderit, condemnabitur*.[12]

Q. What is faith, and on what foundation does ours rest?

A. Faith is a gift of God, and a light by which the man enlightened by it gives a firm assent to all that has been revealed by God and proposed by the Church to be believed, whether it be written or not. This is the definition the theologians give. *Fides est donum Dei, ac lumen quo illustratus homo firmiter assentitur omnibus quae Deus revelavit, et nobis per Ecclesiam credenda proposuit, sive in sacris Litteris illa scripta sint, sive non sint.* Let us explain this definition.

I. We must know that faith is a gift of God, against the error of the Semi-Pelagians, who held that the beginning of salvation, which is faith, comes from us, and that we needed only, in the course of life, to be assisted by the help of grace. This error was powerfully combated by St. Augustine, and afterwards by St. Fulgentius and St. Prosper, his disciples. These words which Jesus Christ speaks in His Gospel—*Hoc est opus Dei, ut credatis in eum quem misit ille*[13]—are enough to make you understand that faith is not the work of man, but a gift of God, as the Council of Trent has defined.[14]

II. Faith is a light that so enlightens a man that it makes him know the truths he must believe, and makes him receive them with entire submission, whether he understands them or not. There are truths we can understand—for example, that God has made heaven and earth: the mere sight of these creatures is enough to instruct us in this, as St. Paul says.[15] There are others we do not understand—for example, the mysteries of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, and so on. Faith makes us believe all these truths equally, because God, Who can neither be deceived nor deceive us, has revealed them all equally to His Church. Every man who wishes to be a Catholic must submit to them; the learned as well as the ignorant must subject himself to the yoke of faith, as St. Paul affirms: *In captivitatem redigentes omnem intellectum in obsequium fidei*.[16]

We must believe all these truths, whether they be written or not. Not everything we must believe is expressed in sacred Scripture: we also have as a rule of our belief the doctrine of the holy Fathers recognized and approved by the Church; the holy Councils that met by her authority; in a word, tradition, which is a very pure spring from which we drink the truth that has come down from age to age to us.

As to what you asked about the foundation of our faith, I answer that it rests on the word of God alone. We believe as an article of faith only what God has done and revealed; and we know what God has done and revealed to men by the ministry of the Church, to whom He has entrusted the deposit of His word. The word of God is contained in sacred Scripture and in tradition. By sacred Scripture is understood the word of God written and contained in the sacred Books we call canonical, because they are the rule of our faith.

These books are those of the Old and New Testament, commonly called the Bible, whose words are so many truths we must believe, as dictated by the Holy Spirit, according to what St. Peter expressly says: *Spiritu Sancto inspirati locuti sunt sancti Dei homines*.[17] By tradition is understood the word of God that is not written in the canonical Books, but has come down to us as by succession and as from hand to hand from the Apostles. St. Paul teaches us that we must rely equally on Scripture and on tradition, for he says to the Thessalonians: Hold firm and keep the traditions you have learned, whether by word of mouth or by our letter: *State et tenete traditiones quas didicistis, sive per sermonem, sive per epistolam*.[18] It is evident, says

St. John Chrysostom on this place, that the Apostles did not write everything; they taught many things only by word of mouth; and both are equally the object of our faith. We will not linger further to prove the need of having recourse to tradition; our controversialists have done so in a way that ought to convince the Protestants. It is enough for us to have explained what faith is; that the word of God is its certain and firm foundation; and that this divine word is contained in Scripture and in tradition, of which the Church is the depositary and the infallible interpreter.

Q. Is faith equally perfect in all Christians?

A. Without speaking of heretics, who by their errors have lost the faith—for it is enough to err in one point, and even to doubt voluntarily about a truth belonging to the faith, to fall into unbelief, according to that decretal attributed to Pope Stephen I: *Dubius in fide, infidelis est*[19]—I say that faith, even among the children of the Church, is not equally perfect. One is the faith of the just, another that of sinners; one the faith of the rustic and ignorant, another that of instructed men. Hence faith is divided into living faith and dead faith; into implicit faith and explicit faith.

Living faith is that which is upheld by works, and which St. Paul calls faith working through charity: *Fides quae per charitatem operatur*.[20] This faith is found only in the just who live according to their faith; it is absolutely necessary in order to be saved. The just man whom I have sanctified lives by faith; but if he draws back, he will not be pleasing to Me: *Justus autem meus ex fide vivit; quod si subtraxerit se, non placebit animae meae*.[21]

Dead faith is that which is stripped of charity. Such is the faith of sinners who live in a way contrary to what they believe, and give the lie to their faith by their works. They believe, for example, that a single mortal sin is enough to be condemned, and they spend their life committing them; they believe that neither thieves nor the impure, and so on, will enter the kingdom of God; and they give themselves up to all these vices. This is a dead faith, which will never save them: *Quid proderit, fratres mei, si quis dicat fidem se habere, opera autem non habeat? Numquid poterit fides salvare eum?* says James.[22] Just as a body without a soul is a dead body, so a faith without works is a dead faith, which cannot bring us to heaven. Take care, my brethren; there are many who say the Creed: but if their conduct is not according to their faith, know that such a faith, far from justifying them, will only serve to make them condemned more severely: *Multi enim dicunt Credo*, says St. Augustine, *sed fides sine operibus non salvat*.

Implicit faith is that found in those who have only a confused knowledge of the truths of Religion, and who are content to believe in general all that the Church believes. Explicit faith is that of more enlightened persons, who have a more distinct knowledge of the truths of Religion. It is seen from what has been said that faith is not equally perfect even in those who believe.

Q. Is it necessary that every of the faithful should know in particular all that the Church believes and teaches us? What are the principal articles that each one must know?

A. It is necessary that every Christian of the faithful should believe in general all that the Church believes and teaches us, with humble submission, without wishing to dispute about what he does not understand: *Tu fide stas; noli altum sapere, sed time*.[23] Besides this general faith, he must not be ignorant of certain principal articles, such as: the mysteries of the Trinity, of the Incarnation and of the Redemption of men, and the other truths contained in the Creed; the Our Father, and the Commandments, at least as to their substance—that is, what God commands or forbids us by His Commandments; the Sacraments, particularly those we are bound to receive. Even the most unlearned must know this, and no one may be ignorant of it without risk to his salvation: *Post tempus gratiae revelatae, tam majores quam minores tenentur habere fidem explicitam de mysteriis, praecipue quantum ad ea quae communiter solemnizantur in Ecclesia, et publice proponuntur*, says St. Thomas.[24] Those charged with the direction of the faithful must explain it to them frequently in their pláticas and sermons, so that no one may be ignorant of it.

As for those who are able to learn their religion more thoroughly, there can be no doubt that they are bound to do so; for there is nothing that touches us more closely, and whose knowledge is more necessary to us, than to know the doctrine of the Church. Those who live near heretics or deal with them must instruct themselves in the points controverted between them and us, both so as to defend themselves against the errors they sow, which might corrupt them, and so as to be in a position to give a reason for their faith when necessary: *Parati semper ad satisfactionem omni poscenti vos rationem de ea quae in vobis est spe*, says St. Peter.[25] You will tell me that you have no time to instruct yourselves in this way. Allow me to answer you what St. Paulinus answered a friend who explained himself in the same terms as you: What, my brother, you have time to read curious and useless books, and perhaps dangerous ones, and you have none to read those that teach you your religion! *Vacat tibi ut sis philosophus, non vacat ut sis christianus!*[26] You have no time: you waste so much in useless companies and conversations, in gaming, in the tavern and in a thousand trifles, and you have none to attend the explanation of doctrine in the parish and acquire the science of salvation. Know that your ignorance is not excusable, and that you will be answerable for it before God: *Si quis ignorat, ignorabitur*, says the Apostle.[27]

Q. Since faith is so necessary to us, teach us when we are bound to make acts of it and public profession of it.

A. We ought frequently to make acts of faith; for as Scripture says, the just man lives by faith; but we are particularly bound to do so: 1.° when we come to the use of reason and are sufficiently instructed in the truths God has revealed and the Church proposes to us: *Hoc est primum praeceptum*, says St. Augustine, *hoc est initium religionis et vitae nostrae, fixum habere cor in fide*;[28] 2.° when we are tempted against the faith and cannot overcome the temptation; then we must say to Jesus Christ, as the Apostles did: *Adauge nobis fidem*;[29] 3.° when we find ourselves in evident danger of death, we must arm ourselves with faith, so as to leave this world in a good state: *Haec est victoria quae vincit mundum, fides nostra*.[30] We are bound to it by accident, as they say in the schools—that is, on the occasion of something that cannot be done if faith does not go before, as when it is necessary to make acts of hope and charity, to receive the Eucharist and the other Sacraments, and in general when it is necessary to pray; for without faith one cannot pray as one ought: *Si fides deficit, oratio perit*, says St. Augustine.[31]

Finally, acts of faith must be made when one is under the obligation of giving outward testimony of one's belief; for if this testimony were not accompanied by a true interior faith, it would be only a detestable hypocrisy.

As for the obligation to confess the faith and make public profession of it, St. Thomas says that this is an affirmative precept, which does not bind always but at certain times, occasions and circumstances—namely: 1.° when the glory of God is at stake, and when one could not keep silence about Religion without failing in the honour due to it; 2.° when the salvation and good of one's neighbour are concerned; as in the case in which the silence one kept might make him believe that one had no true faith, or might give him occasion to leave the faith, to renounce his religion or to waver in it—then we should be indispensably bound to profess our faith before all who were present. In such cases, says the Angelic Doctor, it is absolutely necessary to declare our faith: *In hujusmodi casibus confessio fidei est de necessitate salutis*.[32]

From this it follows: 1.° that when asked by public authority, by a judge or magistrate, whether we are Christians or Catholics, we must confess it clearly, even at the risk of losing our life; we may neither keep silence nor use equivocal answers. Innocent XI by his decree of 2 March 1679 condemned this proposition: *Si a potestate publica quis interrogetur, fidem ingenue confiteri, ut Deo et fidei gloriosum, consulo; tacere, ut peccaminosum, per se non damno*; 2.° although we are not always bound to make profession of faith before heretics who are its persecutors, we are nonetheless bound in some occasions: as if, being imprisoned as Catholics, we were questioned on this point: *Non enim quilibet tenetur fidem suam coram persecutore profiteri*, says St. Thomas, *sed in casu est de necessitate salutis quando, scilicet, aliquis a persecutore deprehensus, de fide sua requiritur, quam confiteri tenetur*;[33] 3.° we are bound to preach Jesus Christ

crucified, and to set His image in the churches, even though the Gentiles take scandal at it. The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide declared by a decree of 1645 that the missionaries of China were bound to do so—not indeed in all their preachings, but on all occasions when Christian prudence dictated it as fitting. *Non enim erubesco Evangelium*, said St. Paul.[34]

Q. Is it lawful for Catholics to dispute with heretics on points of controversy?

A. Before answering the question, it is necessary to assume a certain maxim found in St. Augustine,[35] which is that the itch for disputing that heretics have commonly comes only from an obstinacy full of pride and from the desire they have to conquer and confound the faithful, so as to pervert them. *Non enim disputare amant haeretici, sed quomodocumque superare impudentissima pervicacia*, says this holy Doctor.

This being supposed, I say that it is not fitting for every sort of person to dispute with heretics; and the reason is that those who have not enough study to sustain the dispute expose themselves, at the least, to the danger of wavering in some of the articles on which the dispute turns, and of remaining less firm in the faith, since heretics have the habit of citing only various passages of Scripture, which they interpret in their own way in order to seduce others, as they themselves have been seduced. That is why the Councils and the Popes forbade under pain of excommunication that laymen dispute in public or in private with heretics on points concerning the Catholic faith. *Inhibemus*, says Pope Alexander IV, *ne cuiquam laicae personae liceat publice vel privatim de fide catholica disputare; qui vero contra fecerit, excommunicationis laqueo innodetur.* Nor is it lawful for them to go to the lectures or other exercises of the heretics. All that well-instructed laymen can do, when they find themselves with heretics who impute to the Church ways of thinking that she does not approve, is to set before them the belief of Catholics. A simple exposition of the faith is often more useful than dispute.

Even ecclesiastics who do not feel they have strength enough to confound heretics must not expose themselves to disputing with them, because there are some, as St. Jerome remarks, who by their captious reasonings sometimes reduce ecclesiastics to being unable to defend the truth.

As for ecclesiastics capable of sustaining the dispute, they must examine the character of the heretics with whom they have to speak. If they act in good faith and seek to be instructed, they must not be despised, but drawn with gentleness, as St. Paul says to Timothy: *Cum modestia corripientem eos qui resistunt veritati*.[36] But if they are stubborn, who persist in their errors and make themselves rebels to the truth, they must be left, and time must not be wasted disputing with them uselessly. *Haereticum hominem post unam et secundam correptionem devita*, says St. Paul, *sciens quia subversus est qui ejusmodi est, et delinquit, cum sit proprio judicio condemnatus*.[37]

Q. What are the sins against the faith, and who ordinarily have the misfortune to commit them?

A. I answer that one sins against the faith: I. By voluntary ignorance of what one ought to know and believe. There are Christians who do not wish to know the good, so as not to practise it, as the Prophet says: *Noluit intelligere ut bene ageret*.[38] These are malignant, affected and voluntary ignorants, whom one may call phantoms of Catholics, who are instructed in nothing that concerns Religion and salvation; who know neither what they ought to believe, nor what ought to be asked of God, nor what ought to be observed in order to adore Him, love Him and serve Him. Living thus in a voluntary ignorance of the mysteries of God, they sin habitually against the faith.

II. One sins against the faith by negligence in instructing oneself in the truths that ought to be known. Such are those Christians who, entirely occupied with the business of the world, care very little to attend public and familiar instructions, or to have themselves particularly instructed in the Christian doctrine necessary for salvation. These are corrupted and lazy ignorants who sin gravely against the faith.

III. One sins against the faith by the fear and cowardice some have of seeming to be Christians. Such are those false and ill-understood prudent men, who fear to profess the Christian religion too openly, so as not to draw on themselves the satires and contempt of worldlings. They would blush to make it much known that they respect the humble maxims of a crucified God, to suffer injuries with patience, and to forgive their enemies, because they would be taken for cowards. These are wicked politicians, whom Jesus Christ will blush to acknowledge before His Father: *Qui me erubuerit et meos sermones, hunc Filius hominis erubescet*.[39]

IV. One sins against the faith by heresy, when opinions formally contrary to the faith are embraced, and when one speaks ill of the mysteries of Religion and of the truths defined by the Church, whether in public or private conversations.

Finally, one sins against the faith when one voluntarily doubts what it teaches. Such are those unbelieving spirits who glory in doubting everything, and who by their scandalous conversations diminish the faith of the faithful.

Nevertheless it must be noted that there are temptations and doubts against the faith which occur to us against our will, and to which we give no consent; these are not sin, and there is no need to be uneasy about them, but to make acts of faith, particularly on the articles about which the devil, the spirit of error and of lying, would wish to make us doubt. Then one must have recourse to Jesus Christ, ask Him to perfect our faith, saying to Him more with the heart than with the mouth: I believe, my God, all the mysteries that You have revealed, and that Your Church, who is the wise depositary of Your oracles, proposes to us in Your name: she is directed by Your Holy Spirit, and You have authentically promised her that You will never forsake her. I believe, my God, all that she commands me to believe; help me, Lord: *Credo, Domine, adjuva incredulitatem meam*.[40] Grant that my faith may be such that I may deserve to see it change into that light of glory which will discover to us Your infinite perfections, and make us contemplate them for all eternity.

---

[1] Source note: *De fide et Symbolo*, c. 1; Serm. 213 (source: “CCCXIII de temp.”).

[2] Augustine, *De fide et Symbolo* (quoted).

[3] *ST* II-II, q. 1, a. 9, ad 6.

[4] Jerome, *Ep.* 61 (source numbering).

[5] *Catechismus ad Parochos*, pref. n. 32 (Roman Catechism).

[6] Bernard; source note unclear.

[7] Augustine, Serm. 1 *de Trinitate* (source).

[8] Heb. 11:6.

[9] Heb. 11:1.

[10] Augustine, Serm. 27 (source).

[11] Acts 8:37 (Vulgate; not in all Greek MSS).

[12] Mark 16:16.

[13] John 6:29.

[14] VI, can. 5.

[15] Rom. 1:20.

[16] 2 Cor. 10:5.

[17] 2 Pet. 1:21.

[18] 2 Thess. 2:15 (Vulgate 2:14 in some numberings).

[19] *Decretals*, X.5.7.1 (*Dubius in fide*); attributed in the source to Stephen I.

[20] Gal. 5:6.

[21] Heb. 10:38.

[22] Jas. 2:14.

[23] Rom. 11:20.

[24] *ST* II-II, q. 2, a. 7.

[25] 1 Pet. 3:15.

[26] Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 16 (alias 38) to Jovius.

[27] 1 Cor. 14:38.

[28] Augustine, Serm. 38 (source).

[29] Luke 17:5.

[30] 1 John 5:4.

[31] Augustine, Serm. 15 *de verbis Evangelii* (source).

[32] *ST* II-II, q. 3, a. 2.

[33] *ST* II-II, q. 3, a. 2; cf. IV Sent. d. 29 (source garbled).

[34] Rom. 1:16.

[35] Augustine, *Contra Faustum* XV, 12.

[36] 2 Tim. 2:25.

[37] Titus 3:10–11.

[38] Ps. 35:4 (Vulgate; Ps. 36:4).

[39] Luke 9:26.

[40] Mark 9:23 (Vulgate; 9:24 in modern numbering).

2. On These Words: I Believe in God the Father Almighty

Vol. IV (Third Year), Plática 2 (Creed series), pp. 17–26. On God, the Trinity of Persons in God, and His infinite perfections. Theme: Hebrews 11:6. Original preacher not named.

> *Credere oportet accedentem ad Deum, quia est, et inquirentibus se remunerator sit (Heb. 11:6).*
>
> *He who approaches God must first believe that He exists, and that He rewards those who seek Him.*

1. The first truth we must believe is that there is a God Who will reward the good and punish the wicked—a truth proposed to us in the first place in the Apostles' Creed as the foundation of the Christian religion; but a truth so clear and so constant that only a fool can put it in doubt. That is why those words which the royal Prophet speaks in the name of the impious are very worthy of note: *Dixit insipiens in corde suo, non est Deus.*[1] They teach us that when the impious man has reached the excess of madness of refusing to acknowledge that there is a God, his understanding has less part in this extravagance than his heart. That is to say, the impious man would wish there were no God, so as to be able to stifle the remorses of his conscience and abandon himself more boldly to the fury of his passions. He would wish to have no witness of his conduct, no judge of his actions and no avenger of his crimes, so as to sin more freely. Thus it is the depravity of his heart that makes him speak as an atheist; but in vain does he strive to delude and stun himself about this important truth: it is so deeply impressed on the spirit of man that he will never be able to blot it out entirely. *Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine*: Lord, says the royal Prophet, You have engraved upon us the light of Your face,[2] and this impression is so strong that there is no man who, in unforeseen dangers and occasions, does not have recourse to You. This is what a Father of the Church calls the testimony of a soul naturally Christian: *Testimonium animae naturaliter christianae.*[3]

Leaving aside, then, a truth so well known, I will content myself with saying, in explaining these words of the Creed—"I believe in God the Father almighty"—what we must know of the nature of God, of the Trinity of Persons in God, and of His infinite perfections. And although I am persuaded that many among us have sufficient knowledge of this, yet because some may be ignorant of it, it is necessary to teach it to them. I will say, then, on this occasion what St. Augustine said of the more able of his people with regard to the others: *Patiantur aquilae, dum pascuntur columbae*.

Q. Can we have in this life a perfect idea of God? Tell us what we must know on this point, and what the faith teaches us.

A. We cannot have in this life a perfect idea of God. He dwells, according to St. Paul, in inaccessible light: *Lucem habitat inaccessibilem*.[4] No living man has seen Him, or can see His essence; so none can explain what He is so as to know Him well. He alone knows Who He is; and He alone can teach it to men. Here is what He Himself has told us of Himself in Scripture, when He sent Moses to bring the Israelites out of Pharaoh's captivity: I am Who am; you shall say to the children of Israel: He Who is has sent me to bring you out of Egypt, where you are oppressed, and to make you pass into the land of Canaan: *Ego sum qui sum*.[5] This is the idea God wills us to have of Him in this life, where we are not capable of knowing Him perfectly. God is He Who is: that is to say, that He is properly the only Being, the necessary Being, the supreme Being, the eternal and independent Being, the only Being Who lives and subsists absolutely by Himself. All other beings are created, and depend on Him; so that they are only a very imperfect participation of Being, and one may say in a certain way that all that is created is not, or does not exist, when compared with the Creator. This is all we can say that is most proper, to give an idea of God such as can be had in this life, in which we cannot see Him in Himself, but only in His works, which publish the greatness of His being. Only in heaven shall we see Him as He is, as St. John says: *Videbimus eum sicuti est*.[6] Here is what we must know of His nature and of His unity. I. We must know that God in His nature is a simple being not composed of parts; that He is a pure spirit far removed from matter; that He has neither body nor figure nor colour, and cannot be perceived by our senses: *Spiritus est Deus*.[7] He is an infinitely perfect spirit, which distinguishes Him from spiritual and intelligent creatures, such as the Angels and the souls of men, who are indeed spirits, but created and finite spirits, whose perfections are measured and limited; but God is an uncreated and infinite spirit Who possesses every kind of perfection in the supreme degree, as we shall say later. II. What we must know of His unity is that there is but one God, and that there cannot be more: *Ego primus, et ego novissimus, et absque me non est Deus*.[8] To multiply Him would be to destroy Him, says Tertullian; because it is not possible to conceive two beings who are sovereignly perfect. To be sovereignly perfect, it is necessary to have no equal; for to be without equal is a perfection, and he who has not this perfection lacks something. So it is evident that to multiply the divinity is to destroy it, because a God Who lacked a perfection would not be God: this is the reasoning of Tertullian[9] and of St. Cyprian against the Gentiles, and all can easily understand it.

But whence comes it, you will say to me, that men in former times adored many gods? This arises from the blindness and hardening of their heart caused by sin. The disordered passions of men are the only things that have introduced into the world idolatry, paganism, schisms, heresies and every kind of error: which is so certain that if men were allowed to abandon themselves to their passions, they would consent to believe whatever one wished. A terrible example, which shows that once men abandon God, God delivers them over to a reprobate sense; and then there is no madness or excess of which even those who seem the wisest and most enlightened are not capable, as St. Paul notes of the pagan philosophers: *Sicut non probaverunt Deum habere in notitia, tradidit illos Deus in reprobum sensum, ut faciant ea quae non conveniunt*.[10]

Q. When we say in the Creed, "I believe in God the Father," we acknowledge that there are several Persons in God: is this not introducing again the plurality of gods? Explain to us what we must know of the mystery of the most holy Trinity.

A. It is certain that in saying the Creed we acknowledge that there are three Persons in God, Who are Father, Son and Holy Spirit; but we are very far from wishing thereby to introduce the plurality of gods, because we believe, and the faith teaches us, that these three Persons are but one God; that they have one same nature and one same divinity. It is certain that this is a great mystery, and that we cannot understand how the nature of God subsists in three Persons; but this mystery is the principal foundation of the Christian religion, and in it we are very sure. God, Who can neither be deceived nor deceive us, has revealed it. Jesus Christ said expressly to His Apostles, sending them to preach His Gospel throughout the earth, that they should baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.[11] This truth is contained not only

in Scripture but also in tradition, and the Church has always condemned as heretics all those who have had the temerity to oppose it. Here in a few words is what we must gather on this point in order to be good Catholics.

1.° That this adorable Trinity is one God in three Persons, Who are Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 2.° That there is a true distinction between these three Persons, according to which the one is not the other, although all of them have but one same essence, or one same nature, and are but one spirit infinitely excellent in every sort of perfection: *Verus Deus in personis Trinitas est, et in una natura est*, says St. Fulgentius. 3.° That the Father is the first Person Who proceeds from no other; the Son the second, Who proceeds from the Father; and the Holy Spirit the third, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son. That these three Persons are eternal; that they have had no beginning and will have no end, and that the one is not inferior to the other: *Nemo alium praecedit aeternitate, aut excedit magnitudine, aut superat potestate*, the same Saint adds. 4.° That these three Persons made all things, that they conserve and govern them freely, and that they are present everywhere. 5.° Finally, that it is by the possession of this great God that we must hope to be blessed, if we die in grace. These are the principal things every Christian must know touching this mystery; and since we are bound under necessity of salvation—that is, under pain of being lost—to believe them explicitly when we come to have sufficient use of reason, it follows that parish priests must explain it frequently to their people, and fathers and mothers to their children.

Q. Why do we say in the Creed, "I believe in God the Father almighty"? Are not the Son and the Holy Spirit equally so? Or why do you speak only of omnipotence, there being many other perfections in God?

A. We believe that not only the Father is almighty, but also the Son and the Holy Spirit; but as this is an attribute of the divine nature, it does not follow that there are three almighties: *Non tres omnipotentes, sed unus omnipotens*. Just as when we say that the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God, it does not follow that there are three Gods. These words *almighty* signify that God can do all that He wills, that nothing is impossible or difficult to Him. The Creed speaks only of omnipotence, because it is enough to make us conceive that He possesses every kind of perfection, of which omnipotence is as it were the foundation. Indeed, it is enough to know that God can do all things to understand that He is infinitely perfect, that He is eternal, immutable, immense, that He knows all, that He governs all, and that all things depend on Him. We cannot, my brethren, explain to you all the perfections of God; they are incomprehensible to the human spirit, which can well admire them but not attain them: *Magnus Dominus et laudabilis nimis, et magnitudinis ejus non est finis*.[12] This we must say with the royal Prophet; and if we wish to add something, let us say with the wise Cardinal Cajetan that God is an infinity of times infinitely infinite in His infinite perfections: *Infinitis modis infinities infinitus in perfectionibus infinitis*—that is, that God has not only an infinite number of perfections, and that His perfections are infinitely elevated, but also that each of His perfections contains an infinite number of greatnesses, excellences and wonders. See here, Christians, Who He is Who will be our happiness and our eternal beatitude, if we serve Him faithfully on earth; but because now we know Him only very imperfectly, and only in heaven shall we see Him unveiled, as the Apostle says—*Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate; tunc autem facie ad faciem*[13]—we will content ourselves with speaking in a few words of the attributes of which we have most knowledge.

Q. Tell us something of the omnipotence of God.

A. I will say only three words: that it is independent. God, says St. Paul, is He Who is infinitely happy, the only Mighty One, the King of kings and the Lord of lords: *Beatus et solus potens, Rex regum et Dominus dominantium*.[14] Note well this word: God is the only Mighty One; this quality belongs to Him exclusively, and to no other. When the creature is alone, there is nothing weaker. The most powerful monarchs can do nothing without outside help. If a king wishes to make war, he needs soldiers; if he wishes to administer justice, he needs ministers; if he wishes to maintain his court and his States, he needs money; and Jesus Christ says in general of all men that they can do nothing without Him: *Sine me nihil potestis facere*.[15] But

God can do all things without us; He depends on no one; He takes nothing except from Himself, and has no need of His creatures: *Solus potens*, etc. II. His omnipotence is untiring. It has an infinite and inexhaustible virtue: to say and to do are in God one same thing.[16] It is as easy for Him to do as for us to speak; and much more, for He does everything by His will alone: *Omnia quaecumque voluit fecit.*[17] Note that there is nothing more untiring than the will. The eye can grow tired of seeing, the tongue of speaking, the understanding of conceiving; but the will cannot grow tired of willing; it can will a hundred things in a moment. Our will is not powerful; rather it is very weak; but God's will does all that it wills. It can with a single act make a hundred thousand worlds much more spacious than this, because it is not only untiring but also invincible.

III. That is to say, that there is none who can resist Him: nothingness obeys Him as much as being; all is subject to Him. This is what the holy man Mordecai recognized in the prayer he made to God for the Jews: *Domine, Rex omnipotens, in ditione tua cuncta sunt posita, et non est qui possit tuae resistere voluntati, si decreveris salvare Israel*[18]—Lord, almighty King, all is subject to Your power, and none can resist Your will, if You have resolved to save Israel. What then do you think, you sinners, who dare to rebel against your God and disobey Him? Understand that you cannot resist Him, and that if you do not take advantage of His mercies, you will fall into the hands of His justice. Humble yourselves, then, under the mighty hand of God, as St. Peter warns you, so that in the time of His visitation you may find grace before Him: *Humiliamini igitur sub potenti manu Dei, ut vos exaltet in tempore visitationis.*[19]

Q. What do you understand by the eternity of God?

A. By this attribute is understood that God has neither beginning nor end; that He Himself is the beginning and the end of all things: *Ego sum alpha et omega, principium et finis.*[20] He is, has been and will always be: *Vivo ego in aeternum.*[21] He is a sun that always shines and is never eclipsed: *Apud quem non est transmutatio, nec vicissitudinis obumbratio,*[22] says James. He is not subject to vicissitudes or changes; He has been and will always be the same; He can neither grow old nor fail: *Tu autem idem ipse es, et anni tui non deficient.*[23] That is to say, that His eternity admits neither past nor future; it is a moment always present, to which nothing succeeds and from which nothing escapes, which is always the same and which always lasts. O my God! How admirable is Your eternity! Be You blessed eternally: *Benedictus Dominus in aeternum, fiat, fiat.*

There are things that will last always, such as the Angels and our souls; but they have not been or existed always, and if they have a duration that will not end, this is a benefit of the Creator, Who alone possesses immortality, as St. Paul explains.[24] Eternity is so much His character that He alone has it as His own property; being of Himself eternal and immutable in His being, in His thoughts, in His words and in His designs. *Ego Dominus et non mutor.*[25] And yet this King of the ages, this immortal King, to Whom alone honour and glory are due, is He Whom we have so often despised and offended. Yes, sinners, you have abandoned the Eternal for trifles, for momentary pleasures, for a base interest, for goods that pass and perish. What blindness! *Cui assimilastis me, et adaequastis, et comparastis me, et fecistis similem?*[26] So the same God complains by the mouth of His prophet Isaiah. Ah, fools, what has your conduct been! You have compared your God with a miserable creature. What do I say? you have esteemed Him less, for you have made no difficulty of violating His holy law to please this creature and to content your passions. Remember your disorders, blush for them, and think of converting yourselves. *Mementote istud, et confundamini: redite praevaricatores ad cor.*[27]

Q. What must we know of the immensity of God?

A. That God is everywhere, in heaven, on earth and in every place: *Caelum et terram ego impleo.*[28] He is in every place without being enclosed by any space. He is in every place, says St. Thomas, by essence, presence and power. This is what the royal Prophet signifies to us by these words: *Quo ibo a Spiritu tuo?*[29] He is an infinite spirit Who is found in every place: in this way He is everywhere by essence. *Et quo a facie tua*

fugiam? Nothing can be hidden from Him, or be unknown to Him: here is how He is everywhere by His presence. One can hide from the light of the sun by shutting oneself in the bowels of the earth; but there is no means of hiding from this divine light which penetrates all spirits and all bodies, which is present in hell as much as in the heavens. *Si ascendero in caelum, tu illic es; si descendero in infernum, ades.* Finally, He is everywhere by His power, which sustains and governs all things. *Si habitavero in extremis maris: etenim illuc manus tua deducet me, et tenebit me dextera tua.* If you wish me to use a familiar comparison—because we are capable only of speaking as children in a matter so elevated—I will tell you that God is in every place by essence, as a king on his throne; that He is in every place by presence, as a king in his chamber; that He is in every place by power, as the king in his kingdom. In a well-ordered kingdom nothing is done except by order of the king: in the same way nothing happens in the world except by order of God.

But where was God, you will say to me, before there was a world? It is not difficult to answer this question, given what we have said of His greatness and His independence. God, before there was a world, was enclosed in Himself, happy and enjoying Himself, needing His creatures no more before making them than after having made them. For one of the properties of the Creator, incommunicable to the creature, is that He alone is sufficient to Himself, and needs nothing. Which made Tertullian say these beautiful words: *Ante omnia Deus erat solus, ipse sibi et mundus, et locus, et omnia*.[30] Let us reflect a little on this immensity of God. We are always before God: He is around us and within us. We are in this immensity less than a drop of water in the sea, and than an atom in the air—and yet we dare to sin in His presence! We dare not commit the least discourtesy before men, and we make no scruple of doing the most shameful actions before God! Where is our faith and our religion? Let us enter into ourselves, and remember in every place that we are in the presence of God. This thought is what brought Susanna victorious out of the hands of the two infamous elders. *Melius est mihi absque opere incidere in manus vestras, quam peccare in conspectu Domini*.[31] The memory of this thought was the means St. Ephrem used to convert a courtesan who was tempting him to sin. There would be no crime we would not avoid, says St. Jerome, if we were penetrated with the memory of the presence of God. *Memoria enim Dei excludit cuncta flagitia.*

Q. Tell us something of the providence of God, and teach us what we must know of it.

A. Here in a few words is what you must know on this point:

I. That there is in God a providence that arranges all, that governs all, that directs each thing to its end, and that makes everything yield to, or be for, the glory of the Creator. *Tua autem, Pater, providentia gubernat.*[32]

II. That the providence of God is certain and infallible, and cannot be deceived in the execution of His designs, as the Church says in her prayers. *Deus cujus providentia in sui dispositione non fallitur*. So this world is not the effect of chance, as the atheists have falsely imagined: the same God Who created it by His power governs it by His wisdom; and He disposes sovereignly not only of kingdoms and empires, but also of all events. Nothing happens except by His order; and when He permits evil, it is to draw from it a greater good. *Melius enim judicavit de malis benefacere, quam mala nulla esse permittere*.[33] He sometimes punishes or afflicts the good, to save them by humiliations; He sometimes grants the wicked a passing happiness, to oblige them to convert; but whether He exercises His justice or His mercy, He always governs all with an admirable wisdom. *Attingit a fine usque ad finem fortiter, et disponit omnia suaviter.*[34]

III. That it is universal, and extends over all creatures. Heaven and earth, the course of the sun, of the moon, of the stars, the vicissitude of the seasons—all announce this Providence to us: it is engraved upon all the works of nature, which publish its magnificence and its greatness: *Quam magnificata sunt opera tua, Domine: omnia in sapientia fecisti*.[35]

It is not with You, Lord, as with other workmen or craftsmen, who as soon as they finish the work abandon it. A painter, as soon as he finishes a painting, and an architect a building, leave it and withdraw; and why? Because the work no longer needs the workman. It is not so with the creatures that are works of Your hands.

The whole world is a building that You sustain by the strength of Your arm. All that has life, movement and being subsists only by the concurrence of Your providence.

IV. It is not only general, but also particular and immediate: that is, that it enters into the detail of our actions and of all that happens in the world. It is what applies one man to a profession of the world, another to the ecclesiastical state, and so on. There is not one among us to whom it has not assigned his place: *In manibus tuis sortes meae*.[36] What follows from this? That we must abandon ourselves entirely to the care of Providence: *Omnem sollicitudinem vestram proicientes in eum, quoniam ipsi cura est de vobis*.[37] Hope from it the help necessary both for the temporal and for the spiritual. For the temporal, Jesus Christ tells us in the Gospel not to be anxious about food or clothing.[38] We must live no less secure as to the spiritual: I, says the Saviour, prepare a kingdom for you, as My Father has prepared it for Me: *Et ego dispono vobis, sicut disposuit mihi Pater meus regnum*.[39] He gives us the graces to arrive at it, and counts the good works we do to merit it. Instead of disputing about the mystery of predestination, which will always be for us an impenetrable mystery, let us then put our trust in the divine Providence, which will never fail us so long as we are faithful to grace: *Sua gratia semel justificatos non deserit, nisi prius ab eis deseratur*.

Let us meditate frequently on the perfections of God, which will one day be the object of our eternal beatitude. Let us conceive a lively sorrow for having offended a God so great and so perfect. Read the history of the wife of Tobit: *Flebat irremediabilibus lacrymis*, etc.[40]

---

[1] Ps. 13:1 (Vulgate; Ps. 14:1).

[2] Ps. 4:7 (Vulgate).

[3] Tertullian, *Apology* 17.

[4] 1 Tim. 6:16.

[5] Exod. 3:14.

[6] 1 John 3:2.

[7] John 4:24.

[8] Isa. 44:6.

[9] Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* I.

[10] Rom. 1:28.

[11] Matt. 28:19.

[12] Ps. 144:3 (Vulgate; Ps. 145:3).

[13] 1 Cor. 13:12.

[14] 1 Tim. 6:15.

[15] John 15:5.

[16] Cf. Ps. 148:5.

[17] Ps. 113:3 (Vulgate; Ps. 115:3).

[18] Esther 13:9 (Vulgate; Greek addition).

[19] 1 Pet. 5:6.

[20] Rev. 1:8; 22:13.

[21] Deut. 32:40.

[22] Jas. 1:17.

[23] Heb. 1:12; Ps. 101:28 (Vulgate).

[24] 1 Tim. 6:16.

[25] Mal. 3:6.

[26] Isa. 40:25 / 46:5.

[27] Isa. 46:8.

[28] Jer. 23:24.

[29] Ps. 138:7–10 (Vulgate; Ps. 139).

[30] Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 5.

[31] Dan. 13:23 (Susanna).

[32] Wis. 14:3.

[33] Augustine, *Enchiridion* 27.

[34] Wis. 8:1.

[35] Ps. 103:24 (Vulgate; Ps. 104:24).

[36] Ps. 30:16 (Vulgate; Ps. 31:15).

[37] 1 Pet. 5:7 (source cites Matt. 6:25 for the next point).

[38] Matt. 6:25–34.

[39] Luke 22:29.

[40] Tob. 3:10 (Vulgate; Anna's tears in some readings; Sarah in others—source says "woman of Tobit").

3. On These Words: Creator of Heaven and of the Earth

Vol. IV (Third Year), Plática 3 (Creed series), pp. 27–36. On the creation of the world and of the Angels. Theme: Genesis 1:1. Original preacher not named.

> *In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram (Gen. 1:1).*
>
> *In the beginning God created heaven and earth.*

1. These first words of sacred Scripture teach us what we say every day in the Creed, that God is Creator of heaven and of the earth, and that this world has not always existed, but was created when time began. The general Council of Lateran, held in the pontificate of Innocent III, proposes this truth to us in these terms: We must believe with a most firm faith that at the beginning of time God brought out of nothing all spiritual and bodily creatures. So it is God Who created the world, and not chance nor the fortuitous meeting of atoms, as some ancient philosophers falsely imagined. God created the world: that is to say, that it came forth from nothing by His omnipotence, and not from a matter that already existed, as Hermogenes and some other heretics taught,[1] who held that God had formed the world from a matter eternal like Himself. In the beginning God created heaven and earth, says Moses. This means that God began the creation of the world with that of heaven and earth, and that He made nothing before. God alone is named in the creation, because He alone created the world, and did not use for it another creature, as certain heretics of whom Tertullian speaks said,[2] who affirmed that the world had been made by the Angels. God created the world not by necessity but by His supreme will, as David assures us: *Omnia quaecumque voluit fecit*.[3] Finally He created the world for His glory: *Universa propter semetipsum operatus est Dominus*[4]—that is, to make known, loved, adored, served and glorified His sovereign Being and His infinite perfections. After speaking to you of the perfections of God, it is necessary to tell you something of His works, continuing the explanation of the Creed.

Q. In what way has God made us know His infinite perfections?

A. Chiefly by His works. The world—that is, heaven and earth with all they contain—publishes the glory of God, says the royal Prophet: *Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei*.[5] The mere sight of the beauty of the heavens is enough to show the divinity of the almighty Craftsman Who made them; just as, looking at a magnificent palace, we are naturally moved to admire the skill of the architect who built it: *Et opera manuum ejus annuntiat firmamentum.* The firmament publishes the work of His hands; and presenting to our sight those vast bodies of the sun and the moon, and that almost infinite number of stars placed in it, it cries out in a way no less intelligible than brilliant that such admirable works are works of a God infinitely wise, infinitely good and infinitely powerful. But you will say to me, how can the heavens sing the glory of God, having neither mouth nor tongue? They do it by sight, says St. Chrysostom;[6] because when they present to our eyes that so astonishing beauty, that so immense greatness, that almost infinite height, that so admirable proportion, and that so uniform movement of all these different parts, we are instructed by sight, and we hear as it were a voice that obliges us to adore Him Who is the Creator of it all.

Hence it is that the Gentiles who did not glorify Him are inexcusable, as St. Paul says, because the greatnesses of God became visible after He made Himself seen by His works in the creation of the world, which He brought out of nothing when it pleased Him.[7] He spoke, says Scripture, and all was made: He said, Let there be light, and light was made; He said, Let the earth be made, and the earth was made. He commands as God, says St. Augustine;[8] He did all that He said as almighty, and approved all that He did as infinitely good. So the creation of the world is the means by which He has made us know His divine perfections, and we must use the creatures God made only to glorify Him, after the example of the royal Prophet: *Confiteantur tibi, Domine, omnia opera tua*.[9] By this same means the mother of the Maccabees exhorted the youngest of her sons to martyrdom: *Peto, nate, ut aspicias ad caelum et terram, et ad omnia quae in eis sunt; et intelligas quia ex nihilo fecit illa Deus*.[10]

Q. Is it long since God created the world, and how much time did He employ in creating it?

A. Without entering into the discussion of the exact chronology of the world, I answer that according to the authority of the original text of sacred Scripture it is about 5,646 years since the world was created, as can be seen in the chronology at the end of the Bible. Some wonder, says St. Augustine, that God should have passed infinite times before creating the world; but he who thinks so, the same holy Doctor continues, does not consider that his astonishment is an error of his imagination, and that he wonders at a false thing: *Attendat qui hoc miratur, quia falsa miratur*. For it is certain that what preceded creation was not time but eternity: time did not begin until with the world, since time is nothing other than the measure of movement and the duration of a temporal thing, and so as long as there were no perishable creatures subject to time, there was no time either. He, then, this Father adds, who imagines infinite ages before the world is like one who imagines infinite spaces outside the world. Both are equally deceived, it being certain that just as there is no place outside the world, so there has been no time before the world, God having created time in the very moment in which He created heaven and earth. Who is the creator of the times, says the same Saint, if not God Who made the bodies whose movements regulate the course and succession of the times? *Quis alius est Creator temporum, nisi qui fecit ea quorum motibus currunt tempora?*[11]

As for the time God employed in creating the world, sacred Scripture tells us that it was six days, although He could have created it in a moment, for He is almighty. On the first day He created heaven and earth, so that the earth was wholly bare, and darkness covered the face of the deep. God then made the light, and divided the light from the darkness. On the second day He made the firmament and divided the waters of the earth from those of heaven. On the third day He separated the water from the earth, and made the earth bring forth every kind of tree and plant. On the fourth day He made the sun, the moon, the planets and the stars. On the fifth day the birds and the fishes; and on the sixth He created all the animals and reptiles of the earth, and finally man and woman to preside over the animals, the birds, the fishes and the reptiles. Let us bless God in all that He has made. *Benedicite Domino omnia opera ejus*;[12] and as to what we do not understand, let us content ourselves with saying: *Vidit Deus cuncta quae fecerat, et erant valde bona*.[13]

Q. Which are the creatures that have the first place among the works of God?

A. They are the Angels: it is properly in their creation that God reached the end that all causes propose to themselves, says St. Thomas,[14] which is to produce, as far as possible, effects that resemble them; and since by this principle these pure spirits free from matter approach more than any creature the spirituality and activity of God, it is no wonder that it is difficult to explain what their nature is, and to define precisely what they are. Here is the notion theology gives us of them: The Angels are spiritual and intelligent creatures that were not made to be united to bodies. I. They are spiritual creatures: that is, the Angels have no body like ours, nor even bodies more subtle than ours, as some of the ancients believed: they are pure spirits, which cannot be perceived by our senses in their own nature. *Qui facis Angelos tuos spiritus*, says the royal Prophet;[15] which St. Paul explains of the Angels and even of the demons, saying to the Ephesians that we have not only to fight against flesh and blood, but also against the spirits of wickedness scattered in the air.[16]

II. They are intelligent creatures, who not only have understanding like us, but also much more perfect knowledge, and the most elevated language; for they express themselves not by words as we do, but by the sole action of their will that wills to make known its thought: *Per voluntatem conceptus mentis angelicae ordinatur ad alterum*, says St. Thomas.[17] III. The Angels are spiritual creatures that were not made to be united to bodies as the soul of man is. The rational soul is a spiritual creature equally with the Angel; but it is made to be united to a body. It is true that it is separated by death, but it is in order to be united to it again on the last day. It is not so with the Angels; they were made to subsist alone without dependence on any body. They can indeed move bodies, for we see in Scripture that they have sometimes appeared under human form; but this impressing of movement has nothing in common with the union God has put between the body and the soul. The bodies with which the Angels have appeared were only fantastic or borrowed bodies. Hence the Angel who had guided Tobias said to him: *Videbar quidem vobiscum manducare et bibere: sed ego cibo invisibili, et potu qui ab hominibus videri non potest, utor*.[18] The Angels being spiritual by their nature, it also follows that they are incorruptible and immortal. To this is reduced what we know on this matter, and what I can tell you.

Q. When did God create the Angels? How did He create them? Have they all been faithful to God?

A. It is a truth on which the whole world agrees that the Angels have been created: Scripture teaches us this; but there is not the same agreement about the time and manner of their creation. Moses did not speak of it clearly, for fear, the interpreters say, that the Jews, who were so inclined to idolatry, should adore creatures so perfect if they had knowledge of them. Some ancient Fathers believed that Moses had included them under the name of heavens, and that in saying that God created heaven, He meant to give us to understand that He had at the same time produced the Angels, who were to be its inhabitants.[19] Others said that they were included under the name of light; and this is the opinion of St. Augustine.[20] It seems to me, he says, that God created the Angels when He said, Let there be light; and that He separated the good Angels from the bad when it was said that God separated the light from the darkness; because the separation of the light of day from the darkness of night is afterwards attributed to the sun, which was created to preside over the day, and to the moon, which God made to preside over the night.

God created the Angels in an admirable order, and with abundant grace: *Simul in eis condens naturam, et largiens gratiam*, says St. Augustine.[21] The Angels are divided into three hierarchies, and each hierarchy into three orders of choirs. In the first hierarchy are placed the Seraphim, the Cherubim and the Thrones; in the second the Dominations, the Principalities and the Powers; in the third the Virtues of the heavens, the Angels and the Archangels. This distinction of hierarchies and orders of Angels is found in the book of the hierarchy attributed to St. Dionysius, and in St. Gregory the Pope.[22] We know from Scripture that the number of the Angels is beyond comparison greater than that of men. God created them to make them blessed; and for this end He gave them a very pure intelligence to know the good, a well-disposed will to love Him, all the graces necessary to be able to persevere and reach eternal life. Nevertheless not all were saved; many of them were lost by pride. Lucifer and the angels he drew into his rebellion, instead of referring to God the beauty they had received from Him, grew proud, even to wishing to withdraw from dependence and make themselves like the Most High. God punished these proud spirits, and condemned them to eternal pains.

The angels who have fallen are called bad angels, demons, powers of hell, spirits of darkness and of malice. The good Angels are those who, considering that God was their sovereign good, persevered in being faithful, submissive and obedient to His commands; and God, to reward their fidelity, confirmed them in grace, and they have reached eternal beatitude. They are ordinarily called good Angels, holy Angels, blessed spirits. Let us here detest the pride of the demons, and fear a vice that so displeases God. Let us imitate the humility of the holy Angels, and learn from them that however perfect a creature may be, all its happiness consists in remaining inseparably united to its God. *Mihi adhaerere Deo bonum est.* This is what the holy Angels said; but on the contrary the apostate angels said: *Mihi adhaerere, mihi bonum est.* It is a reflection of

St. Augustine.[23] Ah! who will not fear a pride that has been the beginning of an infinite misery?

Q. Where are the demons, and what is their occupation?

A. They suffer all the eternal pains of hell, to which God condemned them, as St. Peter says: *Rudentibus inferni detractos in tartarum tradidit cruciandos*;[24] which does not prevent many of them from still being scattered in the air, and St. Jerome assures that it is the constant opinion of all the Doctors that the air between heaven and earth is full of evil spirits: *Haec autem omnium Doctorum opinio est, quod aer iste qui caelum et terram medius dividens, inane appellatur, plenus sit contrariis fortitudinibus.*[25] Their occupation is to tempt men: they go continually about them to devour them, as St. Peter says; that is, to make them unhappy like themselves. Before the birth of Jesus Christ their power was of great extent, because idolatry reigned everywhere; but Jesus Christ stripped them of their empire by His death and Resurrection. Since then the power of the devil is bound; he exercises his tyranny only over those who wish to subject themselves to it. He is, says St. Augustine, like a dog that is bound with a chain, which can bark, but cannot bite except those who come near it: *Latrare potest, mordere omnino non potest, nisi volentem*.[26] At the end of the world, during the persecution of Antichrist, the malice of men will make the empire of the devil more extended; but it will last little: Jesus Christ will scatter it by His second coming; He will cast down all the demons and the impious into hell, and will take with Him all the saints to heaven, to reign in them and with them for all eternity. Until then—that is, until the day of judgment—men always have to fear the demons, who do not tire and who employ a thousand artifices to make them fall into their snares; which obliges us to be on our guard, to watch over ourselves, to pray and to arm ourselves with faith, which is the efficacious and powerful means of resisting them, as St. Peter says: *Cui resistite fortes in fide*.[27]

Q. Where are the holy Angels, and what is their occupation?

A. They are in heaven, always in the presence of God: they see Him, adore Him, and are united to Him for all eternity: *Semper vident faciem Patris mei, qui in caelis est*, says Jesus Christ.[28] They are the ministers of God, always ready to obey Him; and God uses them to execute His commands upon creatures, and particularly upon men: *Omnes sunt administratorii spiritus in ministerium missi propter eos qui haereditatem capiunt salutis*, says St. Paul.[29] This is what the name *angel* indicates, which means envoy, ambassador, messenger. God sends them to announce the birth of some great men, as of Isaac, Samson, St. John the Baptist and Jesus Christ Himself. They are deputed to guide and protect His friends. The angel Raphael was sent to Tobias. They are also charged to exercise His justice against the wicked, as those who were sent to Sodom, and the exterminating Angel who put to death the firstborn of Egypt. Finally, they are destined to announce the will of the Lord to His prophets and His servants, as those who were deputed to Abraham, Daniel, Zachary, and so on. They preside over nations and States. St. Michael is recommended as the Angel of the people of God; Daniel speaks to us of the Angel of Persia; the Acts of the Apostles of that of Macedonia; Zacharias also speaks of the Angels of various nations. The churches, the holy congregations, the sacred places likewise have their Angels; according to Scripture and the Fathers, St. John in the Apocalypse writes to the Angels of the seven churches of Asia, and under this name he understands not only the Bishops, who are the visible angels, but also the invisible tutelary Angels who govern them: *Non solum episcopos ad tuendam gregem Dominus ordinavit, sed etiam angelos destinavit*, says St. Ambrose;[30] and as for the holy places where the divine mysteries are celebrated, do not doubt, the same Saint adds, that the Angel is present in them when Jesus Christ is present, when Jesus Christ is immolated: *Ne dubites assistere Angelum, quando Christus assistit, quando Christus immolatur*.[31] They offer to God the incense of our prayers and our petitions, says St. John.[32] Infer from this, my brethren, what our modesty in the churches ought to be, and with what fervour we ought to pray to God in them so as to join our praises to those these blessed spirits give Him: *In conspectu angelorum psallam tibi, adorabo ad templum sanctum tuum, et confitebor nomini tuo*.[33]

Q. Have all men a guardian Angel?

A. It is the common opinion of the theologians that all men, even unbelievers, have a guardian Angel.[34] At least all agree that it is a certain thing that every of the faithful has from his birth a guardian Angel: although this truth has not been expressly decided by the Church, the testimonies of Scripture and of the Fathers do not allow us to doubt it. Jacob spoke of his guardian Angel when he said that the Angel had delivered him from the dangers to which he had been exposed.[35] Of the guardian Angel Judith spoke when she said that the Angel of the Lord had taken care of her when she was in the tent of Holofernes.[36] Of the guardian Angel of every of the faithful Jesus Christ spoke when He said: Do not despise any of these little ones; I declare to you that their Angels continually see the face of My Father Who is in heaven.[37] Admire the dignity of souls, says St. Jerome on this subject: scarcely had God given you a soul, my brethren, when He at the same time gave you an Angel to guard it: *Magna dignitas animarum; ut unaquaeque habeat ab ortu suae nativitatis in custodiam sui Angelum deputatum*. The words of Jesus Christ, says St. John Chrysostom, show us clearly that we all have a guardian Angel who sees us, although we do not see him; who is always with us wherever we are; who hears us however secretly we speak; who observes us in whatever we do, and who is always at our side. *Angelus meus vobiscum est*.[38] Yes, my brethren, the Angel of the Lord is with you, accompanies you in your pilgrimage of this life, and will not leave you until death. He is with us to deliver us from the snares of the devil, and to inspire holy thoughts in us while the tempter seeks to ruin us. *Vobiscum est.* He is with you, follows you everywhere, and enters any place in which you hide: you cannot flee from his presence, nor elude his testimony. Holy souls, understand that he notes all the good works you do, your alms, and so on. But know also, sinners, that he observes all your disorders, and that one day he will reproach you for them.

Q. What ought our gratitude to our guardian Angels to be?

A. St. Bernard teaches it to us when, explaining these words of Psalm 90—*Angelis suis mandavit de te*: God has commanded His Angels to keep you in all your ways—he exclaims: O! how much respect, devotion and confidence in our holy Angels these words ought to inspire in us: *Quantum tibi debet hoc verbum inferre reverentiam, afferre devotionem, conferre fiduciam!* Their presence asks our respect, their friendship our devotion, and their care our confidence: *Reverentiam pro praesentia, devotionem pro benevolentia, fiduciam pro custodia.* Here are three things that we owe these blessed spirits whom God gave us as guides and protectors.

Reverentiam pro praesentia. Their presence deserves our respect: so let us do nothing before them that can offend them. Before a person whom you revere you are afraid; you compose your gesture and your look; if some word escapes you that displeases him, you ask his pardon; if he finds you in an indecent posture, you regret it; and before your guardian Angel, in comparison with whom the greatest princes are worms of the earth, do you dare to commit scandalous actions, give to your eyes, your hands, your mouth, your passions an unbridled licence, fall in his presence into shameful prostitutions, and let yourselves be carried into every kind of fault? Is that treating your holy Angel with respect?

Devotionem pro benevolentia. The holy Angels are our friends, and the best friends. O how many good counsels they have given us! how many times they have warned us of the danger we were in, and that we should flee bad company! how many times they have taken us, so to speak, by the hand, as Lot, to make us leave Sodom, and prevent us from perishing with it! O! who can say all the good offices we owe them? Let us then have a singular devotion to them, and not fail to implore their help when we need it.

Fiduciam pro custodia. They are our guards and our guides, in whom we must have confidence. It is certain that, properly speaking, God alone is He Who guards us, conserves us, receives us, covers us with the wings of His mercy; but what He could do by Himself alone, He wills to execute by the ministry of the Angels. *Ecce ego mittam angelum meum*, He says in Scripture, *qui praecedat te, et custodiat in via, et introducat in locum quem paravi*.[39] Note well all these words. God grants us the grace of giving us an Angel who goes before us, and who shows us the good way we must follow. This Angel is not only our guide, but also our

guard, who defends us from the enemies of our salvation: *Et custodiat te*. Ah! what would become of us, if he did not oppose the efforts of the devil, who does all he can to ruin us! Finally, this good and faithful guard is he who leads us to the place the Lord has prepared for us: *Et introducat in locum quem paravi.* This place is heaven, where He wills to make us enter, so that we may share in His happiness.

Loving and faithful guardian, who from my birth have taken care of me, do not tire of giving me signs of your protection, so that I may persevere to the end in the way that leads to the beatitude that you enjoy.

---

[1] Tertullian, *Adversus Hermogenem* 25.

[2] Tertullian, *De praescriptione* 46.

[3] Ps. 113:3 / 134:6 (Vulgate).

[4] Prov. 16:4.

[5] Ps. 18:1 (Vulgate; Ps. 19:1).

[6] Chrysostom, *Ad populum Antiochenum*, Hom. 9 (source).

[7] Rom. 1:20.

[8] Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* (source).

[9] Ps. 144:10 (Vulgate; Ps. 145:10).

[10] 2 Macc. 7:28.

[11] Augustine, *City of God* XI, 6.

[12] Dan. 3:57 (Song of the Three Young Men).

[13] Gen. 1:31.

[14] *ST* I, q. 50, a. 1 (source numbering).

[15] Ps. 103:4 (Vulgate; Ps. 104:4); Heb. 1:7.

[16] Eph. 6:12.

[17] *ST* I, q. 107, a. 1.

[18] Tob. 12:19.

[19] Origen, Hom. 1 on Genesis (source).

[20] Augustine, *City of God* XI, 9 (source: XII, 19 slip).

[21] Augustine, *City of God* XII, 9.

[22] Pseudo-Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy*; Gregory the Great, Hom. 34 on the Gospels.

[23] Augustine reflection on Ps. 72:28 (Vulgate; Ps. 73:28).

[24] 2 Pet. 2:4.

[25] Jerome (source: “Hier. ibid.”).

[26] Augustine, Serm. 197 *de Tempore* (source).

[27] 1 Pet. 5:8–9.

[28] Matt. 18:10.

[29] Heb. 1:14.

[30] Ambrose, on Luke, book 2 (source).

[31] Ambrose, ibid.

[32] Rev. 8:3–4.

[33] Ps. 137:1–2 (Vulgate; Ps. 138).

[34] *ST* I, q. 113, a. 4 ad 3; Sylvius ibid. Guardian angels:.

[35] Gen. 48:16.

[36] Jdt. 13:20 (Vulgate).

[37] Matt. 18:10.

[38] Cf. Bar. 6:6; Acts 12:15 (source citations mixed).

[39] Exod. 23:20.

4. On the Creation of Man

Vol. IV (Third Year), Plática 4 (Creed series), pp. 37–44. Theme: Genesis 1:26. Original preacher not named.

Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram (Gen. 1:26).

Let Us make man to Our image and likeness.

1. The holy Fathers remark that, having made all things by His command alone—saying, Let there be light, and light was made, and so of the rest—God in a manner exhorts Himself, when He wills to form man, to make a thing greater than all He had made until then, to mark the dignity of him who was to be the end, and as it were the chief among all His works.[1] So man was formed last, after the creation and establishment of heaven and earth, of the elements and of all creatures; and in this very thing God showed the greatness to which He had destined him when He gave him being; having willed that the world should be perfect in all its parts before introducing man into it, so that he might enter it as into a palace and a kingdom, of which he should be lord and king. You have created man a little lower than the Angels, says David speaking to God: *Minuisti eum paulo minus ab angelis*;[2] yet, though less noble than the Angels, You have crowned him with honour and glory, establishing him as lord of the universe: *Gloria et honore coronasti eum, et constituisti eum super opera manuum tuarum.* But what did man do? Instead of using this great spectacle of nature as a mirror always exposed to his eyes, to contemplate the beauty of creatures and revere the power and wisdom of the Creator, he lost by sin all these great advantages he had received from the goodness of God. So to know man well it is necessary to distinguish in him what comes from God from what is the work of sin. This we shall try to do in this plática and in those that follow.

Q. What is the most perfect creature after the Angels?

A. Man, who is a rational creature composed of body and soul to the image and likeness of God. Each one being bound to know what he is, we must explain this definition. We say that man is a rational creature—that is, that he acts with knowledge, with choice and deliberation; that he knows what he does, and why he does it. *Deus ab initio constituit hominem*, says the Wise Man, *et reliquit illum in manu consilii sui*.[3] He is a creature composed of body and soul: when God made man, Scripture says that He formed his body of earth: *Formavit Dominus Deus hominem de limo terrae*;[4] and He gave life to this body by uniting to it a rational soul which He created—that is, which He brought out of nothing: *Et inspiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitae.* So God creates all souls to unite them to the human body, as theology teaches,[5] according to Scripture. Finally, man is a creature made to the image and likeness of God: *Creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam.*[6] The other creatures are only vestiges of the Divinity, as a Father of the Church says: *Vestigia Dei*; but man is His image, which resembles Him, though with great inequality; for only the eternal Word is the perfect image of the Father, the character and expression of His substance, as being consubstantial with Him and equal to Him in all. Man is the image of God, not in the body, as the Anthropomorphites imagined who attributed a human form to God; but in the soul, in which man has received from God spirit, understanding, will and liberty: and by these advantages which the other creatures lack, except the Angels, God has, so to speak, impressed on us His image and likeness; because God is spirit: His understanding, His will, His liberty are the most notable perfections of His divine essence.[7]

Let us here acknowledge the greatness of our being, and give thanks to God for having made us what we are. We are not of the number of the insensible creatures stripped of reason; He has raised us even to giving us a being capable of possessing Him. He created the whole universe for the service of man, and all nature works to relieve his needs. If there were only one man in the world, heaven, earth and the elements would serve him alone equally as they serve all: *Omnia subjecisti sub pedibus ejus*,[8] the royal Prophet exclaims. With him let us give thanks to God for the benefit of our creation, and take care not to abuse it: *Tuus sum ego, salvum me fac*.[9]

Q. When God created man, in what state did He create him?

A. God created man on the sixth day of the creation of the world. Adam was the first man, and Eve the first woman; and it is a truth of faith that there was no man or woman before them. God created them in innocence and holiness, with all the advantages of body and soul; and if they fell it was solely by their own fault: *Solummodo hoc inveni quod fecerit Deus hominem rectum*, says the Wise Man, *et ipse se infinitis miscuerit quaestionibus.*[10]

As to the body, there reigned in the first man a health always equal: he was subject neither to illnesses nor to death. Adam, says St. Augustine, was at once mortal and immortal: mortal by the nature of his animal body, which of itself could die; and immortal by the gift of his Creator, Who had given him the tree of life to keep him from growing old: *Mortalis erat conditione corporis animalis, et immortalis beneficio Conditoris.*[11] Indeed, he would never have died if he had remained in the state of innocence in which God had created him; he would have lived in this happy state with all his children for as long as it pleased God; and afterwards they would have been translated to heaven without dying, it being certain, according to Scripture, that death entered the world by sin: *Per peccatum mors.*[12]

As to the soul, Adam and Eve received all that can make the spirit perfect. They had a full and entire liberty to do all they willed, and a right will inclined to the good without any propensity to evil. God had given them all the helps and all the graces with which they could arrive at eternal life. In a word, Adam was like a king, says St. Augustine;[13] but a king of a majesty in comparison with which that of the princes of the world is baseness and servitude. All nature was subject to him, and all the elements conspired together for his happiness. He commanded equally over the birds of heaven, the fishes of the sea and the animals of the earth; and what is more, he was king of himself, and had absolute empire over all the impressions of his senses, over all the thoughts of his understanding and the movements of his heart. He did not possess this happiness for himself alone: he was to transmit it to all his posterity: all his children were to be born of an original innocence and holiness, just as from a perfectly pure spring pure streams flow. Consequently they would all have been born kings, all lords of the world, and all would have been venerated by creatures. O my God! who can think of this happiness without feeling that he has lost it, and without exclaiming with St. Augustine: O fall of Adam, how fatal you are! *Ruina ineffabilis, et ineffabiliter grande peccatum!*[14]

Q. For what did God create man?

A. To make him blessed like the Angels, communicating Himself to him without reserve for all eternity. Man must therefore approach only God, Who is his sovereign good. Only the possession of God can make him happy. Which obliges St. Augustine to say that the heart of man will always be restless until it rests in God, Who is its centre and its end. *Fecisti nos, Domine, ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.*[15] So let us remember, my brethren, that we have not been made for the goods, the pleasures and the honours of this world, nor for any creature, but for God alone; that it is with Him that we must unite ourselves, directing to Him all our thoughts, our words and our works—in a word, our whole life—as the Apostle warns us: *Omnia in gloriam Dei facite.*[16] Let us not forget this important lesson. Fathers and mothers, teach it to your children from the tenderest age: tell them frequently that God is their first principle and their last end, that their whole occupation must be to know, love and serve this great God, Who brought them out of nothing and made them capable of an eternal beatitude. But instead of giving them these instructions, they are spoken to only of the world and its vanities; and the God of the world is forgotten, and you hardly dare to speak of Him. Heaven and earth publish the glory of God; and you, fathers and mothers, say not a word on this point to your children: what can you expect, except that they turn out libertine and disordered children? For the Holy Spirit has said it, and it will be eternally true, that all men in whom there is not the knowledge of God are vain: *Vani sunt omnes homines in quibus non subest scientia Dei.*[17]

Q. You have said that man is composed of body and soul; teach us what the soul of man is, and what we must know about it.

A. Our souls are immortal spirits, which have been created by God to be united to the human body. We must know their nature and dignity. The soul of man is spiritual and immortal by its nature: this is what faith and reason teach us. Faith instructs us by sacred Scripture that God created man immortal, and made him to His image and likeness: *Deus creavit hominem inexterminabilem, et ad imaginem similitudinis suae fecit illum.*[18] Which is also made known by the whole economy of Religion, which could not subsist without this fundamental truth. For, as St. Paul says, if we hoped in Jesus Christ only for this life, we should be the most miserable of all men: *Si in hac vita tantum in Christo sperantes sumus, miserabiliores sumus omnibus hominibus*.[19] Reason also offers us convincing proofs. I will use here only the following argument: All that which thinks and reflects on its thoughts is spiritual; matter is not capable of thinking and reasoning; turn it every way you will, and you will conceive in it only extension, figures and local movement. It is impossible that thought should be body, that body should be thought. Now we all know that we think, that we know, that we will, that we reflect, and so on; therefore there is in us a spiritual principle that makes us think, and this principle is what we call the rational soul. This soul being spiritual, it follows that it is immortal, because there is nothing mortal except what is corruptible; and there is nothing corruptible except that which has parts separable from one another. What is spiritual is indivisible, therefore it is incorruptible.

This truth being supposed, what must be inferred from it? Your soul is spiritual, my beloved brethren; it must not, then, be employed in works of the flesh, in excesses of eating and drinking. Know, Jesus Christ tells you, that your soul is more than all this: *Nonne anima plus est quam esca?*[20] Your soul is immortal. O what a word! I repeat it that you may note it. Your soul is immortal, and nothing in the world is capable of destroying it. You must therefore fear nothing of this. *Nolite timere eos qui occidunt corpus*, Jesus Christ tells us, *animam autem non possunt occidere*.[21] That cheat threatens you with a lawsuit if you do not swear falsely to please him; that impure man, that he will send the justice or the constable upon you, who will seize all your goods and ruin you, if you do not consent to his brutal passion; that wicked man wants to beat you or kill you if you do not commit such a theft, such an injustice: do not fear all these people: they can harm your body and your goods; but they have not the least power over your soul: *Occidunt corpus, animam autem non possunt occidere.* I want to show you Whom you must fear: *Ostendam autem vobis quem timeatis.*[22] Fear Him Who after taking the life of the body can send soul and body to the torments of hell: *Timete eum qui postquam occiderit, habet potestatem mittere in gehennam*: see Whom you must fear to offend: *Ita dico vobis, hunc timete.*

Q. After explaining to us the nature of our souls, show us the esteem we must have for them.

A. To understand the greatness of the soul and the value we must set on it, it is necessary to consider it not with respect to the body it animates, but with respect to God, of Whom it is the image, as St. Gregory Nazianzen remarks. This holy Doctor had married his niece Alypiana to a knight named Nicobulus, who despised his wife for being small, which gave the Saint occasion to write him these words: My nephew, you proceed like a man who would esteem a large pebble more than a diamond, a crow more than a nightingale, a large thistle more than a carnation: reflect on the virtues that adorn your wife, the love she has for you, the obedience she renders you, the fidelity she keeps you, her devotion to God, her care in business, her prudence in the government of your family. If you take account of all these qualities, you will confess that to know well the greatness of a soul, it must not be measured by spans: *Animus in mensuram non cadit.*[23] So we must not judge of our soul by the shadows and imperfections of the body, if we wish to know it well: *Revertamur ad animam, et hominem Deo metiamur*. Let us look at it with respect to God, Who created it and destined it to an immortal glory: this is what must make us esteem it. It is a great motive of confidence for us, says St. Augustine, to know that our soul has come from the hands of God; that it has received from Him all that it is; that it is not only a weak vestige of His power, as irrational creatures are, but that He created it to His image and likeness, capable of possessing Him: *Non parvae fiduciae est res facta ad factorem suum, et non quomodocumque facta, sed ad imaginem et similitudinem ejus.*[24] But this confidence becomes still greater if

we reflect that the same Son of God has willed to be its Redeemer; that He gave to redeem it, not gold or silver, but His Blood and His life, as St. Peter says: *Scientes quod non corruptibilibus auro vel argento redempti estis… sed pretioso sanguine Christi*.[25] From this it follows that our soul must be a very great thing, since it has been redeemed at such a price. *O anima! erige te*, St. Augustine exclaims, *tanti vales… salus tua Christus est. Christum ergo cogita.*[26]

Q. What fruit must we draw from this plática?

A. We must: I. Make a serious reflection on what we are by the benefit of our creation; love and esteem in ourselves what is the work of God; hate at the same time and detest the disorders that sin has caused in us: *Oportet ut oderis in te opus tuum, et ames in te opus Dei*, St. Augustine tells us.[27] II. Give thanks to God for having given us a soul so noble, so excellent and so elevated, that all that is great and rich in the world has no comparison with it in the judgment of Jesus Christ Himself, Who tells us that if anyone loses his soul, there is nothing in the world with which to repair this loss: *Quid prodest homini si mundum universum lucretur, animae vero suae detrimentum patiatur: aut quam dabit homo commutationem pro anima sua?*[28] III. Work carefully to sanctify it, and make it pleasing in the eyes of God by the exercise of good works: *Miserere animae tuae placens Deo*.[29] Have compassion on your soul, do not leave it in sin, adorn it with the virtues proper to your state, and do all you can to secure its salvation. Show in every trial that you have not received an immortal soul in vain. Happy he who finds himself in this disposition. *Qui non accepit in vano animam suam*.[30] Happy the fathers of families and all who, having charge of souls, contribute to the sanctification of those God put in their care, whom, says the Wise Man, He so loves that He exercises His mercy upon all, because He loves them: *Parcis omnibus quoniam tua sunt, Domine, qui amas animas*.[31] For these motives and considerations, my brethren, the Apostles have had an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls. They all said like St. Paul: *Ego autem libentissime impendam, et superimpendar ipse pro animabus vestris*.[32] I will gladly give all I have, and I will give myself also for the salvation of your souls: go, Apostles, cross the seas, traverse the provinces, expose your life to win souls for a God: if you converted only one, you would be well rewarded, for that soul bears the image of God, is the price of the death of a God, and is destined by the redemption to a glory that will never end. And you, Christians, who are not called to the apostolic labours, apply yourselves with great care to the sanctification of your souls and to that of your children and domestics; take with love the trouble of directing them, and you will receive from the hand of the Lord the crown of glory He has promised to His good and faithful servants.

---

[1] Basil, Hom. 18 *in Hexaemeron* (source).

[2] Ps. 8:6–7 (Vulgate).

[3] Sir. 15:14.

[4] Gen. 2:7.

[5] *ST* I, q. 90; q. 118, a. 2.

[6] Gen. 1:27.

[7] *ST* I, q. 93.

[8] Ps. 8:8 (Vulgate).

[9] Ps. 118:94 (Vulgate; Ps. 119:94).

[10] Eccles. 7:30 (Vulgate; 7:29 modern).

[11] Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* VI, 25 (source: c. 28).

[12] Rom. 5:12.

[13] Augustine, *City of God* (source: XVIII, 10—check).

[14] Augustine, *Enchiridion* 45 (source).

[15] Augustine, *Confessions* I, 1.

[16] 1 Cor. 10:31.

[17] Wis. 13:1 (source cites “Ibid.” after 1 Cor.—likely Wis.).

[18] Wis. 2:23.

[19] 1 Cor. 15:19.

[20] Matt. 6:25.

[21] Matt. 10:28.

[22] Luke 12:4–5.

[23] Gregory Nazianzen, *Ep.* 155 (source).

[24] Augustine, *De Genesi* III, 24 (source).

[25] 1 Pet. 1:18–19.

[26] Augustine, on Ps. 102, n. 6 (source).

[27] Augustine, Serm. 368 (source).

[28] Matt. 16:26.

[29] Sir. 30:24 (Vulgate; source: "Psalm. xxiii, 4" may be a slip for Sirach).

[30] Ps. 23:4 (Vulgate) in some readings; or Sir. context.

[31] Wis. 11:27 (Vulgate 11:27).

[32] 2 Cor. 12:15.

5. On the Fall of Adam, and Original Sin

Vol. IV (Third Year), Plática 5 (Creed series), pp. 45–52. Theme: Psalm 50:7. Original preacher not named.

> *Ecce enim in iniquitatibus conceptus sum, et in peccatis concepit me mater mea (Ps. 50:7 Vulgate).*
>
> *Behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me.*

1. What does the penitent King mean by this, St. Augustine asks? Was he born of adultery, that he should tell us he was conceived in iniquity? Was not Jesse his father of orderly conduct, and did not his wife keep conjugal chastity? Without doubt, yes. Why, then, does he tell us that he was begotten in iniquity? It is, this Father says, because he wishes to teach us in these few words that iniquity is the origin of the children of Adam; that no man is born into this world without being a sinner, and without bringing at the same time the penalty of sin. It is to set before us, and put before our eyes, this frightful misery that extends to all the children of Adam; to make us know that they contract sin with life, and to oblige us to deplore with tears and groans a state so worthy of compassion, saying to God as he did: Ah! Lord, have pity on me; You well know how corrupt my origin and my birth are: *Ecce enim in iniquitatibus conceptus sum.* Note, my brethren, that this holy King does not say only that he was conceived in sin, but uses the plural, saying that he was conceived in sins, to make us understand that this single sin is the general origin of every kind of sin. Note also that he says it twice in the same verse, which shows that he was very vividly penetrated by it, that he thought of it frequently, and that we must do the same, there being nothing more capable of humbling human pride than the truth of original sin. And this truth being one of the principal articles of our Religion, it will be the matter of this plática.[1]

Q. Did Adam and Eve live long in the state of innocence and holiness in which God had created them?

A. We cannot assure how long Adam and Eve lived in the state of innocence in which God had created them: Scripture does not say; and as it speaks so soon of their sin, we may infer with the holy Fathers that they lived few days in this happy state, and that they fell from it very soon by their disobedience. Here is how:

God having created Adam at a perfect age—that is, an age corresponding to that of thirty-three years, which is that in which Jesus Christ died—He placed him in a delicious garden, which Scripture calls the earthly paradise, a place of divine beauty, unknown to us today, as Tertullian remarks: *Locus divinae amanitatis a notitia orbis communis segregatus*.[2] He placed him in this delicious garden so that he might occupy himself in cultivating it, not by a toilsome agriculture such as that of today, but by a pleasant occupation that would give him occasion to raise himself to the greatness of the Creator. Placing Adam and Eve in the earthly paradise, God imposed on them a precept most just in itself, and very easy to fulfil. Eat, He says to them, of

all the fruits of this garden; but do not touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: for the moment you touch it, you will most certainly die.[3] This tree is so called by the effects it was to produce; because if men abstained from the fruit of this tree in order to obey God, they were to be happy, and consequently would know the good; and on the contrary, eating against God's order of the fruit of this tree, they were to be unhappy, and consequently know evil by a fatal experience. The fruit of this tree was without doubt good like the others; and God forbade them the use of it only to prove their obedience, to make them know that they must depend on God alone, love Him above all things, live in submission and dependence on their Creator, and render Him their homage as their sovereign Lord; but instead of remaining in this submission they disobeyed Him.

The devil, who had already fallen by his pride, envious of their happiness, tempted them in order to make them miserable like himself: for this he used the organ of the serpent, and told Eve that if they ate of the fruit they would not die, but would become like gods, knowing good and evil. Eve listens attentively, and lets herself be seduced: she eats of the fruit, and after eating presents it to her husband, who eats of it like her by a complacency all the more culpable because it was entirely voluntary; for Adam was not, like Eve, seduced by the devil, as St. Paul notes: *Adam non est seductus; mulier autem seducta in praevaricatione fuit*.[4] He determined of himself to sin: he saw the evil, says St. Augustine,[5] he knew it, he willed it, he did it: *Adam sciens prudensque peccavit.* He wished to use his own power, says the same Saint: he took pleasure in doing the contrary of all that had been commanded him, as if to show that he could act without dependence on God, and make himself like the Most High, Who depends on no one and has nothing superior to Him: *Sua potestate uti voluit, praeceptum rumpere delectavit, ut nullo sibi dominante fieret sicut Deus, quia Deo nullus utique dominatur*.[6] So the first man fell from the happy state in which he had been created.

Q. What was the sin of the first man, and what idea do the holy Fathers leave us of it?

A. St. Augustine,[7] considering this sin with the most profound reflection, teaches us that it is the greater in that it encloses in itself all sins. It is an assault, this Saint says, against the majesty of God; because in disobeying God Adam and Eve wished to equal themselves to Him, and make themselves like the Most High: *Ut sub Deo esse nollent, et Deo pares esse vellent.*[8] It is a treason and an infidelity, for man, finding himself between God and the devil, believes the devil rather than God, and puts himself on the side of the apostate angel, to shake off, like him, the yoke of Him Who had created him, by a detestable independence and pride; which made the holy Doctor of grace say that the devil made our first parents fall by the same steps by which he himself had fallen: *Unde cecidit daemon, inde dejecit*.[9] It is a profanation and a sacrilege, for man has violated in himself that angelic beauty which made his soul the temple of God. It is a homicide, and the greatest of all, for the first man has not only given death to himself, but also to that innumerable multitude of men who were to descend from him in the course of all the ages. It is an adultery and a corruption, and cannot be sufficiently condemned, for the soul of man, which was the spouse of God, has corrupted itself, prostituting itself to the devil—a corruption so great that it passed into all the feelings and members of his body. It is a theft, a robbery, for man has withdrawn himself from his God, like a slave who flees from his master's house to live at his own pleasure. It is an intolerable avarice, for man desired what did not belong to him, and wished to enrich himself with what was stolen from God. In a word, if one examines Adam's sin closely, one will see that it encloses all sins; that it is an incomprehensible ruin, and a sin ineffable in itself and in its consequences: *Ruina ineffabilis et ineffabiliter grande peccatum*.[10]

Q. Has the sin of the first man passed to us? How can we understand that we are all born guilty of a sin committed so many ages ago?

A. It is a truth of faith that Adam's sin has passed to us, and that we are all born guilty of this sin. This truth is expressed in sacred Scripture. It is said in it that Adam, after his sin, begot children to his image and likeness: *Genuit ad imaginem et similitudinem suam*[11]—that is, as the interpreters explain, children sinners like himself. If Adam had remained in the innocence in which God had created him, his children would have

been born pure, of a most pure father: they would have been like him living images of the holiness of God; but having fallen into this enormous sin, which with the deep wound it made in him disordered him entirely in soul and body, his children have borne the image and character of their father's corruption; and the whole human nature has come to be not only sinful, but has begotten only sinners: *Magno illo primi hominis peccato*, says St. Augustine, *natura nostra in deterius commutata: non solum facta est peccatrix, sed etiam genuit peccatores*.[12]

This truth being one of the principal articles of Religion, St. Paul establishes it in an invincible way in his Epistle to the Romans. Sin, he says, entered the world by one man, in whom all sinned: *In quo omnes peccaverunt*… By the sin of one alone condemnation has fallen upon all men.[13] The Church, instructed by the Holy Spirit, has always taught this truth; and when the Pelagians strove to destroy it, claiming that children are born today as pure of every original stain as if they had been in the earthly paradise, the holy Fathers of the Church, such as St. Jerome and St. Augustine, opposed them with all their strength, and finally the Councils condemned them: on which one may see the councils of Africa, of Orange, of Florence, and lastly that of Trent.

It is certain, my brethren, that original sin is a great mystery, and that we do not understand how a sin committed so many ages ago has passed down to us: nevertheless, if we reflect that we were all enclosed in an ineffable way in the person of our first father, we shall recognize that it is neither strange nor unjust that from a sinful root sinful children should come forth: *Nec mirum, nec injustum est quod radix damnata proferat damnatos*.[14] On the other hand the effects of original sin are so palpable and so sensible that the very pagans knew them without knowing the cause, as St. Augustine remarks: *Rem viderunt, causam nescierunt.*[15] Whence comes it that man begins life by pains; that all he knows how to do, coming into the world, is to weep and groan? Under the government of a just God, can one be born so miserable and unhappy without having deserved it? *Neque enim sub Deo justo miser esse quisquam, nisi mereatur, potest.*[16] So we may say that however incomprehensible this mystery is for man, man is still more incomprehensible without this mystery. Indeed, all that we see in ourselves of greatness and of baseness proves the great misery of a being that is corrupted, not by its nature, but by sin. Let us then firmly believe the truth of original sin, which God has revealed in sacred Scripture, which the Church has always taught, which we feel by our own misery, and on which is founded the need of a Redeemer, and the whole economy of Religion.

Q. What are the effects of original sin?

A. These effects belong to the soul and to the body. As to the latter, the rebellion of the flesh against the spirit, pains, sufferings and death are its fatal consequences. Scarcely had Adam and Eve sinned when they were ashamed of their nakedness, and covered themselves with fig leaves, says Scripture; because then they began to feel the rebellion of the flesh against the spirit, says St. Augustine;[17] they lost not only the empire they had over the animals, but also that which they had over their own body. They had risen against God, and everything rose against them. This rebellion passed to all the children of Adam; Scripture warns us of it, and a fatal experience teaches it to us only too well: this is what makes the greatest Saints groan, and obliges them to exclaim with St. Paul: *Video aliam legem in membris meis, repugnantem legi mentis meae*.[18]

Labours, illnesses, pains were also penalties to which the body of man was subjected. God said to the woman: "I will afflict you with many evils during your pregnancy; you shall bring forth in pain; you shall be under the power of your husband, and he shall dominate you."[19] Afterwards He said to Adam: "Because you gave ear to the voice of your wife, and ate of the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat, the earth shall be cursed for your sake, and you shall not draw from it your food all the days of your life except with much labour. It shall produce for you thorns and thistles, and you shall feed on the herb of the earth; you shall eat bread in the sweat of your face until you return to the earth from which you came, for you are dust, and unto dust you shall return." Here are the penalties of sin as regards the body, penalties to which all the children of Adam are condemned, and which we must suffer in a spirit of penance; not only because they are effects of

original sin, but also because we have together deserved them by those we have added to it. Let us then remember that the evils of this life, and finally death, are the wages and pay of sin, and that we must suffer all with patience and submission to the will of God. *Stipendia enim peccati, mors*.[20]

Q. What are the effects of sin as regards the soul?

A. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned they were both shamefully cast out of the earthly paradise without being allowed to return to it: they were subjected to the empire of the devil: the entrance into heaven was closed to them, and they deserved eternal condemnation. Their soul remained subject to ignorance, to concupiscence, and their liberty was weakened. All these evils fell upon us; but as we have little understanding of them, it is necessary to explain them.

There is in the soul understanding, will, liberty and memory: what have these faculties come to after sin? There is almost nothing but error and ignorance in the understanding: *Error et tenebrae peccatoribus concreatae sunt*, says the Wise Man.[21] Here is the inheritance of sinful man. But this man, you will say, is a great genius, a man of good judgment, an understanding so excellent that he directs his affairs with much intelligence. No matter: consider him deprived of the grace of the Christian, and you will hardly find in him anything but errors, darkness and illusions. His will is no less defective; of itself it cannot conceive any good desire for salvation. I say the same of his liberty: it is certain, and it is of faith, that it has not been destroyed by sin; but it is also certain that it has been weakened, and that man has not the same facility for the good that he had before;[22] and we may look, with the prophet Isaiah, upon this liberty as a leaf: *Cecidimus quasi folium universi*.[23] The least thing casts it down, the least passion makes it fall, a glance, the presence of an object, a thought, a temptation, a small interest, a momentary pleasure overturns it: it is the leaf that falls by the least wind. *Cecidimus quasi folium universi, et iniquitates nostrae quasi ventus abstulerunt nos.* If we pass to the memory of sinful man, may we not say with St. Bernard that it is a sewer, and a deposit of every kind of filth, a bilge of extravagances, of follies, of corruption? *Tota in repertorium memoriae recurrit sentina vitiorum.* Let us add to all this concupiscence—that is, the propensity and inclination we have to evil, which remains in us even after original sin is forgiven. *Deleta est iniquitas, sed manet infirmitas.* And the holy Council of Trent warns us that, having been left to us until death, we must resist it with courage.

Q. What fruit must we draw from what we have said of the fall of man and of original sin?

A. We must humble ourselves in the presence of God, and groan at the sight of the pitiable state to which sin has reduced us. A state that made St. Paul say that we were all by the misfortune of our birth children of wrath, and worthy of the divine vengeance. *Natura filii irae*.[24] A state that moved Job to curse the day of his birth: *maledixit diei suo*.[25] Great God, annihilate this day, he said, and make no one remember that night in which it was said that a man had been conceived. To what end this curse? Because we know by the same Scripture that this holy man did not sin by his words: *in omnibus his non peccavit Job labiis suis*; it is because I was conceived in sin, and a sinner from the instant I began to live, because the womb that bore me bore a sinner, and has not taken from my sight the miseries that overwhelm me. *Quia non conclusit ostia ventris qui portavit me, nec abstulit mala ab oculis meis.* Would to God that this day had never existed; and according to the explanation of St. Ambrose, may God will that the fatal day of my carnal birth perish, and be as it were absorbed in the presence of God by another day, which is that of my spiritual generation. *Pereat, inquit, dies saecularis, ut dies spiritualis oriatur.*

O proud man! Here is with what to confound you and cast down your pride; you cannot bear to be humbled, and this is motive enough to humble you and shut your mouth. I was born in iniquity, my body is nothing but misery; my understanding is full of ignorance, my will of malice, my imagination and memory of a thousand mad thoughts, my liberty continually varies, my concupiscence inclines me to evil without ceasing, and as a child of Adam I have nothing but lying and sin. *Nemo habet de suo nisi peccatum et mendacium*, as a council says.[26] This is my patrimony, my inheritance and my riches. In view of it can I grow proud and glory in

anything? Must I not on the contrary annihilate myself, confound myself and exclaim with the Apostle: *Infelix ego homo! quis me liberabit de corpore mortis hujus?*[27] Unhappy me! who will deliver me from this mortal body, under whose weight I groan overwhelmed with illnesses and temptations? The grace of God which Jesus Christ my Saviour has merited for me, Who will do me this mercy. *Gratia Dei per Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum.* We shall speak of it in the next plática; and meanwhile I wish it to you, etc.

---

[1] Augustine on Ps. 50 (Vulgate).

[2] Tertullian, *Apology* 47.

[3] Gen. 2:16–17.

[4] 1 Tim. 2:14.

[5] Augustine, *City of God* XIV, 11.

[6] Augustine, on Ps. 70, conc. 1 (source).

[7] *Enchiridion* 45–46 (source numbering varies).

[8] Augustine, Serm. on the words of the Apostles (source).

[9] Augustine, ibid.

[10] *Enchiridion* 45/48 (source).

[11] Gen. 5:3.

[12] Augustine, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* II, 34.

[13] Rom. 5:12, 18.

[14] Augustine, *Contra Julianum* III, 10 (paraphrased).

[15] Augustine, ibid.

[16] Augustine, ibid.

[17] Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* XI, 32 (source).

[18] Rom. 7:23.

[19] Gen. 3:16–19.

[20] Rom. 6:23.

[21] Sir. 11:16 (Vulgate).

[22] VI, can. 5 and 8 (source: can. 2 et 5).

[23] Isa. 64:6.

[24] Eph. 2:3.

[25] Job 3:1–10.

[26] Council of Orange II (529), can. 22 (source: “c. 2”).

[27] Rom. 7:24–25.

6. On the Need of a Redeemer

Vol. IV (Third Year), Plática 6 (Creed series), pp. 53–60. Theme: 1 Timothy 1:15. Original preacher not named.

> *Fidelis sermo, et omni acceptione dignus, quod Christus Jesus venit in hunc mundum peccatores salvos facere (1 Tim. 1:15).*
>
> *It is a certain truth, and worthy to be received with perfect submission, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.*

1. See here, Christians, a truth that ought to console us, a faithful, sure, firm word, that deserves to be believed and well received by all: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners: *Fidelis sermo*, etc. Nothing ought so much to occupy our faith and kindle our heart in love of Jesus Christ as this truth of a God incarnate and made man for the salvation of men: but O the insensibility of men with regard to a mystery so advantageous to them! they think little of it; the greater part do not remember it at all: there is hardly anyone who corresponds to it, as he ought, by his gratitude and the holiness of his life. And yet this is the mystery

that the Apostle wills us always to have before our eyes and that he proposes to us as the great object of our faith: *Fidelis sermo,* etc.

The whole Christian religion consists, according to St. Augustine, in knowing well two men, Adam and Jesus Christ. Adam, origin of death, and Jesus Christ, principle of life: Adam, who introduced sin into the world, and Jesus Christ, Who brought grace and truth into the world: Adam, sinner, and Jesus Christ, Redeemer.[1] *In causa duorum hominum quorum per unum venumdati sumus peccato, et per alterum redimimur a peccatis, proprie fides christiana consistit.* Let us study these two men well; and after having considered the evil the first did us, let us see the obligation we owe to the second. To understand the benefit of which we are debtors to Him, it is necessary to make you know the extreme need we had of the Redeemer after the fall of Adam, which had made us miserable like him; and that is what we shall do in this plática.

Q. What would have become of men after Adam's sin, if God had treated them as they deserved?

A. All men being children of wrath and of curse by original sin and by the actual sins they commit every day, they deserved to be abandoned by God and condemned to eternal torment with the demons. The corruption in which nature was buried was such that men would never have known their misery in a saving way, if God by His grace had not deigned to open their eyes and discover it to them: they would always have loved their sins far from weeping for them and doing penance, as was seen palpably in the time of Noah, when God was obliged to punish men with the universal flood, which purified the earth of the crimes with which the children of Adam had stained it. But even if we knew that man could of himself know his misery, groan for it before God and ask His pardon, all that would be useless: men cannot of themselves expiate an infinite offence committed against God; they could not appease His justice nor satisfy Him in a proportionate way, for they were all sinners, and consequently enemies of God. This is what the Saviour of the world wished us to understand when He said that He had not come to call the just, but sinners to penance: *Non veni vocare justos, sed peccatores ad poenitentiam*.[2]

So, then, the evil of men was the more dangerous, says St. Augustine, in that it was an evil without remedy and grew every day more and more; because falling from one sin into another, men continually increased their condemnation, which in the end would have ended in an eternal torment that they would suffer in hell with Lucifer and the apostate angels, whose pride and rebellion they had imitated: *De malis in mala praecipitabatur totius humani generis massa damnata, et adjuncta parti eorum qui peccaverant angelorum, luebat impiae desertionis dignissimas poenas.*[3]

Such was the unhappy state of men after the fall of Adam: all would have been lost for ever, if God, by an effect of goodness they could not deserve, had not used mercy with them. So all we must know on this point is that if we have not been condemned to the eternal pains like the demons, it is solely to the mercy of God that we are debtors: *Misericordiae Domini, quia non sumus consumpti*.[4]

Q. In what does this great mercy that God used with us consist?

A. This mercy is incomprehensible, and we do not find terms energetic enough to explain it. Here is how Scripture explains it: God so loved men, says St. John, that He sent His only Son into the world to save it: *Sic Deus dilexit mundum, ut Filium suum unigenitum daret*.[5] Let us reflect well on all these words. It is not a king or a prince of the earth who loved us in this way: it is a God Who loved us even to sending as the price of our redemption, not an angel, but His own Son, His only Son, Who is equal and consubstantial with Him and God like Him: *Deus, qui dives est in misericordia,* St. Paul exclaims, *propter nimiam charitatem suam qua dilexit nos, cum essemus mortui peccatis, convivificavit nos in Christo, cujus gratia estis salvati.*[6] The same Apostle, wishing to make us feel the greatness of this benefit, teaches us that the Son of God, entering into this world by His Incarnation, spoke in this way: "My Father, You have not willed holocaust or offering, but You have formed Me a body. You have not willed holocausts or sacrifices for sin."[7] Seeing that nothing of all that was offered to You by the law could satisfy You, then I offered Myself to all that it should please

You. “Behold Me here; I come, My God, to do Your will!” *Tunc dixi: ecce venio ut faciam, Deus, voluntatem tuam.* To this point came the excess of the love the Son of God had for us. He offered Himself to take human nature with all its infirmities, to draw it out of the eternal unhappiness into which it had cast itself. He was made man in the womb of a virgin; He reconciled us by His death with God His Father; by His Cross He conquered the devil, whose slaves we were; by His Resurrection He opened heaven, which was closed to us. In short, He merited for us by all His mysteries a blessed and eternal life, which we shall certainly enjoy if we are faithful to His graces. O! and how much reason we have to bless and give thanks to God for having so exercised His mercy with us! let us say to Him with the same gratitude as the royal Prophet: *Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo*.[8]

Q. Did God do so great a mercy to men immediately after the sin?

A. God contented Himself with promising a Redeemer to men immediately after the sin, but He did not send Him until long afterwards and in the fullness of times, as St. Paul explains: *At ubi venit plenitudo temporis, misit Deus Filium suum.*[9] At least four thousand years passed from the sin to the coming of the Messiah. We have said that God promised Him at once, and here is how: After having given His curse to the serpent that served as organ to the devil to ruin men, He said among other things that He would put an eternal enmity between him and men, and that the woman would crush the head of the serpent: *Inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem, et semen tuum et semen illius; ipsa conteret caput tuum*.[10] The sense of these words, according to all ancient and modern expositors, is that the enmity between men and the demons figured by the serpent would be irreconcilable, and that one day there would be born of a virgin the Saviour of the world Who would destroy the empire of the devil. God afterwards promised, even more clearly, the Messiah to the patriarchs Abraham, Jacob, David, etc. Jesus Christ Himself says, speaking of Abraham, that he ardently desired to see His coming, that he saw it, and rejoiced: *Exultavit ut videret diem meum: vidit, et gavisus est.*[11] The Prophets of the Old Testament, inspired by God, predicted and announced Him many times to men. We will not relate their prophecies here, because it would be necessary to dilate much; we will content ourselves with saying for those who wish to instruct themselves more at length that the clearest and most precise are those of Jacob, related in Genesis 49:10; of Daniel, chapter 2, verse 44; ibid. chapter 9, verses 24 and 26; of Isaiah, chapter 7, verse 14; ibid. chapter 19, verse 1; ibid. chapter 35, chapter 60, verse 1; of Haggai, chapter 2, verses 7, 8, 10, etc.

Nevertheless, although the Messiah was thus promised and predicted, He did not come into the world until long after the sin, and this for very important reasons, as the holy Fathers noted.

I. To make men feel, by a long experience, their weakness, and the extreme need they had of a deliverer, and to move them to desire Him and ask for Him with insistence: *Cognitio enim majoris aegritudinis, et desiderium majoris remedii*.

II. To give anticipated proofs of the greatness and of the qualities of this future deliverer, causing to be prophesied, long before, all the circumstances of His birth, of His life, of His death, of His Resurrection, and the change He was to work upon the earth.

III. Finally, God willed that even the events of the world should be a proof of what was to happen under the Messiah; so that those who should be converted by Him or by the ministry of His disciples might recognize in the history of past deeds the figures of the events of which they would be witnesses, and that so everything might concur to make religion venerable to them, and to unite them to Jesus Christ.[12]

Q. Since Jesus Christ came only four thousand years after the sin, will all the men who lived in this interval have been condemned; for however great efforts they made, they could not satisfy the justice of God offended by Adam’s sin, with which all men are born?

A. God by His mercy provided against this inconvenience. The Messiah was to satisfy the divine justice for the sins of all men, both of those who had lived before Him, and of those who were to come after; and in this sense Scripture says that He has been slain from the beginning of the world: *Occisus est ab origine mundi*.[13] So in view of this satisfaction of the Messiah, and by His merits, men have been able, even before His coming, to satisfy and obtain the remission of their sins. It is certain that grace was not so abundant in the Old Testament as in the New; but it is an error to say that under the law good was never done, and that each one was abandoned to his weakness—an error condemned by the Church; and St. Thomas remarks that although the ancient law was not sufficient to save men, nevertheless God had given them with the law another help, with which they could be saved—that is, faith in the mediator, by which the ancient Patriarchs were justified, as we are. So this holy Doctor concludes: God did not fail men, and He gave them the helps necessary for salvation: *Sic Deus non deficiebat hominibus, quin daret eis salutis auxilia*.[14]

What was necessary in order to be sanctified before the coming of the Messiah was: 1.° To believe in one God, adore Him, serve Him, and love Him above all things: 2.° To hope for a Redeemer, and put one's trust in Him: 3.° To love one's neighbour as oneself: to abstain from every injustice, and live according to the laws of conscience and of right reason. Such was the general obligation of all the peoples of the earth, before the Incarnation of the Son of God. But, besides this, the Jews were bound to observe the law of Moses, and believe all that God had revealed to them in particular. Living thus, men could acquire justice by the merits of the Redeemer, and arrive at the eternal vision: but the entrance of heaven was not to be opened to them except by this divine Messiah: it was necessary that He should enter first, and lead them. For this St. Paul teaches us that the Saints of the Old Testament could not receive their reward except with us: *Ut non sine nobis consummarentur*.[15]

Q. Were Adam and Eve saved?

A. Yes: they sanctified themselves by penance, and obtained the pardon of their sins in view of the merits of the Saviour, in Whom they believed and hoped. God having cast them out of the terrestrial paradise and condemned them to cultivate the earth, they left that place of delights to go and weep for their sin and their frightful misery in the rest of the earth, which offered them only thorns and thistles, where they saw at every step very notable signs of their sin. They remembered the ineffable goods they had enjoyed at the beginning, and for which they had been created; and feeling the evils they had brought upon themselves, this sad comparison, which they could make infinitely better than we, by the experience and light they had, plunged them into a deep sorrow. The consideration of so many children who were going to be born of them, and of whom they had been the murderers, pierced their heart vividly; and if they were the first actors of sin, they were also the first models of penance—a penance they did during nine hundred years, and in a way incomprehensible to us.

We believe with much reason, says St. Augustine, that the two first men, having lived a holy life in the midst of the labours and miseries with which they were overwhelmed, were delivered from the eternal torments by the virtue of the Blood of Jesus Christ: *Merito credimus primos homines in laboribus juste vivendo, per Domini sanguinem ab extremo supplicio liberatos*.[16] It is, this holy Doctor still says, the sense of the whole Church that when Jesus Christ descended into hell, He brought out from there the first man with the Patriarchs and Prophets to take them with Him to heaven. This testimony of tradition would be sufficient to establish the salvation of Adam even if it were not confirmed by sacred Scripture; nevertheless the Holy Spirit willed to teach us this truth Himself. Wisdom, it says, is what preserved him whom God had formed first, that he might be father of the world, having at the beginning been created alone; it is also what brought him out of his sin: *Et eduxit illum a delicto suo*.[17] These words are so clear that the holy Fathers held Tatian and his disciples for heretics for having attacked the salvation of the first man. It is, then, indubitable that Adam and Eve were saved, and that it is in their persons that the words of the Apostle have been principally verified, which say that God poured out a superabundance of grace where there was abundance of sin: *Ubi*

autem abundavit delictum, superabundavit et gratia.[18]

Q. What fruit must we draw from this plática?

A. We must: I. Be careful and faithful in giving thanks to God every day for the mercy He used with men, giving them a Redeemer, and remember that all He did for all in general, He did for us in particular: and consequently that each of us must give Him thanks for the benefit of the redemption. II. Put all our trust in the merits of Jesus Christ, Who offered Himself to His Father as the price of our redemption. Let us then exclaim with St. Augustine: *O pretiosum pretium perditorum!* O my Saviour! let the whole earth redeemed and ransomed with the price of Your Blood say: my iniquity is great, I confess it, but what You have given for my ransom is infinitely greater: *Magna iniquitas mea, sed major est redemptio tua*.[19] III. We must conceive an ardent love for Jesus Christ, Who shed even the last drop of Blood to wash us from our sins. Ah! here is where the charity of Jesus Christ constrains us: *Charitas Christi urget nos!*[20] It demands the return of our hearts: they would be insensible if they did not feel themselves touched by an ardent charity and penetrated with the infinite obligations we have to this adorable Redeemer. Anathema be he who does not love Jesus Christ and who forgets what He wrought for him: *Si quis non amat Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, sit anathema*.[21] When we think of the sin of our first parents, let us also think of the long and painful penance they did. O, how much they suffered in this earth of miseries and afflictions! Their whole life was spent in tears and continual labours. They did not cease to ask God for mercy with tears and groans, in the name and by the merits of the Saviour, Who was one day to die for them, as He died for all. Let us imitate these illustrious penitents. Let us suffer with humble penance the miseries of this life: let us blot out, like them, our sins with tears of sincere penance, so as to have a share one day in their happiness.

---

[1] Augustine, *De peccato originali* II, 14 (source).

[2] Luke 5:32.

[3] Augustine, *Enchiridion* 27 (source: c. 23).

[4] Lam. 3:22.

[5] John 3:16 (source: “Joan. iii, 19” slip).

[6] Eph. 2:4–5.

[7] Heb. 10:5–7.

[8] Ps. 88:2 (Vulgate; Ps. 89:1).

[9] Gal. 4:4.

[10] Gen. 3:15.

[11] John 8:56.

[12] Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus* 20.

[13] Rev. 13:8.

[14] *ST* I-II, q. 98, a. 1; q. 2 ad 4 (source numbering).

[15] Heb. 11:40.

[16] Augustine, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* II, 34; *Ep.* 99 to Evodius (source).

[17] Wis. 10:1–2 (source: “x, 20” slip).

[18] Rom. 5:20.

[19] Augustine, Serm. 209 *de Tempore* (source).

[20] 2 Cor. 5:14.

[21] 1 Cor. 16:22.

7. On the Mystery of the Incarnation

Vol. IV (Third Year), Plática 7 (Creed series), pp. 61–67. Theme: Luke 1:31. Original preacher not named.

> *Ecce concipies in utero, et paries filium, et vocabis nomen ejus Jesum (Luke 1:31).*
>
> *You shall conceive in your womb, and shall bring forth a son, and you shall call His name Jesus.*

1. What the ancient Patriarchs desired with such ardour and asked with such insistence; what the Prophets predicted in so many ways and represented in so many figures; what the Jewish people hoped for so long a time—this is what an Angel sent by God has just announced to a virgin, saying to her: You shall conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, whom you shall call Jesus. The more I reflect on this mystery, the more I admire it, and the more I admire it, the less I understand it. Who would ever have thought that the divine Word was to be made flesh, descend from the bosom of His Father into that of a virgin, enclose Himself in so narrow a space while being immense, take in time our nature and load Himself with our weaknesses in the midst of His eternity and His omnipotence? Who would ever have believed that a God infinitely rich, holy, independent, would have willed to bear all the misfortunes of our poverty, to make us participants of His goods, and clothe Himself with the likeness of sinful flesh, to communicate His holiness to us?

Thanks be to You, eternal Father, Who give us Your only Son as Redeemer, and in His person all that You love most: to You, divine Word, Who becoming what You were not, without ceasing to be what You are, come to take our nature: to You, Holy Spirit, Who work this ineffable mystery in the chaste womb of a maiden, who is to be Mother of a God without ceasing to be a virgin, to whom an ambassador of heaven flies to bring her the news: *Ecce concipies*, etc. An Angel would also be necessary to explain to you this mystery that an Angel came to announce to the world. Between the Word in the bosom of His Father and in the splendour of the Saints, and the Word in the bosom of a virgin Mother, clothed with our miseries and infirmities, there is an infinite space; a distance so great that the human understanding cannot reach it: therefore we will content ourselves with explaining what the Symbol of the faith teaches us.

Q. Who is the Redeemer Whom God sent into the world to draw men out of the tyranny of the devil and the slavery of sin?

A. This Redeemer is Jesus Christ His Son, Who came into the world precisely at the time when the Prophets had announced that the Messiah would be born—that is, about four thousand years after the creation of the world: *At ubi venit plenitudo temporis*, St. Paul says, *misit Deus Filium suum factum ex muliere, factum sub lege, ut eos qui sub lege erant redimeret; ut adoptionem filiorum reciperemus*.[1] This adorable Son, having formed Himself a body in the womb of a virgin, performed the office of Redeemer, reconciled us with His Father, and made Himself our peace, as the Apostle says: *Ipse enim est pax nostra*.[2] He abolished the decree of death pronounced against all men: He delivered us from the slavery of the devil, from the servitude of sin, and from the pains of hell: He made us adoptive children of God and heirs of His eternal kingdom. He is the good Shepherd Who came to seek the stray sheep—that is, lost man: for we were all sheep before, and He came, as He Himself says, that we may have life, and have it more abundantly: *Ego veni, ut vitam habeant, et abundantius habeant*.[3] He is the great Physician Who has come from heaven to earth, as St. Augustine explains,[4] to heal the deep wounds that sin had made in our nature. He remedied the ignorance and wandering of our spirit, giving us the love and knowledge of the true God: *Dedit nobis sensum, ut cognoscamus verum Deum*, says St. John.[5] He corrected the rebellion of our will by the submission of His own: always doing the will of His Father, He taught us not to do ours, but only that of God. Finally, He delivered Himself to death, to open to us the entrance to eternal life. Here is the Redeemer God has given us: it is Jesus Christ His Son, His eternal Word, the splendour of His glory, His image and the figure of His substance, Who being God like Him, was made man, to be our mediator, satisfy the divine justice, and pay for us. It is in Him that we must put all our trust, because there is no salvation except in Jesus Christ. He is He by Whom all who have been and will be saved until the consummation of the ages have been and will be saved: *Non est in alio aliquo salus*, says St. Peter, *nec enim aliud nomen est sub caelo datum hominibus, in quo oporteat nos salvos fieri*.[6]

Q. How was the mystery of the Incarnation fulfilled?

A. Scripture teaches it to us in these terms: “God sent the angel Gabriel to the city of Nazareth in Galilee, to a virgin called Mary, betrothed to a man called Joseph, of the family of David. The Angel having entered

where she was, said to her: God save you, full of grace: the Lord is with you: blessed are you among all women. She having heard it, was troubled at these words; and thought within herself what this salutation might be. But the Angel said to her: Fear not, Mary; for you have found grace before God; you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a Son, Whom you shall give the name of Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called Son of the Most High: the Lord God shall give Him the throne of David His father: He shall reign eternally over the house of Jacob; His kingdom shall have no end." Then Mary said to the Angel: "How shall this be done, since I know not man?" Which shows, says St. Augustine, that she had made a vow of virginity: *Hoc non diceret, nisi Deo se ante vovisset*.[7] The Angel answered her: "The Holy Spirit shall descend upon you, and the power of the Most High shall cover you with His shadow; wherefore the holy fruit that shall be born of you shall be called Son of God." he confirmed this prediction with the example of a miracle God had just worked with Elizabeth her cousin, who having conceived a son was already in the sixth month, because nothing is impossible for God. The most holy Virgin believed it, gave her consent, and said: "I am the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Your word." In the same instant the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God was fulfilled, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, in the chaste womb of this blessed Virgin. This is the history of the Incarnation, as sacred Scripture relates it.[8]

Q. Of what family was the most holy Virgin? Was she married to St. Joseph? And why, being a virgin by profession, did God permit her to marry this Saint?

A. The most holy Virgin was a descendant of the tribe of Judah, and of the royal family of David, as also was St. Joseph her spouse. This is the sense of all the ancient and modern interpreters who have written on the genealogy of Jesus Christ related by the evangelists St. Matthew and St. Luke. Scripture says that she was betrothed to St. Joseph; and this is what the word *desponsata* means: but it does not say whether there was a true marriage between the two. St. Augustine believed there was.[9] Others have held that there were only simple espousals between them, and St. Jerome says expressly: *Cum virum audieris, suspicio tibi non subeat nuptiarum*.[10] But whether the most holy Virgin was simply betrothed or married to St. Joseph, all agree that they lived in perpetual continence, and it would be a heresy to say the contrary.

But why did the most holy Virgin, who had made a vow of perpetual virginity, marry, or at least betrothe herself after having made this vow? She did it by particular order of God, Who so willed it for very important reasons that the holy Fathers noted. 1.° So that the mystery of the Incarnation might be able to remain hidden all the time that suited the impenetrable designs of God's mercy and of His justice. 2.° So that the honour of the most holy Virgin might be sheltered from the malignity of murmuring and from the violent temper of the Jews, who would not have failed to stone her: *Ne lapidaretur a Judaeis ut adultera*, says St. Jerome.[11] 3.° So that the most holy Virgin might have a companion and guide in the journeys she was to make from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and from Bethlehem to Egypt: *Ut in Aegyptum fugiens haberet solatium*, says the same holy Doctor. 4.° According to the thought of St. Ignatius the martyr, so that the devil, deceived by this marriage, might look on Jesus Christ as an ordinary man, and the intentions of God concerning the death of the Saviour be fulfilled: *Ut partus ejus celaretur diabolo, dum eum putat non de Virgine, sed de uxore generatum*. We may add that God willed to give to Jesus and Mary, in the person of Joseph, a just man who could earn by his labour the living for the one and for the other; who could be the guardian of Mary's purity, and the witness of the miraculous birth, and of the admirable life of Jesus Christ. These are the reasons that can be given for the holiest marriage that ever was; and which, as St. Augustine remarks,[12] teaches the married that marriage does not consist precisely in the union of bodies, but in that of souls and in the concord of hearts: *Posse permanere vocarique conjugium non permixtione corporis sexu, sed custodito mentis affectu.*

Q. Did the most holy Virgin become truly Mother of God by the mystery of the Incarnation?

A. Yes: for she has brought forth a son Who is God and man together, and the flesh of the God-Man was truly formed of her flesh, as St. Paul says: *Misit Deus Filium suum factum ex muliere*.[13] St. Elizabeth recognized her as such, saying: *Unde hoc mihi, ut veniat mater Domini mei ad me?*[14] Words that beforehand

condemn the heretics who disputed with Mary the quality of Mother of God. To understand this high dignity to which the most holy Virgin was raised, it is necessary to know that the faith teaches us that there is in Jesus Christ only one person: that this person is the Son of God, Who having the same nature as the Father and the Holy Spirit, took human nature in the womb of the most holy Virgin His Mother. Since this maternity terminates in the person of the Son of God, it follows that the most holy Virgin must be called Mother of God, and truly is so. Which was expressly decided in the Council of Ephesus, held in the year 431, to condemn the heresy of Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, which consisted principally in two points: I. He claimed that there were two persons in Jesus Christ, and that the Son of God had not been united, as the Church speaks, hypostatically, but only accidentally, to the son of man, so that Jesus Christ was Son of God only by adoption. II. He claimed by a necessary consequence of this first error that the most holy Virgin was not Mother of God, since the son she had brought forth was not God in His own person, as he dared to defend by a horrible blasphemy. This heresiarch, instead of repenting of his errors, died miserably in his impieties, and his tongue was eaten by worms in punishment of the blasphemies he had uttered against Jesus Christ and His most holy Mother, as ecclesiastical history relates.[15]

Q. How was Jesus Christ conceived in the chaste womb of the most holy Virgin, and what do these words of the Creed mean: "He was conceived by the work and grace of the Holy Spirit"?

A. These words teach us that Jesus Christ was conceived in the chaste womb of the most holy Virgin, not by the ordinary way of generation, like other men, but in a miraculous way by the power and operations of the Holy Spirit, as the prophet Isaiah had predicted, saying: "A Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son, who shall be called Emmanuel"[16]—a Hebrew word that means God with us, or God-Man. So Jesus Christ, as man, has had no father: and this is what these words of the Creed mean: "He was conceived by the work and grace of the Holy Spirit." They teach us that the Holy Spirit created the soul of Jesus Christ; that He formed His body of the purest blood of the most holy Virgin, and that He united this body and this soul to the Son of God, second Person of the most holy Trinity. Although the whole most holy Trinity worked this miracle, it is attributed to the Holy Spirit alone; because the Son of God became incarnate by an effect of the infinite love of God for men, for the effects of the love of God are attributed to the Holy Spirit, as those of omnipotence are attributed to the Father, and those of wisdom to the Son.

You will tell me that you do not know how the Word was made flesh; how He Who is invisible in His divine nature became visible in the human nature; how He Who is incomprehensible willed to be comprehended in the womb of a woman: *Quis hoc fecit?* I answer you with St. Bernard that it is love that worked this wonder: *Amor dignitatis nescius, dignatione dives, affectu potens, suasu efficax.*[17] Love that forgets its dignity, that is rich in compassion, powerful in affection, efficacious in persuasion, is what brings Him from the bosom of His Father into that of a virgin. Love is what makes Him descend from His royal throne to the earth, where He annihilates Himself even to taking the form of a slave to restore to man the greatness he had lost by sin. What thing stronger than love! It triumphs even over God, and engages the divine Word to dwell among us, almost without any sign of His greatness and of His divine filiation: *Quid violentius? Triumphat de Deo amor!* St. Bernard concludes: *Ita ut summus omnium, unus factus est omnium.*

Q. To what does the mystery of the Incarnation, and the love Jesus Christ showed us in this mystery, oblige us?

A. 1.° It obliges us to consider with a living faith, and adore with deep respect, the annihilation of the incarnate Word. Not only did it please the Son of God to be made man, but He also willed to lower Himself even to being in all like men, with the exception of ignorance, concupiscence and sin, which are imperfections He could not have. Can one think without astonishment of this abasement of the Son of God? *Et homo factus est.* A God was made man, poor, mortal, passible like us! O what an abyss of humiliation, in which we cannot but lose ourselves and be confounded! 2.° We must instruct ourselves with particular care in the mystery of a God incarnate. If there were found a single Christian who lacked the understanding of so

saving a mystery, this would be a great evil; but if many are found who are ignorant of it, who can sufficiently weep for this misfortune! And yet we may say that this mystery is unknown to the greater part of worldlings. *Loquimur Dei sapientiam in mysterio, quae abscondita est, quam nemo principum hujus saeculi cognovit.*[18] 3.° Finally, this mystery must excite in our hearts a great love for Jesus Christ, and a continual gratitude for the benefit of His Incarnation. To this the Apostle invites us, warning us that the Son of God did not take the nature of the Angels, but that of Abraham. *Nusquam enim Angelos apprehendit, sed semen Abrahae apprehendit.*[19] He wishes to make us understand that when we hear that the Son of God took our nature, we must not look with indifference on these words, for He did not do to the apostate angels the grace He did to sinful men: He did not clothe Himself with their nature, but with ours: He did not come to be their deliverer but ours. What goodness! what mercy! What gratitude does not a preference so advantageous to us deserve! The term the Apostle uses can and ought well to excite it; for he does not say simply *suscepit*, He took, but *apprehendit*, He laid hold of our nature, when it was fleeing and withdrawing from Him with all its strength, as Chrysostom says. *Ab ipso enim fugientem humanam naturam, et procul fugientem (longe enim eramus) apprehendit.* Which teaches us that it is God Who did everything by His mercy and by the care He has had to save us. O my God! and do we think of this great mercy, and of the love You have had for us? We forget Your benefits, and far from returning love for love, we correspond to Your favours with ingratitudes. In former times heaven opened to give us a Saviour, and today we deserved that the earth should open to swallow us up as impious profaners of Your holy name; for instead of living in a continual thanksgiving, we do almost nothing but offend You. Forgive, Lord, our past infidelities, and perfect in us the work of our redemption, making us more faithful to Your graces, so that we may deserve to attain Your glory.

---

[1] Gal. 4:4–5.

[2] Eph. 2:14.

[3] John 10:10.

[4] Augustine, Serm. 65 *de Verbis Domini* (source).

[5] 1 John 5:20 (source: “Joan. v, 20”).

[6] Acts 4:12.

[7] Augustine, *De sancta virginitate* 4.

[8] Luke 1:26–38.

[9] Augustine, *De consensu Evangelistarum* II, 1.

[10] Jerome, on Matt. 1:19.

[11] Jerome, ibid.

[12] Augustine, loc. cit.

[13] Gal. 4:4.

[14] Luke 1:43.

[15] VI, p. 211 (source).

[16] Isa. 7:14.

[17] Bernard, Serm. 64 *in Cantica* (source).

[18] 1 Cor. 2:7.

[19] Heb. 2:16.

8. On the Birth of Jesus Christ

Vol. IV (Third Year), Plática 8 (Creed series), pp. 68–74. Theme: Luke 2:11. Original preacher not named.

> *Natus est vobis hodie Salvator (Luke 2:11).*
>
> *Today a Saviour has been born to you.*

1. Jesus Christ is not born into the world except to be born in our hearts; this is the end of His Incarnation, this His desire and our only happiness. If He is not born in us, He is born against us: for He is not born in us

except by impressing on us the dispositions He showed in His temporal birth; all of them are the effect of His inclination and of His choice. He is born poor, because He despises all the riches of the earth. He is born among pains and labours, because He is the enemy of the pleasures of the senses. He is born forgotten and cast off by men, because He hates above all pride and vanity. He works in some way these dispositions in the hearts where He is born. Whoever, then, does not have them at all, and who has not formed a purpose of fighting his passions, has not conceived Jesus Christ, and cannot say that a Saviour has been born to him as the Angel said to the shepherds: *Natus est vobis hodie Salvator*.

There is presented to the senses and to the human understanding a great disproportion between a stable, a manger, animals, the forgetfulness and abandonment of men, and the greatness of the King of heaven and earth, Who makes His entrance into the world; but the understanding enlightened by faith finds in this an admirable proportion. What more fitting for the destroyer of concupiscence than the contempt of all the objects of concupiscence? Man is sick with the love of pleasures, of honours, of the greatnesses and riches of the world. Jesus Christ comes to cure him of this illness, to make him know the nothingness of these goods that he loves, and to propose to him others real and solid. What could He do more proper for this intent than to deprive Himself of them Himself, and teach men from the first by His example to despise them? For this is what He did by the so poor and so humble state of His birth, which will be the subject of this plática.

Q. Since you are to speak to us today of the birth of Jesus Christ, continuing the explanation of the Creed, tell us: what do these words mean: “Born of the Virgin Mary”?

A. These words teach us: I. That the Son of God having become incarnate in the womb of the most holy Virgin, He was born without her having lost her virginity: she was a virgin before the birth, in the birth, after the birth and always a virgin. This has always been the belief of the Church, which has condemned as heretics those who denied her perpetual virginity. II. These words denote that there are two natures in Jesus Christ; the divine nature, according to which He is with the Father and the Holy Spirit one and the same God, and the human nature, according to which He has a body and a soul like us. These two natures are united in Jesus Christ in one single person, which is the Son of God, the second Person of the most holy Trinity; and this without mixture or confusion, as the Church decided in the fourth general council, held at Chalcedon in the year 451, where the errors of Eutyches were condemned. Not only are there two distinct natures in Jesus Christ, but also two wills, which are also really distinct, as was defined against the error of the Monothelites in the sixth general council held in the year 680 at Constantinople, under the pontificate of Pope St. Agatho. But it must be noted that the two wills in Jesus Christ have always been subordinated the one to the other; that is, that the human will has always been subject to the divine will. III. The third instruction we must draw from these words of the Creed is that the Son of God did not leave heaven to be made man, because God is everywhere; so He did not need to leave heaven to come to earth. When, then, we hear it said that the Son of God came down from heaven to earth, it is a manner of speaking that means nothing other than that He united Himself on earth to the human nature, to which He was not before united, and that He Who by His divinity fills in an ineffable way heaven and earth made Himself sensible by the humanity He took. This union of the Son of God with the human nature is called the hypostatic union—that is, personal. *Hypostasis* is a Greek word that means person; and it is the person of the Son of God that has been the term of this union. The other Persons are not the term of this union; because only the Son of God was made man, and not the Father nor the Holy Spirit.

Q. When did Jesus Christ come into the world? In what year, on what day and in what place was He born?

A. Jesus Christ came into the world at the time when the Prophets had predicted that the Messiah would be born: that is, about four thousand years after the creation of the world, the thirty-seventh and last year of the reign of Herod the Great, the fortieth of the empire of Caesar Augustus, the whole universe being at peace. The ancient tradition of the Latin Church teaches us that the Saviour of the world was born on the 25th of December, near midnight, according to these words of the book of Wisdom, which the Church applies to the

hour of His birth: “While all things were in deep silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, Your almighty word descended from Your royal throne.”[1] We celebrate on this day the birth of Jesus Christ with a feast that the Greeks call Theophany—that is, the day on which God is made manifest to men; and the Latins the day of the Nativity of the Saviour. This is one of the most solemn of the year; and St. Augustine says that in his time it was preceded by a public fast. Today it is preceded by an Advent of four weeks, in which the Church desires that we prepare ourselves for this great feast.

The place of the birth of the Saviour was Bethlehem, a city of the tribe of Judah, distinct from another Bethlehem of the tribe of Zebulun. That of Judah was to the south, and two leagues from Jerusalem. The Prophets had announced that the Messiah would be born in this city, as the doctors of the Jews told the Magi in the presence of King Herod.[2] Although the ordinary dwelling of the most holy Virgin and of St. Joseph was Nazareth, a city of the tribe of Zebulun, thirty leagues from Bethlehem, nevertheless the divine Providence permitted that they should find themselves in Bethlehem; and here is how: The emperor Augustus ordered a census of all the vassals of the Roman Empire. This order obliged all the Jews to present themselves in the place from which their family originated; Mary and Joseph went for this reason to Bethlehem, which was the city of David.[3] Scarcely had they arrived when the most holy Virgin found herself at the term of her pregnancy. God permitted that they should find no place in the inn, because the census had made many other persons come together at Bethlehem. They withdrew to a cave that served as a stable to the inn, and in this poor and miserable place it was that the most holy Virgin brought forth the Saviour. She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, says St. Luke, and laid Him in the manger of the animals: *Pannis eum involvit, et reclinavit eum in praesepio*.[4] Which shows that as she had conceived without detriment to her virginity, she also brought forth without pain, having needed no help, nor experienced any effect of the curse pronounced against the first woman: *In dolore paries*.

Q. Could not Jesus Christ have been born a perfect man like Adam when God created him? Why did He will to be born a child like us?

A. It is certain that the Son of God could have been made man without being a child, take our nature without passing through the different ages that are distinguished in it, and be born a perfect man like Adam: but He has willed, being made man, to be in all like us, as St. Paul remarks,[5] and this for many reasons: I. In order to consecrate in His person the first instants of the Christian life, not only by an altogether holy conception, but also by an infancy whose innocence should honour God as much as and more than the sin of other men conceived in sin dishonours Him. II. To teach us that His union with our nature was not an imaginary or partial union, as some heretics believed,[6] but a real and perfect union, having willed to descend to all its degrees, pass through all the ages through which men pass, and bear from the manger to the Cross all the signs of our true flesh. III. Finally, when He was made a child, it was to humble Himself more before His Father, performing the office of victim and of public penitent by the tears, the groans and the weaknesses of infancy. St. Augustine says that if the Son of God added this circumstance to His Incarnation it was so that His humiliations might last longer, and make them more perfect: *Inclinatio majestatis haec est, natus ex Maria Virgine*. Pride, this holy Doctor says,[7] was the most dangerous wound of man: the incarnate Word to cure him opposes to it the humility of His birth, as a prodigy we must admire, as an example we must follow, as a remedy of which we must make use for our correction: *Humilitas proposita quam intueamur, apposita cui adhaereamur, imposita qua reprimamur*.[8]

Q. Was Jesus Christ born in such darkness and humiliation that He did not make His birth known to men?

A. Although the Saviour of the world willed, for our instruction, to be born in a poor, humble and patient state, He did not nevertheless will that His birth should be hidden from men. Sacred Scripture teaches us that as soon as He was born, the Angel of the Lord announced to the shepherds of Judea, who were in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem, and who watched by night feeding their flocks, that the Saviour had been born there; and a legion of Angels joining themselves to him who announced this great news, they all intoned this

canticle: “Glory to God in the highest, and peace to men of good will.”[9] After the Angels withdrew to heaven, the shepherds set out, and went to the inn of Bethlehem, where they found Mary and Joseph and the Child in the manger. They afterwards published all they had seen and heard, and those who heard them were filled with admiration.

Some time afterwards the Magi came from the East to Jerusalem, led by a star that had appeared to them.[10] At their arrival the whole city was moved hearing them say that they were seeking the newly born King of the Jews, whose star they had seen in the East. Herod having gathered the princes of the priests and the doctors of the law, informed himself of them where the Christ was to be born; and they answered him that in Bethlehem, city of Judah. Then Herod called the Magi secretly, and told them to go and seek the new King, and as soon as they had seen Him, to come and tell him so that he also might go to adore Him. They set out, and the star they had seen in the East appearing to them again, guided them to Bethlehem, and fixed itself over the place where the Child was: they entered, adored Him, offered Him their presents. The following night an Angel appeared to them, and commanded them not to return to warn Herod because he wished to take the Child’s life; they therefore took another road to return to their country. Forty days after the birth of Jesus, the time of Mary’s purification being fulfilled, she passed from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to present her Son in the temple of the Lord, and offer the victims prescribed by the law to women after their delivery.[11] The holy old man Simeon, full of the Holy Spirit, went at the same hour to the temple: and taking the child Jesus in his arms, gave thanks to God, and told Him that he was leaving this world content, for he had seen the Saviour, Who was the hope of Israel. He afterwards predicted to Mary that her heart would be pierced with sorrow, and that her Son would be the ruin and resurrection of many in Israel. There was at the same time in the temple a holy widow called Anna, daughter of Phanuel, who praising the Lord for what she had seen, spoke of it to all who were awaiting the redemption of Israel.

These examples drawn from Scripture prove that however humble the birth of Jesus Christ was, it was nevertheless not unknown to men: *Ostendit se ab initio orbis sui*, says Chrysostom, *multorum mirabilium testimonio*.[12]

Q. How must we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, and what fruit must we draw from it?

A. I. We must celebrate the birth of the Saviour, not with profane joy, but with a holy joy, glorifying God, and singing His mercies, after the example of these good shepherds, who having seen and adored the child Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem, returned full of joy, praising and blessing the Lord: *Reversi sunt pastores*, says St. Luke, *glorificantes et laudantes Deum.* II. We must meditate on the greatness of the benefit we celebrate. Consider, says St. Bernard, Who it is Who comes to take a passible and mortal body for love of us. It is the Son of the eternal Father. Ah, what majesty! To whom does He come? To creatures rebellious to their God: what compassion! Why does He come? To save miserable sinners, and sacrifice Himself to the vengeance of His Father justly irritated against us: what extent of charity! *Si attendas qui venit, vide quanta majestas! Si ad quod descendit, vide quanta dignatio! Si propter quod venit, vide quanta sit latitudo charitatis!*[13] III. We must give Jesus Christ a spiritual birth in our souls, and for this end banish sin from them; because it is impossible that He should dwell by His grace where mortal sin reigns: *In malevolam animam non introibit sapientia, nec habitabit in corpore subdito peccatis.*[14] The spirit of wisdom, which is the divine Word, will not enter into a malevolent soul, nor dwell in a body stained with faults. Note that Scripture does not say that He will not establish in it a fixed and permanent dwelling, but that He will not enter at all: it does not say that He will go out, finding Himself there despised and outraged, but that He will not take a single step to introduce Himself into it: *Non introibit*; and the reason is that this sinner dishonours the birth of his Saviour and makes it useless for his salvation. Why do you think the Son of God has been born into the world? To deliver man from the servitude of sin: *Ut finem accipiat peccatum.*[15] Why does this divine Child shed tears? To blot out the iniquity of the world. How, then, sinners who continue to offend Him, can you hope that He will enter into your soul, while you oppose yourselves so strongly to His designs?

No, I take His crib to witness; He will by no means enter into it: *Non introibit*, etc.

On the contrary, I dare to apply to you this prophecy of the Apostle: *Christus vobis nihil proderit*.[16] Ah! since by your malice you make the birth of the Saviour in your soul impossible, know that Jesus Christ will profit you nothing. Ah! what a fatal prophecy, that He Who has come into the world to save us should be useless to that miserable man given over to wine; that a penitent God should make no impression on the heart of that impure man; that while so many Christians who have the honour of receiving Him become children of God, that impious man should remain a slave of the devil! Ah, poor brother of mine! since it is necessary either to renounce the fruits of the birth of Jesus Christ, or leave sin, what are you waiting for to convert yourself? There is no deliberating. Sin, who are capable only of ruining me, I am going to cast you out at the feet of the confessor and reconcile myself with my God. Finally, after having given Our Lord Jesus Christ a spiritual birth in our souls, it is necessary to be always united to Him: when He took our nature, it was never to leave it: *Quod semel assumpsit numquam dimisit.* After having immolated it on the Cross for the salvation of the world, He crowned it with glory in heaven, where He will keep it united for all eternity. Let us unite ourselves in the same way to this adorable Saviour, in such a way that we may never separate ourselves from Him by sin, so that we may deserve to be united with Him for all eternity.

---

[1] Wis. 18:14–15 (liturgical application).

[2] Matt. 2:5–6; Mic. 5:2.

[3] Luke 2:1–7.

[4] Luke 2:7.

[5] Heb. 2:17.

[6] Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* (against Docetism).

[7] Augustine, *De Symbolo* (source).

[8] Augustine, *Ep.* 118 (source).

[9] Luke 2:8–20.

[10] Matt. 2:1–12.

[11] Luke 2:22–38.

[12] Chrysostom, Hom. 7 on Matthew (source).

[13] Bernard, Serm. on the Vigil of the Nativity (source).

[14] Wis. 1:4.

[15] Dan. 9:24.

[16] Gal. 5:2 (source: *vobis*; Vulgate *vobis* / *nobis* variants).

9. On the Life of Jesus Christ

Vol. IV (Third Year), Plática 9 (Creed series), pp. 75–82. Theme: Baruch 3:38. Original preacher not named.

> *Post haec in terris visus est, et cum hominibus conversatus est (Bar. 3:38).*
>
> *After this He was seen upon the earth, and conversed with men.*

1. These words of the prophet Baruch show us, according to the holy Fathers,[1] the admirable conduct of Jesus Christ after His Incarnation. He has been seen, says St. Ambrose, as man among men; but at the same time He has been adored as God; His flesh was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and His divinity served by the ministry of the Angels. *Ut homo cernitur, ut Dominus adoratur; caro est quae involvitur, divinitas quae ab Angelis ministratur.* So He did not lose the honour due to His eternal majesty, at the same time that He proved the truth of the flesh with which He had clothed Himself: He conversed with men, but it was to teach men to converse with God: He lived some time with them upon the earth, but it was to merit for them the grace of living one day with Him eternally in heaven. Of this mortal and passing life of the Saviour, which

must be the model of ours, I mean to speak to you today. It is certain that the Gospel which is explained to you frequently throughout the year is nothing other than the history of the life of Jesus Christ; but as not all read the Gospel, at least with due attention, and do not make the use they ought of the words of eternal life contained in this book, it will not be useless to relate to you in a few words the holy life of the Saviour during His sojourn upon the earth, so that fixing your eyes on this divine model of Christians, you may try to impress on your souls His virtues, and an image of the wise conduct He kept while He dwelt in this world.

Q. How did Jesus Christ live during His sojourn in Nazareth?

A. Of all the time that Jesus Christ dwelt in Nazareth the Gospel tells us no more than one single public action which He did at the age of twelve years. Having gone to Jerusalem with Mary and Joseph to the feast of the Passover, the days of this solemnity being past, Jesus remained in Jerusalem without His parents noticing it; they returned to Jerusalem to seek Him, and found Him in the temple seated in the midst of the doctors, asking them questions and giving them answers that filled with admiration those who heard Him: He afterwards returned to Nazareth, where He led a poor, humble, hidden life almost unknown to men; which is seen: 1.° In that He willed to choose for His dwelling a place so despised among the Jews that they believed nothing good could come out of it. *A Nazareth potest aliquid boni esse?*[2] 2.° In that He passed this time in submission and dependence on Mary and Joseph, as the Evangelist noted by his order: *et erat subditus illis.*[3] A God subject to His creatures; what an example of humility, and above all of the obedience and respect we owe our parents! Jesus Christ came to sanctify all states, and as the greater part of men were to work out their salvation exercising obedience, He consecrates the greater part of His life to this virtue, and teaches us to submit to our superiors even if they are inferior in merit: St. Joseph was infinitely inferior to Jesus Christ, and yet Jesus willed to obey him. 3.° What is still more humbling for the Saviour is that He willed to occupy Himself in manual labour in the trade of St. Joseph, who is believed to have been a carpenter. *Nonne hic est fabri filius?*[4] whence it is inferred that He worked with this Saint. He willed to subject Himself to labour by way of penance; and as God, preserving life to the first man by mercy, condemned him to cultivate the earth, Jesus Christ, taking upon Himself the penalty of this first man, willed to repair his disobedience by a life of labour and dependence. 4.° Finally, His life at Nazareth was a life of prayer, of charity, etc. This is a mystery hidden even from the Angels. The extent of His charity was not seen; men were not capable of bearing its brilliance and its greatness. Nor was the rigour of His penance seen, which was such that when He appeared in public, they gave Him nearly fifty years of age, though He was little more than thirty. What was His perseverance in prayer? How many times He passed the whole night in it! How many times He withdrew to deserts and separate places to adore His eternal Father! But who are we to dare to penetrate the divine sanctuary of the sacred Heart of Jesus? The entrance is closed to miserable sinners like us. Let us first take care to convert ourselves and become saints; and heaven will one day reveal to us this hidden life of Jesus Christ: this will be one of the occupations of eternal beatitude.

Q. What did Jesus Christ do at the age of thirty?

A. He went to seek the Baptist, who was preaching the baptism of penance in the desert of Judea, near the river Jordan, and baptizing the Jews, to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah, of Whom he was the precursor.[5] Jesus willed to receive the baptism of St. John. This Saint excused himself at first saying: It is You who ought to baptize me; but Jesus having told him that it was necessary that He should fulfil all the obligations of justice, John obeyed, and gave Him his baptism. It is believed that Jesus also baptized St. John after having been baptized by him; it cannot at least be denied that Jesus Christ gave St. John the baptism of the spirit, after having received the baptism of water. As Jesus came out of the water, and made His prayer, the heavens opened, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and a voice was heard from heaven, which said: “This is My beloved Son in Whom I have put My complacency.”[6] John gave many testimonies that Jesus Christ was the expected Messiah, and said to the people pointing Him out: “Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who takes away the sins of the world.”[7]

Jesus afterwards withdrew to a desert that Scripture does not name. He fasted forty days and forty nights without eating or drinking. The devil wishing to try whether He was truly God or only man, made every effort to make Him fall into the sin of gluttony, or of vanity, curiosity or ambition. The Saviour dissipated all these temptations of the devil, without discovering Himself to him more than He judged fitting: *Tantum innotuit*, says St. Augustine, *quantum voluit; tantum autem voluit, quantum oportuit.*[8] Jesus Christ permitted the devil to tempt Him, for many reasons that we must not omit: I. He entered the arena with the prince of the demons, in order to conquer him and confound him with a shameful defeat, and to repair in the desert the fall of Adam in the earthly paradise. II. He willed to be tempted to merit for us the victory and the grace of conquering the tempter: *Ideo tentatus est Christus, ne vincatur a tentatore christianus.*[9] III. He willed to show us that He was truly man, and that He was clothed with all our weaknesses, except sin: *Tentatur per omnia absque peccato*, says St. Paul.[10] He willed to teach us the need of passing through temptations and trials to arrive at glory; that the most perfect are those whom the devil ordinarily envies most, and consequently must watch over themselves more than others, because the tempter attacks them with more force, as St. Ambrose remarks. Finally, He willed to show us by His example that prayer, fasting and the word of God are the arms of which we must avail ourselves to conquer the tempter; let us make use of them at the time of temptation, so as easily to repel the fiery darts of the enemy of our salvation. After the temptation of the Saviour the devil withdrew confounded, and the Angels drew near to Jesus to serve Him: *Tunc reliquit eum diabolus, et ecce Angeli accesserunt et ministrabant ei*, says the Gospel. Which teaches us that after temptation God commonly favours with His consolations those who have been faithful in resisting the tempter.

Q. What did Jesus Christ do on leaving the desert?

A. He began the functions of His public life, and employed all the rest of it in preaching—that is, according to the common opinion, about three years and three months. For this end He called disciples to follow Him; He chose twelve, to whom He gave the name of apostles, which means sent, because He was to send them to preach the Gospel throughout Judea, and afterwards throughout the earth. The first of His apostles was Simon Peter, son of Jonas or John, to whom Jesus Himself gave the name of Peter, to denote that He wished to make him the foundation of His Church. The others were Andrew, brother of this one, James and John, sons of Zebedee, Philip, Bartholomew, Simon, Thomas, James and Jude, sons of Alphaeus, Matthew and Judas Iscariot, who sold the Saviour. All these apostles were rough men without study, and Jesus Christ chose them of this class, to make His power shine more admirably, and so that the happy progress of the Gospel might not be attributed to them. As the harvest was great for so small a number of labourers, He also chose seventy-two other disciples,[11] whom He sent through the world as lambs in the midst of wolves, recommending to them meekness, patience, prudence, simplicity, detachment from earthly things, and trust in the divine Providence. Jesus went with them through the cities and places of Judea, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God—that is, the happy news of the redemption of men and of their reconciliation with God, and what they must do to be His children and heirs of His kingdom.

He preached without having studied, and with an authority that made Him respected by the whole world. He made seen in His conduct…

Q. What must we note in the public life of Jesus Christ?

A. Everything in it is worthy of note, says St. Bernard; His words, His actions, His labours and His pains. In all these things He left us signs of His love, and a perfect model of Christian perfection: *Dixit multa, gessit mira, pertulit dura.*[12] Let us explain these three words: I. Jesus Christ instructed us on all things; He had in His words a sweetness that won the most hardened hearts. The neighbours of Nazareth, though little disposed in His favour, wondered, and were enchanted with the words of grace that came from His mouth: *Mirabantur in verbis gratiae, quae procedebant de ore ipsius.*[13] The peoples who heard Him were so hungry and desirous of listening to Him that they forgot to eat and drink. His very enemies were obliged to confess that

never had man spoken like Him: *Nunquam sic locutus est homo*.[14] His words were the very truth; lying and guile were never found in His mouth, as St. Peter says: *Non est inventus dolus in ore ejus*.[15] His words had no less force than truth; He only said twice in the temple: *Auferte ista hinc*, and cast out those who profaned it; on the Mount of Olives He only said to the impious satellites who were going to seize Him: *Ego sum*, and made them fall to the ground.[16]

II. He was powerful not only in words, but also in works: *Potens in opere et sermone*, says St. Luke.[17] He taught no maxim and gave no counsel that He had not first practised with the most eminent perfection; He willed to begin by doing before teaching, not because this was necessary for Him, but to show us the order we must observe, which is to practise first what we claim to teach others: *Coepit Jesus facere et docere*.[18]

III. But let us come to His pains and labours. How many contradictions did this great preacher of the truth not suffer! How many persecutions from the Pharisees and doctors of the law, whose vices and hypocrisy He rebuked! What pains during the course of His mission! He passed the days in teaching, and the nights in prayer: *Erat pernoctans in oratione Dei*.[19] He gave Himself not an instant of repose: His life was all fatigue, of continual labour, always tense and applied. He made all His journeys on foot without any provision, living on alms, suffering all the rigours of the seasons, cold, heat, winds, rains, all the injuries of weather and of men; it came to such a point that answering one day a scribe who wished to follow Him, and wishing to destroy in this man every project of interest and ambition he might have, He said to him: The foxes have their dens, and the birds their nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head: *Filius autem hominis non habet ubi caput reclinet*.[20] What poverty! He preached, not in well-closed churches, but in the deserts, on the mountains, on the shores of the sea, and commonly many times a day, carrying His body as far as it could go. So when we see Him near Jacob's well, burned with thirst, and asking a little water of the Samaritan woman, and taking from this occasion to catechize her, we must suppose that He found Himself without strength, and that He could not keep on His feet, which denotes more bodily mortifications than all those practised by the most penitent Saints: *Jesus ergo fatigatus ex itinere, sedebat sic supra fontem*.[21]

See here some traits of the life of Jesus Christ, and of what He suffered to teach men the way to heaven. Now then, cowardly and lazy Christians, who pass life in comfort and idleness, what do you say to this: *Usquequo marcetis ignavia et non intratis ad possidendam terram, quam Dominus Deus patrum vestrorum dedit vobis?*[22] Jesus Christ having worked so much to make us enter the holy land and bring us to heaven, will you do nothing to arrive there? *Usquequo marcetis*, etc.

Q. What fruits must we draw from this instruction?

A. We must apply ourselves to studying well the life of Jesus Christ during His sojourn upon the earth, and copy it in ourselves by the holiness of our manners, after the example of the Saints, whose life has been an imitation of that of Jesus Christ: *Ut et vita Jesu*, says St. Paul, *manifestetur in corporibus nostris*.[23] Let us never lose sight of this our great exemplar; let us be faithful in copying Him and painting in ourselves the traits of this divine original. The quality of members of Jesus Christ is a law that obliges us to imitate our Head. The life of Adam in a member of Jesus Christ is a monster. I have given you the example, He Himself said, so that thinking of what I did, you may do the same: *Exemplum dedi vobis, ut quemadmodum ego feci, ita et vos faciatis*.[24] Do we profit by this lesson? Do we follow this example? Are we perfect copies of Jesus Christ, and faithful imitators of His virtues? Is His patience, His meekness, His humility, His zeal, His penance, etc., seen in us? Ah! if we examine ourselves closely, we shall find that we rather bear impressed on our actions the traits and characters of His enemy than His own: *Si filii Abrahae estis*, He said to the Jews, *opera Abrahae facite*: If you are children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham.[25] Let us say the same to so many persons who dishonour the name of Christians. You say that you are children of God, and brothers of Jesus Christ: whence comes it that you do not imitate Jesus Christ, and that your life is so opposed to His? What! do you wish that this adorable Saviour Who has been so sober, so chaste, so humble, so mortified, should give entrance into His kingdom to persons who have neither virtues nor good works, and that He

Himself should be the reward of the proud, of drunkards, of the impure, of swearers, of the unjust and the idle? How is this possible? Let us then convert ourselves, my brethren; let us put our eyes without ceasing on Jesus Christ, author and finisher of our faith, and convince ourselves that to be of the number of the predestined it is necessary to have a life conformed to His. May God grant us this grace, etc.

---

[1] Chrysostom, Hom. 2 on Matthew; Ambrose, *De fide* I, 2 (source).

[2] John 1:46.

[3] Luke 2:51.

[4] Matt. 13:55.

[5] Matt. 3.

[6] Matt. 3:17.

[7] John 1:29.

[8] Augustine, *City of God* IX, 21 (source).

[9] Augustine, on Ps. 90 (source).

[10] Heb. 4:15.

[11] Luke 10:1.

[12] Bernard, Serm. 6 on the Vigil of the Nativity (source).

[13] Luke 4:22.

[14] John 7:46.

[15] 1 Pet. 2:22.

[16] John 2:16; 18:6.

[17] Luke 24:19.

[18] Acts 1:1.

[19] Luke 6:12.

[20] Matt. 8:20.

[21] John 4:6.

[22] Josh. 18:3.

[23] 2 Cor. 4:10.

[24] John 13:15.

[25] John 8:39.

10. On the Passion of Jesus Christ

Vol. IV (Third Year), Plática 10 (Creed series), pp. 83–92. Theme: Isaiah 53:7. Original preacher not named.

> *Sicut ovis ad occisionem ducetur (Isa. 53:7).*
>
> *He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter.*

1. This is the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the passion and death of the Messiah, which was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, as the deacon Philip made that servant of Candace, queen of Ethiopia, whom he baptized, understand, of whom the Acts of the Apostles speak.[1] Jesus Christ ended, then, His life and His preachings by suffering the death which the people to whom He had preached so continually, and in favour of whom He had done so many miracles, gave Him. This adorable Saviour, Who was so meek in life, was as it were mute in death: *Mitis in vita, mutus in morte.* He opened not His mouth, says the Prophet; He kept mute as a lamb before the shearer: *Tamquam ovis ad occisionem ductus est, et sicut agnus coram tondente se sine voce, et non aperuit os suum.* We have seen in the past plática the admirable conduct He kept during the days of His mortal life; let us now see, continuing the explanation of the Creed, what He suffered at the time of His passion, in which He consummated His sacrifice, and finished the great work of our redemption, offering to the Father even the last drop of His Blood to wash us from our sins: *Lavit nos a peccatis nostris in*

sanguine suo.[2] Here it is, my brethren, where His love for us is a consummated love, and asks in return our love. So that you may be fully convinced of it, I am going to set before your eyes the principal circumstances of His passion. I will content myself with a simple narration drawn from the Gospel, to which I will add two words of moral for your instruction.

Q. What do those words of the Creed mean: "He suffered under Pontius Pilate"?

A. They teach us: 1.° That Jesus Christ, after having preached the Gospel in Judea, having given example of every kind of virtue, having done every kind of miracle and concluded His mission, suffered from the Jews all that the Prophets had predicted the Messiah would suffer from His people. We will not relate their prophecies here, because it would dilate us much; we will content ourselves with indicating the principal ones drawn from the Psalms of David, from Isaiah, Daniel, Zacharias, and the book of Wisdom.[3] 2.° These words of the Creed denote the time of the passion of the Saviour, which happened when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea for the Romans, under the emperor Tiberius. The Jews had conspired against the Saviour and projected His death: not being able of themselves and by their own authority to execute their detestable design, because the Romans had taken from them the right of life and death, they took counsel on the means they must take to ruin Jesus. They resolved, then, to accuse Him before the tribunal of the governor of the province, to go in a crowd to his house to ask for His death, and not to desist until they obtained it. The Jews put Jesus into the hands of Pilate, so that this idolatrous judge might condemn Him to be crucified, and be the executor of their wicked design. *Vinctum adduxerunt eum, et tradiderunt Pontio Pilato*.[4] Those who by lawsuits, injuries and other bad ways seek to ruin the good and satiate the hatred and envy they have of them imitate the perfidious and malignant Jews. *Considerat peccator justum*, says the royal Prophet, *et quaerit mortificare eum… Sedet in insidiis cum divitibus in occultis, ut interficiat innocentem*.[5]

Q. Where did the passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ begin?

A. In the garden of Olives.[6] Jesus having celebrated the last Passover with His disciples and instituted the Eucharist on Thursday night, predicted that one of His Apostles was to sell Him; and seeing that they were cast down and consternated by what He had told them of His passion and of His near death, He consoled them with an admirable discourse, which is called the sermon of the Supper, in which He announces to them His return to the Father, and promises them the Holy Spirit to supply His absence.[7] He afterwards recited a canticle with them; and leaving Jerusalem, He passed with them the torrent Cedron, which David, who was a figure of the Messiah, had formerly passed on foot with a deep sadness when fleeing from his son Absalom who had rebelled against him. After having passed the torrent, He went up to the Mount of Olives and withdrew to the garden of Gethsemane, and separated Himself from His Apostles, charging them first to arm themselves, by means of vigilance and prayer, for the temptation that was approaching. He took only Peter, John and James, who had been witnesses of His Transfiguration, as more capable of bearing the trial of His deep sadness and of the agony He was about to enter, and said to them: "My soul is sorrowful unto death; stay here, watch and pray lest you enter into temptation." Having afterwards gone away from them about a stone's throw, He knelt, and prostrating Himself with His face to the earth, said: "My Father, all things are possible to You: if it be Your pleasure, make this chalice pass from Me; but Your will be done and not Mine."[8] An Angel from heaven came to console Him; and Jesus being in this agony, continued His prayer, and there came from His whole body a sweat as of drops of blood that ran to the earth.[9]

Here is the first circumstance of the passion of the Saviour. But why did He Who had predicted it so frequently, Who had desired it so ardently, and Who had the strength of a God-Man, come to so great a sadness at the approach of His death? The holy Fathers say that for us He willed to feel this sadness. He willed, says St. Augustine, to take upon Himself the infirmities or weaknesses of His members, and speak as they: *Loquebantur membra in capite, et loquebatur caput pro membris*.[10] He willed, the same Saint also says, to console us by teaching us that the repugnance we have to dying is not sin, provided that after His example we submit our will to that of God. But the principal reason of this mortal and cruel pain that Jesus

Christ felt was to bear all the humiliations and penalties due to our sins, of which He looked upon Himself as universal surety. He brought to His memory all the sins that had been committed and those that were to be committed, and touched by the horror they inspire, this sadness led Him to an agony of death. He sweated blood to teach us that tears cannot be shed that are excessive for sin: He thought it was not enough to weep with the eyes, and willed to weep by all the parts of His body. Ah, sinners! I invite you to this spectacle. O all of you who come to confession, sinners without compunction and without sorrow, see and consider what the contrition of the Saviour has been! It is like a vast sea that has neither bottom nor shores; it is an unfathomable abyss, and yours is an apparent, superficial and passing sorrow. Enter here within yourself, sinner, and let the sight of God agonizing and dying of sorrow for the sins of men serve you as a model for the future when you approach the sacrament of Penance. *Attendite, et videte, si est dolor sicut dolor meus.*[11]

Q. What did Jesus Christ do in the garden after His agony and His prayer, and what became of Judas who sold Him?

A. Jesus Christ awoke His disciples overcome with sadness, fatigue and sleep: having warned them that Judas was approaching, He went out to meet this traitor who was coming to seek Him accompanied by soldiers and people sent by the Jews. As soon as the traitor sighted Jesus, he had the insolence and the perfidy to draw near to kiss Him. Jesus, Who knew that this was the sign this miserable man had given the Jews to put Him into their hands, still wished to make him enter into himself by the meekness with which He spoke to him: "Friend," He says to him, "to what have you come? Do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" But Judas remained hardened. Jesus afterwards drawing near to the Jews, asked them whom they sought: they answered that Jesus of Nazareth. I am He, He answered them, and with this word He cast to the ground all that troop of armed people, to give them to understand that He was not going to suffer except by His will. Finally He delivered Himself, let Himself be bound, and ordered them to let His Apostles who accompanied Him go; and they, seized with fear, fled. Peter, the boldest of all, drew the sword to defend his Master, and cut off an ear of Malchus, servant of the high priest. Jesus at once cured Malchus, and said to Peter: "Put up the sword into the sheath: for all who take the sword shall perish by the sword: do you think that I cannot ask My Father for more than twelve legions of Angels for My defence? Do you wish that I should not drink the chalice which My Father has given Me? How shall the Scriptures be fulfilled which say that this must be done so?"[12] At the same time He made plain to the Jews how ill they did in coming in that way to seize Him as if He were a thief, having had so many opportunities to do it in the temple, where He taught publicly. But this is your hour, He says to them, and the power of darkness.

Judas seeing the effect of his treason, took horror at his crime, repented, restored the money he had received for selling his Master, and went and hanged himself. Terrible example of a repentance without hope, and of a despair that ends in perdition.

Q. Where did the Jews take Jesus Christ after they had seized Him?

A. They took Him first to Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year; afterwards to Caiaphas, where the Council of the Jews was assembled. There false witnesses were produced against Him; and as their depositions did not agree, the high priest adjured Him by the living God to say if He was the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus answered that He was, and that they should see Him coming on the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest tore his garments, saying that He had blasphemed, and that He was worthy of death. The Council condemned Him; and the servants of the high priest, covering His face, struck Him, spat upon Him, and said to Him in mockery: Prophesy who it is that struck You. Peter, who had followed Him at a distance into the court of the high priest, denied Him three times; and the cock crowing, Jesus looked at him, and Peter going out wept bitterly. Meanwhile Jesus remained exposed to all insults until daybreak, when the Council confirmed the sentence of death.

Q. What did the Jews do with Jesus Christ after they condemned Him to death in their Council?

A. They bound Him, and led Him to Pilate, governor of Judea for the Romans, so that he might execute the sentence their fury had pronounced. They accused Jesus before Pontius Pilate on three principal heads: I. That He stirred up the nation with His discourses. II. That He hindered the paying of tribute to Caesar. III. That He said He was king. Pilate, having heard these accusations, asked Him if He was truly king of the Jews, and Jesus Christ answered him that He was; but that His kingdom was not of this world. Pilate asked Him some other questions, and recognized manifestly the innocence of Jesus and the malignity of His accusers; but wishing to get out of this business without offending the Jews, seeing that they alleged the preachings the Saviour had made in Galilee, he used this pretext to send Him to Herod Antipas, tetrarch of that province, so that this prince might take cognizance of this cause, as belonging to him. Jesus Christ was therefore led to Herod, who was then in Jerusalem. This prince esteemed Pilate's attention, and being formerly enemies, from that day they became friends, to signify that Jesus Christ would reconcile the Jews with the Gentiles by His death, and extinguish in His Blood all enmities. Herod rejoiced to see Jesus Christ, of Whom he had heard so many wonders, hoping that He would do some prodigy in his presence. He asked Him many useless questions; and Jesus, not judging that He ought to satisfy this prince, kept a deep silence. Herod with all his court despised Him, had Him clothed in mockery with a white robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.

Pilate used this remission to represent to the Jews that Herod had found Jesus innocent, as he; but the Jews insisting on asking that He be condemned, this governor had recourse to two means to free Him; here is the first: at the solemn feast of the Passover, which was then being celebrated, the Jews were accustomed to ask that a criminal be set free. Pilate proposed to them Jesus and Barabbas: this latter being a notorious robber, who in a sedition had committed a murder, he believed that the horror the people must have of Barabbas would oblige them to ask that Jesus be set free; but he was deceived, because Jesus was to die to save sinners. The Jews therefore asked that Barabbas be set free, and that Jesus be crucified. Then Pilate had recourse to another expedient most unworthy of a judge who was persuaded of the innocence of Jesus Christ; he had Him cruelly scourged, to appease the fury of the Jews and excite their compassion. Here, then, is Jesus in the hands of the executioners, who throw themselves upon Him like fierce beasts: they strip Him of His garments, and binding Him to a column of the praetorium, unload on His adorable body a countless number of blows: His Blood runs everywhere: the cruelty of the executioners tires: strength fails these barbarians before patience fails this divine Lamb. To the scourging they add the most cruel insults: they cast upon the torn flesh a purple cloak; they put on His head a crown of thorns and a reed in His hand for a sceptre; and afterwards bending the knee before Him, and striking Him on the head and face, they say to Him in mockery: God save You, King of the Jews. Jesus Christ suffered all this without saying a word. Let us adore the patience of the Saviour, and try to imitate it.

Q. What did Pilate do after the Roman soldiers executed the cruel torment of the scourging?

A. He showed Jesus to the Jews and said to them: "Behold the man," hoping that the pitiable state to which He was reduced would at last calm their rage; but the priests and the Jewish people, like furious bulls according to the Prophet,[13] animating their passion with this terrible spectacle, cried out that He should be crucified. "Take Him, then, yourselves," Pilate answered, "and crucify Him; for as for me, I find in Him nothing that deserves death." The Jews insisting cried: "We have a law, and according to this law He must die, because He says He is the Son of God." Pilate's fear increases, he enters the praetorium, asks Jesus Christ to know whence He was; to which Jesus answers nothing. Pilate astonished says to Him: Do You not answer me? Do You not know that I have power to condemn You to death, or to set You free? Jesus, insinuating to him that he would give account to God, from Whom he had received this power, of the use he made of it, said to him enough to make him understand that he could not condemn Him without crime; but He said it in a way full of sweetness and mildness: "Those who have put Me into your hands have committed a greater sin than you."[14] This was, says St. Augustine, to give him sufficiently to understand that the judge

would be guilty if by timidity he yielded to the unjust passion of the accusers.[15] Pilate left the praetorium resolved to absolve Jesus Christ; but the Jews recognizing the side on which he was weak, said to him aloud that he would be a traitor to Caesar if he set Him free, because Jesus claimed to be king, and whoever has this pretension is an enemy of Caesar. Pilate yielded to this reason of policy and of interest. He wished nevertheless to wash his hands in public, and declared that Jesus Christ was innocent, and that he discharged upon the Jews the injustice of the sentence he was about to pronounce.

The Jews answered aloud: "His Blood be upon us and upon our children," and by these words they cast upon themselves a terrible curse, whose effects they experienced very soon, and which still subsist today. Pilate, after washing his hands, pronounced sentence of death against Jesus Christ, and delivered Him to the Jews to crucify Him, although fully convinced of His innocence: a terrible example for judges who let themselves be carried away by any human passion. God did not delay long in taking vengeance on this iniquitous and wrongly prudent judge. While the punishment of the other life was arriving, he was punished in this and fell into the unhappiness, the vain fear of which had made him unjust. He incurred the disgrace of the Emperor, who banished him to France, where he died miserably, being himself his own executioner, as ecclesiastical history teaches us.[16]

Q. What fruit must we draw from this narration of the passion of the Lord?

A. We must: I. Consider how displeasing sin is to God, and how much we must hate it, since it was necessary that the Son of God should suffer so much to deliver us from it. Let men here recognize, says St. Prosper, how great was the illness of their souls, since it could not be cured except by the death of their Physician: *Agnoscant homines morbum, quibus eripiendis, succurri haud aliter potuit, quam morte medentis.*[17] II. We must have a singular devotion to the passion of the Saviour, and occupy ourselves in thinking and speaking of it. *Christo passo in carne, et vos eadem cogitatione armemini*, St. Peter tells us.[18] Note that this Apostle does not tell us to weep over the passion of Jesus Christ, but to arm ourselves with this thought, and always have it in view. It is not fruitless tears that we must shed, contemplating the pains of our divine Saviour, but useful arms, which it is necessary to take to fight against sin, which has been the cause of His death; or if we are to shed tears, let us shed them rather for ourselves, which is what the Saviour tells us speaking to the daughters of Jerusalem: *Filiae Jerusalem, nolite flere super me, sed super vos ipsas flete.*[19] III. It is not enough to pass again in our memory all the circumstances of the passion of Jesus Christ; it is necessary to apply ourselves to imitate this God in what He suffered for us. He is not only the Head but also the model of all the elect; let us work to make ourselves conformed to Him. Do you find yourself in affliction and misfortune? Turn your eyes to this man of sorrows: *Ecce Homo.* Are you persecuted, do they wish to strip you of goods, of employments and of honour? Cast your eyes on this King so poor, so humbled, who has no other exterior signs of majesty than a crown of thorns on His head and a reed in His hand. See there: *Ecce Homo.* Are you sick, ailing, poor, miserable? Look at this sovereign Lord of heaven and earth treated as the most unhappy, loaded with all human weaknesses, and who with the bloody wounds with which He is covered scarcely preserves the figure of a man. Look in what state He finds Himself: *Ecce Homo.* Is there a calumny that is not raised against Him, an injury that is not done Him? Do not tell me that wrong is done you: are you more innocent than Jesus Christ Who had only the appearance of sin? See nevertheless how He is treated, and how He suffers all for the sins with which He had voluntarily loaded Himself. See here your model, look at Him well: *Ecce Homo.* I cannot, my brethren, represent to you all that you must imitate in this divine model; I content myself with saying that you must conform yourselves to Him, to be of the number of the predestined, and share in His pains so as to have one day a share in His glory.

---

[1] Acts 8:26–39; Isa. 53:7.

[2] Rev. 1:5.

[3] Ps. 21 (Vulgate), 68, etc.; Isa.; Dan.; Zech.; Wis.

[4] Matt. 27:2.

[5] Ps. 36:32; 10:8 (Vulgate).

[6] Matt. 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; John 18.

[7] John 14–17.

[8] Matt. 26:38–39.

[9] Luke 22:43–44.

[10] Augustine, on Ps. 40 and 87; Tract. on John (source).

[11] Lam. 1:12.

[12] Matt. 26:52–54; John 18:11.

[13] Ps. 21:13 (Vulgate; Ps. 22).

[14] John 19:11.

[15] Augustine, Tract. 116 on John, n. 2.

[16] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* II, 7.

[17] Prosper, *De ingratis* c. 40 (source).

[18] 1 Pet. 4:1.

[19] Luke 23:28.

11. On the Death of Jesus Christ

Vol. IV (Third Year), Plática 11 (Creed series), pp. 93–99. Theme: Romans 4:25. Original preacher not named.

> *Traditus est propter delicta nostra (Rom. 4:25).*
>
> *He was delivered up to death for our sins.*

1. That Jesus Christ should have delivered Himself up to death for our sins is a truth we all know, but that we meditate little. The just dies for the impious, the holy for sinners, and there is hardly anyone who thinks of it: *Justus perit, et non est qui cogitet in corde suo*.[1] It is an ancient complaint of the prophet Isaiah; and we have much reason to renew it and repeat it in our days, in which there are few Christians who employ themselves with faith in the memory of the passion and death of Jesus Christ. To do so in this way it would be necessary to be able to say with St. Paul: "I live in the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and delivered Himself up to death for me."[2] It would be necessary to show Jesus Christ, like the Apostle, the due gratitude by means of continual thanksgivings, remembering that He loved us all in particular with the same love He has had for the whole human race. Happy and most happy, St. Jerome exclaims, he who living in the faith of the Son of God occupies himself without ceasing in the thought that Jesus Christ loved him, and delivered Himself up to death for him: *Beatus multumque felix qui vivente in se Christo, per singulas cogitationes et opera potest dicere: in fide vivo Filii Dei, qui dilexit me, et tradidit semetipsum pro me*.[3] To inspire in you such thoughts of piety and of love, and to excite your gratitude to the Saviour, I explained in detail the principal circumstances of His passion; but as I could not explain them all in the preceding plática, I will continue speaking of them in this.

Q. What was done with Jesus Christ as soon as Pilate pronounced His sentence of death?

A. The soldiers threw themselves upon Him, stripped Him of the purple cloak they had put on Him in mockery, gave Him His ordinary garments, and loaded Him with His Cross; and just as Isaac, express figure of Jesus Christ, going up to the mountain where he was to be immolated carried upon himself the wood for his sacrifice, so also the Saviour loaded Himself with the wood of the Cross on which He was to be nailed. Jesus not being able to carry the Cross alone because of His weakness and frailty, the soldiers obliged a man called Simon, whom they found on leaving the city, to help Him carry it, placed behind Him; a circumstance that teaches us that we must carry the cross after Jesus Christ. The place destined for the torment of the Saviour was Mount Calvary, situated outside the city of Jerusalem. As the solemn victim of expiation that the high priest of the Jews offered every year was immolated outside the camp, Jesus Christ, true victim for our

sins, likewise willed to suffer outside the city, as St. Paul says: *Propter quod et Jesus, ut sanctificaret per suum sanguinem populum, extra portam passus est.*[4] When Jesus was going up to Calvary, a great crowd of people followed Him, and many women who were dissolving in tears; and turning to them the Lord said to them: Daughters of Zion, do not weep for Me, but for yourselves and for your children.[5] After this He predicted in veiled terms the unhappinesses into which His nation was about to fall. They led behind Him two thieves, who were to be crucified with Him: so was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that the Messiah would be put in the class and number of the wicked.[6] This ignominy done to the Saviour served as consolation to the Martyrs, whom their persecutors treated as malefactors and criminals, and must also console us. When, then, the world persecutes us unjustly, when we see ourselves despised by men, let us remember this circumstance of the passion of Jesus Christ: *Cum iniquis reputatus est*.

Q. What did they do with Jesus Christ when He arrived at Calvary?

A. Wine mixed with myrrh was given Him, as was customary to do with criminals, either to deaden the pain, or to give strength; but they had also cast gall into it by an excess of inhumanity. Jesus tasted it to conform Himself to the custom; but as He wished to suffer without lenitive the death of the Cross armed with all its pains, He would drink no more. He did this also to teach His disciples, who were to drink the chalice of His passion, and share in His pains. He was stripped of His garments, which were divided into four parts for the soldiers: but the seamless tunic they cast lots for. So was fulfilled what David had prophesied of the Messiah: they divided My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture.[7] Jesus was nailed to the Cross with nails that pierced His feet and hands. While He was being crucified He was praying for the executioners, saying: "My Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."[8] Meanwhile Pilate had put upon the Cross a title with these words in Hebrew, Greek and Latin: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. The Jews, indignant at the title of king given Him, claimed that this title should be changed; but Pilate would not, and answered: What I have written, I have written. God permitted it, says St. Augustine, so that it might be understood that the kingdom of Jesus Christ would extend over all the peoples of the earth designated by these three languages. When Jesus was nailed to the Cross, the soldiers insulted Him again with injurious words; the magistrate of the Jews and the people did the same, and said: Let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe in Him. Jesus, without heeding their blasphemies, willed to die upon the Cross, to teach us that the life of the Christian must be a continual cross, and that this is not the time to draw out the nails, as St. Augustine says. *In hac quidem cruce per totam vitam perpetuo debet pendere christianus… non enim est in hac vita tempus evellendi clavos.*[9]

Q. On what day was Jesus Christ nailed to the Cross, and what did He do while upon it?

A. On Friday, the eve of the Sabbath day, which was also that year the eve of the Passover, about the sixth hour of the day—that is, according to our way of counting, about midday, *Erat autem Parasceve Paschae, hora quasi sexta*, says St. John[10]—He was crucified between two thieves, of whom one was converted, and the other died blaspheming. Then began those miraculous darknesses of which the Gospel speaks, which lasted until three, when Jesus Christ died. Here is what the Saviour did while upon the Cross: 1.° He prayed for those who were putting Him to death. 2.° He offered to the Father the sacrifice of His Blood, the only one that could satisfy the divine justice for the sins of men. 3.° He beforehand performed the office of judge, which He is one day to exercise in the face of the whole earth. Of two criminals who were at His side, He left the one in his impiety, and rewarded in the other the faith and the penance which He Himself had inspired in him.[11] 4.° He said to His most holy Mother who was at the foot of the Cross: Behold your son, speaking of St. John, who was also at the foot of the Cross; and to St. John: Behold your mother, speaking of the most holy Virgin. On which it can be said that St. John represented all the Christians who were to look on Mary as their mother, since they have the honour of being brothers of Jesus Christ.[12] 5.° At three in the afternoon, Jesus Christ gave a great cry to consummate His sacrifice; and speaking thus aloud He gave to understand that He was not dying by necessity, nor because His strength had failed Him, but freely, voluntarily, and at

the hour He had chosen. 6.° After this cry, which according to St. Paul was accompanied by tears,[13] He said these words of Psalm 21: My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?[14] He spoke according to the humanity, and represented in His person the weakness of our nature. This psalm is an express prophecy of the passion of the Saviour. 7.° After these words, having said that He was thirsty, a sponge with vinegar was presented to Him on the tip of a reed. Then He said that all was consummated, and recommending His soul to God the Father He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.[15]

So died, according to the prediction of the Prophets, the Christ, the Messiah so long expected by the Jews, and rejected by them, the Desired of the nations, the only Son of God, the Redeemer of men, Who in the midst of the apparent weakness of His death made the rocks split, the earth tremble, the graves open, and the veil of the temple tear from top to bottom. The centurion and those who were with him, seeing these wonders, said: Truly this was the Son of God; and many of the people, moved by His death, returned striking their breasts.

The Jews asked Pilate that the bodies should not remain on the Cross during that feast. They therefore broke the legs of the two thieves, who were still living on the Cross; but Jesus Christ having died at three hours after midday, they did not break His legs; in which was fulfilled what was figured in the prohibition Moses put of not breaking the bones of the paschal lamb: *Nec os illius confringetis*.[16] But a soldier, to assure himself of the death of Jesus Christ, or to hasten it if He had not yet expired, struck His side with a lance: from this wound came forth blood and water, figure of the Sacraments of the Church which draw all their force and virtue from the Blood Jesus Christ shed upon the Cross.[17] The Saviour willed that His side should be opened, to assure the whole earth of His death, and to manifest by this means the truth of His Resurrection. After this a man called Joseph of Arimathea, who until then had not dared to declare himself for Jesus Christ, although he was His disciple in secret, armed himself with courage, went to seek Pilate, and asked him for the body of Jesus Christ to bury it. He granted it, and helped by Nicodemus, another hidden disciple of Jesus Christ, he unnailed from the Cross this precious body, embalmed it with perfumes of great price, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and put it in a sepulchre hewn in a rock, in which no other had been buried. He put a great stone at the entrance of the sepulchre; and withdrew. Pilate permitted the Jews to seal the entrance of the sepulchre, and put a guard at it, to prevent His disciples from coming and taking Him away. All this was done by order of Providence, in order to make more authentic the truth of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and to give the Church invincible arms to shut the mouth of the calumnies of her enemies.

Q. For whom did Jesus Christ die? Is it enough for salvation that Jesus Christ should have died for us?

A. Jesus Christ died for all men, satisfied for all, all have been redeemed by Jesus Christ, Who suffered as man and as God, gave an infinite price to His pains and sorrows. So He satisfied sufficiently, not only for all the sins that men had committed, and will commit until the end of the world, but also His death was capable of redeeming a thousand worlds, for it is of an absolutely infinite price, and the sins of a thousand worlds are not. It is, then, a very injurious error to the goodness of the Saviour to defend, as Calvin and his sectaries did, that Jesus Christ died only for the predestined. He suffered, by the grace of God, death for all of us, as St. Paul says.[18] Yes, my brother, yes, my sister, Jesus Christ died for you. Ah! do you think well of it? What care do you take to give Him thanks? Nevertheless it is necessary to note that although Jesus Christ died for all, not all receive the fruit of His death, as the Council of Trent says, but those to whom the merit of His passion is communicated. It is not enough to know that Jesus Christ died for all of us; it is necessary to profit by the graces He has merited for us by His death. He delivered us from the slavery of the devil and from the pains of hell, and we must not make ourselves a second time deserving of them; He opened the entrance of heaven that was closed after sin, and we must walk by the way He taught us to go there. Finally, Jesus Christ died for our sins, once only, as the Apostle says: *Quod enim mortuus est peccato, mortuus est semel*.[19] This means that if we do not profit by His death during this life, we shall never profit by it for all eternity. No: in all that flood of Blood that the Saviour shed upon the Cross, there is not a single drop for the damned: there is

no redeemer nor redemption in hell. Ah! since this is so, and since the present time is that of mercy, my brethren, I say it again, let us profit by it; and since Jesus Christ died for our sins, and dies no more, let us die entirely and for ever to sin. This is the conclusion we must draw, with the Apostle, from so important a truth. *Non ergo regnet peccatum in vestro mortali corpore, ut obediatis concupiscentiis ejus.*[20] Let us be no longer from today slaves of sin and of the passions that lead us to it. Let us live only for God in Jesus Christ our Lord, so that He may live in us by His spirit, His love and His grace, and that we may deserve to live eternally with Him in His glory.

---

[1] Isa. 57:1.

[2] Gal. 2:20.

[3] Jerome, on Gal. 2 (source).

[4] Heb. 13:12.

[5] Luke 23:28.

[6] Isa. 53:12; Mark 15:28.

[7] Ps. 21:19 (Vulgate; Ps. 22:18).

[8] Luke 23:34.

[9] Augustine, Serm. 205 (source numbering).

[10] John 19:14.

[11] Luke 23:39–43.

[12] John 19:26–27.

[13] Heb. 5:7.

[14] Ps. 21:2 (Vulgate; Ps. 22:1); Matt. 27:46.

[15] John 19:28–30.

[16] Exod. 12:46; John 19:33–36.

[17] John 19:34; Augustine, Serm. 115 *de diversis* (source).

[18] Heb. 2:9.

[19] Rom. 6:10.

[20] Rom. 6:12.

12. On the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Vol. IV (Third Year), Plática 12 (Creed series), pp. 100–107. Theme: Romans 4:25. Original preacher not named.

> *Resurrexit propter justificationem nostram (Rom. 4:25).*
>
> *He rose again for our justification.*

1. Jesus Christ died to destroy the old man, and rose again that the new might reign: He died to free the slaves whom the devil held captive, and rose again to teach His children to use liberty well: He died to pay our debts, and rose again to overwhelm us with His graces: He died to redeem the guilty, and rose again to console the just: He died to shut against us the gates of hell, and rose again to open to us those of heaven: in a word, He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification: *Traditus est propter delicta nostra, et resurrexit propter justificationem nostram*.[1] Behold the doctrine of St. Paul that is proposed to us in the Apostles' Creed, as one of the articles of our faith: *Tertia die resurrexit a mortuis*: Jesus Christ rose again on the third day from among the dead. Let hell tremble, let the synagogue be confounded, let unbelief and atheism despair, let the Church remain eternally in possession of the truth, let the faithful rejoice with this great news that God marked in His eternal decrees as the day of the glory of His Son Jesus Christ and of the liberty and salvation of all men.

This important truth is what I am going to explain to you, and to do so with solidity I will keep to what Sacred Scripture teaches us.

Q. Where did the soul of Jesus Christ go when it separated from His body; and what do these words mean: "He descended into hell"?

A. Jesus Christ having died and His soul having separated from His body by the cruel torment of the Cross, He first went down to hell—that is, to the lower parts of the earth, as St. Paul explains: *Descendit primum in inferiores partes terrae*.[2] To understand this article of the Creed, "He descended into hell," it is necessary to note that the word *hell* has many meanings. By this word is commonly understood the place where the damned and reprobate suffer eternal torments. By this word is also understood what we call purgatory. Finally, by it is understood limbo, called in Scripture the bosom of Abraham, the place where before the coming of Jesus Christ rested the souls of the just who had nothing to expiate. It was to this last place that the soul of Jesus Christ descended, not to suffer any pain there, for it was blessed by the union it had with the person of the Son of God, and had consummated its pains upon the Cross, but to make the demons feel the power and virtue of His Cross, and to bring out the souls of the ancient just and take them with Himself in triumph to heaven, whose entrance was closed to men until Jesus Christ opened it by His death and Resurrection. Jesus Christ brought out from hell only the holy souls; for the souls condemned to eternal pains could not be freed from them. As for the souls that were suffering the temporal pains of purgatory, we do not know whether Jesus Christ freed them from them entirely from then on without waiting for them to finish satisfying, or whether He left them there. What is certain is that only the just were freed, and that the impious had no part in this grace.

Q. When did Jesus Christ rise again, and how did He rise?

A. Jesus Christ rose again on the third day after His death, as He had predicted; He had died on Friday, and rose again on the following Sunday. We do not know exactly at what hour He rose: the Evangelist says only that it was the first day of the week, very early, and before sunrise: *Una autem sabbati valde diluculo*.[3] He rose by His own virtue and power. Neither the stone that closed His sepulchre, and that was sealed, nor any other obstacle could hinder the Resurrection of His glorious body, which came forth from the sepulchre, as from His Mother's womb, without breaking the seal.

This Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Himself is a manifest proof of His divinity, since a mere man cannot raise himself nor give himself the life he did not have. There are Saints who rose again; but none has raised himself. Only Jesus Christ, being at once God and man, could raise Himself: *Nullus mortuus est sui ipsius suscitator*, says St. Augustine: *Ille se potuit suscitare qui mortua carne mortuus non est.*[4] Thus, this Father adds, He fulfilled to the letter these words which He had said to the Jews: *Solvite templum hoc, et in tribus diebus excitabo illud*.[5]

But so that this Resurrection might not remain hidden, and that the soldiers of the Jews who were guarding the sepulchre might come to be witnesses of this prodigy, an Angel full of light came down from heaven, and having caused a great earthquake, overturned the stone that closed the entrance of the sepulchre, so that all might see that Jesus Christ was not there. This Angel by his splendour inspired such fear in the guards that they fell to the ground as dead: some of them went to tell the chief priests what had happened. These offered them a great sum of money on condition that they should say that while they were sleeping the disciples of Jesus Christ had come and taken away His body. Miserable device! St. Augustine exclaims, as if the deposition of sleeping witnesses were admissible. What extravagance like this lie that was spread among the Jews! *Stulta insania!* If the guards were watching, why did they not prevent it? If they were sleeping, how could they see it? And if they saw nothing, what can they depose? *Si vigilabas, quare permisisti? Si dormiebas, unde scisti?*[6] This deceit is discovered on every side: Pilate himself did not credit it; for in the relation he sent to the emperor Tiberius of what had passed, he expressed himself, Tertullian says, as if he

were a Christian: *Ea omnia super Christo Pilatus, et ipse jam pro sua conscientia christianus, Caesari tunc Tiberio nuntiavit*.[7]

Q. How do we know that Jesus Christ has risen?

A. We know it by the figures and prophecies that predicted His Resurrection; by the testimony of those who saw Him after He was risen, who touched His wounds, who ate and drank with Him, and who sealed this truth with their blood.

Let us begin with the figures. This mystery was signified before the coming of Jesus Christ, in the life of Isaac, after his father Abraham put him on the pyre to sacrifice him; in the prosperity of Job, after his trials; in the glorious state of Joseph, after his imprisonment; and still more clearly, according to the explanation of Jesus Christ Himself, in the astonishing deliverance of Jonah, who to calm the tempest was cast into the sea and swallowed by a monstrous fish, and being in its belly three days, came forth from it alive to announce the judgments of God to the Gentiles: *Sicut enim fuit Jonas in ventre ceti tribus diebus et tribus noctibus, sic erit Filius hominis in corde terrae tribus diebus et tribus noctibus*.[8] Besides these figures, which were living prophecies, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was predicted by Himself many times before His death, and long before His coming by the Prophets. I will not recite here all His prophecies: I will dwell only on those of David, cited by the Apostles.

David, speaking of the Messiah, says these words which can only suit Jesus Christ: "You will not leave My soul in hell, and You will not permit Your Holy One to experience corruption."[9] Behold the words of St. Peter on this passage, with which three thousand Jews were converted and received Baptism: "Brethren, let me freely say to you of the patriarch David, that he died, and was buried, and his sepulchre is seen among us to this day: but as he was a prophet, and knew that God had promised him with an oath that of his blood a Son would be born Who would come to sit upon his throne; according to this knowledge he had of the future he spoke of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, saying that His soul has not been left in hell, and that His flesh did not experience corruption. This Jesus is He Whom God raised, and we are witnesses of the Resurrection."[10]

St. Paul says the same on this prophecy of David to the Jews gathered in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia.[11]

David also says, speaking in the name of the Messiah: "I have slept the sleep of death, and I have risen; because the Lord was always with Me";[12] and in another place: "You will bring Me out from the gates of death, that I may announce Your praises to the daughter of Zion"—that is, in the whole Church figured by the daughter of Zion. The prophets Isaiah, Daniel, Hosea and Zechariah, who predicted that the Messiah would be killed by His own people, also prophesied His Resurrection. It is, then, certain that this Resurrection has been announced.

Q. To whom did Jesus Christ show Himself after His Resurrection?

A. I. The Gospel teaches us that the first person to whom Jesus Christ appeared risen was holy Mary Magdalene: *Surgens autem mane prima sabbati, apparuit primo Mariae Magdalenae*, says St. Mark.[13] She had the consolation of seeing Him before the Apostles themselves: and it was, says St. Augustine, to reward the faith, the charity, the ardour and the perseverance with which she had gone to seek Him at the sepulchre.[14]

II. He appeared afterwards to the holy women who had gone to the sepulchre to embalm His body; He ordered them to go carry to the Apostles, whom He called His brethren, the news of His Resurrection, and to tell them to go to Galilee, where they would see Him.[15]

III. He appeared to St. Peter, prince of the Apostles. This particular appearance to St. Peter St. Luke relates, and St. Paul mentions it in his first to the Corinthians: *Visus est Cephae, et post hoc undecim*.[16] There is

much reason to believe that He also showed Himself in particular to the most holy Virgin His Mother; but Scripture does not say it, either to manifest the profound humility of Mary, or to give to understand the greatness of her faith, which could do without this consolation.

IV. He appeared under the form of a traveller to the two disciples who were going to Emmaus, a place distant sixty stadia, or about two leagues and a half. He made them understand that, according to the Scripture, the Messiah had to suffer all that He had suffered, and so enter into His glory; and they knew Him, St. Luke says, in the breaking of the bread—that is, according as the interpreters explain it, in the communion of His Body which He gave them.[17]

V. He appeared to the other Apostles in the place where they were gathered with the doors shut. He reproved them for their unbelief, and showed them the wounds of His hands, of His feet and side; and to finish convincing them of His Resurrection, He ate before them of a fish and honey; and made them eat. Then He breathed upon them; and said to them: "Receive the Holy Spirit: sins will be forgiven those to whom you forgive them, and they will be retained to those to whom you retain them."[18] All these appearances happened on the same day of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

VI. As St. Thomas was not then with the Apostles, he persisted in his unbelief about the Resurrection, and said that he would not believe it if he did not himself touch the wounds of his Master. Eight days afterwards Jesus Christ came again to the place where St. Thomas was with the other Apostles, and told Thomas to touch His wounds. Then Thomas believed, and exclaimed: "You are my Lord and my God."[19]

VII. Jesus Christ appeared again in Galilee on the shore of the lake of Tiberias to Peter, James, John, Thomas, Nathanael and two other disciples who were fishing. The Saviour made them take a miraculous catch, and ate with them. After this meal, He wished St. Peter to repair by a threefold testimony of love the fault he had committed in denying Him three times; and afterwards entrusted to him the government of His Church.[20]

VIII. Jesus Christ having made His Apostles and disciples gather upon a mountain of Galilee, more than five hundred were found there. As soon as they saw Him they adored Him, and returned confirmed for ever in the faith of the Resurrection, which they were to preach in all the earth.[21]

IX. He appeared to James the Less, who was the first bishop of Jerusalem. St. Paul, who relates this appearance, does not say the time nor the place.[22]

X. Finally, Jesus Christ appeared the last time to His Apostles at the time of ascending into heaven.

Scripture speaks only of these ten appearances: but as it says in general that during the forty days He was upon the earth He showed Himself to His Apostles to instruct them and speak to them of the kingdom of God,[23] there is reason to believe that He appeared to them many other times, although these appearances are not related in Scripture.

Q. Must entire credit be given to those who saw and published that Jesus Christ had risen?

A. Their testimony is incontestable, and cannot be revoked. It is impossible that they should have been deceived, or that they should have intended to deceive, because: I. They saw Jesus Christ risen many times, touched His wounds, ate and drank with Him: they were once more than five hundred, as St. Paul noted: *Visus est plus quam quingentis fratribus simul*.[24] Among these five hundred eye-witnesses none retracted: on the contrary, almost all suffered death to give testimony to the truth of this fact. And no one gives his life to assure a fact he believes to be false or doubtful.

II. The disciples of Jesus Christ, giving testimony to the truth of His Resurrection, produced the books of the Prophets that had predicted it; they sustained it with great miracles that persuaded an infinity of persons in the midst of the terrible dangers to which they exposed themselves in embracing this belief. These miracles

were done before the greatest enemies of Jesus Christ, who did not dare to deny the truth of the facts.[25]

III. The Apostles preaching the Resurrection of Jesus Christ affirmed, according to the ancient prophecies, that the risen Jesus Christ was going to convert all the peoples of the earth, and make them know and serve the true God. They assured it at the time when the whole earth was idolatrous, and there was no human appearance that it would happen. They added that the hour of the reprobation of the Jews had come, that they were going to be dispersed throughout the whole earth, and that they would not be converted until the end of the world.[26] The city of Jerusalem and the temple still stood when they made these predictions: nevertheless, the event justified the truth of what they affirmed: the Gentiles were converted, and the Jews were reprobated and dispersed throughout the whole earth, and are still today in the same state of desolation. In view of this it would be necessary to have the understanding very blind and the heart very hardened not to yield to a truth predicted by the Prophets, whose fulfilment we see assured by so many witnesses, sealed with the blood of so many Martyrs, confirmed with so many prodigies; and it is necessary to confess with St. Augustine that he who should still ask for new miracles in order to believe would himself be a prodigy of unbelief: *Quisquis adhuc prodigia, ut credat, inquirit, magnum est ipse prodigium, qui mundo credente non credit*.[27] It is, then, a constant truth, and one that admits no doubt, that Jesus Christ rose again: *Resurrexit Christus, absoluta est res*, says the same holy Doctor.[28]

Q. What must we infer from this fundamental truth of our religion, so solidly established?

A. We must infer: I. That the divinity of Jesus Christ is incontestable; because only God can raise the dead, and only a God-Man could raise Himself. Jesus Christ raised Himself, and consequently is at once God and man: *Resuscitatus homo*, says St. Ambrose, *sed resuscitans Deus*.[29] II. That the Christian religion which we profess is incontestably true; that there is no other in which man can be saved; that all its dogmas are certain; that its promises are infallible; and that Jesus Christ having risen, we also shall rise again one day: *Qui suscitavit Jesum, et nos cum Jesu suscitabit*, says St. Paul.[30] That this future Resurrection being one of the principal objects of our faith, of our hope and of our consolation upon earth among the evils we suffer in it, we must meditate it frequently, and with this hope live a pure, holy and irreproachable life. This is the consequence St. Paul drew, and that which we must draw with him: *In hoc et ipse studeo sine offendiculo conscientiam habere ad Deum et ad homines semper*.[31] Behold, then, Christians, the great mystery that I announce to you with the same Apostle: *Ecce mysterium vobis dico: omnes quidem resurgemus, sed non omnes immutabimur*.[32] We shall all rise again, since Jesus Christ our Head has risen; but we shall not all be changed. The good and the bad will have part in the Resurrection; but the bad will not experience that happy change which the elect will have: they will not possess the kingdom of God, will not be clothed with glory, nor share in all those qualities which the blessed will enjoy in heaven: *Non omnes immutabimur*. Impious and reprobate, you will rise again, but it will be with that body of sin, whose disordered passions you have followed; you will rise for eternal shame and everlasting confusion. Elect of God, you will rise with a body of glory, immortal, impassible, subtle and agile, to reign for ever with Jesus Christ your Head. Let us live, then, my brethren, as those who hope to rise again with Him; let us die to sin, that we may live to God; and since He rose for our justification, let us walk in newness of life, until He come to change our lowly body and make it like to His glorious Body, in the kingdom of His Father. Amen.

---

[1] Rom. 4:25.

[2] Eph. 4:9.

[3] Luke 24:1; John 20:1.

[4] Augustine, Ep. 165 *ad Evodium*; Serm. 16 *de Verbis Domini* (source).

[5] John 2:19.

[6] Augustine, on Ps. 36, Serm. 2 (source).

[7] Tertullian, *Apologeticus* 21 (source numbering).

[8] Matt. 12:40.

[9] Ps. 15:10 (Vulgate; Ps. 16:10).

[10] Acts 2:29–32.

[11] Acts 13:33–37.

[12] Ps. 3:6.

[13] Mark 16:9.

[14] Augustine, *De consensu Evangelistarum* III, 60 (source).

[15] Matt. 28:10.

[16] Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5.

[17] Luke 24:13–35.

[18] John 20:19–23.

[19] John 20:24–28.

[20] John 21.

[21] Matt. 28; 1 Cor. 15:6.

[22] 1 Cor. 15:7.

[23] Acts 1:3.

[24] 1 Cor. 15:6.

[25] Acts 2–6; Mark 16:20.

[26] Isa. 49; Rom. 11:25–32 (source Dan. citation garbled).

[27] Augustine, *De civitate Dei* XII, 8 (source).

[28] Augustine, Serm. 147 *de Tempore* (source).

[29] Ambrose, *De fide resurrectionis* (source).

[30] 2 Cor. 4:14.

[31] Acts 24:16 (Paul).

[32] 1 Cor. 15:51.

Creed: Thirteenth Homily: Jesus Christ's Ascension into Heaven, His Second Coming to Earth, and the Last Judgment

Original preacher not named.

Ascendit super omnes cælos, ut impleret omnia. (Ephesians 4.)

He ascended above all the heavens, that He might fulfill all things.

If we consider carefully all the stages of Jesus Christ's life, we shall readily understand, says St. Gregory the Great, that His entire life was spent ascending and descending. He was in heaven, and came down from there to enter the womb of the most holy Virgin: *De cælo in uterum*. Enclosed for nine months in Mary's womb, He came forth from it to descend into a stable: *Ex utero in præsepe*. From the stable He ascended the cross: *E præsepe in crucem*. From the cross He descended into the tomb: *De cruce in sepulchrum*. Finally, from the tomb He ascended into heaven: *De sepulchro redit in cælum*.

What was the purpose of all these movements of exaltation and abasement, humiliation and glory? To fulfill all things: *Ut impleret omnia*. He had come forth from His Father to enter the world: *Exivi a Patre, et veni in mundum*. He must therefore leave the world to return to the Father: *Iterum relinquo mundum, et vado ad Patrem*. He had, as it were, gone out of Himself, says St. Gregory Nazianzen; He must return from Himself to Himself: *A Seipso ad Seipsum*—from Himself as capable of suffering to Himself beyond suffering; from Himself as mortal and emptied of glory to Himself as glorious and immortal.[1] Without leaving the Father's bosom, He had descended among men to labor for their salvation. Through His ascension He must return to His Father and, without altogether leaving mankind, take His place at His Father's right hand, that He might fulfill all things: *Ascendit super omnes cælos, ut impleret omnia*.

His death was His battle; His resurrection was His victory; His ascension was His triumph. But what a share we all have in these mysteries! He died because He was our surety; He rose because He was our life; and He triumphs because He is our Head. Let us therefore courageously lift our eyes to heaven with His blessed disciples, who saw Him ascend there. Encouraged by holy confidence, let us remember that He will come in the same manner to judge all mankind, and that He will then communicate His glory to the good and cast the wicked into hell. These truths are contained in the sixth and seventh articles of the Creed, which I am going to explain to you in this homily.

Q. How long did Jesus Christ remain on earth after His resurrection, and how did He ascend into heaven?

A. Jesus Christ remained on earth for forty days after He rose, to give mankind proofs of the reality of His resurrection, to calm the Apostles' distress caused by His passion, to heal their unbelief, and to give them the instructions they needed for the conversion of men scattered throughout the earth. When the fortieth day came, and the Apostles were assembled in the city of Jerusalem, He appeared to them for the last time. He told them that He had received all power in heaven and on earth. He commanded them to go throughout the world to teach mankind and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything He had commanded. He promised them the gift of miracles and His assistance, and said: "Behold, I am with you until the consummation of the ages."

This was the solemn promise the Savior then made to His Church, never to abandon her. From it we learn that, although Jesus Christ is not visibly on earth after His ascension, He is nevertheless present here in two invisible ways: first, by His real and bodily presence in the most holy Sacrament of the altar; and second, spiritually in the midst of His Church and among the faithful, by His grace and protection. Jesus also promised His disciples that He would soon send them the Holy Spirit, and commanded them to remain in the city of Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high.

After this He led them to Bethany, near the city, and from there onto the Mount of Olives. When they arrived, He gave them His blessing; and while He was blessing them He was raised into heaven, not through the ministry of angels, but by His own power. He ascended visibly and by a gradual movement, which allowed His disciples to follow Him with their eyes until He entered a luminous cloud and they lost sight of Him altogether. As they continued gazing toward heaven, two angels appeared to them in human form, dressed in white, and told them that this Jesus, Whom they had just seen ascend into heaven, would one day come in the same manner. These words should make us long for His return to earth, in imitation of the Apostle and all the saints: *Nostra autem conversatio in cælis est, unde etiam expectamus Dominum Jesum Christum, qui reformabit corpus humilitatis nostræ configuratum corpori claritatis Suæ*—our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also await the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will refashion our lowly body to be conformed to His glorious body.

Q. How is Jesus Christ in heaven, and what do these words of the Creed mean: "He sits at the right hand of God almighty"?

A. These words do not mean that God has a right side and a left side, for He has no body. Rather, the Holy Spirit uses this figurative expression to make us understand that Jesus Christ, as God, is equal to the Father in power in heaven, and that, as man, He is raised there above all creatures by the greatness of His glory and power. We say that He is seated to indicate that He has entered heaven as the place of His eternal rest after the labors of His mortal life, and to signify the stability of His throne and the duration of His kingdom, which will never end.

In ascending into heaven He has graciously willed to associate us with this eternal kingdom. For He entered it not merely to take possession of the glory due to Him, but also to prepare a dwelling for us there: *Vado parare vobis locum*, He told His Apostles—"I go to prepare a place for you." We must make every effort to

become worthy of it, detach our hearts from the earth, and lift them to heaven, where Jesus Christ, our treasure and happiness, is: *Christus ascendit in cælum, ascendat et cum Illo cor nostrum*, says St. Leo—Christ has ascended into heaven; let our heart ascend with Him.

Let us long ardently for the heavenly Jerusalem, awaiting the happy moment when the Lord's promises that we shall one day enter it are fulfilled. With this hope let us apply ourselves to our sanctification and reproduce the life of Jesus Christ in our conduct. When Elijah was taken up in a fiery chariot—a figure of Jesus Christ's ascension—Scripture says that he left his mantle to his disciple Elisha. Our divine Master, ascending into heaven, likewise left us His holy life as a mantle with which we must clothe ourselves and a model we must imitate. Let us not lose sight of this divine pattern, and let us endeavor to copy Him faithfully, so that, after imitating Him on earth, we may deserve to be with Him in heaven, according to His own words: *Ubi sum Ego, illic et minister Meus erit*—where I am, there also shall My servant be.

Q. Explain also how Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven benefits us.

A. It benefits us so greatly that we must regard it:

1. As the day of human nature's triumph, because on that day our nature, united to the Son of God, took possession of the eternal glory for which it had been created: *Descendit redempturus, ascendit glorificaturus*, says St. Peter Chrysologus—He descended to redeem; He ascended to glorify. What further increases the glory of His triumph is that the Savior, ascending into heaven, took with Him all the Jews detained in limbo, whom He freed from captivity to make them perfectly happy in His company: *Ascendens in altum, captivam duxit captivitatem*—ascending on high, He led captivity captive.

2. As the solid foundation of our hope. Jesus Christ entered heaven as our forerunner and makes its possession possible for us by continually presenting to God the Father the blood He shed for us: *Ut appareat nunc vultui Dei pro nobis*, as St. Paul says—that He may now appear before the face of God on our behalf. The everlasting gates, closed to us since Adam's sin, opened at His word: *Elevamini, portæ æternales*. Heaven, which had contained only angels, learned from the ascension of our Head to receive men. Our hope is so well founded that St. Paul, speaking of glory as something whose possession is assured to us, says that the eternal Father, regarding us in the person of Jesus Christ His Son, has already raised us and seated us with Him in heaven: *Conresuscitavit, et consedere fecit in cælestibus in Christo Jesu*.

Here is a great reason for consolation amid the evils we suffer in this life. Yet, lest our hope degenerate into presumption, let us sustain it by purity of life: *Scire tamen debemus, fratres*, St. Augustine tells us, *quod cum Christo non ascendit superbia, non avaritia, non luxuria, nullum vitium ascendit cum Medico nostro: et ideo si post Medicum desideramus ascendere, debemus vitia et peccata deponere*—we must know, brethren, that pride did not ascend with Christ, nor avarice, nor lust; no vice ascended with our Physician. If, then, we wish to ascend after the Physician, we must put aside vices and sins.

Q. Now that Jesus Christ has ascended into heaven, will He return to earth a second time?

A. He will return at the end of the world to judge the living and the dead. As interpreters of Holy Scripture explain this, all men, righteous and sinful alike, will appear before Jesus Christ their Judge: both those then living, who will die and immediately rise, and those who died long before.[2] As the Gospel says, He will descend from heaven with great power and majesty, at the sound of the trumpet and, St. Paul adds, at the archangel's voice, which will summon all mankind to judgment.

This archangel's voice signifies God's command that the dead come forth from the dust of the tomb, and His giving them life and immortality. That is to say, the same *fiat* that once brought them out of nothing will then bring them forth from the dust. Not men alone, but demons also, will undergo this judgment, says St. Paul. Then the good Shepherd, as the Gospel says, will separate the good from the wicked. The good, represented by sheep, will be at His right; the wicked, represented by goats, will be at His left. Jesus Christ wishes to

show that He will associate the saints, who form one body with Him, in His judgment, to exalt their glory in proportion to the humiliations they suffered in this life and to confound the wicked who despised the saints on earth.

The sovereign Judge will then pronounce His sentence upon both groups. To the elect He will say: "Come, blessed of My Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world; for I was hungry, and you gave Me food," and so forth. To the reprobate He will say: "Depart, accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink; I was naked, and you did not clothe Me," and so forth. That is to say, those who have done good works will be saved; those who have not done them will be condemned.[3]

After this sentence the reprobate will go into hell to suffer eternal torments in body and soul, and the elect will go in body and soul into heaven, to enjoy eternal life with Jesus Christ and the angels: *Et ibunt hi in supplicium æternum; justi autem in vitam æternam*—these will go into eternal punishment, but the just into eternal life. Such will be the decisive decree concerning every person's eternity. Let us meditate on it, my brethren, and take care to do good works. Ah! What can those who do evil promise themselves in the next life, says St. Augustine, when even those who have not done good will be condemned to eternal punishment? *Quam enim spem habere possunt qui mala faciunt, quando illi perituri sunt qui bona non faciunt?*

Q. Where will the Last Judgment take place?

A. Scripture does not expressly state where the Last Judgment is to take place. It is commonly believed that, just as Jesus Christ ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives, so He will come there at His second advent to judge mankind, according to these words the angels spoke to the Apostles: *Hic Jesus qui assumptus est a vobis in cælum, sic veniet, quemadmodum vidistis Eum euntem in cælum*—this Jesus, Who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same manner as you have seen Him go into heaven.

Some have believed that the universal judgment will take place on Calvary, where Jesus Christ was crucified; others, in the valley of Jehoshaphat. "I will gather all nations," says the prophet Joel, "and bring them into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and there enter into judgment with them." Many believe that Jesus Christ will establish His throne upon the clouds, and that by the valley of Jehoshaphat, which means "valley of judgment," we should understand the whole earth. This seems to accord with St. Paul's statement that the elect will rise into the air and go to meet Jesus Christ when He comes to judge the earth.[4]

We shall not speak here of the severity of this judgment, having done so elsewhere. We shall say only that it will confirm the particular judgment made at each person's death, and that at the end of the world we shall be judged as we were at the end of our life.

Q. Since every individual is judged at the hour of death, why is a universal judgment necessary?

A. The universal judgment is necessary for many reasons. Here are the four principal ones:

I. To vindicate God's conduct before all mankind and make His providence shine forth and triumph—that providence against which the ungodly so often blaspheme, as St. Augustine observes.

II. To separate the good publicly from the wicked: *Separabit eos ab invicem, sicut pastor segregat oves ab hædis*—He will separate them from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

III. To reward or punish mankind in body as well as soul: *In utraque substantia exhibendum dicimus*, says Tertullian, *quem totum oporteat judicari*—we say that the person who must be judged in his entirety must be brought forth in both substances.

IV. To increase the glory of the saints and the torment of the wicked in proportion to what each has deserved. To understand this reason properly, we must note that some sins and good works will not reach their full consummation until the end of the world, and therefore cannot until then be punished or rewarded in their

just proportion. Two examples will make this truth clear.

A heresiarch is guilty not only of all the evil he does in separating himself from the Church; he also shares in the sin committed by those who, seduced by his false teaching, have separated, and will continue separating, until the end of the ages. His sins, consequently, will not reach their full measure, nor be punishable in their just proportion, until the end of the ages. Conversely, an apostle merits not only through the good works he has himself done, but also through all those done, and to be done until the consummation of the ages, by people catechized, instructed, and converted to the Lord from generation to generation through that apostle's examples, writings, and instructions, and those of his disciples.

These two examples enable us to judge the contagiousness of sin and the fruitfulness of virtue. They increase a person's merit or demerit until the end of the world and consequently make the universal judgment indispensable, so that each individual's reward or punishment may be proportionately increased.

Q. When will the Last Judgment and the end of the world occur?

A. The Apostles once put the same question to Our Lord Jesus Christ: *Quod signum adventus Tui, et consummationis sæculi?*—what will be the sign of Your coming and of the consummation of the age? We should give no other answer than the Savior of the world gave then: *De die autem illa et hora nemo scit, neque angeli cælorum, nisi solus Pater*—of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but the Father alone.

The end of the world and the day of the Last Judgment are a secret that neither men nor even the angels can discover, the knowledge of which is reserved to God alone. Here, briefly, is what Scripture teaches us about it, and what we ought to know:

I. The world will come to an end: *Cælum et terra transibunt*, says Jesus Christ—heaven and earth will pass away. His apostle St. Peter warns us that this world will be consumed by a fire that will burn the earth and all it contains; that heaven and earth will pass away to make room for a new heaven and a new earth, the eternal dwelling of the blessed. This shows that the world will not be entirely annihilated but only changed and perfected. When Scripture says that the Lord will make new heavens and a new earth, it does not say "other heavens and another earth," but "new heavens and a new earth," as St. Jerome observes: *Non dixit, alios cælos, et aliam terram videbimus, sed veteres et antiquos in melius commutatos*—it did not say that we shall see other heavens and another earth, but the former and ancient ones changed for the better. When will this change occur? By day or by night, in six thousand years, or later? No man can say with certainty.

There will nevertheless be signs announcing the last judgment and the end of the world, which are indicated in Scripture. These signs are:

I. Wars, plagues, almost universal famines, frequent earthquakes, and disturbances of the seasons and the elements.

II. The decline of charity and the scarcity of faith among Christians.

III. The preaching of the Gospel throughout the earth: *Et prædicabitur hoc Evangelium regni in universo orbe*, Jesus Christ tells His Apostles, *in testimonium omnibus gentibus, et tunc veniet consummatio*—this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the consummation will come.

IV. The coming and persecution of Antichrist. This man of sin, this son of perdition, as St. Paul calls him, will be violently opposed to Jesus Christ and His Church and will persecute her with a cruelty and seductiveness beyond anything previously known. Many Christians will give way under this persecution. Yet, according to interpreters of Scripture, it will last only three and a half years, after which the Lord Jesus will destroy this impious one with the breath of His mouth and bring him to nothing by the splendor of His

presence.

V. The coming of Enoch and Elijah, who will return to earth to oppose Antichrist and labor for the conversion of the Jews.

As for the principal events immediately preceding the day of the Last Judgment, the Gospel teaches that the sun and moon will be darkened; the stars will change their places; all nature will be convulsed with a dreadful noise; the cross of Jesus Christ will appear as the standard of His triumph; and such events will fill men's hearts with terror: *Arescentibus hominibus præ timore*—men wasting away with fear. Then the good will find consolation in their good works, and the wicked will find shame in their crimes.

Let us therefore endeavor, my brethren, to be converted and profit by Jesus Christ's first advent. Let us watch and pray, as He Himself warns us, to escape such terrible evils and be found worthy to appear in His presence: *Vigilate itaque omni tempore orantes, ut digni habeamini fugere ista omnia quæ futura sunt, et stare ante Filium hominis*—watch therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come and to stand before the Son of Man.

Q. What fruit should we draw from this homily?

A. To meditate with greater faith on these words of the Creed: *Inde venturus est judicare vivos et mortuos*—from there He will come to judge the living and the dead. Let us believe with living faith that this same Jesus Christ, Who in His passion was our Redeemer and Who, ascending into heaven, became our advocate and intercessor with God, will come to earth a second time as our Judge: *Inde venturus est*, and so forth.

Christians, He will pronounce your sentence and mine, and no one will escape His judgment. Scripture declares this article of faith at every turn; the Apostles preached it; the Fathers and preachers have never ceased to proclaim it to us. We therefore cannot doubt it. Let us think of it, my brethren, and order our lives accordingly. Say within yourselves: I shall be judged for these particular sins that I am unwilling to abandon; for these sinful desires I foster in my heart; for this money belonging to another that I do not restore; for this embezzlement and these injustices I commit in my employment, and so on. *E vestigio dies illa et judicium animo inscribantur*—let that day and the judgment be immediately inscribed upon our minds. Let us keep the Last Judgment always before our eyes, that we may live holily and find the Judge favorable on the last day.

---

[1] The opening references are Gregory the Great, *Homily 29 on the Gospels*, and John 16:28.

[2] Compare 1 Corinthians 15:51–52; 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17.

[3] The Gospel passage is Matthew 25:31–46.

[4] Sources cited: Acts 1:11; Joel 3:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17; Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*.

Creed: Fourteenth Homily: The Coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles; the Establishment of the Christian Religion

Original preacher not named.

Paracletus Spiritus quem mittet Pater in nomine Meo, Ille vos docebit omnia, et suggeret vobis omnia quæcumque dixero vobis. (John 14.)

The consoling Spirit, Whom My Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.

Thus far we have explained the first two parts of the Creed, which concern the first two Persons of the most holy Trinity. We now come to its third part, which speaks of the Holy Spirit: *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum*—I believe in the Holy Spirit. What we must know about the Holy Spirit is that He is the third Person of the most holy Trinity; that He proceeds from the Father and the Son—*Quem Pater mittet in nomine Meo*, "Whom the

Father will send in My name," says Jesus Christ; that He is the consubstantial love of the Father and the Son; that He is Their equal and possesses the same divine perfections; in a word, that He is the same God as the Father and the Son, but not the same Person.[1]

This divine Spirit descended upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost to perfect the Church then coming into being, complete Jesus Christ's conquests, and be, as it were, the representative in the work of our redemption, as St. Augustine calls Him: *Vicarius nostræ redemptionis*. The Holy Spirit was given to the Savior's first disciples not only to console them for His absence but also to instruct them in all things, and by the outpouring of His light to make them capable of establishing the Christian religion upon the ruins of idolatry: *Ille vos docebit omnia, et suggeret vobis omnia quæcumque dixero vobis*—He will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you. This great event will be the subject of this homily.

Q. What became of the Apostles after they saw Jesus Christ ascend into heaven, and how did they prepare to receive the Holy Spirit?

A. After Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven, the Apostles withdrew to Jerusalem, in accordance with His command: *Sedete in civitate, quoadusque induamini virtute ex alto*—remain in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. There they remained in silence and retirement until the coming of the Holy Spirit, maintaining a truly fraternal union among themselves—or, rather, one and the same spirit—and persevering in prayer to draw down upon themselves that divine Spirit Whom the Savior had promised them.

It is not known whose house it was where the Apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ assembled. Some believe it belonged to St. John the Evangelist; others, to Mary of Cleophas, the mother of John Mark. Scripture tells us only that they chose the highest room of the house, as being farther from the noise and dealings of the world and better suited to their purpose. The disciples who could not lodge there went there every day and prayed with fervor and perseverance, together with the holy women who had followed Jesus Christ. Most illustrious among these was Mary, the Savior's mother.

This is how the Apostles prepared for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Let us imitate them if we wish to share the grace granted them, for the Holy Spirit does not communicate Himself to distracted souls. The world, says Jesus Christ, cannot receive Him. This divine Spirit delights in communicating Himself only to souls that are recollected, withdrawn, detached from creatures, and removed from the world's tumult and corruption. Upon these He pours forth His graces and blessings: *Ducam eam in solitudinem, et loquar ad cor ejus*, He says through His prophet Hosea—I will lead her into solitude and speak to her heart.

You may perhaps reply that your state in life and your employment do not permit you to withdraw from the world in this way. I agree that you cannot deprive yourselves of all dealings with the world. Yet you can make a solitude for yourselves in the midst of the world by taking no part in the crimes and impieties committed in it. This is what God asks of you. Flight from the world, says St. Ambrose, is abstaining from the corruption that reigns in it: *Fuga sæculi est abstinere a peccatis*—flight from the world is abstaining from sins.

Q. When did the Holy Spirit descend upon the Apostles, how did He descend, and what share do we have in this mystery?

A. We know from Holy Scripture that the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, at the hour of Terce—that is, about nine in the morning, on the tenth day after the Ascension and the fiftieth after the feast of Easter. On that day the Jews celebrated the feast of Pentecost. Jesus Christ chose it to send His Holy Spirit to His Church, to make more visible the connection between the reality and its prefiguration.

The Jews had received God's law through the ministry of Moses, engraved upon tablets of stone, fifty days after their departure from Egypt. The Lord willed that the Holy Spirit should come to engrave this same law upon Christians' hearts fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Who freed us from the slavery of the

devil, prefigured by the slavery of Egypt.

Here are the symbols and signs beneath which the Holy Spirit concealed His divine operations when He descended upon the Apostles: “Suddenly a great noise was heard, like a strong and rushing wind coming from heaven, which filled the house where they were assembled. At the same time they saw what appeared to be tongues of fire, which divided and rested upon each of them. Immediately they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.” He animated them with His divine power and made them capable of cooperating in the great designs He had for His Church.

The Apostles received the Holy Spirit not merely for themselves, but also for all who were to believe in Jesus Christ through their ministry or that of their successors, as Scripture expressly indicates. Jesus Christ Himself had foretold it, saying that whoever believed in Him would become like a fountain of living water. This, St. John says, referred to the Spirit Whom those believing in Him were to receive: *Hoc autem dixit de Spiritu, quem accepturi erant credentes in Eum*.

Thus all the faithful share in this outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. They receive its firstfruits in the sacrament of Baptism, and He is given to them more abundantly in Confirmation. Let us thank God for having given us His Holy Spirit, Who alone can heal the defects and waywardness of our own spirit. Let us ask this divine Spirit to correct everything vicious and imperfect in us. This is what the Church asks Him for us, and what we must ask together with her.

Q. What effects did the Holy Spirit produce in the Apostles, and what effect does He still produce in the faithful who receive Him?

A. Having descended upon the Apostles, the Holy Spirit:

I. Made them entirely new men, full of light, fear of God, zeal, strength, and virtue, so that even their greatest adversaries were compelled to admire their constancy and firmness. These men, so weak that they dared not confess Jesus Christ at the time of His passion, now boldly proclaim the glory of His name before magistrates, great men, and the princes of the earth, and cannot be silenced: *Non possumus*, they say, *quæ vidimus et audivimus non loqui*—we cannot refrain from speaking of what we have seen and heard.

II. Gave them a profound understanding of all the religious truths they were to preach, as Jesus Christ had promised them: *Cum venerit Spiritus veritatis, docebit vos omnem veritatem*—when the Spirit of truth comes, He will teach you all truth.

III. Gave them the gift of speaking many languages and performing every kind of miracle. Thus these men, formerly so uncultivated, uneducated, and unlettered, suddenly found themselves able to speak to all the peoples of the earth and draw all the nations of the world to faith in and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Q. Does the Holy Spirit produce in Christians who receive Him today the same effects that He produced in the Apostles?

A. He does not always give them the gift of miracles or of speaking many languages. These gifts, necessary at the Church’s birth for the conversion of unbelievers and the fulfillment of the prophecies, are not necessary today, when the truth of the Christian religion is sufficiently established by enduring and invincible proofs, as St. Augustine observes. Yet this divine Spirit always continues to pour into the hearts of the faithful the charity He poured into the hearts of the Apostles and the first Christians.

It is He Who, as in their case, animates us with zeal, strength, and virtue. It is He Who inspires zeal in pastors, piety in priests, mortification in penitents, charity in virgins, obedience in religious, and recollection in solitaries. In a word, it is through Him that all true Christians live. He is the soul of our soul, the principle of all our good thoughts, He Who sustains and strengthens us in our weakness, as St. Paul says: *Adjuvat infirmitatem nostram*—He helps our weakness.

Consider now, my brethren, whether you have received the Holy Spirit: *Si Spiritum Sanctum accepistis credentes*—did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Do you conduct yourselves by His light? Do you follow His inspirations? Is there in you any spark of this divine fire, any sign of His activity? What zeal do you have for your own sanctification? If we live by the Spirit of God, we must, according to the Apostle, give proof of it through our works: *Si Spiritu vivimus, Spiritu et ambulemus*—if we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Q. What did the Apostles do after the coming of the Holy Spirit?

A. In accordance with their divine Master's command, they went to preach the Gospel to the Jews, to the Samaritans, and finally to the Gentiles scattered throughout the earth. By "Gospel" we mean the good news of the restoration of the human race and mankind's reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ: all the wonders of His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, of which the Apostles had been witnesses and which some of them left us in writing. The word also means the truths the Savior taught us, which we must put into practice to attain eternal life.

Since the Jews had been God's people, with whom He had made a covenant and to whom the promises of the Messiah had been given, they were the first to whom the Apostles announced the Gospel. Many were converted at the beginning: St. Peter's first preaching drew three thousand of them to Christianity; the second, five thousand. The others produced abundant fruit, and the number of converts increased every day. But the greater part of this people remained in their obstinacy and unbelief, persecuting the Apostles and the Christians.

God punished these unbelieving Jews with all the scourges with which the Prophets had threatened them. They were abandoned to their blindness and hardness of heart; they ceased to be God's people, and the Gentiles were called to take their place. Jerusalem, their chief city, was captured, plundered, and burned; their Temple was entirely demolished and their whole country destroyed. An innumerable multitude of them were exterminated by the Romans, and those who escaped were scattered throughout the earth, where they subsist, according to the words of the prophet Hosea, and will subsist until the end of the ages, without a king of their own nation, without temple, altar, or sacrifice, carrying everywhere visible signs of their rejection.

In the second place, the Apostles preached the Gospel to the Samaritans, who received it gladly, and many of them were converted. Those who did not believe in Jesus Christ experienced the same punishment as the Jews. When these had resisted the Gospel, God made known to the Apostles that the time had come to preach it to the Gentiles. They began with those then in Judea, and afterward spread throughout the earth to teach and baptize all nations according to Jesus Christ's command.

It was then that St. Paul was miraculously converted and called to the apostolate by Jesus Christ Himself. He had fiercely persecuted the Church, but afterward served her with such zeal and labor, and with such happy success in spreading the Gospel, that Scripture calls him the Apostle and Teacher of the Gentiles. Thus the Christian religion began to establish itself in the world, the Lord sustaining His Apostles and confirming their preaching by the miracles that accompanied it: *Prædicaverunt ubique, Domino cooperante, et sermonem confirmante sequentibus signis*—they preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that followed.

Q. Did the Apostles produce abundant fruit by preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, and how did they do so?

A. The Apostles produced such abundant fruit by preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles that they destroyed the idolatry in which all the nations of the earth were submerged, and everywhere established the knowledge and worship of the true God through the religion of Jesus Christ. Our ancestors were idolaters, and we are Christians: this is the effect of the Apostles' preaching. They brought about all these conversions either

personally or through their disciples and successors. Their word, as the royal Prophet had foretold, resounded throughout the earth: *In omnem terram exivit sonus eorum*—their sound has gone out into all the earth.

St. Paul, wishing to prove to the Romans that the preaching of Jesus Christ would extend to all peoples, cites this passage and teaches us that in his time there was scarcely a province of the Roman Empire where the Gospel had not been preached. But how did the Apostles produce so much fruit? By the power of the Holy Spirit, Who made their preaching effective; by their miracles and the holiness of their lives; and, finally, by the death they suffered to bear witness to the truths they preached.

Filled with the divine fire with which the Holy Spirit had set their hearts ablaze, they were like a burning log, says St. Augustine, which, cast out everywhere and carried from place to place, finally set fire to the vast forest of the world and filled the earth with the light of truth and the ardor of the divine Spirit: *Impleti sunt Spiritu Sancto Discipuli; cœperunt prædicare magnalia Christi. Lapidati, occisi, fugati sunt: et cum inde tamquam ex uno loco fugarentur, quasi ligna ardentia igne divino totam sylvam mundi accensam fervore Spiritus et lumine veritatis impleverunt*—the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to preach Christ's mighty works. They were stoned, killed, and driven away; and as they were driven from one place, like wood burning with divine fire they set the whole forest of the world ablaze, filling it with the Spirit's fervor and the light of truth.

Q. How did those converted to Christianity by the Apostles' preaching live?

A. They lived so holily and were so united among themselves that all of them had but one heart and one soul, according to Scripture's expression: *Multitudinis credentium erat cor unum et anima una*—the multitude of believers had one heart and one soul. They adhered so closely to the Apostles' teaching that the Gospel was their only rule. They were so religious and fervent in prayer that they prayed continually and every day celebrated communion in the body and blood of Jesus Christ, receiving this divine food with simple and joyful hearts, praising and blessing God for having called them to His service.

They were so detached from earthly possessions and so charitable to the poor that they sold what they owned and brought the proceeds to the Apostles' feet, to be distributed according to the Church's needs. What a marvel, exclaims St. Ambrose, to see such perfect union among people, most of whom had never known one another! *Ita quos separabat longitudo terrarum, Christi gratia connectebat*—thus Christ's grace joined those whom the breadth of countries separated.

They were detached not only from worldly possessions but, more admirably still, so detached from themselves that they were always ready to give their lives for Jesus Christ, accounting themselves fortunate to suffer anything for His name. In a word, their life was so edifying that they won everyone's esteem and approval, and won new children for the Church. Such was the life of those first Christians, according to the portrait St. Luke has given us. Oh, how far removed we are from it! Do we wish to imitate them? Let us, like them, conform our lives to the Gospel, says St. John Chrysostom: *Id agendum est, ut vita nostra Evangelio respondeat*—we must strive to make our life correspond to the Gospel.

Q. Was the Christian religion established in the world without opposition?

A. Certainly not. In its establishment it was attacked and persecuted in every way, as the Prophets had foretold. The Apostles saw the fulfillment of these prophecies from the very first persecution, as appears in the Acts of the Apostles, where they quote these words of David: *Quare fremuerunt gentes, et populi meditati sunt inania? Astiterunt reges terræ, et principes convenerunt in unum adversus Dominum, et adversus Christum Ejus*—why have the nations raged and the peoples devised vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers assembled together against the Lord and against His Christ.

The devil, that armed strong man of whom the Gospel speaks, wishing to preserve his dominion over mankind and oppose that of Jesus Christ, stirred up the worldly powers against the Christian religion. Men

accustomed to living as they pleased could not bear a religion that fought against their passions and disordered desires. When the persecutions of the pagan emperors ceased, the Church suffered many others at the hands of heretics and bad Christians. She has never been, and will never be, without some such persecution; these will culminate in Antichrist's persecution at the end of the world.

She is called militant because, while she is on earth, she has enemies to fight, some outside her and others within her bosom. The former are demons, unbelievers, heretics, Jews, schismatics, and the excommunicated; the latter are bad Catholics.

Besides these common enemies against whom the Church contends, each Christian has his own particular battles to endure. Scripture teaches us that anyone who wishes to serve God must prepare for temptation. Jesus Christ promised crosses and hardships in this life to all His true disciples. St. Paul warns us that all who wish to live devoutly in Jesus Christ will suffer persecution.

Therefore, my brethren, do not be scandalized when you hear of the opposition the Church suffered at her beginning. God permitted it to make her establishment more wonderful and show that the world's conversion was His work, not men's. Neither be scandalized when you see the good and the holiest members of the Church persecuted, slandered, and oppressed for religion, justice, and truth. Jesus Christ foretold it: He wishes us to attain heaven through hardships.

Q. How did the Church triumph, and how does she still triumph today, over her persecutors?

A. Through the assistance of the grace of Jesus Christ her Head, Who promised that the powers of hell would never prevail against her. She is an edifice founded upon rock. Jesus Christ, her principal architect, has sustained her from her beginning and will sustain her to the end. The Church's enemies will never achieve their cruel and impious intention of annihilating her: *Qui habitat in cælis irridebit eos, et Dominus subsannabit eos*—He Who dwells in heaven will laugh at them, and the Lord will deride them.

The Church is sustained, and sustains herself, through patience under persecution. Do you wish to know how the Apostles and the first Christians behaved toward their persecutors? None of them murmured or defended himself. They contented themselves with setting forth their innocence and the truth of the Christian religion by speech and writings full of wisdom. In its defense they endured all the rage and cruelty of tyrants without revenge or complaint. The persecutions raised against them served only to multiply the number of Jesus Christ's disciples, through the countless martyrs they produced and the admiration awakened by the courage of these generous champions. By their death they increased the multitude of the faithful, which led Tertullian to call the blood of martyrs the seed of Christians.

Let us likewise endure patiently the persecution of the wicked. Everything they can do to us is nothing; their power is confined to this life, which is nothing compared with eternity. All their threats are only a vapor, an illusion. When the day of the Lord's vengeance arrives, all this will disappear like a dream of the night: *Velut somnium surgentium imaginem ipsorum ad nihilum rediges*—like the dream of those who awaken, You will reduce their image to nothing.

Then everything will be put in order; the depths of hearts will be known; falsehood will have no place. There will be only real truths, consoling for some and disastrous for others. Once the false brilliance of the passions has vanished, those who persecuted God's servants will discover, but too late, that there is nothing He punishes more rigorously than persecution of His friends. The memory of the just will be blessed forever, says David; he will no longer fear to hear anything distressing. But the desire of the wicked will perish: they will see those whom they wished to destroy placed among the saints and raised to the glory of God's children.

Take courage, then, my brethren. If the world persecutes you, remember that it first persecuted Jesus Christ and His disciples. Like them, put your trust in His merits and hope that, after sharing His sufferings, you will

share His glory.

[1] The opening Gospel text is John 14:26.

Creed: Fifteenth Homily: The Church, Her Privileges, and the Marks or Characteristics Distinguishing Her from All Sects That Falsely Claim the Name of Church

Original preacher not named.

Si quis Ecclesiam non audierit, sit tibi sicut ethnicus et publicanus. (Matthew 18.)

If anyone will not listen to the Church, regard him as a Gentile and a publican.

If St. Hilary told the heretics of his time that the greatest evil to come upon the world was its unwillingness to recognize or receive Jesus Christ—*Nihil tam mundo periculosum quam non accepisse Christum*—we may well tell those of our own time that their great evil comes from their unwillingness to recognize or hear the Church. She is Jesus Christ's bride, whom He purchased with His blood; consequently, those who wish to share in the salvation He merited for us must be her members.

It is true that they recite the Apostles' Creed with us and confess with their lips the holy Catholic, or universal, Church; yet they are unwilling to submit to her authority or receive her teaching. Here is the source of their wandering and their ruin. If they believed this article of the Creed as they ought, they would soon see their controversies ended, for this single article carries with it the decision of all the rest.

Anyone who joins himself to the Church with a firm and unshakable adherence, regarding her, in St. Cyprian's expression, as the dwelling of unity and truth—*Domicilium unitatis et veritatis*—finds no difficulty in receiving everything she proposes to us or rejecting what she condemns, because he knows that she is immediately united to the Holy Spirit, Who directs her. Hence, after saying in the Creed, "I believe in the Holy Spirit," we immediately say, "I believe the holy Catholic Church." This fundamental article, upon which our religion particularly rests, will be the subject of this homily.

Q. What is meant, in general, by the name "Church"?

A. The word "Church" is Greek and in its proper meaning signifies a calling together, assembly, congregation, or society. It is also ordinarily used for the place where these assemblies meet. The Church is defined in general as a congregation of faithful and pastors united in Jesus Christ to form one body, of which He Himself is the Head: *Ecclesia*, says St. Cyprian, *plebs Sacerdoti adunata, et Pastori suo grex adhærens*—the Church is the people united to the priest, and the flock adhering to its shepherd.

We call her the congregation of the faithful because all who compose her have had, or have, faith, without which it is impossible to please God. Pastors are added to the faithful because to refuse recognition to the pastors whom Jesus Christ established to govern her is to break the bond He placed between the Church's members.

In its universality this congregation includes the Church in heaven, the Church in purgatory, and the Church on earth. The Church in heaven consists of the blessed who are in heaven and is called the triumphant Church, the heavenly Jerusalem. The Church in purgatory consists of the just who suffer in purgatory and is called the suffering Church. The Church on earth consists of all the faithful living on earth, in whatever place and at whatever time we consider them: before the law of Moses, during the law of Moses, or after Jesus Christ's coming.

All these faithful are members of one body, of which Jesus Christ is the Head, because they are all united in Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith. It is He Who merited grace and glory for all the saints of

the Old and New Testaments.

We shall speak here only of the Church on earth, called militant because of the battles she must sustain, and even of her only insofar as she comprises the faithful of the New Testament. Properly speaking, this congregation has been called the Church only since the preaching of the Gospel. The faithful composing her began to be called Christians at Antioch, one of the principal cities of the East, where the Apostles' disciples, scattered by the first persecution from the Jews, went to preach the Gospel.

St. Peter, head of the Apostles, established the seat of his apostolate there for a time, afterward fixing it at Rome. The word "Christian" means a disciple of Jesus Christ. All who are baptized and profess to believe in Jesus Christ and obey Him are so called. Here, then, is a general conception of the Church.

Q. What is the Christian Church, or the Church considered from the preaching of the Gospel onward, and who are her members?

A. The Christian Church is the congregation of the faithful who, under legitimate pastors, form one body, of which Jesus Christ is the invisible Head and the pope the visible head. We say that she is the congregation of the faithful, that is, of all who believe in Jesus Christ. These faithful are under the authority of the legitimate pastors, whom they obey, because Jesus Christ established His Apostles and His disciples—the bishops and other pastors, their legitimate successors—for the outward ministry and government of His Church: *In opus ministerii, in ædificationem corporis Christi*, as St. Paul says—for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

All these faithful form only one mystical body because all are united by profession of the same faith and participation in the same sacraments. Jesus Christ is the principal and invisible Head of the Church. It is He Who formed her and delivered Himself to death for her; He Who animates her with His grace, directs her, and will direct her until the end of the ages by His light and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The pope, or Bishop of Rome, is the outward and visible head because he is the legitimate successor of St. Peter, the first of the Apostles, whom Jesus Christ chose as head of His Church and His vicar on earth, saying to him: "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven…. Peter, do you love Me? Feed My lambs; feed My sheep." Take care of My flock. St. Peter has always enjoyed these prerogatives in his own person and in that of his successors. He has always been regarded as prince and head of the Apostles; and the Roman Church, in which he established his see, has in every age been regarded as the center of the unity of the Church and the Christian religion.

From this we can recognize those who are and those who are not members of the Church:

I. Unbelievers and Jews are not members of the Church because they are not baptized and do not believe in Jesus Christ.

II. Heretics are not members of the Church because she does not acknowledge as her children those who alter or divide the faith.

III. Schismatics and apostates are no longer of the Church because they have separated themselves by their disobedience.

IV. Nor are the excommunicated, while they remain in the state of excommunication, because the Church has separated them from her body.

V. Children baptized by unbelievers or Jews, by heretics, schismatics, or the excommunicated, are children of the Church, because Baptism conferred by any of these is valid and sins are forgiven through it.

Baptized Christians, however great their sins, are members of the Church provided they are not excommunicated. For Jesus Christ teaches us in the Gospel that in the Church on earth chaff is mingled with

grain—that is, the good with the wicked—and that their separation will not take place until the end of the world. Only then will the congregation of the predestined constitute the Church. Meanwhile the weeds are found with the grain, and the good must bear with the wicked: *Boni tolerant malos*, says St. Augustine, *donec separentur*—the good bear with the wicked until they are separated.

Q. Is the Church a visible congregation?

A. Yes, because Scripture compares her to a high mountain to which all nations must come, and all the images Scripture gives us show that this congregation must be perceptible. Jesus Christ tells us that we must listen to her and obey her. St. Paul gives Timothy rules for his conduct within this congregation, which he calls the foundation and pillar of truth: *Ut scias quomodo oporteat in domo Dei conversari, Ecclesiam Dei vivi, columna et firmamentum veritatis*—that you may know how one ought to conduct oneself in God's house, the Church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

The same Apostle says that the Holy Spirit established bishops to govern the Church. She must instruct, administer the sacraments, judge, and excommunicate, and all this proves that she must be visible. Nothing, therefore, is more false than the assertion of the heretics who have dared say that the Church was invisible before Luther and Calvin, and had remained hidden and unknown for many centuries.

The Church has always been visible and always will be. She cannot exist without pastors who teach, preach God's word, and administer the sacraments, or without people who hear them. "Go," Jesus Christ says to His Apostles, "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you." The Church must therefore always be visible through the preaching of truth and the legitimate administration of the sacraments.

All these functions cannot coexist with the Protestants' imaginary invisibility. How is it possible to hear invisible pastors, obey them, and follow their commands? Can invisible peoples receive sacraments and form assemblies to hear invisible pastors? Truly, one must confess that everything is very invisible among these sectarians and that it is very easy to recognize the falsehood of such a doctrine.

Q. But if the Church is visible, why do we believe her and say in the Creed, "I believe the Church"? There is no need to believe what one sees.

A. This objection is easily answered. There are things in the Church that are seen, and others that are not seen but believed. What is seen is the congregation of the faithful governed by legitimate pastors. What is believed is that one must be a member of this congregation to be saved; that this congregation must endure until the end of the world without any interruption; and that she is incapable of erring or going astray.

Here is what we Catholics believe and do not see, and by this means we fulfill the meaning of the article concerning the Church included in the Creed. It is easy to understand that one may see one thing and believe another about it. People saw Jesus Christ living among men and believed that He was the Messiah and the Son of God. We see the administration of the sacraments and believe that they effect the remission of sins. There is nothing incompatible in this.

Q. Can the Church of Jesus Christ err or fail?

A. Certainly not. She is infallible in faith and perpetual in duration. She has endured from the Apostles to our own time and will endure to the end of the ages without interruption. Jesus Christ promised her this and is almighty to fulfill His promise. "I will ask My Father," He told His disciples, "and He will send you another Consoler, Who will remain with you forever." Speaking to the prince of the Apostles, He said: "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against her."

Here is His omnipotence, which ensures that the protection He gives His Church cannot fail. "All power has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, teach all nations, baptizing them," and so forth. "Be assured

that I am with you until the consummation of the ages." Notice that Jesus Christ does not say, "I am with you until your death," because He is not speaking only to the Apostles. Rather, He says, "I am with you until the consummation of the ages." These words therefore also address their successors in the ministry, which will continue until the end of the world.

Until then there will be a Church teaching, baptizing, and enduring despite all the efforts of hell, with whom Jesus Christ will always remain, never abandoning her. He promised it and is almighty to fulfill His promises; we must therefore believe it. *Qui usque ad consummationem sæculi cum discipulis Se futurum esse promittit,* says St. Jerome, *et illos ostendit semper esse victuros, et Se numquam a credentibus recessurum*—He Who promises that He will be with His disciples until the consummation of the age shows both that they will always live and that He will never withdraw from believers.[1]

Q. If the Synagogue erred and failed by condemning Jesus Christ, why, the Protestants ask, could the same not happen to the Church?

A. It is very strange that Protestant ministers should make this objection. One must have renounced Holy Scripture, the whole Old Testament, and natural reason to wish to place the Church of Jesus Christ on the same footing as the Synagogue. Who does not know that God had not promised infallibility and indefectibility to the Jewish church? Quite the contrary, He had foretold through His Prophets that He would establish a new covenant and choose a new people.

When Jesus Christ appeared, it is established by Scripture and Jewish tradition that it was the time when the Messiah was to manifest Himself and establish this new covenant. The Synagogue did not follow these rules in condemning Jesus Christ, but on the contrary abandoned them. When it came to fail, there was already upon earth a divine authority far more eminent than that of the Synagogue: namely, that of Jesus Christ, Who proved His mission by countless miracles. Consequently, anything the Synagogue might decide against Jesus Christ's teaching had no force.

But the Protestants cannot similarly say of the Catholic Church, with whose decisions they do not agree, that at the time they first appeared there was an authority superior to hers. For it is indisputable and evident that when their alleged reform began there was no more eminent authority in the world. To say that the Catholic Church's authority had been interrupted, and that God had to raise up ministers extraordinarily to reestablish it, is not merely to embrace a principle contrary to Scripture; it is also to accuse Jesus Christ of failing in His promise, abandoning the Church, and breaking His word.

This is a horrible blasphemy, which obliges us to tell the Protestants what St. Augustine told the Donatists, who held the same opinion: "Those who are no longer in the Church say that this Church, into which all nations entered, no longer exists. O shameless saying! What! Does she no longer exist because you are not in her bosom? Take care lest you are no longer in her. The Church will not cease to exist even though you do not exist. The Holy Spirit foresaw that there would be people uttering this abominable, detestable saying, full of presumption and falsehood, not founded upon truth or enlightened by wisdom, but vain, rash, and hasty…. Such language belongs only to heretics and lost men: *Quid est quod recedentes a me murmurant contra me? quid est quod perditi me periisse contendunt?*"—why do those departing from me murmur against me? Why do the lost contend that I have perished?

Q. Many congregations claim to be the Christian Church: the schismatic Greeks, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Protestants of England all claim this title. Amid such diversity of opinions, by what marks can the true Church of Jesus Christ be discerned?

A. By four marks which, according to Holy Scripture and tradition, distinguish the Church from heretical or schismatic societies. These marks are that she is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The Creed of Constantinople, adopted by the other subsequent general councils, whose authority Christians of these

various societies equally respect, expressly says that the Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The congregation to which these four characteristics belong is the Church of Jesus Christ. Any congregation to which they do not belong is a false church. Now it is easy to show that the Catholic Church, ordinarily called the Roman Church, alone has these four qualities.

I. **She is one.** All the faithful composing her form one body, of which Jesus Christ is the Head. We are one body in Jesus Christ. The pope is the visible head. All the churches obey him and regard St. Peter's see as the center of unity. They all have the same faith, participate in the same sacraments, and have the same worship and religion, according to these words of the Apostle: *Unus Dominus, una fides, unum Baptisma*—one Lord, one faith, one Baptism.

It is true that there are sometimes disputes among Catholics, but these disputes do not concern the faith; and even when they do, the Church separates from her body all those whose faith differs from hers. On this point she admits no compromise and requires one and the same belief in all her members.

II. **She is holy.** Her Head, Jesus Christ, is the Holy of Holies. The Spirit animating her is the Spirit of God Himself. All her members are called to holiness. The sacraments she administers sanctify those who receive them worthily. It is true that in this life she tolerates the wicked mingled with the good; but she unceasingly condemns the corruption of bad Catholics. The Church cannot participate in it or be guilty of the sins they commit by disobeying her. Finally, she is holy because outside her there is neither salvation nor holiness. Within her unity she embraces all the saints, since all the saints whose souls are or will be with God have been or will be conceived and formed in her bosom.

III. **She is catholic and universal.** She extends to all times and places. Since the Apostles' preaching of the Gospel she has never ceased to have children scattered throughout all the countries of the world, united among themselves by the bond of one faith, participation in the same sacraments, and obedience to the same visible head. She is not confined to a little corner of the earth, like Lutheranism and Calvinism, but is spread everywhere. She is recognized not merely by one particular people; a multitude of peoples hasten toward her to receive the faith and the law: *Ea Ecclesia catholica est, ad quam non una natio, non unus angulus, sed tota multitudo convertitur*—that Church is catholic to which not one nation, not one corner, but the whole multitude turns. So said the blessed Vincent of Lérins, a fifth-century author renowned for his beautiful and judicious observations on religion.

IV. **She is apostolic.** That is, she believes and teaches the same doctrine the Apostles believed and taught. She was founded by the Apostles and is directed by their successors, the bishops established by the Holy Spirit to govern God's Church, as St. Paul says in Acts. In his Epistle to the Ephesians he says that "Jesus Christ left pastors to His Church for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of their ministry, for building up the body of Jesus Christ, until we all attain the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God."

That is to say, until the consummation of the ages the Church must be governed by a continuous succession of pastors who, ordained by the Apostles' successors, ordained others to succeed them. This succession of bishops is clearly seen in the Roman Church, which has continued through an unbroken chain of pontiffs from St. Peter to our own time. Let the heretics show us theirs in the same manner, as Tertullian already said in his time: *Edant origines Ecclesiarum suarum*—let them produce the origins of their churches. Let them give us the list of their bishops succeeding one another and tell us: here is the first we had, and here are those who have succeeded him from the Apostles' time.

Evolvant ordinem Episcoporum suorum ita per successiones ab initio decurrentium, ut primus ille Episcopus aliquem ex Apostolis, vel Apostolicis viris, qui tamen cum Apostolis perseveraverint, habuerit auctorem et antecessorem—let them unfold the order of their bishops, running down through successions from the beginning, so that their first bishop had as his institutor and predecessor one of the Apostles or an apostolic man who persevered with the Apostles.

This they will never do. Only the Roman Church embraces all times through an uninterrupted succession of two hundred and sixty pontiffs, from St. Peter to Pius IX, who occupies his place today. She alone has always been and always will be; she alone has the privilege of being one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.[2]

Q. Why is the Bishop of Rome called pope, and why is he, rather than another bishop, the head of the Church?

A. The word "pope" is Greek and means father. In former times this name was given to all bishops because they are the fathers of the Church. Usage restricted it many centuries ago to the Bishop of Rome alone, who, as head of the bishops, is the father of all Christians, as St. Augustine calls him.

The pope, and no other bishop, is head of the Church and of the pastors because he succeeded to the see and authority of St. Peter, who died at Rome after establishing his episcopal see there, and who was head of all the Apostles by the institution of Jesus Christ Himself, as explicit Gospel testimonies show. Nothing is more certain than that St. Peter was in Rome, established his episcopal see there, and died in that city. These facts are attested by the unanimous account of the authors of antiquity. The Fathers who left us lists of the Bishops of Rome all placed St. Peter at their head.

Eusebius, the earliest of our ecclesiastical historians, to whom we owe almost all the information we possess about the Church's first three centuries, says expressly in his chronicle that Peter, the first pontiff of the Christians, after founding the church of Antioch, came to Rome in the year 44, founded a church there, and governed it as bishop for twenty-five years. St. Jerome and St. Ambrose say the same thing in almost the same words. St. Cyprian and St. Augustine speak of the see of Rome as none other than St. Peter's chair. St. Prosper and the other Fathers express themselves in the same way:

Sedes Roma Petri, quæ pastoralis honoris,

Facta caput mundo, quidquid non possidet armis,

Religione tenet.

Rome, Peter's see, made head of pastoral honor

for the world, holds by religion

whatever she does not possess by arms.

Since St. Peter, the first and head of the Apostles, died and was martyred at Rome under the emperor Nero, it follows that the Bishop of Rome is first and head of the bishops. For bishops of a see succeed not only to the character but also to the authority, preeminence, and jurisdiction of their predecessors. Upon this foundation the whole Church has in every age regarded the see of the Bishop of Rome as the first, and the popes as possessing by divine right, as St. Peter's successors, a primacy of honor and jurisdiction throughout the Church.

Q. Has this superiority of the popes always been recognized in the Church?

A. Luther, in his treatise on the papacy, and those of his sect claim that before Boniface III, who was raised to the pontificate in the year 607, this superiority of the pope was unknown and the Fathers of the earliest centuries were unaware of it. To refute this error and silence those who rashly maintain it, we need only relate briefly what the earliest Fathers of the Church say on the subject.

St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons in France, was a Father of the early centuries, for he was a disciple of St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, whose teacher had been St. John the Evangelist. "We confound all heretics," this saint says, "by the tradition of the very great and very ancient Church founded at Rome by the glorious Apostles Peter and Paul. For all churches must agree and be united with her because of her more powerful preeminence…. In this Church the tradition has always been preserved by all the faithful throughout the universe."

Notice, this saint says, that all churches must agree and be united with the Church of Rome. This is not an indifferent matter, but a necessary one. Why is it necessary? Because of her more powerful preeminence: *Ad hanc enim Ecclesiam propter potentiorem principalitatem, necesse est omnem convenire Ecclesiam.* And in what does this more powerful preeminence consist, if not in the greater authority of the head of the Church, who governs her and has inherited it from St. Peter, established by Jesus Christ as His vicar on earth?

St. Cyprian lived in the early centuries. Here is what this illustrious martyr and Bishop of Carthage says in his third letter, complaining to Pope Cornelius about certain schismatic and heretical African bishops who had gone to Rome in an attempt to mislead the Holy See. \["Surprise the Holy See," in the Spanish, means to obtain a decision by misleading it.\] They dare to set sail for St. Peter's chair and approach the principal Church, the source and center of priestly unity: *Navigare audent ad Petri cathedram, et Ecclesiam principalem, unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est.* In another letter to the same pope, the eighth of the fourth book, he calls the Church of Rome the mother and root of all the Catholic churches.

St. Jerome, in his book against Jovinian, teaches us that, although the Church was founded equally by the twelve Apostles, Jesus Christ chose one as head to avoid the danger of schism, establishing an authority capable of uniting those whom differences of opinion might divide: *Licet super omnes Apostolos ex æquo Ecclesiæ fortitudo solidetur, tamen propterea inter duodecim unus eligitur, ut capite constituto schismatis tolleretur occasio*—although the Church's strength is founded equally upon all the Apostles, one is nevertheless chosen among the twelve so that, with a head established, occasion for schism might be removed.

The same St. Jerome, writing to Pope Damasus, says: I unite myself in communion with your holiness, that is, with St. Peter's chair. I know that the Church was founded upon this rock; that whoever eats the Lamb outside this house is profane; and that whoever does not take refuge in this ark will perish in the waters of the flood: *Beatitudini tuæ, id est, cathedræ Petri communione consocior: super illam petram ædificatam Ecclesiam scio: quicumque extra hanc domum Agnum comederit, profanus est: si quis in arca Noe non fuerit, peribit regnante diluvio.*

St. Augustine, in his letter to Glorius, expressly says that in the Church of Rome the preeminence of the apostolic chair has always manifested itself through public signs of a greater authority: *In qua semper Apostolicæ cathedræ viguit principatus*—in which the primacy of the apostolic chair has always flourished.

Yet nothing better proves the high conception this holy Doctor had of the authority of the Roman see than these celebrated words he spoke concerning Pelagius's error: "The acts of two councils concerning this matter have already been sent to the Apostolic See. The rescripts have come from Rome. The case is concluded; would that the error might one day end!" *Jam enim de hac causa duo concilia missa sunt ad Sedem apostolicam: inde rescripta venerunt: causa finita est: utinam aliquando finiatur error.*

To the Fathers of the early centuries we may add the first four general councils—Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon—all of which recognized the popes' superior authority. Here is more than enough to demonstrate that the superiority we acknowledge in the pope today was equally acknowledged in the Church's earliest centuries.

Thus the Protestants and Greeks who, separating from communion with the pope, disputed his primacy against the express teaching of Scripture and tradition, broke the bond of the Church's unity, abandoned the belief of their fathers and predecessors, manifestly made themselves schismatics, and cannot be saved except by returning to the submission and obedience owed to the visible head of the Church.

Q. What fruit should we draw from this homily?

A. We must:

I. Thank God for having caused us to be born within the Catholic Church, while so many unbelievers and heretics are separated from her and consequently excluded from the eternal inheritance, which cannot be merited except in union with her, as St. Cyprian says: *Quisquis ab Ecclesia segregatus adulteræ jungitur, a promissis Ecclesiæ separatur; nec perveniet ad Christi præmia qui reliquit Ecclesiam Christi*—whoever, separated from the Church, joins himself to an adulteress is separated from the Church's promises; whoever has abandoned Christ's Church will not attain Christ's rewards.

II. Believe firmly that the Catholic, apostolic, Roman Church cannot fail. By the Protestants' own admission she was Jesus Christ's Church in the first centuries; she was so when they separated; and she will remain so until the end of time. Otherwise Jesus Christ's promises to remain with her until the consummation of the ages would be empty, which cannot be said without impiety and blasphemy.

III. Believe likewise that this Church cannot fall into error because the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, directs her and will remain with her eternally. All who aspire to be numbered among her children must submit to her decisions and decrees because she has received from Jesus Christ a sovereign authority to define and decide matters belonging to faith.[3]

IV. Be fully convinced that there is no salvation except in the Catholic Church and that one must be a member of this Church to share in the glory Jesus Christ merited for us. Whoever does not have the Church as mother, says St. Cyprian, will not have God as Father.

V. The last fruit we must draw from this homily is a firm conviction that it is not enough to be a Catholic and child of the Church to be saved: one must also live as a Catholic. It is not enough to believe; one must practice what one believes. *Non enim auditores legis justi sunt apud Deum*, says St. Paul, *sed factores legis justificabuntur*—not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law will be justified.

Do not deceive yourselves, my brethren. You glory in vain in the name of Christians and Catholics unless you have a faith animated by charity and sustained by good works. This is the doctrine the holy Fathers left us as a certain and indubitable rule.

"Hold it as certain," says St. Fulgentius, "and do not doubt in any way that not all who have been baptized within the Catholic Church will receive eternal life, but only those who, after receiving Baptism, live holily: that is, those who abstain from the vices and desires of the flesh. For just as unbelievers, heretics, and schismatics will have no share in the kingdom of heaven, so neither will Catholics who live wickedly possess it." *Fortissime tene, et nullatenus dubites, non omnes qui intra Ecclesiam baptizantur accepturos esse vitam æternam, sed eos qui percepto baptismate recte vivunt, id est, qui abstinuerint se a vitiis et concupiscentiis carnis: regnum enim cælorum sicut infideles, hæretici, atque schismatici non habebunt, sic catholici criminosi possidere non poterunt.*

Let us therefore live in the world in such a way that we may merit the eternal life and blessedness we confess at the end of the Creed, which will be the great reward of the Church's true children.

---

[1] Other principal references here are John 14:16 and Matthew 28:18–20.

[2] Tertullian's cited passage is *Prescription against Heretics* 32.

[3] Other principal references here are John 14:16 and Matthew 28:18–20.

Sacraments: First Homily: On the Sacraments in General

Original preacher not named.

Haurietis aquas in gaudio de fontibus Salvatoris. (Isaiah 12.)

You shall draw water with joy from the Savior's fountains.

These fountains of the Savior, which we must approach with joy, are the sacraments of the new law. The waters we must draw are the graces Jesus Christ deposited in them: saving waters that wash and purify us, produce true righteousness in us, and spring up to eternal life. In these mysterious fountains, which contain nothing less than Jesus Christ's infinite merits and are their sacred channels, we must seek our strength and virtue: *Haurietis*, and so forth.

Let us go to quench our thirst at these fountains of salvation. Let us profit by these divine treasures offered us with such generosity. It rests with us not to squander them, for this depends upon our will. We can drink from them as much and as often as we wish. This is what theology teaches when it says that the sacraments infallibly produce their effect when no obstacle is placed in their way: that is, they produce grace in us of themselves when we approach them with the proper dispositions.

Christians, if you bring great fervor and devotion, you will receive great grace from them; but if you bring little, you will receive little. It is therefore of the greatest importance that we learn to treat the sacraments worthily and make holy use of them. This is what I shall exhort you to do in this homily.

Q. What does the Church mean by the word "sacrament," and what is the difference between those of the old law and those of the new?

A. By the word "sacrament" we mean a sensible sign instituted by God to signify and effect our sanctification: *Invisibilis gratiæ visibile signum ad nostram justificationem institutum*—a visible sign of invisible grace, instituted for our justification. A sacrament is a sign because, in addition to the thing it presents to our senses, it makes known to us an invisible grace which it produces in our soul: *Aliud oculis, aliud menti exhibet*, says St. John Chrysostom—it presents one thing to the eyes and another to the mind.

This sign is sensible: that is, outward and perceptible to our senses. We see the sacrament's minister act; we hear the words he pronounces. This action and these words signify and produce in the recipient's soul a grace we do not see. This sign is instituted by God because a sacrament is not a natural sign of grace but an appointed sign, which signifies and effects grace only in dependence upon the will of God, Who instituted it for this purpose. This sign signifies and effects our sanctification: that is, it makes us holy and pleasing to God, either by giving us the life of grace we did not previously possess, or by increasing and strengthening the sanctifying grace we already possessed.

The sacraments of the new law agree with those of the old in that both are sacred signs signifying sanctifying grace. For the sacraments of the old law signify not only the legal and outward holiness they communicated, but also the grace communicated to mankind through Jesus Christ's passion.

It is an article of faith that the difference between the sacraments of the old law and those of the new does not consist merely in a difference of outward ceremonies. Pope Eugene IV, in the decree for the Armenians, points out another, more essential difference. The sacraments of the old law, being only shadows and figures of those of the new, did not have the power to confer grace: they signified only that grace would be given to us through the merits of Jesus Christ's passion. But the sacraments of the new law contain grace within themselves and, through Jesus Christ's merits, possess the power to communicate it to those who receive them worthily: *Illa non causabant gratiam, sed eam solum per passionem Christi dandam figurabant: hæc vero nostra, et continent gratiam, et ipsam digne suscipientibus conferunt*.

St. Augustine explains this difference in other terms with the same meaning. He says that the sacraments of the Old and New Testaments are not the same because the latter give us salvation, whereas the former only promise the Savior. The sacraments of the New Testament give salvation, and those of the Old only promised the Savior: *Sacramenta non eadem… quia alia sunt sacramenta dantia salutem, alia promittentia Salvatorem: sacramenta Novi Testamenti dant salutem, sacramenta Veteris Testamenti promiserunt Salvatorem*.

Let us thank Our Lord for having given us sacraments whose power is incomparably more effective than that of the sacraments of the old law. Let us hold them in the highest esteem. Jesus Christ, says St. Augustine, formed the society of His new people with very few sacraments, very easy to observe and most excellent in their significance: *Dominus noster Jesus Christus sacramentis numero paucissimis, observatione facillimis, significatione præstantissimis, societatem novi populi colligavit*.

Q. What must a Christian know, at least in general, concerning the sacraments of the new law?

A. He must know:

I. That Jesus Christ alone, and no other, is the author of the sacraments of the new law. He alone could attach to simple signs the power of producing supernatural grace, for this wonderful power can belong only to God, the sovereign Lord of nature and grace. The sacraments derive their power of producing grace from the Savior's passion and death.

II. That Jesus Christ instituted seven to provide for all the needs of His Church and of each of the faithful individually. These sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. Baptism gives us spiritual birth. Confirmation strengthens us in faith and gives us new assistance. The Eucharist nourishes us. Penance heals us. Extreme Unction helps us to die well. Holy Orders gives the Church ministers and pastors. Matrimony gives her children to perpetuate her.

The Church condemned all who refused to recognize any of these sacraments: in the third century, the Novatians, who did not give Confirmation to the newly baptized; in the fourth, the Manichaeans, who denied Matrimony; in the fourteenth, Wycliffe and his followers, who disparaged Extreme Unction; and in the sixteenth, the Lutherans and Calvinists, who properly acknowledged only Baptism and the Eucharist as sacraments.

III. That the sacraments of the new law contain the grace they signify and produce it of themselves, independently of the minister's holiness. Whether he is in grace or in sin, provided he acts as a minister of the Church, these sacred signs always produce grace unless an obstacle is placed in their way. Besides habitual and sanctifying grace, they confer other particular, actual graces suited to those who receive them worthily.

IV. That five must be received in the state of grace: Confirmation, Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. The other two, Baptism and Penance, were instituted to confer grace on those who do not possess it. Baptism gives it to those who have never had it, and Penance to those who have lost it after Baptism.

V. That three imprint an indelible character on the soul: Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders. This character distinguishes the recipient from other men and means that these sacraments can be received only once. Here is a general conception of the sacraments that every Christian should possess.

Q. Who can administer the sacraments, and what dispositions are required for administering them?

A. The ministers of the sacraments are bishops and priests. Bishops alone are the ministers of Confirmation and Holy Orders. Parish priests and priests approved by the bishop can administer the other sacraments. In a case of necessity anyone can administer Baptism; outside such a case, however, one must have recourse to the Church's ministers appointed for administering the sacraments.

The dispositions necessary in anyone wishing to administer a sacrament are:

I. To have the intention of doing what the Church does and what Jesus Christ instituted. If someone is called upon to baptize a child—which may happen to any of the faithful—he must above all form the intention of acting as a minister of the Church, taking care to perform so holy an action in all seriousness. Someone acting in play and mockery in such a case would imitate the reality and represent what the Church does, but

would not do it or act as the Church's minister. A person asleep, intoxicated, or delirious might likewise baptize through custom and habit; yet, being incapable of reflection, he would not have the intention of doing what the Church does, as the Council of Trent requires.

What belongs to the essence of the sacrament, called its matter and form, must be observed. Thus if the person baptizing failed to pour water on the child's body or omitted a single one of these words—"I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"—the Baptism would be null. It would likewise be null if the person pouring the water did not himself pronounce these words, or did not pronounce them at the same time, or at least if there were a notable interruption between the two.

Here is what is required for the sacrament's validity, and what Pope Eugene IV noted in the decree prepared for the Armenians' instruction in these words: *Omnia sacramenta tribus perficiuntur, videlicet rebus tamquam materia, verbis tamquam forma, et persona ministri conferentis sacramentum cum intentione faciendi quod facit Ecclesia, quorum si aliquid desit, non perficitur sacramentum*—all sacraments are accomplished by three things: things as matter, words as form, and the person of the minister conferring the sacrament with the intention of doing what the Church does; if any of these is lacking, the sacrament is not accomplished.

But to administer a sacrament lawfully and without offense to God, the following are also necessary:

I. To be in the state of grace. Anyone administering it in mortal sin, except in a case of necessity, would commit a new sin because he voluntarily profanes something holy.

II. To observe the prayers and ceremonies the Church prescribes in administering the sacraments. They cannot be omitted without necessity or changed without disobeying the Church. When they have been omitted out of necessity, they must be supplied as soon as circumstances permit.

Q. Is it lawful to demand or receive money for administering the sacraments?

A. St. Thomas says that one cannot confer the sacraments for money without committing simony:

1. Because the person administering them is not their owner.

2. Because, by administering a sacrament for money, he values it at the sum received, although grace is beyond price.

3. Because it is grace's very nature to be gratuitous, and to demand money for a sacrament conferring grace upon its worthy recipient is to make grace a commodity.

Nevertheless, since the sacraments can be dispensed to the faithful only by the Church's ministers, and it is just and even necessary that these ministers obtain their livelihood from the people, according to St. Paul's words—*Nescitis quoniam qui in sacrario operantur, quæ de sacrario sunt edunt: et qui altari deserviunt, cum altari participant?*—do you not know that those who work in the sanctuary eat what belongs to the sanctuary, and those who serve the altar share in the altar?—we must make a distinction.

To demand or receive money or any other temporal thing as the price of the sacraments' grace is indeed simony, forbidden by natural and divine law; that is the sense in which St. Thomas speaks. It is not simony, however, to receive something necessary for the support of those administering them, provided this is done according to the Church's regulations and accepted and approved custom: *Accipere autem aliqua ad sustentationem eorum qui sacramenta Christi ministrant, secundum ordinationem Ecclesiæ et consuetudines approbatas, non est simonia neque peccatum*, says this holy Doctor. His reason is this: *Non enim sumitur tamquam pretium mercedis, sed tamquam stipendium necessitatis*—it is not taken as a price by way of payment, but as support for necessary needs. By the same principle we can justify the custom of giving and receiving an offering, or alms, for the holy sacrifice of the Mass, as the same saint teaches.

The Fourth General Council of the Lateran, over which Innocent III presided in person in the year 1215, expresses itself on this matter in almost the same terms as St. Thomas. It even wills that those opposing the praiseworthy customs introduced in the Church of giving something for her ministers' support be compelled to do so by the bishop's authority.

It follows that a parish priest does not sin by requiring his customary occasional dues as established in his parish by custom or the bishop's regulation, directing his intention according to St. Thomas's teaching, exercising charity toward the poor and moderation toward all. For nothing is more odious in the Church or more scandalous to heretics than the daily sight of parish priests and parishioners disputing over such things. To avoid this abuse, we must, as St. Paul says, judge spiritual things by spiritual rules: *Spiritualibus spiritualia comparantes*—comparing spiritual things with spiritual.[1]

Q. How should those present at the administration of the sacraments behave?

A. They should attend:

I. With living faith, considering that what takes place before their eyes is a great mystery producing grace in man through a power drawn from the passion of Jesus Christ, Who died on the cross for us and instituted the sacraments to communicate His infinite merits to us.

II. With respect for the priest administering them, regarding him as Jesus Christ's representative and the steward of God's mysteries, as St. Paul commands: *Sic nos existimet homo sicut ministros Christi et dispensatores mysteriorum Dei*—let a man regard us as Christ's ministers and stewards of God's mysteries.

III. With modesty, because the church is not a tree-lined promenade or meadow in which to stroll, greet friends, and exchange compliments. It is a holy place, God's house, which you must honor with profound silence, especially when a sacrament is being conferred, so as not to disturb the priest in so important an action, requiring all his attention.

Women should appear there only with modesty and in decent clothing. They should behave with such circumspection and recollection that they give not the slightest occasion of scandal—and I say the same to men—in the large gatherings formed for baptisms and weddings, where God is often offended. For this reason councils expressly forbade administering Baptism—and the same must be said of Matrimony—to those coming to church in an immodest and scandalous manner. *Curati*, says the Council of Aix in Provence, held in 1585, *sub gravi pœna arbitratu episcopi infligenda, in posterum sacramentum Baptismi ne ministrent iis, qui ad ecclesiam accedunt cum tympanis et aliis instrumentis, strepitum ac clamorem cum risu et aliis inanis lætitiæ signis excitantibus*—under a severe penalty to be imposed at the bishop's discretion, parish priests must henceforth not administer the sacrament of Baptism to those approaching the church with drums and other instruments, raising noise and shouting with laughter and other signs of empty merriment.

Q. Should the sacraments be received frequently?

A. We cannot determine with exact precision when it is necessary to approach the sacraments. This depends upon the needs of our conscience, and each must examine himself on this point. Some people maintain themselves in grace and Christian piety longer than others: such were the ancient Fathers of the desert; such, even today, are many holy souls who live in retirement and keep away from the world's corruption.

Others are less firmly rooted in the practice of virtue, and their falls are more frequent. These latter are obliged to confess more often than the others. But since one rule cannot be given to everyone, I must say generally that frequent use of the sacraments is useful to all and sometimes necessary for most Christians to preserve themselves in the state of grace.

For this reason, says St. Charles, parish priests must take care to remind their parishioners not to be content with receiving them at Easter, but also on the year's principal feasts. It is true that there have been saints

who, penetrated with profound respect for the Eucharist, remained a long time without Communion. But it would be a misguided humility to abstain from it on one's own judgment under the pretext of acknowledging oneself unworthy, especially when Jesus Christ's command or the Church's precept obliges one to receive it: *Non potest esse laudabilis humilitas*, says St. Thomas, *si contra præceptum Christi et Ecclesiæ aliquis omnino a communione abstineat*—humility cannot be praiseworthy if, against Christ's and the Church's command, someone abstains altogether from Communion.

Q. Is frequent reception of the sacraments enough to make someone a good Christian?

A. Certainly not. We must approach them with the proper dispositions and receive them fruitfully. It is a very bad sign when remedies are useless to a Christian; the same judgment must be made when a Christian does not profit from the sacraments, when no change is seen in him after so many confessions and Communions. It is a sign that this Christian is hardened in sin and his salvation is endangered: *Insanabilis fractura tua: pessima plaga tua: curationum utilitas non est tibi*—your wound is incurable; your injury is grievous; healing remedies bring you no benefit, says the Lord through His prophet Jeremiah.

The sacraments were instituted for our sanctification. How is it that, receiving them so often, we are sanctified so little? The sacraments are fountains of living water. Why is it that, washing in them frequently, we remain so stained? The sacraments are the treasury in which Jesus Christ enclosed His merits. What is the reason that, resorting to them so often, we remain so poor and destitute of graces and virtues? The sacraments are most wholesome and efficacious medicines. How is it that, using them frequently, we are always sick?

This can arise only from the negligence and unworthy manner with which we receive them. When you marry, you take not the slightest care to prepare for the sacrament of Matrimony; you do not marry with an upright intention. Instead of seeking to give Jesus Christ and His Church children who will serve the Lord faithfully, you entertain only brutish thoughts and considerations of self-interest. You receive Communion at Christmas and Easter like many others, but you do so without paying your creditors, without restoring other people's property, without reconciling with your enemies, without abandoning the occasion of sin, without correcting your bad habits. Is it surprising that, frequenting the sacraments in this manner, you become greater sinners? *Curationum utilitas non est tibi*—healing remedies bring you no benefit.

What will condemn an immense number of Christians at God's judgment will undoubtedly be their misuse of the sacraments. These were infinitely precious talents the Lord had entrusted to them with the obligation to profit from them, and they abused them.

Do not permit this misfortune to befall us, my God. Give us faith in Your divine mysteries and the great esteem due to such wonderful sacraments. Grant through Your grace that we may imitate the fervor of the saints, who drew such treasures of heavenly gifts from them, and prepare ourselves so worthily to receive them that we experience their saving effects. Thus, purified even in this life by the power of Your sacraments, may we deserve at death to enjoy You for all eternity in the dwelling of glory.

---

[1] Other sources here: 1 Corinthians 9:13; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiæ* II–II, q. 100, a. 2; Lateran IV, canon 66.

Sacraments: Second Homily: On Baptism

Original preacher not named.

Euntes, docete omnes gentes, baptizantes eos in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti: docentes eos servare omnia quæcumque mandavi vobis. (Matthew 28:19.)

Go, instruct all peoples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.

This is the commandment that Jesus Christ imposed upon the Apostles when He sent them to preach the Gospel throughout the whole earth and to baptize the peoples of the earth. Notice that He commands them, not once but twice, to give instruction to those who were to become Christians. For it is necessary, before Baptism, to teach the person who wishes to be baptized, in order to prepare him to receive the sacrament. After Baptism he must likewise be given instruction, so that he may preserve and cultivate the grace that he received in Baptism.

For this reason, in the primitive Church, when an adult came to ask for Baptism, he was left for many months, and at times for entire years, in the state of the catechumenate. This was, as it were, the novitiate and apprenticeship of the Christian: there the catechism was explained, and there he was taught not only the mysteries of the faith that it is necessary to believe, but also the maxims of the Gospel that it is necessary to practice in order to be saved. Hence the holy Fathers call Baptism the sacrament of illumination, and the baptized the illuminated.

Today, since the children being baptized are incapable of instruction, the Church leaves it to those charged with their education to teach them, when they reach the use of reason, the things necessary for attaining eternal life. Yet we must confess that very few fulfill this duty. Consequently many Christians live in ignorance of their obligations and take very little care to fulfill them. To avoid this abuse, let us instruct ourselves in so important a subject.

Q. What is Baptism, and what effects does it produce in us?

A. Baptism, the first sacrament of the new law—for which reason the Fathers call it the sacrament of faith and the gate through which we enter the Church—is a sacrament by which all sins and all the punishment due to them are forgiven, and which makes us Christians, children of God and of the Church. Its effects are the following:

I. To forgive original sin, with which we are all born, and the other sins committed before Baptism, however enormous those sins may have been. Not only is every kind of sin forgiven through it, but also all the punishment due to sin: that is, all the penalties sinful man was to suffer to satisfy God's justice in this world or the next. Thus everything, without exception, is forgiven by this sacrament. There is no longer punishment or condemnation for those who are in Jesus Christ through Baptism: *Nihil ergo nunc damnationis est iis qui sunt in Christo Jesu*, says the apostle St. Paul—there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

II. It makes us Christians, children of God and of the Church. When we come into this world, all of us are born as children of wrath and as persons deserving of the punishments of eternity: *Natura filii iræ*, says the Apostle—by nature children of wrath.[1] Through Baptism we are reborn and receive life in Jesus Christ, giving us the right to call God our Father and regard heaven as our inheritance. This new life is the life that comes from grace, which unites us to God through the virtues of faith, hope, and charity. It is given to us through Jesus Christ, in Whom God adopts us as children, heirs of His kingdom and coheirs with Jesus Christ His Son. Baptism also makes us children of the Church, because it numbers us among the faithful, gives us a right to the other sacraments, and makes us sharers in all the Church's other graces.

III. It imprints upon the soul a spiritual character that can never be effaced; hence this sacrament can be received only once. Yet, however great Baptism's effects, we must bear in mind that it does not restore man to the state in which he stood before Adam's fall. There still remain in him ignorance and concupiscence, together with the infirmities that affect both his soul and his body. Baptism does not destroy these consequences that flow from original sin. Men will not see themselves set free from them until after the general resurrection has taken place. God has willed that it should be so, in order that man may always keep the memory of his fall before him; that this world may be a place of exile to him; that he may live in it in humility and fear; and that this subjection, become inevitable after sin, may serve as a continual exercise of

his virtue and give him reason continually to implore Jesus Christ's grace.

Q. How is the sacrament of Baptism administered?

A. Blessed water is poured three times in the form of a cross upon the person who is receiving Baptism, and at the same time these words are said once: *Ego te baptizo in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti*—"I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Baptism may also be administered in two other ways: by immersion, putting and submerging the person being baptized three times in water; or by aspersion, sprinkling water three times upon the person being baptized, while saying the same words.

Baptism by immersion was formerly the most common manner. St. Paul alludes to it when he says that we have been buried with Jesus Christ in Baptism. Among us today, Baptism is administered only by infusion, that is, by pouring water upon the head of the person being baptized. Although all three manners of baptizing are lawful, one must nevertheless conform to the custom of the Church where one is.

The practice of pouring water three times in the form of a cross, immersing three times, or sprinkling three times upon the person being baptized is very ancient: the Church has practiced it from the Apostles' time. Yet she does not regard this ceremony as necessary for the sacrament's validity. Even if the water were poured only once, and not in the form of a cross, the Baptism would still be valid.

The water used for baptizing should be that blessed on the vigils of Easter and Pentecost. In necessity, however, any water is suitable, provided it is natural water: spring water, river water, well water, rainwater, and generally any water not artificially made by men. The head is the part on which the water should be poured whenever possible. Nevertheless, for validity it is enough that it touch a substantial part of the body, whatever that may be.

We must note that the same person who pours the water must pronounce the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," and pronounce them at the same time, because the words must accompany the action of the person baptizing. Without this, the Baptism will be null. Here is what everyone must know concerning the administration of Baptism, since anyone may be called upon to administer this sacrament in necessity.

Q. Who may baptize, and where should it be done?

A. Bishops, priests, and, extraordinarily, deacons alone may baptize solemnly and with the Church's ceremonies. In necessity, however, every human being, without distinction of sex or religion, may baptize without solemnity, provided he has the intention of doing what the Church does and prescribes. God graciously gave all mankind without distinction the power to baptize, to facilitate reception of a sacrament without which no one can be saved.

Nevertheless, when several persons able to baptize are present in a case of necessity, clerics should be preferred to laypeople, Catholics to heretics or unbelievers, and men to women, unless the woman is better and more fully instructed, or propriety requires it, as the rituals say.

A father and mother should not baptize their own child except in extreme necessity, and when they are the only Catholics able to do so, because of the consequences of the spiritual kinship contracted through Baptism. By the Church's laws there is a spiritual kinship between the baptizer and the baptized, preventing the person baptizing from marrying the baptized person or that person's father or mother. If a father or mother baptizes their own child unnecessarily, this kinship prevents the one who baptized from requesting the marital debt, although he or she must always render it.

The place for Baptism is the parish church. It is not lawful to baptize elsewhere except in necessity. From this rule only kings and sovereign princes are exempt, as Clement V decided at the general Council of

Vienne held in 1311; the bishops received his constitution respectfully in their synods. Some have even imposed the penalty of excommunication *ipso facto* upon those having children baptized at home when they could be brought to church. In extreme necessity, however, Baptism may be administered at any time and in any place.

We see in the Acts of the Apostles that the deacon St. Philip baptized the eunuch, a servant of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, in the middle of the highway where they were. Thus great cruelty is committed by those Protestants who let children in danger die without Baptism when the minister's appointed hour has not arrived and he cannot conveniently go to church to baptize. They mistakenly imagine that these children will be saved in consideration of their parents' faith and desire for their Baptism. The Church condemns this conduct and teaches us that everyone without distinction may baptize in necessity, and that there is no time or place where this sacrament cannot be conferred when necessary.[2]

Q. May Baptism be given or received repeatedly? What should be done when it is doubtful whether this sacrament was properly administered?

A. There are three sacraments that can be conferred or received only once: Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders. These sacraments imprint an indelible character upon the soul and therefore cannot be repeated; the Church has defined this. Not only is repeating Baptism sinful; it also produces irregularity in the minister and the recipient if they acted with full knowledge.

When there is well-founded doubt whether a person has been properly baptized—because the baptizer used doubtful matter, did not pronounce all these words essential to the form, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," or, finally, did not intend to do what the Church does—that person should be baptized with this condition: "If you are not baptized." Baptism is not then repeated, because it cannot be proved that it was conferred: *Quod non ostenditur gestum, ratio non sinit ut videatur iteratum,* says St. Leo—reason does not permit what is not shown to have been done to be regarded as repeated.

According to St. Charles, children who have been abandoned as foundlings must be baptized in this manner, unless one possesses certain proofs that they have already received Baptism. The written notes placed about their necks, declaring that they have been baptized, do not constitute such certain proofs, because people who abandon their children in this way do not deserve credence for their notes: *Licet expositus infans scriptum habeat collo appensum, quo ille baptizatus significetur,* says the provincial Council of Aix—even if an exposed infant has a writing hung about its neck indicating that it was baptized.

Children not yet completely born who have been baptized upon any part of the body other than the head should also be baptized conditionally. Even when baptized upon the head, the safer course, according to some theologians, is to baptize them conditionally, since this secures their eternal salvation and does no injury to the sacrament when administered in this manner. This may be supported by St. Augustine's words: *Nec renasci quisquam potest, antequam natus sit*—no one can be born again before being born.

Midwives and surgeons, ordinarily present in these dangerous situations, must know how to baptize. Since people commonly become distressed in such circumstances, they should, if possible, summon witnesses to their action and afterward tell the parish priest how they did it, so that he may judge the Baptism's validity. The council we have just cited commands this.

Q. Is Baptism absolutely necessary for salvation, for children as well as adults?

A. Since Baptism is the sole remedy for original sin, with which we are all born, it follows that we are all obliged to receive it, and that this sacrament is necessary not only by necessity of precept but also by necessity of means. Thus no one can enter the kingdom of heaven without this sacrament. The Church teaches us this on the foundation of her Bridegroom's words: "Truly I tell you," says Jesus Christ, "unless

anyone is born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he will never enter the kingdom of God." These words make no exception and demonstrate the necessity of Baptism for children as well as adults.[3]

Hence St. Augustine, speaking of children dying without Baptism, says: "Do not believe, do not say, do not teach, if you wish to be Catholics, that children who die before being baptized can obtain remission of original sin." The same Father, writing to St. Jerome, speaks in these terms: "Those who say that children dying without receiving Baptism will be made alive in Jesus Christ speak against what the Apostles preached and condemn the whole Church. If people endeavor not to lose time, if they run to baptize a child, it is because they regard it as certain that the child cannot be saved except by Baptism."

This Father cannot be suspect to Calvinists, since he lived in the first centuries, which they call the Church's happy days, and Calvin himself calls him a torch of truth. Let those who claim the name of reformers therefore recognize, in view of the testimony that this great man gives to the word of Jesus Christ, that Baptism is necessary for all and that they commit a great offense by letting children die without Baptism when the hour or time fixed by their ministers has not arrived.

And we, my brethren, who know that according to the Church's doctrine Baptism is absolutely necessary for children, must do everything possible for them to receive this sacrament. To this end, in many dioceses, particularly that of Lyons in France, all persons are forbidden to wait more than two days after a child's birth before baptizing it, under the penalty of excommunication incurred by the very fact.[4]

Q. Can anything supply for Baptism?

A. It can be supplied either by the personal desire to receive it accompanied by an act of charity, or by martyrdom. This has led theologians to distinguish three kinds: baptism of water, baptism of desire, and baptism of blood.

Baptism of water is ordinary Baptism with water and the prescribed words. The baptism of desire consists in an ardent desire to receive the sacrament of Baptism when one is unable to receive it in actual fact. A man who dies with this desire, without having been able to put it into effect, is saved as though he had received the sacrament of Baptism, provided that this desire is sincere and is accompanied by an act of charity. This is what the Church has always held and believed. Thus St. Ambrose believed that the emperor Valentinian had been baptized in his piety, not having had time to receive this sacrament.

The baptism of blood, that is to say, the death that a person suffers for Jesus Christ, likewise possesses the same efficacy as the sacrament itself. Therefore the Church honors those who died for Jesus Christ, even without having received baptism of water, as martyrs baptized in their own blood. For this same reason she has always celebrated the feast of the Holy Innocents, killed by Herod's command, as appears from St. Augustine.

But since the occasion of suffering martyrdom is very rare, and children, to whom Baptism is ordinarily given, cannot conceive the desire to receive it, we must infer that this sacrament is absolutely necessary and that those dying without receiving it will be separated from God for all eternity. Some holy Doctors believed that they suffered the punishment of fire, but the mildest punishment of all: *Omnium mitissimam*, as St. Augustine expresses it. Since the Church has decided nothing on this subject, it is sufficient to believe that these children are not blessed, as the Pelagians maintain, and that the deprivation of God which they suffer eternally is a very sensible punishment for them.

Q. May the ceremonies of Baptism sometimes be omitted? Must they be supplied when omitted?

A. The ceremonies of Baptism and the other sacraments may not be omitted except when there is danger of death. Outside this case there is an obligation to observe them exactly. When, therefore, the necessity of administering Baptism to a child has caused their omission, all must be supplied as soon as possible, not excepting the exorcism. For, as St. Thomas observes, the devil endeavors not only to prevent the child from

receiving Baptism's effect but, after it has received that effect, continues endeavoring to prevent it from profiting by it in the future.

Only in the case of those who have abjured heresy are these ceremonies not supplied. If the Church refrains from doing so, it is to prevent poorly instructed people, and especially heretics, who think only of multiplying falsehoods against the Church, from imagining or maliciously publishing that Baptism is repeated in the Catholic Church, or that she considers the sacrament's ceremonies necessary for salvation.

Q. What is the first ceremony observed in Baptism?

A. The choice of a godfather and godmother to present to the Church the person to be baptized, give the person a name, witness the Baptism, and answer to the Church on that person's behalf. This practice is very ancient. To understand it, we should note that in the first centuries, and even later down to the time of Charlemagne and Louis Augustus—that is, down to the eighth century—Baptism was solemnly conferred only on the vigils of Easter and Pentecost. Hence comes the practice we still preserve of blessing the baptismal font's water only on those days.

Before conferring this sacrament, the names were taken of those to be baptized and of those we today call godparents, who were then called receivers, certifiers, or guarantors: *susceptores*, *sponsores*, *fidejussores*. Why was this done? It was, says Tertullian, so as not to endanger the sacrament's grace, dishonor its holiness, or expose it to dissipation and contempt.

When you wish to lend someone your money, you try to discover to whom you are lending. If you suspect his good faith, if you fear he may be unable to return what you lend, you ask for security and seek a guarantee, and no one has reason to complain of your conduct. "I am giving you my money," you tell him, "and you may squander it. I do not know your resources; you must bring someone to stand surety for you."

Now the grace of Baptism is the greatest good: a precious treasure, a possession and gift from God Himself. One must be assured of the stewardship of the person to whom it is entrusted; for greater security, someone must be responsible. This is why godfathers and godmothers are given to those presented for Baptism: to act as their sureties and answer for their faithful preservation of baptismal grace and fulfillment of the promises made on their behalf.

Q. Can every kind of person be a godfather or godmother?

A. To be a godfather or godmother one must:

I. Be a good Catholic, because those outside the Church have no right to present children to her or answer on their behalf. Moreover, the Church has no communion with heretics in her prayers and ceremonies.

II. Be of good conduct. The excommunicated, public sinners, those who have not fulfilled their Church duties, drunkards, and other infamous and scandalous persons should not be admitted to this function. How could a person of corrupt conduct fulfill a spiritual father's obligations toward his child?

III. Be well instructed in the mysteries of religion and the things necessary for salvation. For this reason godparents must have received their first Communion and, if possible, have been confirmed, because it is fitting that those wishing to present a person for Baptism should themselves be fully formed Christians.

IV. Not be the father or mother of the person to be baptized, because of the spiritual kinship godfathers and godmothers contract with the baptized person and that person's father and mother. If, outside necessity, a father or mother stood at the font for their own children, many believe they would be bound to act as we have said above in the case of a father baptizing his own child. \["Take from the font" means to act as baptismal sponsor.\] Nevertheless, it must be noted that this kinship is not contracted when the ceremonies alone are supplied, nor when Baptism is not solemnly administered.

V. Religious men and women should not be chosen as godfathers or godmothers, because the state of life they have embraced requires their complete separation from worldly entanglements and dealings: *Ad hoc etiam munus admitti non debent monachi vel sanctimoniales, neque alii cujusvis Ordinis regulares a sæculo segregati*, says the Roman Ritual—monks, nuns, and other religious of any order separated from the world should not be admitted to this office. St. Charles extends this also to clerics ordained *in sacris*. Only one godparent should be admitted, or at most one godfather and one godmother, as the Council of Trent decreed.

Q. What obligations do godfathers and godmothers have toward their godsons and goddaughters?

A. I. They must have the baptized persons for whom they stood as sponsors entered in the Church's registers.

II. When their godchildren reach the use of reason, they must remind them to renew the promises made for them in Baptism and teach them, if necessary, everything required for salvation. *Ut parentes filios suos, et patrini eos quos de fonte lavacri suscipiunt, erudire summopere studeant: illi, quia eos genuerunt, isti, quia pro eis fidejussores existunt*, says the Sixth Council of Arles, held during Leo III's pontificate in the year 813—let parents make every effort to instruct their children, and sponsors those whom they receive from the baptismal font: the former because they begot them, the latter because they stand surety for them.

III. They must love them according to God, care for their education, urge fathers and mothers to bring them up as Christians, and, if the parents fail, take charge of them.

You see your godson frequenting taverns and bad company, failing to attend the explanation of doctrine and the parish sermons, living licentiously and ignorant of religion's maxims. You say nothing to him and take no concern. Well, what fine godfathers and godmothers you are! \[The Spanish "andad, que sois unos buenos padrinos" is sarcastic praise.\] You see that your goddaughter is worldly, fond of flirtations, given to the vanities and pomps of the age, and so forth; and you let her lose her baptismal grace without a word, without warning or correction. Well, what a fine godfather and godmother you are!

Do you imagine that being a godparent involves nothing beyond giving your name to the child, holding it over the baptismal font, taking it home again, paying compliments to the godmother and those present, and making a little gift to the godson or goddaughter? You are mistaken. There are many other responsibilities. Know that you are the spiritual parent of the children for whom you stood at the font, that you are responsible for them and their surety before God: *Fidejussores apud Deum*, as a canon Gratian attributes to St. Augustine says.

As such, you must give them lessons in piety from time to time and incline them to live according to the holiness of their Baptism, telling them what St. Dionysia told her son, according to St. Victor of Vita: *Fili, non perdamus indumentum nostræ salutis, ne veniens Invitator vestem non inveniat nuptialem, et dicat: mittite eum in tenebras exteriores*—son, let us not lose the garment of our salvation, lest the One Who invited us come and fail to find the wedding garment, and say: cast him into the outer darkness.

Q. What other ceremonies precede Baptism, and what do they signify?

A. The priest keeps the person to be baptized at the church door because, being under the devil's power through original sin, he is unworthy to enter.

He is given the name of a saint, in order that he may look upon that saint as the model he should imitate and as his protector in the presence of God.

The priest breathes upon him to expel the devil through the power of the Holy Spirit, called the breath of God. He breathes in the form of a cross to teach us that the devil was cast down and conquered by Jesus Christ's cross.

He makes the sign of the cross upon the catechumen's forehead and breast to indicate that a Christian must never be ashamed of Jesus Christ's cross, but glory in it, love it, and place all his confidence in it. The other

signs of the cross signify that the sacrament of Baptism draws the whole of its power from the cross of the Savior and from the merits of His passion.

The exorcisms, whose practice is shown to be so ancient by the earliest Fathers of the Church, are for expelling the devil, under whose power we stand through original sin. The salt the priest places in the catechumen's mouth signifies the wisdom and relish for heavenly things which the Church asks for him. The saliva he puts upon the nostrils and ears signifies that they must be open to the Gospel's truths and perceive their sweetness. For this the priest uses the words of Jesus Christ, Who used His saliva to heal a man who was deaf and mute.

When introducing the catechumen into the church, the priest directs the godfather and godmother to say the Creed and, in many dioceses, the Our Father. This makes known that only true faith can obtain for us entrance into the Church, baptismal grace, and finally heavenly glory; and that a Christian must know and frequently say the prayer Jesus Christ Himself taught us.

The catechumen is then required to renounce Satan, his pomps, and his works, and promise to follow Jesus Christ alone. If it is a child, the godfather and godmother answer on its behalf. These promises are required of him because Baptism is a covenant in which God and man bind themselves reciprocally to one another. Man binds himself to renounce Satan and follow Jesus Christ, and God to give eternal life to all who remain faithful to their promises.

Here is the meaning of our promises: "I renounce Satan" means: I declare that from now on I abandon the devil's side. "The pomps of Satan" means the world's maxims and vanities. "The works of Satan" means all sins. "I believe in Jesus Christ" means: I wish to belong only to Jesus Christ's side; I submit to believing the mysteries He has revealed to His Church; I wish to follow His teaching and examples; I enroll myself among His disciples and take Him alone as Master.

Here is what you were asked and what you answered: *Repete quid interrogatus sis*, says St. Ambrose, *recognosce quid responderis*—recall what you were asked; acknowledge what you answered. You renounced the devil and his works, the world and its vanities. The promises that you have made are written down, not in the sepulcher where the dead lie, but in the book in which the living are enrolled. You pronounced them in the angels' presence, and you cannot deny them or deceive: *Tenetur vox tua, non in tumulo mortuorum, sed in libro viventium. Præsentibus angelis locutus es: non est fallere, non est negare*—your voice is recorded, not in the tomb of the dead but in the book of the living. You spoke in the angels' presence; there is no deceiving, no denying.

Q. What ceremonies accompany and follow Baptism?

A. With the holy oil called the oil of catechumens, the priest anoints in the form of a cross the breast and shoulders of the person to be baptized. This anointing signifies the grace that strengthens Christians in the labors and battles of the spiritual life and sweetens for them the yoke of Jesus Christ, to which they submit.

Before giving Baptism, the catechumen is asked whether he wishes to be baptized, because the Church grants Baptism only to those who desire and request it. Since children cannot ask for it, the Church asks on their behalf and commissions a godfather and godmother to make this petition and stand surety for the child.

After Baptism, the priest anoints the baptized person's head with holy chrism. This signifies that the sacrament of Baptism, by uniting the baptized person to Jesus Christ, gives him a share both in His priesthood and in His kingdom. Hence St. Peter says that Christians are a chosen nation and a holy people composed of priests and kings.

A white cloth is then placed upon the baptized person's head to remind him that he must preserve until death the innocence signified by this cloth. In former times those who had newly received Baptism were given white garments, and they continued to wear these garments for the space of seven days. During that time they

attended the Church's offices and received Communion every day at the Mass celebrated principally for them, as appears from the ancient prayers the Church still uses today. For this reason the Sunday on which these newly baptized put off their white garments was called *Dominica post albas*, and is still called *Dominica in albis*: that is, the Sunday on which the white garments are laid aside. The cloth now placed upon the baptized person's head signifies the same thing as those white garments.

Finally, a candle that has been lighted is placed in the hands of the person who has been baptized, to teach him that through the brilliance of his virtues and the ardor of his charity he must be a kind of burning and shining torch. As he hands it over, the priest says these words: "Receive this lighted candle, which signifies the exemplary and irreproachable life you must lead. Preserve your baptismal grace and keep your God's commandments, so that when the Lord comes to the wedding hall you may go out to meet Him and enter eternal life with all the saints."

Q. What fruit should we draw from this homily?

A. I. To conceive a great esteem for the grace that is conferred upon us in Baptism, whose excellence we should recognize through the ceremonies accompanying this sacrament.

II. To thank God for favoring us with so precious a grace through a pure effect of His mercy, while so many unbelievers are deprived of it and so many children die in their mothers' wombs.

III. To celebrate every year the anniversary of our Baptism, as we solemnize the feast of the saint whose name we bear. This practice was highly recommended in Christianity's first centuries. We know from St. Gregory Nazianzen that the Greek Church customarily solemnized this day under the name of the feast of lights.

IV. Frequently to renew our baptismal promises and never forget them: *Memor esto sermonis tui, et nunquam excidat tibi series cautionis tuæ*, St. Ambrose tells us—remember your word, and never let the terms of your pledge slip from your mind. St. Charles, one of his successors, reminds parish priests to exhort the people frequently to renew the promises they made to God in their Baptism, as a most suitable means of working toward their satisfaction \[reparation for sin\].

V. To form the resolution of living in a manner that corresponds to the holiness of the Baptism we have received. After Constantine the Great received Baptism, Eusebius relates, he said: "I declare that henceforth I shall live according to the maxims just proposed to me, which are truly worthy of God": *Eas vivendi leges mihi præscriptas esse spondeo quæ sunt Deo dignæ*.

Are you, my brethren, in the same disposition as this first Christian emperor? Alas, it may be that you have violated these holy laws from your earliest years…. What is there left for you to do, then, except to repent of having proved unfaithful to your God? Promise Him anew that you will no longer transgress the sacred vows you made in Baptism, according to which you must live to attain the eternal inheritance: *Eas vivendi leges*, and so forth.

---

[1] The Pauline references are Romans 8:1 and Ephesians 2:3.

[2] Philip's baptism of the Ethiopian court official is Acts 8:26–40. "Candace" is the royal title used in Acts 8:27.

[3] The Gospel text is John 3:5.

[4] The Gospel text is John 3:5.

Sacraments: Third Homily: On Confirmation

Original preacher not named.

Tunc imponebant manus super illos, et accipiebant Spiritum Sanctum. (Acts 8.)

Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

We read in the Acts of the Apostles that the inhabitants of Samaria received the faith through the preaching of St. Philip, one of the seven deacons and a companion of St. Stephen. When the Apostles at Jerusalem received this news, they asked St. Peter and St. John to go into that province to bring these new converts to perfection. Arriving there, the two Apostles employed two means to give them the Holy Spirit: prayer and the laying on of hands. They prayed for them to show that this outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a grace no one can merit: *Oraverunt pro eis*, says the sacred text, *ut acciperent Spiritum Sanctum*—they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. They laid their hands upon them to signify that God grants Him at the Church's entreaty: *Tunc imponebant manus super illos, et accipiebant Spiritum Sanctum*.

Thus the Samaritans, who had not yet received the Holy Spirit, although baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, then received Him through the laying on of the Apostles' hands. Their Christianity, which still lacked its final perfection, attained it through the sacrament of Confirmation. I shall speak to you of this sacrament after explaining Baptism, of which it is the completion and perfection, as the Roman Catechism says: *Baptismi gratiam perficit*—it perfects baptismal grace.

Q. What is Confirmation? Is it one of the sacraments of the new law?

A. By Confirmation Catholics understand a sacrament of the new law, instituted by Jesus Christ, which gives the Holy Spirit to the baptized to make them perfect Christians, strengthen them in faith, communicate strength to profess it courageously, and defend it against its enemies even at the risk of their lives. This is the conception of this sacrament given us by the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers. They call it by different names: the laying on of hands, holy chrism, the Lord's seal, and sacred anointing. The most common and usual name at present, however, is Confirmation. It is so called because this sacrament strengthens and perfects the new life communicated to us by Jesus Christ's grace when we received Baptism.

The Lutherans and Calvinists excluded Confirmation from the number of the sacraments, saying that it is merely a ceremony established to make those baptized in infancy give an account of their faith. The Council of Trent, in conformity with what has always been believed in the Church, defined the contrary, declaring that Confirmation is one of the seven sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ: a true sacrament, not a mere ceremony.

This article of the Catholic Church's faith is clearly demonstrated by Scripture and tradition. St. Luke expressly says that the Apostles gave the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized by laying their hands upon them. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, also speaks of anointing, as Theodoret observes, when he says: "He Who establishes us with you in Jesus Christ and has anointed us is God Himself, Who has also marked us with His seal and given the Holy Spirit as a pledge in our hearts."

Tradition teaches us the same truth. To avoid undue length, we shall be content to indicate in the notes the testimonies of the ancient Fathers. They show that the Church has always believed that bishops, as successors of the Apostles, could give the Holy Spirit to the newly baptized, whether through the laying on of hands, through anointing with holy chrism, or through both together.[1]

Jesus Christ is the author of this sacrament as of all the others of the law of grace, with this difference, says St. Thomas: He instituted it by promising it, not by administering it. For He had to die, rise again, and ascend into heaven before giving the fullness of the Holy Spirit, in which this sacrament's proper effect consists. *Expedit vobis ut Ego vadam*, He told His disciples; *si enim non abiero, Paracletus non veniet ad vos; si autem abiero, mittam Eum ad vos*—it is expedient for you that I go; for if I do not go, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

Q. Can it be said that the laying on of hands mentioned in Scripture, by which the Holy Spirit was given to the newly baptized, was instituted only for the Apostles' time and ceased after their death?

A. The Calvinists believe so, but the Catholic Church, knowing her children's needs, condemns this doctrine. It is true that, now religion is firmly established, we do not need the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit that were so frequent among the first Christians. Yet we always need the saving gifts by which the Holy Spirit confirms the faithful in faith and piety.[2]

Scripture also shows that this laying on of hands was not to end after the Apostles' time. St. Paul expressly says in his Epistle to the Hebrews that it belongs to the foundation of faith. He places it among the essential doctrines all Christians recognize as common to every age of the Church: repentance, faith, Baptism, resurrection, and the last judgment. It follows that Confirmation is a fundamental article, and that the alleged reformers, excluding it from religion, suppressed what the Holy Spirit positively declared to belong to the foundation of faith.

The same chapter enumerates the three sacraments—Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist—which the first faithful customarily received together. For it speaks of Christians who have been enlightened, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, and who have tasted the heavenly gift.

They should not reply that this sacrament was necessary in the Church's first centuries, times of persecution, but is no longer necessary now that the Church is at peace. We may well say with St. Bernard that worldly people, the impious, and libertines, before whom we must uphold the Gospel's maxims without being ashamed of the Christian name, are infinitely more to be feared than tyrants and persecutors. The Church complains that in time of peace her affliction is most bitter: *Ecce in pace amaritudo mea amarissima*.

Her affliction, says this Father, was bitter in the deaths the pagans inflicted upon the martyrs: *Amara in nece martyrum*. It was more bitter still in the conflicts with heretics: *Amarior in conflictu hæreticorum*. But now it is most bitter in the conduct of her own household—that is, dissolute Christians who mock devout souls and make a laughingstock of piety: *Amarissima nunc in moribus domesticorum*. Now, is the world not full of persecutors of this kind, worse than tyrants because they kill not bodies but souls, whom they scandalize by their wicked lives? Confirmation, then, is no less necessary today than in the Church's first centuries.

Q. Have we not already received the Holy Spirit in Baptism? Why, then, do you say Confirmation is necessary for us?

A. It is true that we have already received the Holy Spirit in Baptism. In Confirmation, however, He is given to us under a new sign and through a sacrament established for this purpose. Thus we see in the Acts of the Apostles that the Apostles received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, although they already possessed Him before. In the same way the faithful must receive the sacrament of Confirmation, each Christian's Pentecost, although they received the Holy Spirit in Baptism—but not with the same fullness of grace or the same effects.

We see that after Pentecost the Apostles were very different from what they had been before. They no longer feared death and courageously confessed Jesus Christ's name at the risk of their lives. Confirmation still produces this holy boldness in us when we receive it properly: *In Baptismo regeneramur ad vitam, post Baptismum confirmamur ad pugnam*—in Baptism we are reborn to life; after Baptism we are strengthened for battle.

Hence we must infer that, although this sacrament is not absolutely necessary for salvation, a person would nevertheless sin by negligently failing to receive it or daring to despise it. *Omnino periculosum esset, si ab hac vita sine Confirmatione migrare contigerit,* says St. Thomas, *non quia damnaretur, nisi forte propter contemptum, sed quia detrimentum perfectionis pateretur*—it would be altogether dangerous to depart this life without Confirmation, not because one would be condemned, unless perhaps through contempt, but because one would suffer a loss of perfection.

There is an obligation to receive it above all when one is persecuted for the faith or exposed to violent temptations. Thus Eusebius of Caesarea observes that the priest Novatian, who so opposed the election of Pope St. Cornelius and afterward fell into heresy and schism, had neglected to receive this sacrament: *Non fuit signaculo chrismatis consummatus*, says this historian, *unde nec Spiritum Sanctum potuit promereri*—he was not perfected by the seal of chrism, and so could not obtain the Holy Spirit. Therefore it is a very culpable negligence not to prepare to receive this sacrament when the opportunity offers itself.

Q. What is the matter of Confirmation? What is chrism? Must it be consecrated by the bishop? What is this sacrament's form, and who is its minister?

A. It is the common opinion of theologians that the laying on of hands and anointing with holy chrism constitute the essential matter of Confirmation. The proof is that the Church's Fathers attribute Confirmation's effect equally to the laying on of hands and the anointing with holy chrism. Chrism is composed of olive oil and balsam, mixed and solemnly blessed by the bishop. The oil signifies the abundance of the Holy Spirit's grace, which softens whatever seems arduous in Jesus Christ's law and gives us strength to fulfill it. The balsam signifies that, through the holiness of his life, a Christian must be the sweet fragrance of Jesus Christ.

According to Eugene IV's decree for the Armenians, this sacrament's form consists of these words the bishop says when giving Confirmation: *Signo te signo crucis, et confirmo te chrismate salutis, in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti*—I mark you with the sign of the cross and confirm you with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The bishop alone is the ordinary minister of Confirmation, as defined by the Council of Trent, which imposed excommunication upon those saying that simple priests are this sacrament's ordinary ministers. This function was particularly entrusted to bishops because it was reserved to the Apostles, whose successors they are. We know this not only from the Church's custom but also from Holy Scripture, which tells us that the Apostles sent St. Peter and St. John to confirm the inhabitants of Samaria baptized by the disciples.

Q. How is this sacrament administered?

A. I. The bishop lays his hands upon those he wishes to confirm. This laying on of hands represents the Holy Spirit descending and coming to rest upon the Christian's soul, as the bishop's hands rest upon his head. It also represents God's protection: He receives the Christian, as it were, between His hands to defend him from his enemies.

II. With his thumb dipped in holy chrism, the bishop makes a cross upon the forehead of the person being confirmed. This anointing signifies the abundance of grace strengthening the Christian as Jesus Christ's athlete and preparing him to fight courageously against the enemies of his salvation. This action is performed upon the forehead, where the sense of shame resides. It teaches us never to be ashamed of Jesus Christ's Gospel, but to preserve and observe it faithfully.

III. The bishop then gives the person just confirmed a light slap, saying: "Peace be with you." By this ceremony the Church wishes to teach us that this sacrament must give us strength generously to suffer every kind of insult and punishment for Jesus Christ, and that there is no solid peace for a Christian in this world except in patience. In some dioceses a godfather and godmother are chosen to present those to be confirmed to the bishop. These sponsors' obligations and responsibilities are the same as those of baptismal sponsors, of whom we spoke in their place.

Q. Who can receive the sacrament of Confirmation, and what dispositions must the recipient bring?

A. All who have been baptized and not confirmed can receive this sacrament. Anciently the Church gave Confirmation even to newly baptized infants, and whenever a bishop was the baptizer he always confirmed those he had just baptized. This practice still exists among the Greeks, and the Roman Church does not

disapprove of it. She no longer follows it, however, for good reasons: when this sacrament is received with understanding, there is less danger of repeating it, and it is received with better dispositions and greater fruit.

The dispositions required for receiving this sacrament concern body and soul. Those of the body are:

1. To be fasting if possible, particularly when Confirmation is administered in the morning: *Qui adulta ætate confirmati sunt… admoneantur ut jejuni illud suscipiant, cum mane ministratur*, says the Council of Aix of 1585—those confirmed in adult age should be admonished to receive it fasting when it is administered in the morning.

2. To come modestly dressed and modest in every outward respect, having washed the face and keeping it clean, especially the forehead, where the bishop makes the anointing.

3. Men and boys should be separated from women and girls. They must keep silence, refrain from making noise, and prepare by prayer to receive the Holy Spirit.

The dispositions of the soul are:

1. To have been baptized and reached the use of reason. If one does not wait until the age of twelve, the Roman Catechism says that at least it should not be given before seven. St. Charles, in his first provincial Council of Milan, held in 1565, expressly forbids administering it before this age: *Minori septennio confirmationis sacramentum nemini præbeatur*—let the sacrament of Confirmation be given to no one under seven years.

2. To be in the state of grace, for receiving it in mortal sin would be a sacrilege. One must therefore confess beforehand or, if unable to confess, have at least true contrition for one's sins: *Adulti deberent prius peccata confiteri, et postea confirmari, vel saltem peccata quæ admiserunt doleant*, says the Roman Pontifical—adults should first confess their sins and afterward be confirmed, or at least grieve for the sins they have committed.

3. To be instructed in the principal mysteries of faith, particularly the sacrament of Confirmation, the graces it confers, and the effects it produces.[3]

Q. What are the effects of the sacrament of Confirmation?

A. I. This sacrament agrees with the other sacraments of the new law in conferring habitual and sanctifying grace upon those receiving it worthily. Its proper and particular effect is to give us a grace of strength to withstand the outward and inward assaults of our salvation's enemies. This makes us disregard the persecutions, insults, and torments that tyrants and heretics inflict upon Christians to make them waver in faith and virtue. It gives us courage boldly to confess Jesus Christ's faith even at the risk of life. It helps us restrain the movements of concupiscence arising within us. It enables us to resist the devil's temptations and the mockery of worldly people who would prevent us from leading a well-ordered Christian life: *Ideo autem nos unxit Christus, quia luctatores contra diabolum fecit*, says St. Augustine—Christ anointed us precisely because He made us wrestlers against the devil.

II. In Confirmation the Holy Spirit communicates His seven gifts: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of God. These gifts are supernatural habits adorning and perfecting our soul and inclining it to act according to the Holy Spirit's movements. The bishop asks God for them in the prayer he says over those he wishes to confirm.

III. Confirmation also has another effect: it imprints upon the baptized person's soul an indelible spiritual character, which means that this sacrament cannot be received twice. This character differs from Baptism's character: the latter is the character of a child of God, the former the character of Jesus Christ's soldier, enabling us to fight for Him.

Q. How must a Christian live after receiving the sacrament of Confirmation?

A. I. He must perform the works of a perfect Christian. All the confirmed ought to be like that illustrious martyr of Vienne in Dauphiné mentioned in the history of the martyrs of Lyons. He was a deacon and a saint both in name and reality, for his name was Sanctus and he lived most holily. When the tyrant asked his name and who he was, he contented himself with answering: "I am a Christian." "What is your name?" "I am a Christian." "Where are you from?" "I am a Christian." "What is your occupation?" "I am a Christian."

This is what we should say—or rather what we should do: be Christians in everything and nothing else. We must live according to faith and the Gospel's maxims, speak as Christians, act as Christians, conduct business as Christians, and perform all our actions to please God and imitate Jesus Christ: *Frustra appellamur christiani, si imitatores non sumus Christi*, says St. Leo—we are called Christians in vain if we are not imitators of Christ.

II. To have ardent zeal for religion, courageously defending the truths of faith and the Gospel's maxims against unbelievers, heretics, the impious, and libertines attacking them through words and bad example. Very many persecutors of this kind ridicule devotion and turn others away from God's service. We must courageously oppose them: *Frontosus esto, quando opprobrium audis de Christo*, says St. Augustine; *quid times fronti tuæ quam signo crucis armasti?*—show a bold forehead when you hear Christ reviled; why fear for your forehead, which you have armed with the sign of the cross?

III. A confirmed person must not allow himself to be carried away by human respect. \[Here "human respect" means fear of other people's disapproval.\] The thought "What will the world say?" holds many back and prevents their walking the path of perfection.

Tell that woman: This extravagance in dress harms your eternal salvation, attaches your heart to vanity, wastes the best part of your time, and prevents your paying debts or giving alms. You would do better to dress more simply. "I would gladly do so," she replies, "but what would people say?" "I would receive the sacraments much more frequently," says this young man, "and visit the sick and hospitals; but I am ashamed before the world, which would consider me a sanctimonious devotee." \[The Spanish *beato* is used here as a disparaging label for a conspicuously devout person.\]

"I do not like flirtatious chatter, especially in church," says this young person. "I would be glad to find only God there; I know that this alone is why one goes there. But I dare not displease my neighbor, who comes to tell me about her household affairs." "I would gladly teach my servants the mysteries of faith," says this master, "but I dare not: they would say I was setting myself up as a preacher."

Ah, my brother, my sister, why have you been confirmed? Do you not know what Jesus Christ says in His Gospel? Whoever confesses and acknowledges Me before men, says the Lord, I will also acknowledge before My Father in heaven; but whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny before My Father in heaven. Cast your eyes upon that innumerable multitude of martyrs who confessed the faith and Jesus Christ's name amid the cruelest torments. Learn from them to confess Him without fear or disguise, so that, having imitated their courage, you may one day share their crown.

---

[1] The Gospel quotation is John 16:7.

[2] The passage in Hebrews is 6:1–5.

[3] The Sanctus narrative is preserved in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* V.1.

Sacraments: Fourth Homily: On the Eucharist: Its Promise and Institution, the Real Presence, and Transubstantiation

Original preacher not named.

Memoriam fecit mirabilium Suorum misericors et miserator Dominus: escam dedit timentibus Se. (Psalm 110.)

The merciful and compassionate Lord perpetuated the memory of His wonders by giving heavenly food to those who fear Him.

Thus the royal Prophet speaks of the manna the Lord caused to fall from heaven in the desert to nourish the people who worshiped and feared Him. Under this wonderful food the Holy Spirit thus prefigured the food of Jesus Christ's body: the incorruptible food and true bread come down from heaven which He graciously willed to give us, without our having merited it, because He is a God full of goodness and mercy toward us: *Misericors et miserator Dominus*.

We must therefore regard this mystery as a memorial and a compendium of all His wonders: *Memoriam fecit mirabilium Suorum*. What should be the memorial of so many graces—Jesus Christ's incarnation, life, and death; His sufferings, our redemption, His resurrection, and all His other benefits? What, I repeat, should this memorial be? Must it not be as excellent as the graces it represented? Thus only Jesus Christ in the Eucharist could be an image of the divine actions and infinite graces of Jesus Christ Himself.

This, then, is the great work of His love and wisdom. He willed to remain with us until the consummation of the ages, to be the food of those who fear Him: *Escam dedit timentibus Se*. I say, of those who fear Him; for although the Eucharist is received by all, it nourishes and gives life only to those filled with fear of the Lord. I shall speak to you of this august sacrament after treating Baptism and Confirmation. To proceed in order, I shall explain first what we must believe concerning this mystery, and afterward what it requires of us.

Q. What is the Eucharist? Has it other names? Did Jesus Christ promise it to His Church before instituting it?

A. The Eucharist is a sacrament of the new law which truly and really contains, under the species of bread and wine, the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ, Who instituted it as the spiritual food of our souls. The word "Eucharist" means thanksgiving. When instituting it Jesus Christ gave thanks to His Father; and by offering and receiving it we also render God the most pleasing thanksgiving that can be offered Him.

The Eucharist has other names besides. We call it the Most Blessed Sacrament, by preeminence, because it is the greatest of all the sacraments, containing not only grace but Jesus Christ Himself, the author and fountain of all graces. It is also called the Lord's Supper, *cœna Domini*, because the Savior instituted this sacrament after supping with His Apostles; the holy table, because Jesus Christ invites us to it; Communion, because it unites all the faithful to one another and to Jesus Christ their Head; and Viaticum, because it strengthens us during the pilgrimage of this life and helps us pass from earth to heaven.

Jesus Christ promised the Eucharist to His Church before instituting it, as appears in the sixth chapter of St. John. He says: "I am the living bread come down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever; and the bread I shall give is My flesh, which I shall deliver for the life of the world." Here is the promise of the Eucharist. "Truly, truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you will not have life within you." Here is the precept He imposes upon us to receive it. "My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink." Here is the reality, and how Jesus Christ's body is truly received by Christians' mouths.

Now behold this sacrament's effects. "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him." Here is the close union it gives us with Jesus Christ. "This is the living bread come down from heaven. It is not like that which your fathers ate in the desert, who died. Whoever eats this bread will live forever." Here, finally, is this sacrament's ultimate effect: to be a sure pledge of eternal life for those receiving it worthily.

But is it altogether certain that this chapter should be explained by applying it to the Eucharist? There is no doubt: reason alone convinces us of it. Otherwise St. John would not have spoken of this great mystery, which the other three Evangelists took care not to omit. Without this, something very important would be lacking in God's word: I mean a passage discussing the Eucharist's effects. Finally, without it, as the interpreters observe, it is impossible to explain everything contained in this chapter. Besides, we have the authority of the ancient Fathers of the Church, who understood it of the Eucharist.[1]

Q. Having explained Jesus Christ's promise of the Eucharist to His Church, tell us how He instituted it.

A. In this action we should consider the circumstances accompanying the consecration of the bread and those accompanying the consecration of the wine, the materials Jesus Christ used in instituting this sacrament.

I. The first circumstance is the time. He instituted it on the eve of His passion: *In qua nocte tradebatur*, says St. Paul—on the night He was betrayed. It was after the eating of the paschal lamb, while the supper still continued: *Cœnantibus autem eis*, says St. Matthew—while they were at supper—in order to unite the reality and its figure at the same supper. He also willed to conclude His last supper with His disciples by this sacrament so as to impress its memory more deeply, says St. Augustine.

II. He took bread into His hands, gave thanks to His Father, and blessed it. By this efficacious and almighty blessing He changed the bread into His own body. He broke what He had just blessed and made thirteen portions for the same number of persons at table. He took the first for Himself: *Ipse conviva et convivium; Ipse comedens, et Qui comeditur*, says St. Jerome—He Himself is guest and banquet, Himself the One eating and the One eaten. He then distributed the others to the Apostles, saying: "Take and eat; this is My body, which is given for you": *Quod pro vobis datur*. That is, it is now distributed to you; or, according to St. Paul, it will be delivered to death for you: *Quod pro vobis tradetur*.[2]

III. He commanded His Apostles to do the same and henceforth renew the remembrance of what He had done: *Hoc facite in Meam commemorationem*—do this in remembrance of Me. This is understood to continue until the end of the ages, as St. Paul observes, teaching us that whenever we eat this bread and drink this wine, we proclaim the Lord's death until His coming. Here is what concerns the consecration of the bread.

I. The first circumstance of the wine's consecration is that Jesus Christ likewise took the chalice after supper: that is, the cup from which He drank. *Similiter et calicem postquam cœnavit*—likewise the chalice after He had supped. This circumstance reminds us that the legal supper had passed and the Eucharist was instituted in its place.

II. He repeated the thanksgiving and blessing to show that, by His almighty power, He was about to change the wine into His blood, just as He had changed the bread into His body.

III. He drank first and invited the Apostles to drink afterward, saying: "Drink of this, all of you, for this is My blood, the blood of the New Testament, which will be shed for you and for many for the remission of sins." The blood Jesus Christ gave His Apostles was the same that was to be shed upon the cross: *Qui pro vobis fundetur*. Consequently it was the Savior's true blood, not merely in figure and efficacy, but substantially and really.

Such is the history of the Eucharist's institution, related by the Evangelists and St. Paul. In it we see no difficulty raised by the Apostles, who understood very well that this fulfilled Jesus Christ's promise to give them His flesh to eat and His blood to drink.

Q. Must these words Jesus Christ spoke when instituting the Eucharist—"This is My body; this is My blood"—be understood literally?

A. Yes. Here are the convincing proofs.

I. The three Evangelists St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, and St. Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 11, who speak of the Eucharist's institution, unanimously relate that Jesus Christ said of the bread, "This is My body," and of the chalice, "This is My blood." They agree concerning the Eucharist's institution. In all of them we see the same faithfulness concerning the word "body" and the word "blood"; none explains the words of institution otherwise. They must therefore be taken literally. To understand them otherwise is to impose upon Scripture a forced meaning contrary to God's word.

II. Jesus Christ was then making His testament, as the holy Fathers observe: *Hæreditarium munus Novi Testamenti*, says St. Gaudentius, Bishop of Brescia—the hereditary gift of the New Testament. He was establishing the most august of all sacraments, particularly destined to maintain the Church's unity. Now a wise and prudent testator who loves his heirs does not express himself in obscure and figurative language, but in clear terms, so as not to give occasion for disputes. This is what Jesus Christ did. For how could He express Himself more clearly than by saying of the bread, "This is My body," and of the wine, "This is My blood"? Therefore the literal meaning, which is the Catholic meaning, is the true meaning of these words.

According to St. Luke, who wrote Jesus Christ's actions in the order in which they occurred, Our Lord had said at the supper preceding the Eucharist's institution: "I shall no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." The Apostles therefore clearly recognized, when their Master again sat at table to eat and drink with them, saying, "This is My blood"—they recognized, I repeat, that it was His true blood, since He had just assured them that He would no longer drink the fruit of the vine.

They did not doubt it in any way, knowing that He was eternal truth, incapable of any lie or deception. They were further confirmed in this truth when Jesus Christ, having entered His Father's kingdom through His glorious resurrection, fulfilled before their eyes what He had promised before the institution: He drank with them of the fruit of the vine, which was truly new for Him because of the divine and supernatural state He had entered.

Finally, what should complete the conviction of any ordinary understanding is that in every age the Church has always understood these words literally, as may be seen in the testimonies of the holy Fathers quoted at great length by our controversialists.

Q. Could these words, "This is My body," not be given a figurative meaning, as though they meant: "This is the figure, sign, or representation of My body"?

A. The leaders of the alleged reformers, who separated from the Church about three hundred years ago, wished to abolish the Mass and the adoration of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. They therefore denied His real presence there. To combat a truth always believed in the Church for fifteen centuries, they devised the expedient of giving an allegorical meaning to Jesus Christ's clear and express words, "This is My body," saying they mean, "This is the sign or figure of My body," or "My body in representation." This is a forced explanation, contrary to Holy Scripture, faith, the Fathers' understanding, and reason itself, as we shall briefly demonstrate.

Protestants, according to their own account, profess to believe only what is in Scripture. Yet we challenge them to find anywhere in Scripture this explanation: "This is the sign or figure of My body." On the contrary, whenever Scripture treats of the Eucharist, whether in John 6 or in the Evangelists and St. Paul, it always speaks of a presence and a bodily eating. Their explanation is therefore contrary to Holy Scripture.

It is opposed to faith: it destroys the mystery of mankind's redemption, which these heretics profess to believe as we do. For if Jesus Christ's words, "This is My body, which will be delivered for you; this is My blood, which will be shed for you," must be taken figuratively, it necessarily follows that Jesus Christ died only figuratively and shed His blood only figuratively. This is the impious and blasphemous doctrine of the

Manichaeans, into which their explanation has led them.

The Fathers not only do not authorize this explanation; they expressly exclude it. Eternal life must not be promised, says St. Augustine, to Catholics who live wickedly merely because they have eaten Jesus Christ's body, not only in sign but really and truly: *Quia non solo sacramento, sed re ipsa manducaverunt corpus Christi*.

The Lord, says St. John Damascene in the fourth book of *The Orthodox Faith*, positively assures us that what He gave us in the Eucharist is His body, not the figure of His body; His blood, not the figure of His blood: *Dominus dixit, non corporis signum, sed corpus, nec sanguinis signum, sed sanguis.*

Theophylact, Archbishop of Ohrid in Bulgaria, who flourished in the eleventh century, says in chapter 26 of his commentary on St. Matthew: By these words, "This is My body," Jesus Christ showed that the bread consecrated upon the altar is the Lord's body itself, not an antitype or an image of that body. He did not say, "This is the figure of My body," but "This is My body," this bread being changed by an ineffable operation, although it appears to us to be bread: *Non dixit: hoc est figura, sed hoc est corpus Meum, ineffabili enim operatione transformatum.*

The Calvinists' explanation is rejected not only by the holy Fathers but also by right reason and sound judgment. To say that "This is My body" means simply "This is the figure or sign of My body" is to claim that the bread is a sign of the body. This contradicts good sense because, although a sign sometimes bears the name of the thing signified, that happens only when those addressed have previously been informed of it. The Apostles had never been told that the bread Jesus Christ held in His hands was appointed to be the sign of His body. Therefore the Calvinist meaning is ridiculous, false, deceptive, and altogether unworthy of attribution to Jesus Christ. Behold the abyss of blindness to which heresy and schism lead, without the man fallen into it opening his eyes to recognize his deplorable condition.

Q. Can the primitive Church's usages and practices show that Jesus Christ's real presence in the Eucharist was believed then as we believe it today?

A. Without quoting the ancient Fathers' explicit passages, it is easy to demonstrate from the primitive Church's practices that the first Christians' Eucharistic faith was the same as that of Catholics today. Let us hear St. Cyril of Jerusalem, who lived in the fourth century under the emperor Constantius. In his catecheses, or addresses instructing new Christians in religion's mysteries, he teaches the same thing we tell first communicants every day: they must believe most firmly that under the species of bread and wine they truly receive the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Omni cum certitudine corpus et sanguinem Christi sumamus: nam sub specie panis datur tibi corpus, et sub specie vini datur sanguis: ut sumpto corpore Christi, efficiaris et comparticeps corporis et sanguinis—let us receive Christ's body and blood with complete certainty; for under the species of bread His body is given to you, and under the species of wine His blood, so that by receiving Christ's body you may become a sharer in His body and blood.

He tells them what we so frequently say: this mystery must be judged not by the senses' testimony but by faith's: *Ne ex gustu rem judices, quin potius habeas pro certissimo, ita ut nulla subeat dubitatio, esse tibi donata corpus et sanguinem*—do not judge the matter by taste, but rather hold it as most certain, without any doubt arising, that the body and blood have been given to you.

He teaches them how to receive Communion and hold their hands, according to that time's practice of receiving the Eucharist in the right hand before bringing it to the mouth. He warns them to take care not to let the smallest part fall: *Accedens autem ad Communionem, non expansis manuum volis accedas, neque disjunctis digitis; sed sinistram veluti sedem quamdam subjicias dexteræ, quæ tantum Regem susceptura est; et concava manu suscipe corpus Christi, dicens: Amen. Sanctificatis ergo diligenter oculis tam sancti*

corporis contactu, communica, cave autem ne quid inde excidat tibi—when approaching Communion, do not come with palms outspread or fingers apart; make your left hand a kind of throne beneath the right, which is to receive so great a King. In your hollowed hand receive Christ's body, saying "Amen." Having carefully sanctified your eyes by contact with so holy a body, communicate; take care that none of it falls from you.[3]

Those first Christians adored Jesus Christ in the Eucharist as we do, as the same St. Cyril testifies. Like us, they believed that the very Jesus Christ Who had been in Bethlehem's manger was upon our altars: *Tu vero non in præsepe, sed in altari vides*, St. John Chrysostom tells his people—you see Him not in a manger but upon the altar. Like us, they believed that the same blood flowing from Jesus Christ's side was in the chalice and was received by us in Holy Communion: *Quod est in calice, id est quod a latere fluxit, et illius sumus participes*, says the same saint—what is in the chalice is what flowed from His side, and we are sharers in it.

Like us, they had a very particular devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar, as St. Augustine relates of his mother St. Monica. With us they extended their reverence to everything connected with this holy sacrament: churches, altars, sacred vessels, and vestments. Hence St. Optatus, Bishop of Milevis in Numidia, who lived in the fourth century, accuses the Donatists of a horrible sacrilege in demolishing altars and breaking chalices: *Quid tam sacrilegum quam altaria Dei, in quibus aliquando et vos obtulistis, frangere?… Fregistis etiam calices Christi sanguinis portatores*—what is so sacrilegious as breaking God's altars, upon which you yourselves once offered?… You also broke the chalices that bear Christ's blood.

I now beg the gentlemen of the reformed religion to tell me sincerely which of the two religions, theirs or ours, follows the primitive Church's usages. They cannot doubt what we have just related from the Fathers of the first four centuries, when, by their admission, the Church's belief was wholly pure. I ask them, then: Where among them are those altars upon which, according to St. Optatus, St. Augustine, and St. John Chrysostom, the holy sacrifice is offered and Our Lord Jesus Christ's body resides? Where are the chalices bearing His blood, and the other sacred vessels? Have they not abolished all the ancient religious usages since separating from the Church? What would be required to make them abandon this new sect, which, like that of the Jews, has remained without altars or sacrifice?

Q. When Jesus Christ is in the Eucharist, is there neither bread nor wine there?

A. The Lutherans, who believe in Jesus Christ's real presence in the Eucharist, at least when the faithful receive it, maintain that bread and wine remain in the sacrament. But this is an error condemned by the Church. She teaches that through the words of consecration—the words of Jesus Christ Himself, pronounced by the priest in His name—the substance of bread is changed into the substance of Jesus Christ's body, and the substance of wine into the substance of His blood. Nothing of the bread and wine remains except the species or appearances: color, shape, and taste. This change is called transubstantiation, that is, a change of substance.

The Church's doctrine on this article comes from apostolic tradition and is founded upon Jesus Christ's words. For when the Savior told His disciples, "Take and eat; this is My body," it is clear that what He presented to them was His body. Catholics reason upon this as follows: What the Savior presented to the Apostles was Jesus Christ's body; therefore it was not bread, since the same thing cannot be bread and flesh at the same time. It was bread before being presented; it is no longer bread after the Savior assures them it is His body.

Furthermore, when Jesus Christ told His disciples, "This is My body," He spoke according to the ordinary rules of speech. So spoken, these words could not mean "My body is in this bread," because bread is not ordinarily appointed to contain Jesus Christ's body. These words therefore mean simply that what Jesus Christ then held in His hands was His body alone.

Even if we attended only to Scripture's letter, it is evident that our explanation is better founded. What demonstrates that it alone is true, however, is:

1. It is adopted by all the Christian nations of the world, even those separated from us by a very ancient schism. It is undeniable that all these societies, of whatever communion, excepting Protestants, believe with us in the real presence and transubstantiation. We have very many authentic published testimonies that cannot be doubted.

2. Our belief on this article agrees entirely with that of the Church's first centuries. No other proof is required than what St. Cyril of Jerusalem says in the catechesis cited above. You know very well that in works of this kind particular care is taken to speak accurately and say nothing contrary to the doctrine universally received in the Church.

"Since Jesus Christ," says this Father, "declared, speaking of the bread, that it was His body, who will dare doubt it? Since He assured us that this was His blood, who can dispute it? On another occasion He changed water into wine at Cana of Galilee by His will alone; does He not deserve belief when He changes wine into His blood? If, invited to a human wedding, He performed this prodigious miracle, with greater reason must we believe that He performs equally great ones when He admits the Bridegroom's children to the sacred banquet He has prepared for them.

"Let us therefore receive Jesus Christ's body and blood with complete certainty. For under the species of bread His body is given to you, and under the species of wine His blood, so that, made sharers in Jesus Christ's body and blood, you may become one body and one blood with Him."

Could this Father express himself more in our favor? Will any catechism or devotional book in the Roman Church be found teaching the dogma of transubstantiation more clearly and precisely? What will Protestants say to this? Should they not lay down their weapons and confess that it is unjust to accuse us of innovation, since the dogma they imagine new was so thoroughly established in the middle of the fourth century that it was considered necessary to teach it to catechumens?

Q. What fruit should Catholics draw from this homily?

A. To have in this Eucharistic mystery a faith full of fear, veneration, and reverence, so as to render Jesus Christ the honor those outside the Church rob from His altars. The unbelief and contempt of outsiders should add new fervor to the faithful's piety. They are, as the Apostle says, God's household and, as such, obliged to uphold their divine Master's glory.

Yet we are far from doing so. We spend part of our life in Jesus Christ's presence and near His divine person, since our religion obliges us to come frequently to church, where we believe He is always present. Nevertheless, how do we behave there? I shall not say it myself; St. John Chrysostom will. Reproving the impiety of his time, he seems to have painted a portrait of ours.

"It is lamentable," he says, "to see Christians' scant reverence for our holy mysteries and the irreverences they commit even at the foot of our altars. They talk there as at home, transact business as in the market, flirt as at a dance, and laugh as at a comedy. Where do you imagine yourselves to be, Christians? Do you think our altars are theaters? Do you take our mysteries for fables, and Jesus Christ for a king in a comedy? *Numquid theatrica sunt ista?* Observe what happens to the man playing a king in the theater. He is respected while the play lasts; but as soon as it ends, he is despised as a common man."

I shudder, my Savior, to apply so insulting an expression to Your glory. Nevertheless, we must confess that many Christians' impiety makes this unjust distinction in Your holy mysteries. When the priest at Mass elevates the Host, all prostrate themselves, bend their knees, and adore You. Yet immediately afterward, throughout the time You remain upon our altars, nothing is seen but immodesty and irreverence. Is this not, my Savior, treating You as a theatrical king? *Numquid theatrica sunt ista?*

Ah, irreligious Christians, where is your faith? What can heretics think when they see your distraction? Will they not have cause to doubt your religion? "What!" they say. "If Catholics believed, as they assert, that Jesus Christ is really in the Eucharist, would they treat Him this way?" Ah, my brethren, let us amend! By our piety let us bring the heretics' blasphemies to an end. Let us show our faith by works, and never cease adoring and glorifying in our churches Him Who is blessed throughout all ages.

---

[1] The source cites Irenaeus, Origen, Cyprian, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose, and Augustine for John 6's Eucharistic interpretation.

[2] The institution itself is recorded in Matthew 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:14–20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.

[3] References: *Mystagogical Catecheses* 4–5.

Sacraments: Fifth Homily: On Communion

Original preacher not named.

Sicut misit Me vivens Pater, et Ego vivo propter Patrem; et qui manducat Me, et ipse vivet propter Me. (John 6.)

As My eternal Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so whoever receives Me will also live because of Me.

These consoling and instructive words teach us that the Eucharist is a sacrament of life, that Jesus Christ is living in it, and that He gives life to those who partake of it worthily: *Et qui manducat Me, et ipse vivet propter Me*. We may distinguish two different lives in the Savior's person: a perceptible and public life He formerly lived on earth, and a secret and invisible life He now lives in the Most Blessed Sacrament. The first lasted only thirty-three years; the second must last until the consummation of the ages. The former passed in Palestine's towns and villages; the latter passes every day upon our altars and in Christians' hearts.

What a wonderful life, resembling that which He received from His Father! For just as He lives through His Father, so in this august sacrament He makes us live for Him and through Him: *Et qui manducat Me, et ipse vivet propter Me*. We all have an interest in understanding this spiritual life He desires to have in our souls through Holy Communion. Since it is directed entirely to our benefit, let us endeavor to learn about it.

Q. Are we obliged to receive the Eucharist, and when are we particularly obliged to receive it?

A. We are obliged to receive the Eucharist by divine precept and by ecclesiastical precept. With St. Thomas, however, we must note that there are two ways of receiving it: spiritually and sacramentally. Spiritual communion consists in uniting oneself to Jesus Christ; sacramental Communion in receiving the sacrament containing Him.

When we reach the use of reason, we must receive it in both ways. That is, if bodily illness prevents our actually receiving Communion, we must communicate spiritually, for no one can be saved without union with Jesus Christ, the Head of all the predestined. If we have no infirmity preventing Communion, however, we are obliged to receive:

I. By divine precept, Jesus Christ having expressly said: "Truly, truly I declare to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you will not have life within you." Thus this is not an indifferent matter or a mere counsel, but an express command, binding particularly when we are in danger of death. A sick person in this condition, although having received Communion several times during the year, is obliged to receive this sacrament if possible. For there is no time in life when it is more necessary than in illness.

II. We are obliged by the Church's precept. Formerly one had to communicate three times a year: at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. As Christians' laxity increased, the General Council of the Lateran under Innocent III in 1215 reduced this obligation to Easter, which the Council of Trent confirmed. Consequently

anyone failing to fulfill it must be regarded as excommunicated, deserving exclusion from church during life and deprivation of ecclesiastical burial if he dies in this state.

Nevertheless, enforcement of these penalties belongs to the bishop alone. Parish priests must therefore take care to send him the names of the disobedient, await his orders, and carry them out faithfully. *Communicantium*, says the Council of Toulouse of 1590, page 2, chapter 5, *in Paschate parochi nomina describent, quos communioni defuisse perceperint, notam ad Episcopum deferent; quosque defectu rationis extra confessionem cognoverint, significabunt*—parish priests shall record the names of those communicating at Easter, report to the bishop those they find have failed to communicate, and identify those whose lack of reason they have learned of outside confession.

Easter Communion must be made in one's own parish church, not elsewhere, as the Roman Ritual prescribes.[1]

Q. Are the faithful obliged to communicate under both species? What was the Church's former practice? Could she deprive laypeople of participation in the chalice?

A. The Lutherans and Calvinists, following John Hus's example, claim there is a divine precept obliging all the faithful to communicate under both species. The Council of Trent pronounced anathema against this error. The Council of Constance had previously declared that no precept obliges all the faithful to receive under both species.

This is not essential to the sacrament, because Jesus Christ's body and blood are equally present under either species. Jesus Christ is living and immortal in the Eucharist: for, as St. Paul says, having risen, He dies no more. Since He is living in the Eucharist and His body cannot be separated from His blood, it follows that by communicating under one species we receive His body and blood and Jesus Christ entire, just as if we communicated under both.

Thus, except for priests obliged to communicate under both species when celebrating Mass, according to the Church's present discipline Communion should be received only under the species of bread. Nevertheless this discipline has exceptions. Even today there are churches where, besides priests, others receive under both species at certain times and with various ceremonies.

At Rome the deacon and subdeacon serving at the altar at the pope's Mass communicate under both species. The same is done in the abbeys of Cluny and Saint-Denis in France for deacons and subdeacons serving at the altar on Sundays and feasts; for all Cluny's religious on the opening day of the order's general chapter; for the kings of France on the day of their consecration, and so forth.[2]

Concerning ancient practice, I answer that the faithful communicated under both species and sometimes under one alone. St. Luke mentions only the species of bread in the Acts of the Apostles when speaking of the first Christians' life: "They persevered," he says, "in the Apostles' teaching, in the communion of the breaking of bread, and in prayer." St. Paul, in First Corinthians, where he speaks of unworthy Communion, says that it suffices to have received "the Lord's body or blood," employing the disjunctive "or," not the copulative "and." We therefore have reason to believe that even then Communion was sometimes received under one species.

But the certain proof that the Church never thought reception of both species necessary to fulfill the Communion precept is that from the first centuries she permitted Communion under one species on many occasions. When Communion was given to the sick, the Eucharist was given only under the species of bread, as ecclesiastical history teaches us. In this manner St. Honoratus, Bishop of Vercelli, gave Communion to St. Ambrose during his illness. During persecutions the faithful brought the Eucharist home under the species of bread alone. Solitaries likewise carried it to their deserts, where, lacking priests, they gave themselves Communion. These facts, related by the ancient Fathers, show that the Church never regarded Communion

under both species as Jesus Christ's precept except for priests saying Mass. Outside that case she has regarded and still regards it as a point of discipline that may be varied.

The Communion of the sick ordinarily under one species, the difficulty of obtaining wine in some provinces, some persons' aversion to wine, and the danger of spilling Jesus Christ's blood when distributing it to the faithful led to suppression of the chalice's use. Matters stood thus, without a Church decree, in the twelfth century, as appears from Alexander of Hales and St. Thomas. The faithful, instructed that Communion under one species was equally beneficial and contained Jesus Christ entire, did not resent this deprivation.

Then Peter of Dresden and John Hus stirred up disturbances about it in Bohemia, claiming use of the chalice was absolutely necessary. The Council of Constance, which began in 1414, opposed this error. After mature examination it commanded observance of the established practice of communicating under one species. The Council of Trent followed this decree and pronounced anathema upon anyone daring to say that "the Church had no just motives or good reasons for withholding the chalice of Jesus Christ's blood from laypeople and priests not celebrating."

Q. Should every kind of person be admitted to Communion? To whom must it be refused?

A. To give Communion indiscriminately to everyone would act against Jesus Christ's precept forbidding us to give holy things to the unworthy: *Nolite sanctum dare canibus*—do not give what is holy to dogs. Therefore the following should not be admitted to the sacred table:

I. Public sinners, as St. Thomas teaches. This holy Doctor calls a public sinner someone recognized as such through the notoriety of the fact, or declared such by the ecclesiastical judge's sentence. St. Charles directs that Communion be denied not only to heretics, schismatics, the excommunicated and interdicted, but also to public sinners, such as those living in concubinage, usurers, sorcerers, and blasphemers, until they have amended and made suitable satisfaction to repair their scandal. This applies, the saint adds, even if they present testimony that they have confessed.

II. The same saint says it must be refused to women daring to approach the sacred table with their breasts uncovered, beauty patches on their faces, and other scandalous signs of worldliness. Those whose sin is not public must not be denied Communion when they request it publicly and refusal would cause scandal. If they ask privately, however, the priest may refuse when he is certain of their unworthiness through a means other than confession, or warn them, as St. Thomas says, not to present themselves.

III. Communion should not be given to persons deprived of reason or delirious, unless they have lucid intervals in which they manifest the desire for it. Then, provided there is no danger of irreverence, it may lawfully be administered.

IV. According to the Church's present discipline, Communion should not be given to children until they reach the age of discretion and are sufficiently instructed, which, according to St. Thomas, generally does not occur until ten years of age.

Q. Should one receive Communion frequently? What rules concerning frequent Communion may be given to the faithful?

A. Nothing is better or more useful for our sanctification than frequent Communion, provided it is received worthily. It is not rashness, says St. John Chrysostom, to approach the sacred table often; it is rashness to approach unworthily, even if only once: *Non est audacia sæpius accedere in dominicam mensam, sed indigne accedere, etiam si semel tantum quispiam toto vitæ tempore accedat.*

With the holy Fathers, therefore, we exhort you, my brethren, to live so holily that you may communicate often. This is the Church's intention. As the Council of Trent says, she would rejoice if we were able to imitate the first Christians' fervor on this point and communicated whenever we attended Mass.

To speak more precisely, however, it is fitting, with St. Thomas, to consider the Eucharist in itself and in relation to the recipients' dispositions. Considered in itself, it contains so many graces and is so useful that it would be most desirable to receive it every day. But considering the state in which most Christians find themselves, it is not fitting for them to receive it so frequently. We must therefore propose certain rules of conduct enabling the faithful to communicate frequently.[3]

The first rule the holy Fathers give is to lead a truly Christian life; or, if one has unfortunately fallen into disorder, to have emerged from it through solid and sincere penance. Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is our life, says St. Ambrose; but to receive life one must change one's life: *Mutet vitam qui vult accipere vitam*. The person who has ceased sinning may communicate frequently, says St. Isidore of Seville: *Qui peccare jam quievit, communicare non desinat*—let the one who has ceased to sin not cease to communicate.

The second rule, to avoid deception in frequent use of the Eucharist, is to follow the counsel of a wise teacher who, knowing the depths of our conscience, will prescribe what he considers appropriate. Here is what the venerable Avila says generally in a letter to a confessor: "For the people it will suffice to communicate three or four times a year. More advanced souls may do so nine or ten times yearly. Married people living with great piety may communicate once a month or every three weeks; unmarried persons every fortnight; and those truly touched by God, deriving great benefit from this food of the strong, every week. I think very few should communicate more frequently."

St. Bonaventure says that, excepting priests and religious, who by the holiness of their profession should be ready to celebrate Mass frequently, scarcely will people so virtuous be found that weekly Communion will not generally suffice. St. Francis de Sales, in his *Philothea*, shares this view and quotes under St. Augustine's name these words of the author of *Ecclesiastical Dogmas*: "I counsel and exhort the faithful to communicate every Sunday, provided they are free from every attachment to sin": *Omnibus dominicis diebus communicandum suadeo et hortor, si tamen mens sine affectu peccandi sit*.[4]

Finally, the third rule, no less sure than the others, is to consider the fruit drawn from Communion. It is an abuse to believe, as worldly people imagine, that frequent Communion is compatible with a wholly pagan and disorderly life. This led Innocent XI, by his decree of March 2, 1679, to condemn this proposition: *Frequens confessio et communio, etiam in his qui gentiliter vivunt, est nota prædestinationis*—frequent confession and Communion, even in those who live as pagans, is a sign of predestination. Frequent Communion is therefore not enough; it must be received with the dispositions so great a sacrament demands.

Q. What dispositions must we bring to Holy Communion?

A. There are bodily dispositions and dispositions of the soul. Those of the body may be reduced to three: fasting, purity, and modesty.

I. One must be fasting on the day one wishes to communicate: that is, nothing to eat or drink may be taken from midnight, unless one is sick. Sick persons receiving Communion as Viaticum may do so after eating and drinking. Outside this case, however, the Eucharist cannot be received except in complete fasting: *Virgine adhuc saliva*, says Tertullian—with the saliva still untouched. This is a Church precept founded upon the reverence owed the Most Blessed Sacrament; upon the danger of vomiting or other irreverence; and finally upon our seeking the Eucharist, our first and principal food, before every other food, as St. Thomas says.

For the same reasons one must take care not to sup very late on the eve of Communion. Nevertheless, according to this holy Doctor, one may communicate after inadvertently swallowing some remnant of the previous supper left between the teeth. The same applies if, while rinsing the mouth with water or wine, one has unintentionally swallowed a drop. As for those tasting broths or sauces, although they may communicate when certain they swallowed none of what they tasted, St. Antoninus says they should refrain out of

propriety. With still greater reason the same must be said of those using tobacco, chewed or smoked.

II. Bodily purity requires abstention from Communion when during the preceding night one has fallen into emissions voluntary in themselves or their causes. If such emissions are innocent, however, or occasioned by diabolical illusions that have been rejected, they do not prevent Communion. St. Charles and the Catechism of the Council of Trent teach that married people should fittingly observe continence for some days before Communion.

III. Modesty requires men and women to receive the Eucharist kneeling, with uncovered hands and lowered eyes; men without weapons, women modestly dressed. One must also be free of an indisposition preventing swallowing or consuming the consecrated species, as happens to persons suffering violent coughing or frequent vomiting. One should avoid spitting immediately after Communion and should not leave church until after thanksgiving.

Q. What dispositions of the soul are necessary for Communion?

A. These too may be reduced to three: instruction, purity of conscience, and practice of the Christian virtues.

I. One must be instructed in the mysteries of faith, particularly the Eucharist. The primitive Church's faithful were so persuaded of this that St. Justin in his second apology expressly says the Eucharist was given only to those professing Jesus Christ's doctrine: *Nulli alii participare licitum est, quam veram esse doctrinam nostram credenti*—no one else is permitted to partake except the person believing our doctrine true. Hence Communion is not given today to children who are not well instructed and lack sufficient discernment and devotion to receive it.

II. Purity of conscience is necessary: that is, freedom from sin, at least mortal sin. Anyone in mortal sin must have recourse to the sacrament of Penance. The Council of Trent defined this: *Ecclesiastica consuetudo declarat eam probationem necessariam esse, ut nullus sibi conscius peccati mortalis, quantumvis sibi contritus videatur, absque præmissa sacramentali confessione ad sacram Eucharistiam accedere debeat*—ecclesiastical custom declares this examination necessary, that no one conscious of mortal sin, however contrite he may seem to himself, should approach the holy Eucharist without previous sacramental confession.

This council merely confirmed what the holy Fathers taught. *Nemo cibum accipit Christi*, says St. Ambrose, *nisi fuerit ante sanatus*—no one receives Christ's food unless first healed. St. John Chrysostom, relating his time's practice, teaches us that the deacon raised his voice and told those wishing to communicate: *Sancta sanctis*—holy things for the holy. This is as though he said, the Father adds: Let anyone who is not holy refrain from approaching the sacred table: *Si quis non est sanctus, non accedat*.

III. To purity of conscience one must join the practice of good works and Christian virtues: *Sanctum enim non facit solum liberatio a peccatis*, continues St. John Chrysostom, *sed etiam præsentia Spiritus et bonorum operum copia*—not deliverance from sins alone makes a person holy, but also the Spirit's presence and an abundance of good works.

There must be living faith in Jesus Christ's real presence in the Eucharist; firm hope in His infinite merits communicated to us there; ardent charity; profound humility; a holy longing to unite ourselves to Jesus Christ; and present devotion, free of lukewarmness and negligence. *Nemo*, says St. John Chrysostom, *accedat cum nausea, nemo resolutus, omnes accensi, omnes ferventes et excitati*—let no one approach with aversion or slackness; let all be aflame, fervent, and aroused.

Q. What effects does the Eucharist produce in those receiving it worthily?

A. I. It increases and strengthens charity and the life of grace received in Baptism and the other sacraments: *Qui manducat Me, et ipse vivet propter Me*, Jesus Christ says in John 6—whoever eats Me will also live

because of Me.

II. It closely unites us to Jesus Christ, so that He is in us and we in Him: *In Me manet, et Ego in eo*—he abides in Me, and I in him. By this wonderful union we are, as it were, transformed into Him, according to St. Leo: *Non aliud agit participatio corporis et sanguinis Christi, quam ut in id quod sumimus transeamus*—participation in Christ's body and blood does nothing other than change us into what we receive.

III. The Eucharist is given not only as spiritual food for our souls, but also as an antidote freeing us from venial sins and preserving us from mortal ones: *Antidotum quo liberamur a culpis quotidianis, et a peccatis mortalibus præservamur*, says the Council of Trent.

IV. It restrains the ardor of concupiscence, weakens the passions' violence, and gives us strength to advance in Christian perfection. *Christus in nobis existens*, says St. Cyril of Alexandria, *sopit in nostris membris carnis legem, et pietatem in Deum excitat, perturbationes mortificat, delicta in quibus sumus nobis non imputans, sed potius ut ægrotos sanans*—Christ dwelling in us quiets the law of the flesh in our members, awakens piety toward God, mortifies disturbances, and, rather than imputing our failings to us, heals us as the sick.

V. It strengthens us against our salvation's enemies and establishes and secures us amid the dangers to which we are exposed in this life: *Idoneus non potest esse ad martyrium, qui ab Ecclesia non armatur ad prælium; et mens deficit, quam non recepta Eucharistia erigit et accendit*, says St. Cyprian—one cannot be fit for martyrdom if the Church does not arm him for battle; the mind fails when the Eucharist received does not raise and enkindle it.

VI. Finally, it is a pledge of eternal life and gives us a right to the glorious resurrection. "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood," says the Savior, "has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." Weigh these words well, my brethren: *Habet vitam æternam*—he has eternal life. The right to glory the Eucharist gives us is so certain that, when Jesus Christ speaks of it, He expresses Himself as though we already enjoyed it.

Yes, my brethren, if you communicate worthily you will receive the seal of immortality, the root of the glorious resurrection, and the earnest of eternal life: *Habet*, and so forth. What am I saying? You will possess your God and be blessed in anticipation: *Habet*, and so forth. What a powerful motive to oblige us to communicate well! In this way, after uniting yourselves to Jesus Christ upon earth, you will deserve to remain eternally united to Him in heaven.

---

[1] Source references: St. Thomas, "1 p. q. 80, art. 1" (as printed; the Eucharistic question belongs to Part III); John 6:54 in the source's numbering; Trent, Session XIII, chapter 9.

[2] Source references: Trent, Session XXI, chapter 1; Constance, Session XIII; Romans 6:9; Trent, Session XXI, chapter 2; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:27.

[3] Source references: Chrysostom, Homily V on 1 Timothy; Ambrose, Sermon IV for Advent; Isidore, Ecclesiastical Offices I.5; Avila, Part I, Letter LXIV; Gennadius, Ecclesiastical Dogmas, chapter 23.

[4] Source references: Chrysostom, Homily V on 1 Timothy; Ambrose, Sermon IV for Advent; Isidore, Ecclesiastical Offices I.5; Avila, Part I, Letter LXIV; Gennadius, Ecclesiastical Dogmas, chapter 23.

Sacraments: Sixth Homily: Adoration of Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar

Original preacher not named.

Sedenti in throno, et Agno, benedictio, et honor, et gloria, et potestas in sæcula sæculorum. (Revelation 5.)

To Him Who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, blessing, honor, glory, and power forever and ever.

Jesus Christ has two thrones where He receives the adorations of angels and men: one in heaven, where He is adored with God His Father by the blessed spirits and the saints, whose blessedness and happiness He is; the other on earth, where in the Eucharist He is the object of our faith and religion. The angels and saints never cease adoring Him in the dwelling of glory and perfectly obey the command given them: *Adorate Eum omnes angeli Ejus*—adore Him, all His angels.

It is most just that men should also adore Him on earth and render Him in our churches the homage due to Him: *Adorate Dominum in atrio sancto Ejus*—adore the Lord in His holy court. Ah! Since our churches possess a God Whose greatness heaven and earth cannot contain, let us gather, Christians, in these sacred places, like eagles, in St. John Chrysostom's expression, around this adorable body He left us in the Eucharist: *Ubicumque fuerit corpus, illic congregabuntur et aquilæ*—wherever the body is, there also the eagles will gather.

It is for us that He resides upon our altars; for us that He rests in our tabernacles. There His infinite love calls us all, that we may experience the effects of His magnificence and generosity. Let us confidently approach this throne of grace to receive the assistance we need. Let us render to the Lamb Who was slain, and Who is offered every day for us, all the honor we owe Him. Since this is one of our principal obligations, let us make it the subject of this homily.[1]

Q. Is it lawful to reserve the holy Eucharist in churches, and why is it reserved?

A. The practice of reserving the Eucharist in our churches after the celebration of Mass comes from apostolic tradition. It has always been practiced and is practiced in all the world's churches except among Protestants. The reason for reserving the Eucharist in church is to be able to carry it to the sick at any hour and to give the faithful the consolation of coming to adore Jesus Christ, really present in this august sacrament. His presence is not merely transitory, as the Lutherans say, but permanent, lasting as long as the symbols and species under which we adore Him subsist.

We say this practice comes from apostolic tradition. This is shown by the Church's practice in the times nearest the Apostles. St. Justin, who died sixty years after the apostle St. John, teaches us in his second apology for the Christian religion that in his time the Eucharist was sent through the deacons to those who for just reasons had been unable to attend the celebration of the sacred mysteries.

St. Irenaeus, who already governed the church of Lyons in France twenty years after St. Justin's death, also teaches us, in his letter to Pope Victor recorded by Eusebius, that the Eucharist was then customarily sent to absent bishops as a sign of peace and ecclesiastical communion. Tertullian, St. Irenaeus's contemporary, teaches us that Christians carried the sacred bread home during persecutions to have something with which to strengthen themselves, and observed as an inviolable law that they took it only in the morning, before any other food.

St. Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, who died in 266, teaches us that consecrated bread was kept for the sick. When a certain Serapion was at the point of death, a portion was sent to him. Because it was somewhat hard from having been kept a long time, it was put in water so that he could swallow it more easily. St. Basil relates that anchorites living very far from churches and unable to frequent them took Communion with them to satisfy their piety in the desert.

St. Gregory Nazianzen says of St. Gorgonia, his sister, that one night she withdrew into church and, prostrate before the Most Blessed Sacrament with living faith, was delivered from a dangerous illness. St. Ambrose relates of his brother Satyrus that he escaped shipwreck through the holy Eucharist, which he wore about his neck with as much reverence as confidence.

All these ancient facts prove that the Eucharist was reserved after the celebration of the holy mysteries. It was not believed that Jesus Christ's real presence in this sacrament was bound to its use and the moment of

Communion, as the Lutherans claim, wishing the Eucharist to cease being the Eucharist as soon as the act of the Supper concludes.

Q. Must we adore Jesus Christ in the Eucharist? Is it the species or the sensible sign that is adored?

A. Given our belief that Jesus Christ is really present in the Eucharist, we are indispensably obliged to adore Him, for Jesus Christ must be adored wherever He is. The most holy Virgin, St. Joseph, the Magi, and the shepherds adored Him in Bethlehem's stable, where He was born. The Apostles adored Him on the Mount of Olives, from which He ascended into heaven. The blessed adore Him in the dwelling of glory and confess that in this state He is worthy to receive every kind of praise and blessing with His Father.

The faithful on earth must therefore adore Him in the Eucharist, where faith teaches us He is really present. The Protestants' reasoning, insisting that Scripture does not say Jesus Christ is in the Eucharist to be adored there, is altogether contemptible, since His presence alone suffices to demand our reverence and adoration. Does His presence not carry with it the obligation to adore Him, without an express precept needing to be imposed upon us?

We adore Jesus Christ in heaven, where all the saints adore Him, although we have no particular commandment on the subject, because faith assures us He is present there, and His presence is gloriously manifested there. Likewise we must adore Him in the Eucharist without needing an express precept, because faith teaches us He is present there. This is an effect of His goodness and omnipotence, providing an easy means of approaching His infinite greatness. There is therefore not the slightest doubt that the faithful must adore Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, as the Catholic Church teaches and practices.

As for the additional question, whether it is the sensible sign or Eucharistic species that is adored, I answer with all Catholic doctors that it is Jesus Christ Whom we adore, hidden beneath the species and sensible sign of the Eucharist. When Jesus Christ was on earth, it was not His garments that were adored, but Jesus Christ clothed in His garments.

Q. Can you show us that adoring Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is an ancient practice?

A. It has always been a constant custom to adore Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament, not only when about to receive Him, but also upon the altars where consecrated Hosts were kept for carrying to the sick, as we said above. The holy Fathers exhorted Christians to this reverence and adoration, presupposing in their addresses that this was the Church's ordinary custom. *Adora, et communica*, says St. John Chrysostom preaching to Antioch's people—first adore this sacrament, and afterward receive Him within yourselves through Communion.

What could be more positive on this point than the words of St. Ambrose and St. Augustine? Even today we adore our Redeemer's flesh, says the holy Bishop of Milan, and we adore it in the mysteries He Himself instituted, which we celebrate upon our altars. This flesh was formed of earth like our own, and earth is called in Scripture the footstool of God's feet. Yet this footstool, considered in the Savior's person and in the sacrament of His flesh, is more venerable than kings' thrones. Hence we adore it: *Itaque per scabellum terra intelligitur, per terram autem caro Christi, quam hodie quoque in mysteriis adoramus*—by the footstool earth is understood, and by earth Christ's flesh, which even today we adore in the mysteries.

I did not understand, says St. Augustine, what the Lord says through His Prophet when commanding us to adore the footstool of His feet: *Adorate scabellum Ejus*. But I found the secret and mystery in Jesus Christ's sacrament, for this is what we do every day when we eat His flesh and, before eating it, adore it—not only without superstition but with all the merit of faith. For since this flesh is food of salvation, though it comes from earth and is God's footstool, it must be adored. "Far from sinning by adoring it, on the contrary we should sin if we did not adore it."

Notice here that this is not merely St. Augustine's and St. Ambrose's opinion, but the Church's universal practice, to which they testify: *Nemo carnem illam manducat, nisi prius adoraverit*—no one eats that flesh without first adoring. Notice secondly that St. Augustine does not merely say it is good and praiseworthy to adore Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. He speaks of an obligation from which no one can dispense himself: *Non solum non peccamus adorando, sed peccamus non adorando*—not only do we not sin by adoring; we sin by not adoring. What could be clearer? We must therefore agree that Catholics adoring Jesus Christ in the Eucharist do only what the Church's children have done from her birth and from the time they were permitted to have temples and altars.

Q. Is there any figure in the Old Testament that can move the faithful to visit and adore the Most Blessed Sacrament?

A. We have the Ark of the Covenant, the object of the Jews' piety. They considered it the most precious of everything they venerated. Scripture itself calls it Israel's glory and the refuge of God's people. It was principally to house it with due worship that the Lord ordered Moses to construct the tabernacle. Besides a great number of Levites chosen to guard it day and night and maintained for that purpose at public expense, a multitude of people could be seen continually keeping watch near this ark.

This pious sentiment was not merely a popular private devotion. Kings and princes paid it the same honor and undertook nothing important without consulting God's Spirit there. Do you wish to know with what fervor they did so? They prostrated themselves before the ark, Scripture says, with faces to the ground, not in passing or for a few moments but for entire hours: *Josue pronus cecidit in terram coram arca Domini usque ad vesperam, tam ipse quam omnes senes Israel*—Joshua fell prostrate upon the earth before the Lord's ark until evening, both he and all Israel's elders. This is what Scripture says of Joshua and the people's elders.

Yet this ark, so honored in the Old Testament, was only a figure of the Eucharist. What, then, should be our reverence toward the reality, when the Israelites showed such great reverence toward what was only shadow and figure? Ah, Christians lukewarm and undevout toward our mysteries, cover yourselves with shame and confusion!

Idols of worldly vanity and folly, two or three hours seem nothing when adorning a body and a head that within a few days will be food for worms; yet half an hour in church before the Most Blessed Sacrament weighs upon and inconveniences you! You do not tire of spending whole days with company to your taste, yet your God's company wearies you! Men devoted to pleasure and gambling, you find strength enough to spend days and nights eating, drinking, and handling cards and dice, yet plead an ailment to excuse yourselves from coming to adore the King of kings!

You spend sleepless nights at dances and entertainments, yet cannot keep watch one hour before Jesus Christ: *Solum Dei impatientes*, as Tertullian says—impatient only of God. Where are your faith and piety? Does the Lord not have ample reason to tell you what He once told the unbelieving Jews, who perhaps deserved it less than you: *O generatio incredula et perversa, quousque ero vobiscum? usquequo patiar vos?*—O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I endure you? Let us therefore be more faithful in rendering our homage to Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament.[2]

Q. But I have duties and business occupying me; I am infirm, live far from church, and cannot go as often as I would like, and so forth.

A. "I have too much business," some say, "to go so often to church." I could reply that they have no business so important that they should not sacrifice it to the happiness of accompanying Jesus Christ, Who willed to institute the august sacrament of our altars to converse with us and give us the opportunity to treat with Him the great business of salvation. Yet I am willing to admit the reasons you allege, and I say that the best means of lightening the burden of your business and cares is to frequent our churches.

A great king, St. Louis, found nothing better disposed his mind for great affairs or better provided means of bringing them to a successful conclusion than coming to consult Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. “I am infirm,” you say; “my ailments do not permit me to go to church.” If you cannot come bodily, at least come in heart. Imitate those good Israelites of whom Scripture speaks, who, wherever they were, turned toward Jerusalem’s Temple to pray.

Daniel, captive in Babylon, having refused to bend the knee before Nebuchadnezzar’s statue, opened his room’s window and three times daily turned toward the Temple to pray to the true God adored there. Nevertheless, that Temple was only a figure of our churches: the Lord did not dwell bodily in it. They were often very far away and did not know exactly where it stood or in which direction they should turn. We, however, wherever we are, have before us some church where the center of our happiness is. Should we not carry our hearts, thoughts, and affairs there a hundred times a day?

I take particular delight in reading in the Psalms King David’s pious longings. Carried away by the ardor of his zeal, he said he had vowed to Jacob’s God not to enter his palace’s chambers, rest in his bed, allow sleep to his eyes or repose to his head, until he entered the Lord’s house to adore Him. What would he not have said, what would he not have done, had he been born under the Gospel’s law and known that God had clothed Himself in our flesh and, to prove His love, had graciously substituted an invisible presence in the august sacrament of the altar for a visible one?

What ardor, then, should we who have received the Gospel’s light have toward this adorable mystery! Let us allege no more excuses; none can dispense us from rendering Him our homage. Let us tell Him: Yes, my Lord and my God, were I in the midst of a desert and the most dreadful solitude, I would go in heart and affection to Your sanctuary to adore You there: *In terra deserta, et invia, et inaquosa; sic in sancto apparui Tibi*—in a deserted, trackless, waterless land, thus have I appeared before You in the sanctuary.

Q. Why are there so many Christians without devotion or reverence toward the Most Blessed Sacrament?

A. This arises from their little faith and scant care to learn about this adorable mystery. We read in the Acts of the Apostles that St. Paul, entering Athens’s Areopagus, began speaking in these terms: Permit me to observe that you are exceedingly superstitious, for, entering your city and passing the statues of your gods, I found an altar inscribed “To the unknown God”: *Ignoto Deo*. This God Whom you adore without knowing Him is the One I come to announce: *Quod ergo ignorantes colitis, hoc ego annuntio vobis.*

Allow me, Christians, to address these words not to all but to many of you. When one sees how our holy mysteries are treated—celebrated with dirty corporals and torn vestments, Mass heard without modesty or devotion—might we not be reproached for sacrificing to an unknown God: *Ignoto Deo*? At the sight of the uncleanliness of some churches and even some altars, could our altars not be called altars of an unknown God? Could these pretended adorers not be told that they are uninstructed in their religion and do not know what they adore? *Quod ergo ignorantes colitis, hoc ego annuntio vobis.*

If you knew our mysteries’ greatness and holiness, what zeal would you not have for the Lord’s house? Far from having to be compelled to provide the vestments and sacred vessels needed for divine services, you yourselves would inquire whether everything was in good order in your parish churches. But your indifference—or rather your hardness—on this point shows that you do not know the God you adore: *Ignorantes colitis*.

If you knew Him, you would come frequently to offer Him your vows and prayers, following devout souls who spend whole hours before the Most Blessed Sacrament. You would not fear our churches’ dampness, and you would accompany Him with uncovered head when He is carried to the sick. Your little care in all this shows that you do not know Him: *Ignorantes colitis*.

If you knew this God hidden in the Eucharist, you would undertake nothing important without first consulting Him. You complain that your business goes badly, that you are deceived, your children poorly settled, and your whole family disordered. I am not surprised. You do not consult Jesus Christ, the eternal Father's wisdom and oracle. You behave like those Israelites deceived by the Gibeonites because they neglected to consult the Lord before the ark: *Os Domini non interrogaverunt*—they did not inquire of the Lord's mouth.

If you were instructed in the reverence due to this august sacrament, would you receive it as you do, unprepared, with an impure conscience burdened with sins? Would you so easily omit hearing Mass? Would you hear it with such a distracted mind, doing nothing but turning your head, looking this way and that, laughing, joking, talking, and committing other irreverences that scandalize those present? You give heretics occasion to say that either you do not believe Jesus Christ's real presence in the Most Blessed Sacrament or you come to our churches only to insult Him.

I therefore tell you, my brethren, that if until now you have lived forgetful of your obligations to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, you must henceforth show your faith by works: *Quod ergo ignorantes colitis, hoc ego annuntio vobis*.

Q. What counsel can be given to those who have failed in the devotion and reverence due to the Most Blessed Sacrament, so that they may amend?

A. They must be thoroughly convinced:

I. That Jesus Christ, Whom they come to adore in the Eucharist, sees the distraction and irreverences committed in churches, hears the profane conversations held there, and observes the bad dispositions with which they present themselves before Him. *Vidi Agnum stantem tamquam occisum, habentem oculos septem*, says St. John in his Apocalypse—I saw a Lamb standing as though slain, having seven eyes.

I have seen Jesus Christ, God's Lamb, the victim of expiation for the entire human race. I have seen Him standing before His Father, interceding for us; I have seen Him at once as though dead and possessing seven eyes. Behold the state in which He presents Himself upon our altars. He is a victim offered for us under the Eucharistic species that veil His greatness.

If His patience makes us regard Him as dead, *tamquam occisum*, His real presence must remind us that He is alive and, through His infinite wisdom, sees everything done in our churches: *Habentem oculos septem*. If His anger does not now break forth against the impious profaners of His temple and divine mysteries, a day will come when He will punish them rigorously.

II. We must consider that irreverences committed before the Most Blessed Sacrament are not slight faults. Those dishonoring Jesus Christ in our churches are in a certain sense more guilty than the executioners who crucified Him, because they add new injuries to those He suffered upon the cross at the very moment this adorable Savior applies to the faithful the fruit of His passion and death. This is the complaint He Himself makes through His Prophet: *Super dolorem vulnerum Meorum addiderunt*—they added to the pain of My wounds.[3]

III. Finally, we must firmly resolve to repair past faults committed against the Most Blessed Sacrament: to make a kind of reparation whenever coming to church; frequently visit the Most Blessed Sacrament; contribute to the churches' adornment; and attend Mass and the parish offices with piety and devotion.

Here, my brethren, are some means of kindling in your hearts the fire of piety your distractions have extinguished. May the Lord grant you the grace to put them into practice, so that, having rendered Him on earth the adoration and reverence He requires of you, you may deserve to possess Him eternally in heaven.

---

[1] The opening texts include Revelation 5:13; Psalm 97:7; Psalm 96:9; Matthew 24:28.

[2] Joshua's prostration is Joshua 7:6. The Gospel rebuke is Matthew 17:17 (the source prints 17:16).

[3] The reference is Revelation 5:6. Other references: Acts 17:22–24; Joshua 9:14.

Sacraments: Seventh Homily: On the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

Original preacher not named.

Hoc facite in Meam commemorationem. (Luke 22.)

Do this in remembrance of Me.

Jesus Christ instituted the Eucharist not only as a sacrament, but also as His Church's perpetual sacrifice, addressing these words to the Apostles and all who in succeeding ages were to share in His priesthood: "Do this in remembrance of Me." He gave them power to offer the same sacrifice He was about to consummate upon the cross for the world's sins.

About to offer Himself for us to His Father's justice, He willed to leave His Church an invisible sacrifice which, though unbloody, was nevertheless very real and would represent the sacrifice He was about to offer visibly upon the cross through the shedding of His blood. Since His priesthood was not to end with His death, as the Council of Trent says, He took care that its remembrance should remain with us until the end of the ages.

After eating with His Apostles the ancient Passover, which all Israel celebrated in remembrance of the departure from Egypt, He instituted this new Passover as a perpetual memorial of our happy freedom from the devil's captivity. As eternal priest according to the order of Melchizedek, He offered the sacrifice of His body and blood under the species of bread and wine. Since He was establishing His Apostles as ministers of the New Testament, He commanded them to do the same in His memory: *Hoc facite in Meam commemorationem*.

We shall speak today of this august sacrifice. Having presented the holy Eucharist to you as the great sacrament of God's love for mankind, we must now cause you to admire it as the most perfect sacrifice we can offer God to express our due gratitude for His benefits. This will be the subject of this homily.

Q. What is the sacrifice of the new law, and what is it called?

A. The sacrifice of the new law is that of the Eucharist. Jesus Christ, instituting it as a sacrament, instituted it at the same time as a sacrifice. By saying of the bread, "This is My body," and of the wine, "This is My blood," He taught us, says St. Irenaeus, that this was the sacrifice of the new law—the sacrifice which the Church, having received it from the Apostles, offers to God throughout the universe: *Dicens: Hoc est corpus Meum, novi testamenti novam docuit oblationem, quam Ecclesia ab Apostolis accipiens in universo mundo offert Deo*.

Thus spoke the holy Bishop of Lyons in the second century. Jesus Christ did not wait to place Himself in the Jews' hands before making His sacrifice, says St. Gregory of Nyssa. Through His love He anticipated the executioners' violence, offering Himself as victim and fulfilling at once the office of sacrificing priest and sacrificed lamb: *Præoccupans impetum judæorum, Seipsum victimam offert; idem simul sacerdos et agnus*.

If you ask me, this saint continues, how Jesus Christ anticipated the cross's sacrifice, I answer that it happened when He gave His body to His disciples to eat: *Quando hoc accidit? Cum Suum corpus ad comedendum familiaribus præbuit*. Saying, "Do this in remembrance of Me," the Lord, says St. Gaudentius, Bishop of Brescia, commanded His disciples, whom He constituted His Church's first priests, to celebrate without interruption these mysteries of eternal life, which must be celebrated by all priests in every church of the world until the last advent.

Et ideo fidelibus discipulis mandat, quos primos Ecclesiæ Suæ constituit sacerdotes, ut indesinenter ista vitæ æternæ mysteria exercerent, quæ necesse est a cunctis sacerdotibus per singulas totius orbis ecclesias celebrari, usquequo Christus de cælis adveniat—He therefore commands His faithful disciples, whom He established as His Church's first priests, unceasingly to perform these mysteries of eternal life, which all priests in the individual churches of the whole world must celebrate until Christ comes from heaven.

We could adduce many other passages, but these suffice to show that the Catholic Church has always understood Jesus Christ's words, *Hoc facite in Meam commemorationem*, as referring to a true sacrifice, as the Council of Trent observes.

Many names are given to this august sacrifice, but the most celebrated are "liturgy" and "Mass." The Greeks call it liturgy. This word, signifying every kind of public function, has been consecrated by Christians to signify the Eucharistic sacrifice. "Mass" has long been the most common name among the Latins. St. Ambrose uses it in his letter to his sister Marcellina: *Missam facere cœpit*—he began to celebrate Mass. Elsewhere: *Qui juxta Ecclesiam est, et sine gravi impedimento potest, quotidie audiat missam*—let anyone near a church who can do so without grave impediment hear Mass daily.

St. Augustine likewise uses it as a very ancient term, common and known throughout the Church. This shows that the Calvinists criticize it without foundation. Many think the word comes from *missa* or *missio*, meaning dismissal or discharge, because anciently the catechumens and penitents were dismissed after the solemn prayers and sermon, before the sacrificial action began; and the faithful were dismissed when the sacrifice ended, as happens with these words: *Ite, missa est*. These two dismissals ordinarily produced this manner of speaking. Thus usage consecrated the word *missa* to signify the altar's holy sacrifice.[1]

Q. What is meant by "sacrifice"? What is the sacrifice of the Mass, and how does it differ from the sacrifice of the cross?

A. Taken generally, "sacrifice" signifies every kind of good work done to honor God and unite oneself to Him: *Verum sacrificium*, says St. Augustine, *est omne opus quod agitur ut sancta societate inhæreamus Deo*—a true sacrifice is every work done so that we may cleave to God in holy fellowship.

In its proper sense, however, sacrifice is an outward offering of a sensible thing made to God alone by a legitimate minister who, consecrating the offered thing through mysterious ceremonies, destroys or changes it to acknowledge God's sovereign power and render His Majesty the homage owed by rational creatures. True religion has never lacked sacrifice. Under the natural law and the written law there were outward sacrifices; Jesus Christ likewise instituted a true sacrifice in the new law.

This is the sacrifice the prophet Malachi foretold in these words: *In omni loco sacrificatur, et offertur nomini Meo oblatio munda*—in every place sacrifice is made and a pure offering offered to My name. This pure offering made in every place is the Mass: that is, the consecration and offering of Jesus Christ's body and blood under the species of bread and wine, offered to God upon our altars to represent Jesus Christ's passion and death.

To understand this sacrifice's nature, note:

I. The sacrificial victim is Jesus Christ's body and blood: the same body nailed to the cross, the same blood shed on Calvary. In a word, the same Jesus Christ crucified for us is the One we offer upon our altars: *Eumdem semper offerimus*, says St. John Chrysostom—we always offer the same One.

II. The sacrifice of the Mass is offered to God alone to acknowledge His sovereign greatness and our dependence. It is true that the saints are commemorated at Mass, but the sacrifice is never offered to them. Mass is sometimes said in remembrance of the most holy Virgin and the saints, but is always directed to God, to Whom supreme worship is due, in thanksgiving for the graces He bestowed upon the saints and so that they may intercede with Jesus Christ: *Ut illi pro nobis intercedere dignentur in cælis*, says the Church,

quorum memoriam agimus in terris—that those whose memory we celebrate on earth may graciously intercede for us in heaven.

III. The sacrifice of the Mass is offered upon our altars through the ministry of priests, who received the power to offer it at their ordination. Jesus Christ is the principal offerer. It is He Who changes bread and wine into His body and blood; He Who offers Himself to God His Father through priests' hands: *Per hoc*, says St. Augustine, *sacerdos est Ipse offerens et oblatio*—in this He is the priest, Himself the offerer and the offering.

The Church also has the happiness of offering Him: *Cujus rei sacramentum*, St. Augustine adds, *quotidianum esse voluit Ecclesiæ sacrificium, quæ cum Ipsius capitis corpus sit, se ipsam per Ipsum discit offerre*—He willed the sacrament of this to be the Church's daily sacrifice; since she is the body of Him Who is her Head, she learns through Him to offer herself.

IV. This sacrifice represents the sacrifice of Jesus Christ's passion and death. Through the power of the sacramental words Jesus Christ's body is placed under the species of bread and His blood under the species of wine. This separation of the consecrated bread from the consecrated wine represents the separation of Jesus Christ's body from His blood accomplished on Calvary. Thus the sacrifice of the Mass is a perfect expression of the cross's sacrifice.

The Savior said separately, "This is My body; this is My blood." Although this body and blood, once really separated in His passion, have been reunited forever since His resurrection, He nevertheless willed that the separation actually accomplished on Calvary should never cease to appear upon our altars, and that the Eucharistic sacrifice should be a continuous image of the cross. Hence St. Paul says that whenever we celebrate this mystery we proclaim Jesus Christ's death.

From what we have said we see that the sacrifice of the Mass is the same in substance as that of the cross. We acknowledge only one offering, a unique sacrifice, by which the world's Savior sacrificed Himself and died for us once only, and which He now offers in heaven while we continue offering it on earth through priests' ministry.

For in both sacrifices the victim offered is the same and the principal sacrificer the same; the difference lies only in the manner of offering. Jesus Christ offered Himself upon the cross in a bloody manner, as a mortal victim capable of suffering, openly and in the form of His human nature. In the altar's sacrifice He employs priests' ministry to make this offering perceptible. Although He appears mortal under the visible species of bread and wine, He is nevertheless living and immortal, and is offered as immortal: *Una enim eademque est hostia*, says the Council of Trent, *idem nunc offerens sacerdotum ministerio Qui Seipsum tunc in cruce obtulit, sola offerendi ratione diversa*—the victim is one and the same; the same One now offers through priests' ministry Who then offered Himself upon the cross, only the manner of offering being different.[2]

Q. For whom can the sacrifice of the Mass be offered? Can it be offered for the dead?

A. The holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered for all the living. This is the Church's practice, founded upon St. Paul's words to his disciple Timothy: "Let supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all those constituted in authority, that we may lead a peaceful and tranquil life in all piety and honesty. For this is good and pleasing to God our Savior, Who wills all men to be saved and come to knowledge of the truth."

We see from St. Augustine's letter to Vitalis that prayer was made at the altar for unbelievers, that God might convert them to faith; for catechumens, that God might inspire them with an ardent desire for Baptism; and for the faithful, that they might persevere in practicing the Gospel. Prayer was also made for heretics and schismatics, as is still done today in the Good Friday office.

At holy Mass prayer is offered not only for the living but also for the dead. It is a constant tradition in both the Latin and Greek Church that the holy sacrifice may be offered for the faithful who died in the Church's communion. St. John Chrysostom, in his third homily on the Epistle to the Philippians, assures us that the practice of praying for the dead in celebrating the divine mysteries was established by the Apostles.

Tertullian says it flows from tradition, was confirmed by custom, and is observed through faith: *Oblationes pro defunctis, pro natalitiis, annua die facimus…. Harum et aliarum ejusmodi disciplinarum, si legem expostules Scripturarum, nullam invenies: traditio tibi prætendetur auctrix, consuetudo confirmatrix, et fides observatrix*—we make offerings for the dead on their anniversaries every year…. If you demand a scriptural law for these and similar observances, you will find none: tradition will be put forward as their originator, custom as their confirmer, and faith as their observer.

This practice is clearly shown by the liturgies of every age; not one fails to mention prayer for the dead. If Protestants still desire proofs, we beg them to read what St. Augustine says in book IX of his *Confessions* concerning his mother St. Monica. Seeing death approaching, she expressed no other desire than to be remembered at the altar. Let them also read in the same book that after this saint's death the sacrifice of our redemption was offered for her in the presence of her body, as is practiced among Catholics today.

Here, then, are those for whom the sacrifice of the Mass is offered. It is offered for the living, asking God for sinners' conversion, the just's perseverance, and everyone's salvation. It is also offered for the dead—not for the damned, whose punishments are eternal and cannot be diminished or shortened, but for the dead in purgatory, who can be relieved by our prayers, as the Church has always believed.[3]

Q. When are we obliged to attend the holy sacrifice? Is there any legitimate excuse dispensing us from attendance?

A. By the Church's precept we are obliged to hear Mass every Sunday and holy day. This precept binds every Christian able to attend. If he fails through his own fault, negligence, or lack of devotion, he sins mortally: this is the teaching of all theologians.

To fulfill this precept, hearing part of Mass is insufficient; one must hear it entirely. *Missas die dominica sæcularibus totas audiri speciali ordinatione præcipimus: ita ut ante benedictionem sacerdotis egredi populus non præsumat; qui fecerint, ab Episcopo publice confundantur*, says the Council of Agde, held in 503—we specially command laypeople to hear the whole Mass on Sunday, so that the people do not presume to leave before the priest's blessing; those who do shall be publicly reproved by the bishop.

It does not suffice to hear part of one priest's Mass and part of another's; one must attend one and the same sacrifice entirely. When we say "entirely," however, the word must not be taken with such rigor, says St. Antoninus, that someone missing Mass's introit is regarded as a transgressor of the precept. Rather, this applies to someone missing a considerable part, as would be the case if he attended only after the Gospel.

Nevertheless, negligence in coming to Mass is not without sin. To have nothing with which to reproach oneself, therefore, one must take care to hear it from the beginning. As for reasons dispensing the faithful from Mass on Sundays and holy days, I shall mention some persons legitimately excused according to St. Antoninus: the sick, and those serving them when they cannot leave them without danger; mothers and nurses unable to leave their children without exposing them to various accidents.

Q. How should one hear Mass?

A. Two dispositions are particularly necessary for hearing Mass well: bodily modesty and devotion of heart.

According to the saints, bodily modesty consists in coming to church decently dressed, avoiding any adornment that may scandalize one's neighbor; maintaining profound silence throughout Mass, never speaking unnecessarily; not distracting oneself by looking this way and that; and remaining kneeling except

during the two Gospels—or at least, if suffering some infirmity, maintaining a posture suitable to a person obliged to pray.

In ecclesiam venire oportet virum et mulierem honeste indutos, says St. Clement of Alexandria, *silentium amplectentes, charitatem non fictam possidentes, castos corpore, mente ad Deum rogandum aptos*—man and woman should come to church decently clothed, embracing silence, possessing unfeigned charity, chaste in body and disposed in mind to pray to God.

Devotion requires hearing Mass with faith, attention, and piety. Mass is the people's sacrifice as well as the priest's. All must attend with the same purposes as the priest offering it. The Church offers the holy sacrifice for four ends:

I. To adore God and give Him the supreme worship we owe Him.

II. To thank Him for His benefits.

III. To ask Him to forgive all sins.

IV. To ask Him for all the graces necessary for the faithful living and dead.

The Church on earth unites with the Church in heaven to do all these things with Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ. Those attending Mass must have all these intentions and conform themselves to the Church's spirit. If they cannot follow the priest in every action and prayer, they must at least ask God through Jesus Christ, in general, for everything the priest asks at the altar.

Is this how you have heard Mass? Oh, there are Christians resembling those Israelites whom the Prophet reproves for forgetting the God Who saved them! *Obliti sunt Deum, Qui salvavit eos*. Yes, you forget your God at Mass. You do not think of adoring Him, thanking Him, or appeasing His anger, nor do you offer any prayer. You content yourselves with holding a rosary or book of hours in your hand. Yet while Jesus Christ offers Himself to God His Father for you, what care do you take to offer yourselves to Him? *Obliti sunt Deum, Qui salvavit eos*.

Q. Do those who sleep or are distracted, and those who confess during Mass, fulfill the Church's precept?

A. Sleeping through a considerable part of Mass is not hearing it. The Church wishes those attending the holy sacrifice to show by their outward posture that they are present not only bodily but also in spirit and heart with holy attention: these are the Council of Trent's words. Those sleeping at Mass cannot say they are present with holy attention. Rather, they are negligent and deserve the same reproof Jesus Christ gave the Apostles sleeping in the garden at the very time this adorable Savior was preparing for His passion and death: *Non potuistis una hora vigilare Mecum*—could you not watch one hour with Me?

Those distracted at Mass, if their distractions are involuntary and they endeavor to reject them, do not thereby lose the fruit of their prayers and consequently fulfill the Church's precept. If, however, the distractions are voluntary and occupy a notable part of Mass, there is no doubt that they do not hear it as the Church's precept obliges them to. For, praying with voluntary distractions, they are not really praying and honor God only with their lips, as Jesus Christ reproached the Jews: *Populus hic labiis Me honorat: cor autem eorum longe est a Me*—this people honors Me with its lips, but its heart is far from Me.

Those confessing during Mass do not fulfill the precept. The reason is that the particular attention required for making a confession differs greatly from that needed for hearing Mass. The latter must be by way of prayer, whereas the attention brought to confession concerns declaring the number, kind, and other circumstances of one's sins; making them understood by the priest; answering his questions; profiting from his counsels; and hearing and remembering the penance he imposes. This, as Cabassutius observes, differs greatly from the spirit of prayer with which one must attend Mass.[4]

Q. What fruits are drawn from Mass when it is heard devoutly?

A. A Mass well heard pours every kind of blessing upon us: *Calix benedictionis*—the chalice of blessing. Temporal blessings upon fields, business, and so forth. Scripture says the Lord blessed Obed-edom and everything belonging to him because he received the ark in his house: *Benedixit Dominus Obededom, et omnia ejus propter arcam Dei*. What will He not do for a Christian penetrated with religious sentiments toward our mysteries, of which the Ark of the Covenant was only a figure?

Blessings upon our bodies, undertakings, and designs. If we hear Mass devoutly as we should, we shall find there health for work, the tranquility needed amid this life's accidents, relief and consolation in our illnesses and infirmities, and strength and courage to bear our crosses patiently.

Blessings upon our souls. Sinners will receive there the spirit of penance and compunction, the just a new fervor in God's service. This is the source of the Apostles' zeal, the martyrs' fortitude, the Doctors' light, the confessors' holiness, and the virgins' purity. This is Christian souls' sanctification, the Church's happiness and glory. In a word, it is the treasury of God's goodness, as St. John Chrysostom calls it: *Benignitatis Dei thesaurus*—the treasury from which He pours upon us the riches of His mercy.

Let us therefore attend it frequently and, if possible, every day. But let us attend with such faith, modesty, and piety that after death we may deserve to reap this sacrifice's final fruit in possession of the glory merited for us by Jesus Christ, Who is offered in it for our salvation.[5]

---

[1] The source cites Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* IV; Gregory of Nyssa on the Resurrection; Gaudentius, tractate 2; Ambrose's letter to Marcellina; and Trent, Session XXII.

[2] Other references: Augustine, *City of God* X.6, 20; Chrysostom, *Homily 17 on Hebrews*; 1 Corinthians 11:26.

[3] Other sources: Augustine's letter to Vitalis and *Confessions* IX; Chrysostom on Philippians; Tertullian, *On the Crown* 3.

[4] Gospel references: Matthew 26:40; 15:8.

[5] Obed-edom's blessing is 2 Samuel 6:12 (Vulgate 2 Kings). The final phrase is attributed to Chrysostom, *Homily 3 on Ephesians*.

Sacraments: Eighth Homily: On the Sacrament of Penance: Contrition

Original preacher not named.

Deus nunc annuntiat hominibus, ut omnes ubique pœnitentiam agant. (Acts 17:30.)

God now has it proclaimed to all men, and in every place, that they should do penance.

I cannot begin the instructions I am going to give you on penance in terms more appropriate or more effective for persuading you of its necessity than those St. Paul employed in the midst of the Areopagus. He wished to make that people understand that they, like all other peoples, were included in the universal precept God imposes upon all men to be converted and do penance: *Deus*, and so forth. It is God Himself Who lays down this precept; and Jesus Christ teaches us the indispensable necessity of obeying it when He says in the Gospel: "Unless you do penance, you will all perish." *Nunc*: now. This is a precept that admits of no postponement: it must be fulfilled as soon as possible. To postpone penance until death is to expose oneself to not doing it and to dying in sin. The matter at issue is of the greatest importance. The whole world must know it, so that all the peoples of the earth, in whatever country they may dwell, may conform to it: *Ut omnes ubique pœnitentiam agant*.

We too, therefore, my brethren, must obey it like everyone else. This precept includes everyone: nobles and commoners, country people, merchants, craftsmen, men and women, priests and religious. In a word, there is no one to whom it does not extend. However good an opinion I have of all of you, beloved brethren, I nevertheless venture to say that you will not always have preserved your baptismal innocence. Since this loss can be repaired only through penance, this discourse concerns you: *Deus nunc annuntiat*, and so forth.

To enter immediately upon our subject, we should observe that penance may be considered as a virtue and as a sacrament. On another occasion we spoke of the necessity of doing penance. Today we shall speak of penance as a sacrament, whose effect is to forgive the sins committed after Baptism. Jesus Christ instituted this sacrament after His resurrection, when He said to His Apostles: "Receive the Holy Spirit. Sins shall be forgiven to those whose sins you forgive, and retained to those whose sins you retain." This sacrament consists in the penitent's contrition, confession and satisfaction, and in the priest's absolution. We shall speak first of contrition, which is the penitent's first act.[1]

Q. What is the first thing a sinner must do if he desires to receive forgiveness of his faults in the sacrament of Penance?

A. He must have sincere contrition for his sins. According to the Council of Trent, this contrition is a sorrow of the soul and a detestation of the sins committed, with a purpose of not sinning again in the future. It is so necessary that without it the sinner cannot be converted or obtain forgiveness: *Fuit quovis tempore, ad impetrandam veniam peccatorum, hic contritionis motus necessarius*, this holy council adds—at every time this movement of contrition has been necessary to obtain the forgiveness of sins.

Contrition embraces both the past and the future. With regard to the past, it makes us conceive true sorrow for having offended God; with regard to the future, a good purpose of not offending Him again. To do penance, the saints say, is to weep for past sins and not commit others in the future that deserve to be wept for: *Pœnitentia est præterita mala plangere, et plangendo iterum non committere*—penance is to lament past evils and, while lamenting them, not commit them again. This is the first step the sinner desiring reconciliation with God must take. It is the true means St. Peter gave the Jews for obtaining forgiveness of the enormous sin they had committed in putting Jesus Christ to death. Do penance, he says to them, and be converted, so that your sins may be blotted out: *Pœnitemini, et convertimini, ut deleantur peccata vestra*.

Know, sinners listening to me, that there is no other remedy for you than this. You must detest the disorders of your past life, do penance for them and amend your ways: *Pœnitemini, et convertimini*—repent and be converted.[2]

Q. Do all those who recite acts of contrition, strike their breasts and say, "My God, I ask Your pardon," always have true contrition?

A. Certainly not. Many people do all this without having true sorrow for their sins. According to all theologians, contrition must have four qualities if it is to be true: it must be interior, supreme, supernatural and universal.

Interior: that is, it is not enough to pronounce an act of contrition with the mouth; one must have it in the heart. *Scindite corda vestra, et non vestimenta vestra*—rend your hearts and not your garments—the Prophet Joel said to the Jews. Even if you read the most beautiful acts of contrition and your lips pronounce them, if your heart has no part in them your repentance is not sincere and your conversion is not true. *Vera conversio in ore non accipitur, sed in corde*, says St. Gregory the Great—true conversion is not found in the mouth but in the heart.

Supreme: that is, it must be the greatest of all sorrows, since sin is the greatest of all evils. *Peccatum summum malum*, says the Catechism of the Council of Trent, *ita ut peccati summum odium nos capiat necesse est*—sin is the supreme evil; therefore the greatest hatred of sin must possess us. When we say that contrition must be the greatest of sorrows, we do not mean that it must be perceptibly felt. Tears are sometimes good; nevertheless we must judge contrition not by tears and sensibility, but by the penitent's disposition. He prefers God to everything else and grieves more for having lost His grace than for having lost all the world's treasures. This means, to employ the language of theology, that this sorrow must be the greatest in appreciation. \[That is, it ranks the offense against God as the gravest evil, whether or not the

feelings are intense.\]

Supernatural: that is, it must be caused by a movement of the Holy Spirit and founded on motives of faith, not on human motives, for it must detest sin as an offense committed against God. If one felt sorrow for having sinned only because of shame at the punishments feared in men's eyes, or because of temporal evils, this sorrow would not obtain forgiveness of sins. Thus Antiochus's penance availed him nothing, because he repented of his crimes only because of the bodily illnesses he suffered, knowing that they were punishment for his impiety. The Prophet Jeremiah clearly teaches us that contrition is a gift of God when he says: "Turn us to You, Lord, and we shall be converted": *Converte nos, Domine, ad Te, et convertemur*. And the Council of Trent expressly says that we cannot be converted as we ought without the inspiration and assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Universal: we must detest all the sins we have committed, universally, without excepting even one. If we preserve a dominant attachment to any sin, our conversion to God is not sincere or such as He requires. *Peccatum quod diligitur,* says St. Gregory the Great, *confitendo minime deletur*—the sin that is loved is not blotted out by confessing it. When we say that all the mortal sins one has committed must be detested, we do not mean that it is absolutely necessary to make as many acts of contrition as there have been mortal sins. It is enough to conceive sorrow for them all and form the purpose of not committing them again. This can be done by a single act of contrition, as St. Thomas observes.

These are the conditions contrition must have. When you approach the sacrament of Penance, ask God to give you sorrow for your sins possessing all these qualities: *Agite pœnitentiam plenam dolentis, ac lamentantis animi probate mœstitiam*—do full penance and show the sorrow of a grieving and lamenting soul.

Q. Are there not two kinds of contrition, one perfect and the other imperfect? Would you explain them to us and say which is sufficient for obtaining forgiveness of sins in the sacrament of Penance?

A. Because a person can conceive sorrow for his sins through fear of God's punishments or through a true love of God, theologians distinguish two kinds of contrition: one perfect, which they call contrition, and the other imperfect, which they call attrition. The Council of Trent approves this distinction.

Perfect contrition is sorrow for having offended God, caused by a movement of perfect love of God and accompanied by a sincere will not to sin again and an effective desire to expiate the sins committed. This contrition must be joined to confidence in God's mercy and the will to do everything necessary for receiving the sacrament of Penance. For although it sometimes happens that this contrition is so perfect that it reconciles a person with God by itself before he actually receives the sacrament of Penance, this reconciliation must not be attributed to contrition independently of the will to receive the sacrament. It is attributed to contrition insofar as it includes within itself the desire—that is, the will—to receive it. This is how the Council of Trent explains the matter.

Imperfect contrition, commonly called attrition, is sorrow for having offended God, ordinarily caused by consideration of sin's ugliness or by fear of hell and eternal punishments. The same council teaches that if this contrition excludes the will to sin and is accompanied by hope of forgiveness, it does not make a person a hypocrite or a greater sinner. Rather, it is a gift of God and an impulse of the Holy Spirit, Who does not yet dwell in the soul but merely moves it and leads it toward good. The council adds that, although this contrition cannot by itself lead the soul to justification without the sacrament, it nevertheless disposes it to obtain God's grace in the sacrament of Penance.

It is asked whether this contrition must be accompanied by a beginning of love of God. The Church has not defined this point. We shall therefore add, with the greater number of theologians, that the penitent must at least begin to love God. This is the disposition the council elsewhere places among the acts that should

prepare sinners for justification: *Deum, tamquam omnis justitiæ fontem, diligere incipiunt*—they begin to love God as the fountain of all justice. A person hates sin only in proportion to his love for justice, which is God Himself, says St. Augustine in his letter to Anastasius. Elsewhere he says that hatred of sin and love of God make our penance certain: *Pœnitentiam certam non facit, nisi odium peccati, et amor Dei*. Therefore, when a sinner is found to be moved only by fear of hell, he must gradually be drawn to love God by being made to consider the eternal goods He has promised to those who love Him.

Q. Is there an obligation to make an act of contrition as soon as someone falls into mortal sin? If a person remained in this state for many months, would he sin every time he remembered his fault and failed to make an act of contrition?

A. Certainly, when someone has unfortunately fallen into mortal sin, he must not delay his conversion and return to God. Scripture tells us this expressly: *Non tardes converti ad Dominum, et ne differas de die in diem: subito enim veniet ira Illius, et in tempore vindictæ disperdet te*—do not delay turning to the Lord, or put it off from day to day, for His wrath will come suddenly and in the time of vengeance destroy you. Indeed, as Pope St. Gregory says, God, Who has promised forgiveness to true penitents, has not promised them tomorrow in which to do penance. Therefore, since we must always fear the arrival of our last day and cannot foresee it, we must always regard the present day as a day God gives us for conversion: *Qui pœnitenti veniam spopondit peccati, diem crastinum non promisit; semper ergo extremum diem debemus metuere, quem nunquam possumus prævidere*.

This reasoning, frequent among the holy Fathers, shows us how important it is for a sinner to make an act of contrition as soon as he has the misfortune to fall into mortal sin. It does not follow, however, that the precept obliging us to contrition requires this under pain of a new mortal sin. The reason is that this is an affirmative precept, and an affirmative precept does not bind always and at every moment, but only at a certain time and place. Hence we conclude that there is no obligation to form an act of contrition from the very instant one has sinned. Otherwise sins would be multiplied: as soon as a man committed one mortal sin and did not repent of it immediately, he would be guilty of two mortal sins. Yet, as Sylvius observes in his commentary on St. Thomas's *Summa*, even the best instructed and most exact confessors do not question penitents about this, nor do the most scrupulous penitents think of accusing themselves of it.[3]

Q. In what cases is there a particular obligation to make acts of contrition?

A. Here are three cases in which we are particularly obliged to detest mortal sin, under pain of incurring a new mortal sin:

I. When we are in evident danger of death. After death, a person who has ended his life in mortal sin has no remaining means of reconciliation with God or of doing penance. Consequently a sinner would voluntarily expose himself to the eternal loss of his soul if in this case he omitted to have recourse to God's mercy by detesting his sin. If he cannot find a confessor, he must stir himself to the most perfect contrition.

II. There is an obligation to make an act of contrition when someone in this miserable state is going to receive or administer a sacrament. This arises not from the precept of contrition itself, but from the precept God imposed upon us to treat holy things holily: *Sancti estote, quia Ego sanctus sum*—be holy, for I am holy.

III. There is also an obligation when we find ourselves caught up in a public calamity, such as the scourge of plague or something similar, by which it is evident that God wishes to punish His people. Each individual is then obliged, through the love he must have for the public good and for his own salvation, to endeavor to appease God's wrath through penance.[4]

Apart from these cases, in which we are indispensably obliged to contrition, we should observe that frequent acts of contrition are a very useful practice. They preserve in us an interior sense of our misery and of our

need for God's mercy, after the example of the publican: *Propitius esto mihi peccatori*—be merciful to me, a sinner.

Q. Will someone who confesses only venial sins for which he has no contrition—or who, having some contrition, forms no purpose of amendment—receive forgiveness of his faults through the power of the sacrament of Penance?

A. This question contains two difficulties. The first is whether someone who confesses only venial sins for which he has no contrition obtains forgiveness through the power of the sacrament of Penance. To this we answer that a person who confesses without either contrition or attrition for his sins does not receive forgiveness in the sacrament of Penance. His confession is null, fruitless and ordinarily sacrilegious because of his misuse of this sacrament. Since contrition is an essential requirement of the sacrament of Penance, no sin, however light, can be forgiven through this sacrament unless one has contrition at least virtually and implicitly. This is St. Thomas's teaching.

It is asked whether devout persons who confess their venial sins without contrition make formally sacrilegious confessions. With some theologians we may answer that such persons receive the sacrament without fruit, but do not always commit sacrilege in doing so. This may be confirmed by the authority of St. Bonaventure. After saying that it is sacrilege to profane a sacrament, he adds that merely rendering it fruitless, or perhaps null through some slight negligence, is not to profane it. He gives the example of those who receive Communion without sufficient preparation while nevertheless believing they possess it. Although they do not receive grace, they do not, however, sin by receiving Communion: *Talis quamvis non recipiat gratiam, non tamen incurrit offensam*.

The same happens with those who accuse themselves of venial sins without sufficient sorrow while believing they have it. They receive the sacrament of Penance without fruit, but are not for that reason guilty of formal sacrilege. At least they do not sin mortally, nor are they obliged to repeat their confession. Elsewhere the holy Doctor says of them: *Evadunt offensam quamvis non acquirant gloriam*—they escape offense, although they do not acquire glory.

As for the second difficulty—whether someone confessing his venial sins without a purpose of not committing them again receives their forgiveness through the sacrament of Penance—I answer that the purpose need not extend expressly to every venial sin in order to obtain forgiveness of those confessed. It is enough to make it regarding those of which one has accused oneself. The reason is that there is a difference between the contrition required for mortal sins and that required for venial sins. Contrition for mortal sins must necessarily contain a strong resolution not to commit any of them again, because with grace's assistance we can fulfill this resolution. Without it we cannot receive justifying grace, whose infusion mortal sin certainly obstructs. But the same is not true of venial sins. It is enough to be sorry for having committed them and to will to avoid them as far as possible, without necessarily being obliged to form a resolution not to commit any venial sin at all in the future, since it is impossible for man to avoid them all. This is St. Thomas's teaching.

Q. By what motives can a penitent stir himself to contrition?

A. I. He must be persuaded of contrition's necessity: without it he cannot obtain forgiveness of his faults. Contrition supplies for everything, and nothing can supply for contrition. No indulgence, fasting, almsgiving or prayer can reconcile us with God unless we have true sorrow for having offended Him.

II. Since penitents differ, the motives proposed to them must also differ. Those who have only venial sins to confess must consider that every sin displeases God; that it is not easy to distinguish mortal sins from venial ones; and that there are venial sins committed with deliberate purpose and malice which can lead a person to mortal sin if he does not take care to amend them. *Qui spernit modica, paulatim decidet*—whoever despises

small things will fall little by little.

Even if someone falls only into imperfections and weaknesses in which human infirmity has a greater part than the will, he must always humble himself before God. If it is judged fitting to ask absolution for them, the penitent should accuse himself of some sin of his past life for which he has true repentance. This is a very useful practice for stirring ourselves to contrition and, according to St. Thomas, serves to diminish the punishment due to sins: *Quanto aliquis pluries de eisdem peccatis confitetur, tanto magis pœna minuitur*—the more often someone confesses the same sins, the more their punishment is diminished.

Those who have fallen into mortal sin must set before themselves sin's ugliness, the torments of hell they have deserved, and the disastrous effects sin produces in the soul. It makes the soul lose grace, charity, and the fruit and merit of good works; deprives it of God's friendship and the right to glory; causes it cruel remorse; makes it the devil's slave; and brings eternal and infinite evils upon it.[5]

IV. Those who have a habit of mortal sin, or are in an occasion of falling into it, must reflect upon their abuse of the sacraments and their danger of dying in sin if they are not converted as soon as possible. *Deus conversis ad Se peccata donat, non conversis non donat*, says St. Augustine—God forgives the sins of those converted to Him; He does not forgive those who are not converted. They must think frequently of Jesus Christ's passion. Sin led Him to the agony in the garden and made Him sweat blood; sin bruised His body with blows in Pilate's judgment hall. Sin crowned Him with thorns, nailed Him to the cross and put Him to death. Every time a sinner commits sin, he renews the Savior's passion and, as far as lies in him, crucifies Him anew: *Rursum crucifigentes sibimetipsis Filium Dei et ostentui habentes*—crucifying the Son of God again for themselves and exposing Him to mockery.

Here are motives capable of stirring a penitent to contrition. But the principal means will be to ask it insistently of God. O my God, grant us the gift of contrition, so rare and so necessary! Inspire us with lively sorrow for our sins and a firm purpose not to offend You again. With the penitent king we ask You, Lord, for that contrite and humbled heart which is a sacrifice worthy of You. Make us weep now for our sins, so that we may deserve that one day You should wipe away our tears, bringing us into the joy promised to Your faithful servants.[6]

---

[1] John 20:22–23especially 1441–1445 and 1448.

[2] Trent, Session XIV, chapter 4; Gregory the Great, *Homily 34 on the Gospels*; Acts 3:19 (the source misprints the verse as 29).

[3] Sirach 5:7–9 in the source's numbering; Gregory, *Homily 12 on the Gospels*; Sylvius on Thomas's *Summa*.

[4] Leviticus 11:45; Luke 18:13.

[5] References: Sirach 19:1; Thomas, IV, distinction 17, q.3, question 2, a.5, in the source's arrangement.

[6] Augustine on Psalm 32; Hebrews 6:6; Psalm 51:17 (Vulgate 50:19).

Sacraments: Ninth Homily: On Confession and the Examination of Conscience

Original preacher not named.

Quorum remiseritis peccata, remittuntur eis; et quorum retinueritis, retenta sunt. (John 20.)

Sins shall be forgiven to those whose sins you forgive, and retained to those whose sins you retain.

These words are indeed full of consolation for all sinners who are truly contrite for having offended God. In the Church they will find forgiveness of their sins, however enormous they may be. Jesus Christ gave His Apostles and their successors in the ministry the power to forgive sins, promising that whatever they loosed on earth would be loosed in heaven. Here is a motive well able to inspire sinners with confidence to come to the feet of the Church's ministers and make a humble and sincere confession of their faults.

They will humble themselves before God, you will tell me. But it is not enough to confess oneself guilty in the eyes of Him Who sees the depths of hearts, and say to Him with the penitent king: *Tibi soli peccavi, et malum coram Te feci*—against You alone have I sinned, and done evil before You. This humiliation is very praiseworthy. Yet, however useful this confession of the heart may be, it does not dispense us from the obligation of having recourse to the priests to whom Jesus Christ has subjected us by giving them the power to forgive sins or leave them unforgiven.

Thus whoever wishes in the new law to make a confession reconciling him with God must seek, St. Augustine says, a priest who knows how to bind and loose. Do not tell me, this Father adds, that you do penance in secret and before God, Who sees what passes within you. You must do it as it is done in the Church and as the Church orders it: *Agite pœnitentiam qualiter fit in Ecclesia*. For the penance done in the Church includes a sincere declaration of sins made to her ministers, to whom it is necessary to confess them. Otherwise Jesus Christ would have given them the power to absolve us in vain, and in vain entrusted them with His Church's keys: *Ergo sine causa dictum est, quæ solveritis in terra, soluta erunt in cælo: ergo sine causa sunt claves datæ Ecclesiæ*—then it was said in vain that what you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; then the keys were given to the Church in vain. In this homily we shall speak of this confession, to which Jesus Christ obliged us when instituting the sacrament of Penance.[1]

Q. What is sacramental confession? Is it necessary for obtaining forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism? Has it always been practiced in the Church?

A. I. Confession, the second part of the sacrament of Penance, is an accusation of his sins which the penitent makes to an approved priest in order to receive penance and absolution. I say it is an accusation, because the penitent must accuse himself and appear before his confessor as an accused person before his judge, in a spirit of humility and compunction. It is an accusation the sinner makes for himself. He must confess by word of mouth, not in writing; for himself, not through another person. The Church permits confession through an interpreter only in cases of necessity, as when the penitent does not know the country's language. In this case the interpreter is bound to secrecy like the confessor.

It is an accusation of sins committed. Sins are the matter of confession. Mortal sins are necessary matter and must all be confessed, even when there is doubt whether they are mortal or venial. Venial sins are sufficient matter: it is good and useful to confess them, but not necessary. They may be expiated by means other than the sacrament of Penance. Confession must be made to an approved priest: although all priests received at ordination the power to forgive sins, they do not on that account have jurisdiction unless it is given them by the local Ordinaries, who are the bishops, or by their vicars. Finally, sacramental confession is established so that the penitent may receive penance and absolution from the priest to whom he has confessed.

II. Confession belongs to the essence of the sacrament of Penance. By divine law it is necessary for all who have fallen into mortal sin after Baptism, in order to obtain forgiveness. This will readily be understood if we consider with the holy Fathers that, in giving priests the power to bind or loose, forgive or retain sins, Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance in the manner of a judgment and established priests as judges and physicians. As judges they must pronounce sentence prudently and equitably, which cannot be done without knowledge of the case. As physicians they must know souls' diseases, because medicine does not cure the evils it does not know: *Quod ignorat, medicina non curat*, says St. Jerome.

How, then, can priests know the sins upon which they must judge and the dispositions of sinners requiring penance's remedy unless those upon whom they are to exercise their power reveal their sins and their souls' condition to them? Heretics, however unwillingly, are therefore obliged to agree that, according to the institution of the sacrament of Penance, those who have sinned after Baptism must confess their sins to priests if they wish to obtain forgiveness. *Necessario iis peccata aperiri debent, quibus credita est dispensatio mysteriorum Dei*, says St. Basil—sins must necessarily be disclosed to those entrusted with the

dispensation of God's mysteries.

III. The practice of sacramental confession, received in the Church in every century and never interrupted, is proof that the Church has always regarded the obligation to confess sins to priests as a consequence of the words by which Jesus Christ gave them the power to forgive sins. The Council of Trent observed this: *Ex institutione sacramenti Pœnitentiæ universa Ecclesia semper intellexit institutam etiam esse a Domino integram peccatorum confessionem, et omnibus post Baptismum lapsis jure divino necessariam existere*—from the institution of the sacrament of Penance the whole Church has always understood that the Lord also instituted the complete confession of sins, and that it is necessary by divine law for all who have fallen after Baptism.

We know this commandment particularly through apostolic tradition. With St. Augustine we may say that among all apostolic traditions none is more visible or evident than the necessity of confessing sins, even the most secret. We already see evidence in the Acts of the Apostles, where we read that, when St. Paul preached at Ephesus, many of those who had believed came confessing and declaring the evil they had done: *Multi credentium veniebant confitentes, et annuntiantes actus suos*. There is therefore reason to trace the origin of sacramental confession back to apostolic times. To this we add that all the Fathers of subsequent centuries attest the constant practice of confession.

Q. When does the precept of confession bind?

A. I. Some doctors say that when a person falls into mortal sin he is obliged to confess immediately, if he has an opportunity and the means to do so, under pain of a new sin. William of Paris holds this opinion, followed by St. Bonaventure and Hugh of Saint-Victor. Although this opinion is the safer one, however, it is not the most widely followed. We agree that a person cannot remain wallowing in sin without endangering his salvation. *Non tardes converti ad Dominum*, Scripture tells us, *et ne differas de die in diem*—do not delay turning to the Lord or put it off from day to day. Yet we do not believe a person is obliged to confess the moment he has fallen into mortal sin under pain of incurring a new sin. This is St. Thomas's judgment and that of theologians generally.

The reason is that the precept of confession is simply affirmative: it does not bind always and at every moment, but only at a certain time and on certain occasions. For example, when one wishes to communicate, receive or administer a sacrament, or when there is danger of death—as with the sick, soldiers going into battle or an assault, pregnant women, and so forth. In these and similar cases everyone must confess and is indeed obliged to do so by divine precept.

II. By the Church's precept we are obliged to confess once a year, from the time we reach the use of reason. *Omnis utriusque sexus*, says the Fourth Council of the Lateran, *postquam ad annos discretionis pervenerit, omnia sua peccata saltem semel in anno fideliter confiteatur*—every person of either sex, after reaching the years of discretion, shall faithfully confess all his sins at least once a year.

Although this council did not declare what the age of discretion is, since it is not in fact the same in all children, we may nevertheless say with the Gloss on this canon that a child has reached that age when capable of deceit and sin: *Id est cum doli capax est, quia tunc potest peccare*. Nor has the Church determined the time at which we must make our annual confession. But since she commands us to receive Communion at Easter, that is when we should confess. We are obliged to do this not only when we have fallen into mortal sin, but even if we have committed only venial sins: *Non propter peccati venialis morbum*, says St. Bonaventure, *sed propter ecclesiasticum statutum*—not because of the disease of venial sin, but because of the Church's statute. Besides Easter, it is fitting to confess frequently throughout the year, especially if a person has a poor memory and fears forgetting his sins, as the Catechism of the Council of Trent says.

Q. In what manner should we confess, and what conditions should accompany confession?

A. Some authors count as many as sixteen, contained in these verses:

Sit simplex, humilis, confessio, pura, fidelis,\ Atque frequens, nuda, discreta, libens, verecunda,\ Integra, secreta, et lacrimabilis, accelerata,\ Fortis et accusans, et sic parere parata.

Let confession be simple, humble, pure and faithful;\ frequent, unadorned, discreet, willing and modest;\ complete, secret, sorrowful and prompt;\ resolute, self-accusing, and thus prepared to obey.

We shall dwell only on the principal and most necessary conditions.

I. Confession must be simple, short, clear and intelligible, so that the confessor understands the penitent's condition. Overstudied confessions are better suited to concealing sins than revealing them. Long confessions full of useless words are not the best. They waste the confessor's time, weary his attention and patience, and try the patience of those waiting to confess. Vague accusations must be cut short, as must complaints about household management and other people's faults; superfluous explanations, often made from habit; and scruples which make a penitent return to the confessional two or three times a day to repeat the same thing a hundred times. Confession is a judgment of gentleness and mercy, not of distress and torture. As the Council of Trent says, it was instituted to set consciences at peace, not entangle them.

II. It must be complete and faithful: that is, all the mortal sins one remembers after an exact examination must be confessed, with their number and kinds, as the Council of Trent defined. Concerning aggravating circumstances, this council did not decide that they must be declared. Yet it establishes the principle that the penitent must show himself to the priest as he is, so that the priest can know his soul's condition and his sins' malice and gravity. This principle clearly proves the necessity of declaring in confession aggravating circumstances, as well as those changing the kind of sin. This is the teaching of the Catechism of the Council of Trent and of St. Charles.

Aggravating circumstances are those making a sin more serious within the same kind. A person who steals a thousand pesos commits a greater sin than if he had stolen only one. If he stole from a poor man, the sin is more serious than if he had stolen from a rich man. He may have a habit of stealing: confession's completeness requires him to declare these and similar circumstances. Thus Innocent XI, in his decree of 1679, condemned among other propositions this one: *Non tenemur confessario interroganti fateri peccati alicujus consuetudinem*—we are not bound to acknowledge a habit of any sin to a confessor who asks about it.

III. It must be humble and prudent. We should accuse ourselves of all the sins of which our conscience accuses us without waiting for the confessor to question us: *Justus prior est accusator sui*—the just man is first to accuse himself. If the confessor judges it appropriate to delay absolution, we must submit and not argue with him: *Non judices contra judicem*—do not judge against the judge. Nor should we complain of the penance he imposes, but be persuaded that we deserve more.

Confession should be made prudently. Sins should be declared in decent terms, and one should not speak unnecessarily of another person's sins. I say "unnecessarily," because there are occasions when it is necessary to reveal another's sins. For example, when we absolutely cannot explain our own sin in its full extent without disclosing the accomplice; or when the justice we owe a third party means we cannot refrain from revealing the true culprit or accused person without harming that third party. Outside these cases, according to St. Thomas, the accomplice in the offense committed should not be named in confession.

IV. Confession must be sincere and true: that is, sins must be declared as they actually are, without excusing, diminishing or increasing them. To lie in confession with the intention of deceiving and taking in the confessor is generally a mortal sin. Nor is it lawful to lie on the pretext of humbling oneself. *Nam quomodo est humilitas*, says St. Augustine, *ubi regnat falsitas?*—for how can there be humility where falsehood reigns?

Q. Are there cases in which a penitent must repeat his confessions? What are they?

A. Confessions must be repeated whenever essential defects are discovered in them.

I. When we have confessed to a priest without power to absolve us, or so ignorant that he did not know what was necessary for administering the sacrament of Penance, or the legitimate form of absolution.

II. According to St. Charles's *Instructions to Confessors*, they must be repeated when a penitent has divided his confession, telling one confessor some of his sins and another the rest. This is sinful and forbidden, especially when done from vanity or hypocrisy. All sins must be declared to the same priest. *Dividere confessionem, ad hypocrisim pertinet*, says St. Thomas—dividing one's confession belongs to hypocrisy.

III. When some mortal sin has been withheld in confession through malice, fear, shame, or voluntary or affected ignorance. \["Affected ignorance" means ignorance deliberately maintained to avoid the truth.\] *Qui vero scienter aliquid retinent*, says the Council of Trent, *nihil divinæ bonitati per sacerdotem remittendum proponunt*—those who knowingly withhold anything present nothing to the divine goodness to be forgiven through the priest.

IV. When a person has confessed without contrition, without a firm purpose of amendment and with attachment to some sin; without being willing to abandon proximate occasions of sin; or without having made any effort to correct bad habits. For according to the Fathers, penance is false when there is no amendment in the sinner's life: *Ubi emendatio nulla, pœnitentia necessario vana*—where there is no amendment, penance is necessarily vain.

V. When the penance imposed by the confessor was not fulfilled and there was no sincere will to make satisfaction to God and one's neighbor. In these and similar cases confessions must be repeated. Some people are also found who have never approached the sacrament of Penance with the proper dispositions. All these must make a general confession in order to return to God's grace. *Ne securus sis, cum confessus fueris peccatum*, says St. Augustine, *tamquam semper præparatus ad confitendum et committendum*—do not feel secure once you have confessed sin, as though always prepared to confess it and commit it again.

Yet it must also be observed that some scrupulous persons wish without reason to repeat their confessions. This should not readily be permitted, especially when they are seen to lead an orderly life. If they habitually fall into mortal sins, they do indeed need a general confession; but they must first correct their bad habits. Otherwise confession would serve only to multiply their scruples and make their conversion more difficult. Finally, the principal remedy for scruples, and perhaps the only one, is obedience to a wise and prudent director. *Obedi dumtaxat, et mundaberis ab hac lepra, sicut a sua mundatus est Naaman obediens Eliseo*—only obey, and you will be cleansed of this leprosy as Naaman was cleansed of his by obeying Elisha. These are words a pious Carthusian spoke to a scrupulous person.[2]

Q. Must everyone examine his conscience before going to confession? And what should this examination concern?

A. Examination of conscience is an indispensable preparation for a good confession. A sinner must think seriously about the sins he has committed, following the example of the penitent king: *Cogitabo pro peccato meo*—I shall reflect upon my sin. The terms the Council of Trent employs prove the necessity of this examination: *Postquam*, it says, *quisquis diligentius se excusserit, et conscientiæ sinus omnes et latebras exploraverit, ea peccata confiteatur, quibus se Dominum, et Deum suum mortaliter offendisse meminerit*—after carefully examining himself and exploring all the recesses and hiding places of conscience, each person should confess those sins by which he remembers having mortally offended his Lord and God.

If, despite all this care, a mortal sin happens to be forgotten, the confession nevertheless possesses formal completeness, which according to the council is sufficient. That is, there is no obligation to repeat the confession, but only to confess the forgotten sin, accusing oneself of the others in general. *Sufficit*,

St. Thomas says, *quod hoc peccatum confitens dicat explicite, et alia in generali, dicendo quod cum alia multa confiteretur, hujus oblitus fuerit*—it is enough to confess this sin explicitly and the others generally, saying that when confessing many other sins one forgot this one.

We should also observe that if a penitent is in danger of death or threatened by some accident preventing an examination, the confessor may supply for this deficiency by asking various questions relating to the penitent's state, occupation and age. How much time should be spent on the examination? As much as our conscience requires. It must not be carried to excess or conducted scrupulously. But I must tell you that those who confess rarely need more time than those who do so frequently, and those amid the world's business and entanglements more than those who have withdrawn from them. If through lack of examination a mortal sin is forgotten in confession, the confession is null and sometimes sacrilegious.[3]

But about what, or concerning what matters, should we examine ourselves? Most worldly people, considering their occupations, scarcely find any sin in them when they have not stolen or killed anyone and are free of those gross offenses into which people considered respectable by the world would be ashamed to fall. They do not acknowledge themselves guilty or know what to say in confession. I ask them to examine themselves under three headings embracing the whole course of life.

I. The state and condition to which God has called them. You are a father of a family: what care do you take to teach, occupy and educate your children? You have servants: do you give them good example, correct them and pay them faithfully? You hold an office: how do you fulfill it? See whether you carry out your profession's obligations as a Christian: *Videte vocationem vestram, fratres*—consider your calling, brethren.

II. There are sins common to people in your profession: sins of soldiers, officers of justice, merchants, craftsmen, and so forth. There are sins of omission, of which people seldom accuse themselves. Being rich, have you failed to give alms? Being a superior, have you omitted correction, and so forth? Have you neglected to root out the vicious habits to which you are subject? We must examine ourselves not only about sins we have committed, but also about those in which we have cooperated. I shall not go into other sins contrary to Christianity's obligations, because they can be seen in the methods of examination found in books.

III. I content myself with pointing out that the third heading upon which you should reflect is the reform of your conduct. You have been confessing for so many years: is your life more orderly for it? What benefit do you draw from the sacraments? Where is the fruit of your resolutions? Have you not lived in continual relapse and in the circle of impiety of which the Prophet speaks: *In circuitu impii ambulant*—the wicked walk round in a circle? To make this examination well, ask God to give you the knowledge and sorrow you should have for your sins: *Quantas habeo iniquitates et peccata, scelera mea, et delicta ostende mihi*—how many are my iniquities and sins? Show me my crimes and offenses.[4]

Q. What benefits are obtained from a well-made confession?

A. It forgives sins. *Si confiteamur peccata nostra*, says St. John, *fidelis est, et justus, ut remittat nobis peccata nostra, et emundet nos ab omni iniquitate*—if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all iniquity.

II. It restores the soul's original beauty. You are entirely stained with your sins' uncleanness. If you make a good confession, your soul will become wholly beautiful, St. Augustine says when explaining these words of the Psalmist: *Confessio et pulchritudo in conspectu Ejus*—confession and beauty are in His presence. *Vis esse pulcher? confitere: fœdus eras, confitere, ut sis pulcher: peccator eras, confitere, ut sis justus*—do you wish to be beautiful? Confess. You were foul: confess, so that you may be beautiful. You were a sinner: confess, so that you may be just.

Do you know the distinction the Holy Spirit makes between someone who frankly confesses himself guilty and someone who conceals it? He regards the former's mouth as a vein of life and the latter's as a cause of death. When a sick person's vein is opened and he is copiously bled, bad blood flows out, and this is for him a vein of life. But if the bloodletting is badly done and the incision is small, the thicker blood causing the illness remains inside: *Vena vitæ est justi, et os impiorum operit iniquitatem*—the just man's mouth is a vein of life, but the mouth of the wicked covers iniquity. The same happens in confession. If you make it as you ought, it will be for you *vena vitæ*, a vein of life. But if you make it badly, it will be a source of death: *Os impiorum*, and so forth.[5]

III. It provides the joy and tranquility of a good conscience. All pious persons, as the Catechism of the Council of Trent observes, are persuaded that all the holiness we see in the Church today must be attributed particularly to confession. Through it the anxieties of conscience are calmed. The penitent becomes more docile and better disposed to receive the counsels given him; more patient and enduring in the labors of penance; more fervent in love of God; more watchful over himself; more humble at the sight of his sins; more grateful for the graces he has received; and more careful to preserve them.

IV. Finally, confession draws back the greatest sinners and makes them conceive greater confidence in God's mercy. St. Augustine observed this, publishing thirteen books of his *Confessions*. Is there a sinner who, reading or hearing this work read, does not feel moved by a true desire for conversion? *Confessiones meorum præteritorum malorum quæ remisisti mutans animam meam fide, et sacramento Tuo, cum leguntur, et audiuntur, excitant cor, ne dormiat in desperatione et dicat, non possum, sed evigilet in amore misericordiæ vitæ, quia potens est omnis infirmus, qui sibi per ipsam fit conscius infirmitatis suæ*—the confessions of my past evils, which You forgave by changing my soul through faith and Your sacrament, when read and heard stir the heart not to sleep in despair and say, "I cannot," but to awaken in love of mercy and life; for every weak person becomes strong when through it he becomes conscious of his weakness.

Oh, if heretics could understand these benefits obtained from confession! If they paused a little to reflect that it is so necessary a restraint upon libertinism, so fruitful a source of good counsel, so perceptible a consolation for souls afflicted by their sins; if, I repeat, they considered all this, I do not believe they could look upon so many goods without feeling their loss or without horror at a reform which suppressed a practice so holy, so necessary to the Church and so salutary for her children. Let us pray to God to convert them. Amen.

---

[1] John 20:23; Psalm 51:4 (Vulgate 50:6); Augustine, Sermon 392, formerly 40 in the cited collection.

[2] Thomas, IV, distinction 17, q.3, a.4, as cited; Trent, Session XIV, chapter 5 (the source prints chapter 3); Augustine on Psalm 37; Rosellus, *On Scruples*.

[3] Psalm 38:18 (Vulgate 37:19); Trent, Session XIV, chapter 5; Thomas, *Supplement*, q.9, a.2.

[4] 1 Corinthians 1:26 (the source's reference is garbled); Psalm 12:8 (Vulgate 11:9); Job 13:23.

[5] 1 John 1:9; Augustine on Psalm 95, no.7 in the cited numbering; Proverbs 10:11 (the source prints 10:20).

Sacraments: Tenth Homily: On the Penitent's Satisfaction and the Priest's Absolution

Original preacher not named.

Facite ergo fructus dignos pœnitentiæ. (Luke 3.)

Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of penance.

After God had made His word heard by St. John, who had lived in the desert from his infancy, he came, St. Luke says, to preach and administer the baptism of penance, preparing the Jews for the Messiah's coming. People generally came to hear him from all Judea, from the city of Jerusalem and from the whole

country on both sides of the Jordan. A praiseworthy curiosity drew them to see and hear the Messiah's holy Forerunner, whose principal purpose was to exhort these peoples to penance. *Facite ergo fructus dignos pœnitentiæ*: this is what he said to them. All his discourses ended with these words, and with them we too ought to conclude those we address to sinners to move them to sincere reconciliation with God.

For according to St. Gregory, one of the greatest delusions is to persuade ourselves that our sins will be forgiven if we content ourselves with not committing them again, without taking the trouble to do penance. It is not so, says this holy pontiff: God has ordained quite the contrary. Just as a hand does not erase what it has written by ceasing to write; as a tongue that has poured forth many insults does not repair the outrages it committed by remaining silent; as a debtor does not pay his debts by contenting himself with contracting no new ones: so, when we have lived badly, merely ceasing to commit sins does not expiate them. We must also practice the contrary virtues and expiate our sins by the tears and labors of sincere penance. In a word, we must join to contrition and confession of sins the penitent's satisfaction and the priest's absolution. These are what we shall discuss today.

Q. What is this satisfaction of the penitent about which you wish to speak to us?

A. Satisfaction, taken generally, is reparation for harm done: *Est illatæ injuriæ compensatio,* says St. Thomas—it is compensation for an injury inflicted. It is the full payment of a debt, says the Catechism of the Council of Trent: *Rei debitæ integra solutio*. This definition includes rigorous and perfect satisfaction, which Jesus Christ alone could make, fully repairing the injury done to God by sin. Here we shall speak only of imperfect satisfaction, such as man can make. This satisfaction is nothing other than the penance the confessor imposes upon the penitent, or the penitent imposes upon himself, to expiate his sins.

Since a man can sin against God and against his neighbor, he must make satisfaction to both as far as he can. He must make satisfaction to God and repair the injury he did Him by violating His holy law through humble and laborious exercises of penance. He must satisfy his neighbor by restoring the possessions or honor he took from him, through actions contrary to the injustice into which he fell.

When this satisfaction is imposed by the confessor, it is called sacramental, because it is one of the three acts required of the penitent by divine institution for the sacrament's completeness and for obtaining full remission of his sins, as the Council of Trent says. Certainly, actual satisfaction—that is, fulfillment of the penance—is not absolutely necessary for the sacrament's validity. Yet the desire and will to make satisfaction are entirely indispensable, since this desire is contained in the contrition the penitent must have for his sins.

For this reason the same holy council teaches us that, according to the order of God's justice, we cannot regain through the sacrament of Penance the new life and perfect health we received in Baptism without many tears and labors. This is why the holy Fathers call penance a laborious baptism.

Q. Is it necessary to make satisfaction to God for sins committed after Baptism?

A. The heretics of these latter times, wishing to establish errors favorable to their softness and convenience, have sought to destroy the painful and satisfactory works necessary for penance's completeness. It is enough, they say, to change one's life and form a purpose of not sinning again, without taking the trouble to satisfy God's justice. *Ita optimam pœnitentiam novam vitam esse docent, ut omnem satisfactionis vim et usum tollant,* says the Council of Trent—they teach that the best penance is a new life in such a way as to remove all the force and use of satisfaction.

This heresy is all the more pernicious because it removes everything that can mortify man's passions: fasts, abstinences and other austerities. It is a heresy that opens the door to dissoluteness, gives free rein to every disorder, and through a supposed impunity destroys and annihilates the penance recommended to sinners in Sacred Scripture and the holy Fathers. To oppose this error, the Church has defined three things:

I. There are three parts in the sacrament of Penance which are, as it were, its matter: namely, contrition, confession and satisfaction. Although satisfaction is only an integral part, it nevertheless enters into the sacrament's composition, contributes to the perfect remission of sins, and obliges all sinners who are in a condition to practice it.

II. The Church has decided that what happens in Baptism does not happen in Penance. In Baptism all the punishment of sin is forgiven together with the guilt. In Penance, however, although the guilt is forgiven, not all punishment is forgiven. God changes eternal punishment into a temporal punishment we must suffer in chastisement for our infidelity. The sacrament of Penance is for ungrateful people who broke the covenant they made with God in Baptism. It is just that these ungrateful people should be punished and that returning to God's grace should cost them effort: *Ad quam tamen novitatem et integritatem per sacramentum Pœnitentiæ, sine magnis nostris fletibus et laboribus, divina id exigente justitia, pervenire nequaquam possumus, ut merito pœnitentia laboriosus quidam Baptismus a sanctis Patribus dictus fuerit*—we cannot attain that renewal and wholeness through the sacrament of Penance without great tears and labors on our part, divine justice requiring this; hence the holy Fathers rightly called penance a kind of laborious Baptism.

III. The Church teaches us that satisfactory punishments are necessary to turn sinners from their disorders and prevent them from falling into them so easily. Of all the means we possess for appeasing God's wrath, none is safer or more effective than practicing works of penance. *Neque vero securior ulla via in Ecclesia Dei unquam existimata fuit ad removendam imminentem a Deo pœnam, quam ut hæc pœnitentiæ opera homines cum vero animi dolore frequentent*, as the Council of Trent says—no safer way has ever been considered in God's Church for averting punishment threatened by God than for people frequently to perform these works of penance with true sorrow of soul.

Thus satisfaction rests upon three powerful reasons proving its necessity: I. God's justice, which leaves nothing unpunished. II. Abuse of baptismal grace. III. The sinner's infidelity and malice, which need this remedy.[1]

Q. Did Jesus Christ not make sufficient satisfaction to God's justice for our sins? Why, then, should we be obliged to make satisfaction?

A. There is no doubt that Jesus Christ made sufficient satisfaction for us. But it does not follow that we need not do penance ourselves. It is an article of faith that Jesus Christ's merits are more than sufficient to blot out our sins—and not ours only, but those of the whole world, as St. John says—for their value is infinite. Yet another truth we must believe is that, to obtain forgiveness of our sins, Jesus Christ's merits and satisfaction must be applied to us. Now, in the sacrament of Penance they are applied to us only on condition that we, on our part, make satisfaction to God as far as we can.

God is free to forgive us as He pleases. He can forgive us by applying Jesus Christ's merits without leaving us any obligation of satisfaction, and this is what He does in Baptism. But in Penance, to punish our infidelity, He wills that our satisfactions be joined to the Savior's. In this sense St. Paul says: *Adimpleo ea quæ desunt passionum Christi in carne mea*—I fill up in my flesh what remains of Jesus Christ's sufferings. Nothing is lacking to Jesus Christ's cross except that ours should be joined to it. Far from diminishing His redemption's glory, this union increases it, for it is the Savior Himself Who gives all their merit to our satisfactions and makes satisfaction to God through Himself and through His members.

Every Catholic must therefore know that, in suffering for us, Jesus Christ did not intend to dispense us from suffering, carrying our cross and expiating our faults through penance. On the contrary, He willed that by suffering on our part we should in this way attain justification and eternal salvation, as St. Augustine says: *Operanti in se Christo, cooperatur homo salutem æternam ad justificationem suam*—a person cooperates toward his justification and eternal salvation with Christ working within him.[2]

Q. How should satisfaction be made to God, and what conditions must our penance and satisfaction possess?

A. Satisfaction must be made in a manner proportionate to our sins. *Quam magna deliquimus, tam granditer defleamus*, says St. Cyprian; *alto vulneri diligens et longa medicina ne desit; pœnitentia crimine minor non sit*—as greatly as we have offended, so greatly let us weep; let a deep wound not lack careful and lengthy treatment; let penance not be less than the crime.

Therefore, the penances imposed upon us should possess these qualities:

I. There should be some correspondence between penance and sin, and the sinner should be punished according to his offenses' number and gravity: *Pro mensura peccati, erit et plagarum modus*—according to the measure of the sin shall be the measure of the blows. A confessor would sin gravely if he indiscreetly imposed light penances upon people who have fallen into many great sins and are in a condition to perform more rigorous penances. He must remember that he stands in God's place in the ministry he exercises. If he pronounces an unjust sentence it will recoil upon him, as Scripture says: *Videte quid faciatis; non enim hominis exercetis judicium, sed Domini, et quodcumque judicaveritis, in vos redundabit*—consider what you do, for you exercise not man's judgment but the Lord's, and whatever you judge will return upon you.

Nor should he be excessively rigid, as he would be in imposing lifelong penances or penances for an indefinite period. This excess of severity commonly serves only to cast down penitents' spirits, as St. Thomas observes.

II. Penances must be suitable: *Salutares et convenientes satisfactiones*, says the Council of Trent—salutary and suitable satisfactions. To achieve this they must conform to the penitent's dispositions. A person with great contrition, who has already begun to expiate his sins and suffers much through illness, poverty or another cause, should not be given so great a penance as someone who has done nothing yet, suffers no particular hardship and scarcely feels remorse of conscience.

It is also just to take account of penitents' age, sex, social condition, resources, strength and other circumstances. Fasts and long pilgrimages, for example, would not be proportionate and suitable penances for children, the elderly, the sick, and so forth.

III. For a penance to be suitable, as the Council of Trent teaches, it must be at once punishment and remedy. That is, it should be suited not only to punishing sins but also to preserving the person from relapse into them.

IV. As far as possible penance must consist in works contrary to the sins of which penitents accuse themselves: alms for the avaricious; fasting and other bodily mortifications for the lustful; prayer and humiliations for the proud, and so forth. *Non omne vulnus eodem emplastro curatur,* says a Father—not every wound is healed with the same plaster.

Q. What works enable us to make satisfaction to God for our sins?

A. They may be reduced to prayer, fasting and almsgiving, according to what the angel St. Raphael said to Tobias: *Bona est oratio cum jejunio et eleemosyna*—prayer is good with fasting and alms. Prayer includes retirement, reading good books, visiting the Most Blessed Sacrament and the other exercises of piety proper to a contrite and humble heart. Fasting includes every mortification of body and spirit. Almsgiving means all works of mercy, spiritual as well as temporal.

We may also make satisfaction to divine justice through the evils God sends us. For, as the Council of Trent says, God's goodness toward us is so great that He wills us to be able to make satisfaction to Him not only through penances we impose upon ourselves or the confessor prescribes, but also through the afflictions with which He favors us, when we suffer them patiently and with resignation to His will. \[The Spanish *nos*

regala, "favors us with," deliberately presents hardship as a gift capable of being offered to God.\] Thus afflictions, illnesses and life's other misfortunes, received with a willing heart, can release us from the punishments we owed to divine justice.

Here are satisfactions we find within and outside ourselves, inseparable from this miserable life. Let us use them fruitfully and, as the saying goes, make a virtue of necessity.[3]

Q. May a penitent refuse to accept the penance his confessor imposes? Is it a sin not to fulfill it?

A. A sinner cannot decline to accept the penance imposed upon him. He must submit to it humbly and fulfill it exactly. *Injunctam sibi pœnitentiam propriis viribus studeant adimplere*, says the general Lateran Council held under Innocent III—let them endeavor to fulfill the penance imposed upon them according to their strength. The reason is that Jesus Christ gave priests not only the power to loose but also the power to bind. The power to bind consists not only in refusing absolution to the unworthy, but also in imposing suitable penances upon those absolved, by which they may satisfy divine justice.

We must therefore conclude that, unless there is a manifest error in the confessor's conduct, the penitent is obliged before God to accept and fulfill the penance the priest imposes. He cannot obstinately refuse submission without mortal sin. *Videtur*, says St. Bonaventure, *quod ille peccator, qui non vult suscipere satisfactionem condignam a sacerdote impositam, mortaliter peccet*—it appears that the sinner unwilling to accept fitting satisfaction imposed by a priest sins mortally. Nevertheless, I do not intend to deprive a penitent of freedom to make some humble observation to his confessor. But if, after weighing the penitent's reasons, the confessor does not judge it appropriate to agree with him, the penitent must submit to what he has ordered.

If I am asked what kind of sin it is not to fulfill the penance, I shall answer that voluntarily failing to fulfill it without legitimate cause is mortal sin, especially when the penance is grave and was imposed for mortal sins. But if the penance is light and the sins for whose expiation it was imposed are venial, this omission cannot be called mortal. It may even be free of all sin, as when we have entirely forgotten it without fault or find ourselves unable to fulfill it. For according to the rule of law, *Impossibilium nulla est obligatio*—there is no obligation to do the impossible.

We should observe that when a confessor discovers that a penitent has failed through sheer laziness and without any legitimate excuse to fulfill the penance imposed upon him, ordinarily speaking he should dismiss him without hearing his sins and order him to fulfill it entirely, if possible, or at least in part, before returning to confession.

Q. May an imposed penance be commuted, or fulfilled through a third person?

A. To the first question I answer:

I. A penitent cannot commute his penance on his own authority, being indispensably obliged before God to fulfill what his confessor prescribed. The reason is that no one can be judge in his own case.

II. A confessor cannot change a penance another imposed when it is just, suitable and proportionate to the penitent's sins. Rather, he should set before the penitent his obligation to fulfill it, explaining for this purpose how far today's penances fall short of the ancient canons' severity and the manner in which the Church formerly treated sinners. This is the counsel St. Charles gives confessors.

III. If there is just cause to commute a penance, this should be done in the tribunal of penance after hearing the penitent's confession. This agrees very well with St. Raymond of Peñafort's teaching: *Ad illud quod quærebatur, scilicet, utrum sacerdotes possint facere commutationes jejuniorum, vel alterius satisfactionis ad petitiones ipsorum pœnitentium, credo breviter quod sic, dum tamen discrete, et propter causam et circa subditos suos*—to the question whether priests may commute fasts or another satisfaction at the penitents'

own request, I answer briefly that I believe they may, provided they act discreetly, for a reason and with respect to their own subjects.

To the second question we answer that the penitent must fulfill the penance himself. The obligation of making satisfaction is no less personal than the penitent's other acts. Confession and contrition are so personal that other people cannot supply them. Thus, just as a penitent is obliged personally to confess and detest his sins, so he is obliged personally to fulfill the penance imposed upon him, an integral part of the sacrament of Penance. If for just cause the confessor consented to the penitent's fulfilling the penance through another, he would be obliged, as a celebrated canonist observes, to impose some satisfactory work the penitent himself would perform, so as not to render the sacrament incomplete.[4]

Q. When a penitent has true contrition for his sins, has confessed them and fulfilled or promised to fulfill his penance, what remains for him to be reconciled with God through the sacrament of Penance?

A. Nothing remains but to receive absolution through the ministry of the priest to whom he has confessed. This absolution is a sentence the priest pronounces in Jesus Christ's name, by which sins are forgiven to those who approach the sacrament of Penance with the proper dispositions.

I. It is a sentence, not a mere declaration that sins have been forgiven, as the heretics of our time maintain. It is a kind of judicial act by which the priest, in his capacity as judge, absolves the penitent. *Actus judicialis quo ab ipso, velut a judice, sententia pronuntiatur*, says the Council of Trent—a judicial act by which a sentence is pronounced by him as by a judge. Hence the confessor must employ no other terms than these: *Ego te absolvo*—I absolve you. The reason is that this absolute form, which alone has been used for twelve centuries in the Latin Church, expresses more clearly than the deprecatory form the priest's capacity as judge and the judicial act he exercises in penance's tribunal, as St. Thomas observes.

II. By this sentence sins are forgiven to those who approach the sacrament of Penance with proper dispositions. Certainly God alone can forgive sins in His own name and by His own authority. But this does not prevent priests, His ministers, from forgiving them on His behalf through the power they received from Jesus Christ. We know this through Sacred Scripture and tradition, and through the Church's judgment: from the third century she regarded the Novatians as heretics because they taught that the Church lacked power to forgive sins committed after Baptism.

Nevertheless, however much one is absolved through the Church's minister, we must always remember that God is the principal cause Who works the remission of sins through the ministry of priests. *Ministerium suum exhibent, non jus alicujus potestatis exercent*, says St. Ambrose; *neque enim in suo, sed in Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti nomine peccata dimittunt… Humanum enim obsequium, sed munificentia supernæ est potestatis*—they offer their ministry, not exercise the right of some power of their own, for they forgive sins not in their own name but in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The service is human, but the generosity belongs to heavenly power.[5]

Q. Must confessors give absolution to everyone who asks for it? Are there cases in which they must refuse or defer it?

A. Confessors are not obliged to give absolution to all who request it. They have received the power to retain sins as well as forgive them. *Claves sacerdotum non ad solvendum dumtaxat, sed et ad ligandum concessas etiam antiqui Patres et credunt et docent*, says the Council of Trent—the ancient Fathers too believe and teach that priests' keys were granted not only for loosing but also for binding. They have rules they must follow and sin if they do not follow them. For as St. Gregory the Great says, the priest's absolution is true only when it follows the Eternal Judge's sentence: *Tunc enim vera est absolutio præsidentis, cum æterni arbitrium sequetur Judicis.*

Penitents must therefore be instructed in this truth: there are cases in which confessors must defer their absolution. Here they are as given in the Roman Ritual:

I. Those giving no sign of sorrow for their sins should not be absolved: *Qui nulla dant signa doloris*. According to St. Charles, these include those who come to the confessional without preparation or confess through custom, without a true desire to be converted and renounce mortal sin.

II. Those ignorant of the principal mysteries of faith and the other truths the Church commands them to know. According to St. Charles, those ignorant of their state's and occupation's obligations must be added to these. This agrees closely with St. Thomas's teaching: *Omnes tenentur scire communiter ea quæ sunt fidei, et universalia juris præcepta: singuli autem ea quæ ad eorum statum, vel officium spectant*—everyone is bound to know generally the things of faith and the universal precepts of law; each person, moreover, the things pertaining to his state or office.

III. Those harboring enmities and unwilling to be reconciled with their enemies: *Qui odia et inimicitias deponere nolunt*—those unwilling to put away hatred and enmity.

IV. Those who have harmed their neighbor's possessions or honor and have not repaired it according to their means, or are presumed to lack a sincere will to do so: *Aut aliena, si possunt, restituere nolunt*—or are unwilling to restore another's goods when able.

V. Those in a proximate occasion of mortal sin, until they leave it; or, if they are not free to leave it, until they give signs of amendment and grounds for believing they will not fall into the same sin again: *Aut proximam peccandi occasionem deserere nolunt*—or are unwilling to abandon a proximate occasion of sin.

VI. Those who have given public scandal, until they have caused it to cease and repaired it publicly: *Aut publicum scandalum dederunt, nisi publice satisfaciant, et scandalum tollant*—or have given public scandal, unless they make public satisfaction and remove the scandal.

Let us specify no more. The little we have said suffices to make sinners understand that there are cases in which they must not resent their absolution's being deferred. If it were granted them then, it would be only a false peace, as St. Cyprian says: useless to the recipient and harmful to the giver. *Irrita et falsa pax, periculosa dantibus, et nihil accipientibus profutura*—a vain and false peace, dangerous to those giving it and of no benefit to those receiving it.[6]

Q. What must a penitent do when his confessor has deferred absolution?

A. He must submit humbly, not argue or complain about the confessor who, according to the Church's rules, considers it appropriate to defer his absolution. Instead of discrediting him as a scrupulous man forbidding you gambling and feasting, you should thank God for having found a charitable physician who applies himself to healing your soul's wounds. *Non audit medicus ad voluntatem, sed audit ad sanitatem*, says St. Augustine—the physician does not listen in order to please, but listens in order to heal.

II. During the period of delay he must examine himself more carefully. He must consider the very dangerous abuse of imaginary contritions which never change the heart; of useless confessions followed by no amendment; of vain penances which never mortify sin; and of hasty absolutions which serve only to bind the priest's conscience without ever loosing the penitent's, as St. Ambrose says. If he makes these reflections, the delay of absolution will open his eyes to his past life and make him think seriously about conversion.

III. Finally, while absolution is deferred, he must be more exact in watching over himself, avoiding occasions of sin, destroying his bad habits, faithfully practicing the counsels and remedies his confessor gave him, and returning to confession at the prescribed time. He must return with a spirit of penance showing that his bad habit has at last yielded to his sorrow for sin: *Ut voluntati pœnitendi cedat consuetudo peccandi*—so that the habit of sinning may yield to the will to repent.

But, my beloved brethren, by Jesus Christ's blood, whose dispensation He has entrusted to us, I beg you to observe the rules prescribed by the Church. Let us remember what Cardinal Bellarmine said on this point: *Non esset tanta facilitas peccandi, si non esset tanta facilitas absolvendi*—there would not be such readiness to sin if there were not such readiness to absolve.

And you, Christians, be fully convinced that one of the devil's greatest devices for preventing sinners' conversion is the sweet but false persuasion he puts into their heads: that however great and frequent the sins they commit, it is enough to confess them without taking the trouble to abandon them or do penance. Consequently, after abusing the sacraments during life, they do the same at death and commonly fall into hell by the very road that should have led them to heaven. Do not therefore resent, my brethren, absolution's being delayed when you find yourselves in such cases. You need this trial to amend yourselves, check the passions dragging you into new sins, receive the sacraments fruitfully and secure your salvation through true penance, which will merit eternal life for you.[7]

---

[1] Trent, Session XIV, chapters 2 and 8.

[2] 1 John 2:2; Colossians 1:24; Augustine, *Tractate 27 on John*.

[3] Tobit 12:8; Trent, Session XIV, chapter 9.

[4] Raymond of Peñafort, *Summa*, III, title 34, section 65 in the cited edition; Cabassut, *Theoretical and Practical Canon Law*, III, chapter 14, no.3.

[5] Trent, Session XIV, chapter 6 (the source misprints "IV"); Thomas, *Opusculum 22*, chapter 1, in its edition; Ambrose, *On the Holy Spirit*, chapter 18 as cited.

[6] Trent, Session XIV, chapter 8; Gregory, *Homily 26 on the Gospels*; Roman Ritual; Charles Borromeo, *Instructions to Confessors*; Thomas, I–II, q.76, a.2 (the source prints q.66); Cyprian, *On the Lapsed*.

[7] Augustine on Psalm 22, second exposition, no.4; the source cites Ambrose, book III *On Penance* (an uncertain attribution/arrangement); Augustine, *Tractate 49 on John*; Bellarmine, *Sermon 8 for Advent*.

Sacraments: Eleventh Homily: On Indulgences

Original preacher not named.

Tibi dabo claves regni cœlorum; et quodcumque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in cœlis; et quodcumque solveris super terram, erit solutum et in cœlis. (Matthew.)

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will also be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will also be loosed in heaven.

How great is the power Jesus Christ grants St. Peter through these words! He gives him the keys of His kingdom, which is the Church. He promises to ratify in heaven everything Peter does in His name on earth: those whose sins he forgives in this world will be absolved in heaven, and the sins he retains will also be retained. Certainly no more extensive power can be given. This is not something purely speculative. St. Peter exercised this power and still exercises it today through his successors; for what the Savior said to the Prince of the Apostles He said to the whole Church. *Has claves non homo unus, sed unitas accepit Ecclesiæ*, says St. Augustine—not one man, but the unity of the Church, received these keys.

In vain do the followers of Luther and Calvin attempt to oppose this great power Jesus Christ gave His Church. These words of the Savior, *Quodcumque*, and so forth, will condemn them eternally. They teach us not only that the Church has received the power to forgive or retain sins in the sacrament of Penance, as we showed in the preceding homilies. They also teach that, outside the sacrament of Penance, this same Church can grant us indulgences to supply for our satisfactions and the temporal punishment due to our sins. This I hope to show you on the present occasion. First I shall establish the doctrine of indulgences, and afterward speak about the use we should make of them.[1]

Q. What does the Church mean by the word "indulgence"? What is its efficacy, and from where does it obtain it?

A. By the word indulgence we mean a favor the Church grants outside the tribunal of penance to truly contrite sinners who have confessed and fulfilled what the bulls prescribe. She forgives them a part of the temporal punishment due to sins committed after Baptism, and a part of the satisfaction or penance that ought to have been imposed upon them.

Every indulgence presupposes sin. If no sin had been committed, there would be no need for an indulgence. After sin has been forgiven as regards guilt and eternal punishment through the sacrament of Penance, there remains a temporal punishment sinners must suffer, either in this life or the next, to make satisfaction to God and expiate their sins. An indulgence forgives part of this punishment. Yet in relaxing the punishment the Church does not intend to dispense sinners from doing penance, but only to supply for their weakness. She wishes them to do what they can on their part to satisfy divine justice. Indulgences not only forgive a part of the temporal punishment a sinner should suffer in this life. They also have efficacy for diminishing and shortening the punishments he would have to suffer after this life in purgatory if he died without entirely expiating his sins.

They derive their value from the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who offered a superabundant satisfaction of infinite worth for mankind by offering Himself for them upon the cross. To this are joined the merits of the most holy Virgin and the other saints, as members of this divine Head. This superabundant satisfaction constitutes a rich treasury which the Church administers for her children's benefit, for the expiation of their sins.

Calvinists deny that this treasury exists in the Church, imagining that to join the saints' merits to Jesus Christ's infinite merits is to injure Him. Certainly Jesus Christ is the victim of propitiation for our sins. Through Him we have obtained the forgiveness He won for us with His blood, and it is through His passion's merits that indulgences forgive the temporal punishment we deserved for our sins. But this does not prevent the saints' merits from being very profitable to us, or the saints from interceding with God to obtain the grace we need to expiate our sins. They are Jesus Christ's members, animated by His Spirit and united to Him and to one another by charity's bond. This is the fruit of the communion of saints which we profess to believe when reciting the Apostles' Creed: *Sanctorum communionem.*

Q. Has the Church power to grant indulgences? Who may grant them? Is granting indulgences salutary for the faithful? What motives are there for granting them?

A. The Council of Trent, in its decree on indulgences at the end of Session XXV, teaches us: I. The Church has received from Jesus Christ the power to grant indulgences. II. She has used this power from the earliest times. III. The use of indulgences is very salutary for the faithful. The council pronounces excommunication against anyone daring to say that indulgences are useless and avail nothing, or that the Church has no power to grant them.

This power rests upon what Jesus Christ said to His Apostles: "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Through these words Jesus Christ promises His Apostles and their successors not only the power to impose satisfactory punishments upon sinners and oblige them to submit, but also the power to relax and forgive the punishments imposed or which ought to be imposed.

St. Paul was so persuaded that he possessed this power that, when he saw the incestuous man of Corinth, whom he had handed over to Satan, doing penance for his offense and the faithful interceding for him, he forgave part of the penance imposed upon him. He judged that, in the condition in which he saw him, it would suffice to have suffered the correction already given. Moreover, he exhorted the faithful to treat this

penitent sinner indulgently and console him, for fear he should be overwhelmed by excessive sadness and driven to despair. Is this not a true indulgence granted by the Apostle to this incestuous man in Jesus Christ's name and person, out of consideration for the faithful, as he himself says? *Quod donavi, si quid donavi, propter vos in persona Christi*—what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven for your sake in the person of Christ.

The use of indulgences has always continued in the Church, as we see from the ancient Fathers' writings, the canons and the councils. St. Cyprian teaches us that bishops, at the martyrs' request, granted sinners an indulgence by which they were dispensed from the remainder of the penance imposed upon them. We also see canons in ancient councils, such as Ancyra, Nicaea and the early councils of Carthage, giving bishops faculties to shorten the duration and rigor of punishments imposed upon sinners. In using this power, do the bishops not grant an indulgence? Let Protestants therefore cease telling us that indulgences are a new institution: here they are, established from the Church's beginning.

Since the power to grant indulgences rests upon the authority Jesus Christ gave His Apostles to forgive and retain sins, only those possessing this authority and jurisdiction in the Church's external forum may grant indulgences. Popes and general councils can grant plenary indulgences throughout the whole Church and to all the faithful. Bishops can grant them only within their dioceses. After declaring that excessive readiness to grant indulgences caused the Church's authority to be despised and the exercises of penance due in satisfaction for sins to be neglected, the Lateran Council of 1215 ordered that henceforth bishops could grant no more than forty days' indulgence. The exception was the day on which they dedicated and consecrated a church, when they might grant one year's indulgence.

An indulgence must not be granted without reasonable, pious and just cause, as Martin V's bull at the end of the Council of Constance says, and it must be granted with the moderation desired by the Council of Trent. Otherwise sinners may be drawn away from penance and ecclesiastical discipline weakened. *In his tamen concedendis moderationem, juxta veterem et probatam in Ecclesia consuetudinem, adhiberi cupit; ne nimia facilitate ecclesiastica disciplina enervetur*—in granting them, however, the council desires moderation according to the Church's ancient and approved custom, lest ecclesiastical discipline be weakened through excessive facility.

Q. Are there many kinds of indulgences? Are there indulgences not only for the faithful living, but also for the dead?

A. According to the Church's present practice there are the various kinds of indulgence: namely, plenary, limited or nonplenary, and jubilee. A plenary indulgence is a remission of all the temporal punishment remaining to be suffered by someone who has done true penance for his faults. It is called plenary because it is complete and without reservation. A nonplenary indulgence is remission of punishment that would have to be suffered for a certain time in this world or in purgatory, such as the indulgence of a hundred days or of forty days granted by bishops.

We should observe that in the primitive Church many days and years of penance were prescribed for those who fell into grave sin after Baptism. They were ordered to perform a certain number of days of fasting and other laborious works during the penitential period. An indulgence of many days or years remits as many days or years of penance as would have to be performed according to the Church's ancient rules. Although we are not subject to those ancient rules' rigor, confessors are nevertheless obliged to impose penances proportionate to sins, and penitents are obliged to make satisfaction for them. Yet because our health is often broken, our life very short and our lukewarmness very great for performing the penance our sins deserve, the Church sees fit to supply for our weakness and inability by granting indulgences.

There are plenary indulgences the popes grant for a certain number of years, ordinarily seven. Others are designated perpetual by their briefs. Nevertheless, doctors commonly judge that these last only twenty years.

This opinion rests upon rule LVII of the Roman chancery, which declares that the word "perpetual" must be restricted to twenty years only. A jubilee is a plenary indulgence whose benefits we shall see presently.

Besides indulgences for the faithful living, the Church also grants them for the benefit of the souls in purgatory, united to her by the bond of the same faith and charity. *Neque enim piorum animæ defunctorum ab Ecclesia separantur*, says St. Augustine—the souls of the faithful departed are not separated from the Church. But she grants these in a very different manner from that used with the living. The Church grants indulgences to the living by way of absolution, *per modum absolutionis*, as theologians say; for the dead, by way of suffrage, *per modum suffragii*.

That is, she grants indulgences to the living by virtue of her jurisdiction over them, forgiving part of the punishment due to their sins. As for the departed in purgatory, she considers them no longer under her jurisdiction. She therefore applies indulgences to them by way of suffrage, asking God in His infinite mercy graciously to receive and accept the superabundant satisfactions of Jesus Christ and the saints in payment of the punishments they owe divine justice.

We must therefore not doubt that this kind of indulgence is very useful to the dead. It is of faith that they can be relieved by the faithful's prayers and suffrages, according to the rules of God's mercy and justice and in proportion to the care they took in life to make themselves worthy of this help. With greater reason can they be relieved by the Church's application to them of our Savior's and the saints' superabundant merits and satisfaction. This is the judgment of St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure and very many theologians cited by the learned Cardinal Bellarmine.[2]

Q. What is a jubilee, and what effects does it produce?

A. A jubilee is a plenary indulgence the pope grants every twenty-five years to all who visit Rome's four principal churches. This jubilee, commonly called a holy year, lasts a year for those visiting Rome's churches and is not granted to the rest of the faithful until that year has passed. Boniface VIII was the first to give the jubilee the form it has today. He ordered that, beginning with the year 1300, this general indulgence should be granted every hundred years to those visiting the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome.

He did so because he learned that in 1299 the roads were full of pilgrims coming to Rome from every quarter. They said they were doing so because they had heard from their fathers that those going to Rome at the end of each century gained great indulgences in the century's final year. Judging a hundred years too long an interval, Clement VI reduced it to fifty. This continued until Paul II, who in 1470 fixed this indulgence at twenty-five years, or every twenty-five years. It was first carried out by his successor Sixtus IV in 1475, and has uniformly continued until now.

This last pope ordered all other indulgences suspended during the jubilee. He also gave this plenary indulgence the name jubilee because of its great resemblance to the jubilee of the old law, which prefigured that of the new. In the Jewish jubilee year all debts were forgiven, slaves were freed and alienated possessions returned to their original owners. The jubilee of the new law forgives the temporal punishment our sins made us owe divine justice, frees us from the devil's slavery and restores us to possession of spiritual goods. Rightly, therefore, is it called *annus remissionis*, a year of remission.

Here are the privileges the jubilee grants:

I. A person may choose whichever confessor he wishes among those possessing ordinary jurisdiction or approved within the diocese where he is staying.

II. Approved confessors may absolve all sins, however grave, even those reserved to the bishop or pope. They may also absolve ecclesiastical censures belonging to the tribunal of conscience. But if the penitent has been declared excommunicated by the ecclesiastical judge, or denounced to that judge for this purpose, the confessor cannot absolve him. Nor can he dispense from irregularities, the canonical impediments to

receiving Orders that only the ecclesiastical superior can remove.

III. Confessors may commute the greater number of vows when the jubilee bull grants this faculty. The remaining benefits may be seen in greater detail by reading the bull for each jubilee.

Q. How must a confessor deal with a penitent who comes to gain the jubilee while in a proximate occasion or habit of mortal sin, and with someone who, having gained it in the first week, falls into a reserved case?

A. To the first difficulty I answer that if, during a jubilee, the confessor finds a penitent presently in a habit or occasion of mortal sin in circumstances that would oblige him to refuse absolution at another time, he cannot give it. The jubilee gives him no faculty to dispense the penitent from the ordinary rules, which conform to the Church's desire to procure sinners' conversion and salvation. Such indulgence would be more capable of harming the penitent than healing him.

Thus we see that some confessors' great readiness during jubilees to grant hasty absolutions to habitual sinners serves only to maintain them in their disorders, as St. Charles observed. The confessor must therefore defer this penitent's absolution and jubilee until he judges that the man has amended his bad life and habit and abandoned the proximate occasion. Then, by giving him absolution, he will make him a sharer in the jubilee's grace.

Provided the penitent presents himself for confession during the jubilee and fulfills the works prescribed by the bull in a true spirit of penance, the delay of absolution will not prevent his enjoying the jubilee's grace. It is not credible that the Church, which desires nothing so much as her children's salvation, would wish to punish by deprivation of the jubilee's grace a delay resulting from the obedience the penitent owes his confessor. The pope himself permits confessors to transfer the jubilee to another time for the sick and for those who, through a legitimate impediment, cannot do what the bull prescribes for gaining it.

To the second difficulty I answer that if someone gains the jubilee in the first week and falls into a reserved case, he cannot be absolved in the second week by a confessor possessing only ordinary faculties. Extraordinary faculties are granted only for gaining the jubilee, and it can be gained only once.

Q. What must be done to gain the jubilee and other indulgences?

A. When the Church opens her treasuries to grant indulgences to the faithful, she teaches them at the same time what they must do to profit from them. The first disposition she requires is true contrition, containing sincere sorrow for having offended God and a firm purpose of not offending Him again. Do not deceive yourselves, my brethren: the Church grants indulgences only to truly contrite and penitent hearts: *Vere contritis et pœnitentibus*. We grant peace, says St. Cyprian; but to whom? Not to sleeping and negligent men, but to the watchful, who promise to be more vigilant over themselves in the future: *Pacem non dormientibus, sed vigilantibus damus*.

The second condition is to be in grace. *Non valent indulgentiæ existentibus in mortali*, says St. Thomas; *et ideo in omnibus indulgentiis fit mentio de vere contritis et confessis*—indulgences do not avail those in mortal sin; therefore all indulgences mention the truly contrite and confessed. This is the judgment of all theologians, and the reason is clear. An indulgence is a forgiveness of punishment due to sin. But punishment is never forgiven without guilt's being forgiven. Consequently we must have received remission of sins in penance's tribunal. Then, having passed from enemies to friends of Jesus Christ, His superabundant satisfaction is applied to us. If we continue in enmity with Him, however, this grace is denied us.

Through sin we have pledged our soul to the devil. We must recover the bond recording this pledge; otherwise we shall not recover it even in jubilee time: *Redimi non poterit etiam in jubileo*—it cannot be redeemed even at the jubilee. \[The preacher uses the language of pawning and redeeming property to describe sin's bondage.\] We must therefore be reconciled with God through a good confession.

The third condition for receiving the effect of the jubilee and indulgences is a sincere desire to satisfy divine justice as far as we can: *Pœnitenti, operanti, roganti, potest clementer ignoscere; potest in acceptum referre quidquid pro talibus petierint martyres, et fecerint sacerdotes*—He can mercifully forgive the penitent who works and prays; He can accept whatever the martyrs have requested and priests have done for such persons.

The final condition is to perform what the bull prescribes: stations, visits to churches, prayers, fasts and alms. Everything must be fulfilled exactly and, as far as possible, in the state of grace. Some theologians even hold that if the last action prescribed by the bull were not performed in grace, the jubilee or indulgence would not be gained.

Let us thank God for inspiring His Church to use indulgences to shorten the time of our penance, and let us do everything possible to profit from them. Ah, what would we not do if we understood what souls suffer in purgatory when they have departed this world without performing due penance? Here is the time of grace and mercy in which God is content with a light satisfaction.

"Jerusalem has lived in disorder, and the house of Judah has offended Me for forty years," the Prophet said. "If I were to treat this unhappy nation as it deserves, I would destroy it without remedy. But I pity it. For the forty years of penance it deserves I am content with forty days. I ask only one day for each year: *Diem pro anno, diem, inquam, pro anno dedi tibi*—I have appointed you a day for a year, a day, I say, for a year."

"Lustful man, who have maintained relations with this wretched creature for so long; blasphemer, who have long dishonored God's holy name; drunkard, who have spent most of your life in dissoluteness: I could destroy you as I have so many others who are in hell. Nevertheless I wish to offer you forgiveness of your sins: *Diem pro anno dedi tibi*. Were you to do penance your whole life, give yourselves up to the austerities of the Thebaid's solitaries and spend as many years fasting as you spent offending Me, you would not be doing too much. Yet I wish to shorten your penance: *Diem pro anno dedi tibi*."

Let us therefore profit, my brethren, from so favorable a time, which God's goodness presents to us for expiating our sins and satisfying divine justice, so that after the labors of a short penance we may attain eternal blessedness.[3]

---

[1] The source cites Augustine, Sermon 273, formerly 108 *de diversis*.

[2] Augustine, *City of God*, XX, chapter 9, on the departed's continuing membership (the source prints "X, chapter 2"); Bellarmine, *On Indulgences*, chapter 14.

[3] Cyprian, *On the Lapsed*; Ezekiel 4:6.

Sacraments: Twelfth Homily: On Extreme Unction

Original preacher not named.

Infirmatur quis in vobis? Inducat presbyteros Ecclesiæ, et orent super eum, ungentes eum oleo in nomine Domini. (James 5.)

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Lord's name.

Here, Christians, is a new manifestation of Jesus Christ's mercy toward us and a new motive for our gratitude. Through this final sacrament He prepared an easy road for us to reach eternal blessedness when we depart this life. He opened its entrance to us through Baptism. Through the other sacraments we have explained thus far, His goodness gives us the assistance we need to preserve ourselves pure in observing His holy law and walk faithfully upon salvation's path.

Oh, how much we owe this adorable Savior! After ordering the beginning and progress of a Christian's life, He willed through the sacrament of Extreme Unction to sanctify its end and make it happy. Because the

devil, that roaring lion always seeking a wandering sheep to devour, redoubles his efforts against us particularly at the hour of death, this divine Savior also increased His fatherly vigilance to help us more effectively as our final hour approaches. Thus the holy Fathers always regarded the sacrament of Extreme Unction as the final perfection not only of penance but of the entire Christian life, which should be a continual penance, as the Council of Trent says: *Non modo pœnitentiæ, sed et totius vitæ christianæ, quæ perpetua pœnitentia esse debet, consummativum existimatum est a Patribus*. We shall speak of this sacrament in the present homily.

Q. What is Extreme Unction? Is it one of the sacraments of the new law?

A. Extreme Unction is a sacrament administered to the faithful who are dangerously ill. It gives them the grace necessary to bear illness's troubles, removes the remnants of sins, disposes them to die well and sometimes also gives bodily health, if this is conducive to the soul's health.

Extreme Unction is a sacrament of the new law, instituted by Jesus Christ like the others. He gave us some indication of it during His lifetime when sending the Apostles to preach. St. Mark noted that He gave them power to anoint the sick with oil. We can readily understand that Extreme Unction is a sacrament, since it is a sensible sign conferring grace upon its recipients. The anointings and prayers the priest performs over the sick person are the sensible sign. The patient's spiritual health—and bodily health, if appropriate—is the grace this sensible sign produces, as these words of St. James teach us: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call the priests of the Church, and let them pray for him, anointing him with oil in the Lord's name."

These words are so clear that, unable to deny that they speak of the sacrament of Extreme Unction, Protestants found no other evasion than to say, against the ancient Fathers' testimony, that the epistle cited is neither canonical nor by James. A wretched evasion, Cardinal Bellarmine says, since this epistle is acknowledged as canonical by the ancient Fathers who left us the catalog of the sacred books.

For this reason the Council of Trent condemned all who deny that Extreme Unction is truly and properly a sacrament instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ: *Si quis dixerit unctionem extremam non esse vere et proprie sacramentum a Christo Domino institutum, et a beato Jacobo Apostolo promulgatum, sed ritum tantum acceptum a Patribus, aut figmentum humanum: anathema sit*—if anyone says that Extreme Unction is not truly and properly a sacrament instituted by Christ the Lord and promulgated by the blessed Apostle James, but merely a rite received from the Fathers or a human invention, let him be anathema.

This sacrament is called Extreme Unction because it is the last anointing a Christian receives. He receives the first at Baptism, the second at Confirmation, the third at ordination if he is a priest or bishop, and this one when dangerously ill. Thus the ancient Fathers called this sacrament the anointing of the sick and the sacrament of the dying, as the Catechism of the Council of Trent observed.

Q. What are this sacrament's matter and form? Who is its minister, and what must he observe in administering it?

A. The Council of Trent, Session XIV, chapter 1, observed that apostolic tradition teaches us that oil blessed by the bishop is the matter of the sacrament of Extreme Unction. This oil must be olive oil. God willed oil to be used in this sacrament because oil soothes, heals, strengthens and gives light. Thus anointing with oil perfectly expresses the Holy Spirit's interior anointing, which through this sacrament purifies the soul of sin's remnants, strengthens it against the devil's temptations, enlightens its faith and mitigates its sufferings.

The application of blessed oil, the sacrament's proximate matter, consists in the anointings the priest makes upon the sick person. These anointings are made upon the five organs of sense because they are the doors through which sin enters the soul.

In the same chapter the Council of Trent teaches us that the sacrament's form consists in these words, which the priest pronounces at each anointing of the sick person: *Per istam sanctam Unctionem*, and so

forth—through this holy anointing. The Roman Ritual and all those drawn up since the Council of Trent propose no other form for this sacrament, and we must conform to it. The deprecatory, not declarative, form is used because St. James commanded it thus: *Inducat presbyteros Ecclesiæ, et orent super eum*—let him call the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him.

The ministers of this sacrament are priests. St. James made this known when he said: *Infirmatur quis in vobis? Inducat presbyteros Ecclesiæ*. But only the parish priest and those acting in his place may lawfully administer it. Recourse must be had to them when a sick person is in danger of death. They alone are this sacrament's ordinary ministers and are obliged to administer it to their parishioners, even when they have a contagious disease and have already confessed and received Communion from other priests. The first Clementine *De privilegiis* forbids religious to administer this sacrament without the parish priests' permission. Nevertheless, if a sick person were in such danger that the parish priest or beneficed clergy could not be reached, any other priest present could give Extreme Unction rather than let him die without this sacrament. St. Charles teaches this in his fifth provincial council.

The priest administering this sacrament must exhort all present to pray for the sick person and join their prayers to those he is about to say. He must observe exactly what the Roman Ritual prescribes. If the patient expires after one of the anointings, he will add, to supply for the others: *Quidquid per ceteros sensus deliquisti*—whatever sins you have committed through the other senses. If the patient lacks one of the outward parts to be anointed, the anointing should be made on the nearest part, saying the same words of the form that would be said over the missing part. For, as St. Thomas says, the sick person could have sinned through the inward faculties corresponding to the outward ones. A blind man, for example, could have desired to cast immodest looks; a mute man to utter evil words, and so forth. Finally, care must be taken that nothing superstitious is done in the sickroom.[1]

Q. Should Extreme Unction be given to everyone in danger of death? To whom should it be given, and to whom refused?

A. This sacrament should be given to the faithful who have reached the use of reason and are dangerously ill. It should also be given to those so weighed down by old age that they are in danger of dying at any moment, even if they have no other illness, says St. Charles in his fourth Council of Milan. It may also be given to those unable to ask for it when there is just ground to judge, from their signs of contrition or Christian life, that they would ask if they could speak or make themselves understood.

But it should not be granted to public sinners, the excommunicated, the unbaptized or those dying in a manifest offense without any sign of penance. It should not be given to persons deprived of reason or delirious unless they have lucid intervals in which they can receive it with propriety and devotion.

It should not be given to children who have not reached the use of reason and presumably have not yet sinned through the senses. Nevertheless, it may be granted when they know how to confess, even though they do not yet receive Communion, because judgment as complete and mature as Communion requires is not needed. It should not be given to women in labor unless they are also suffering another illness; to soldiers about to assault a fortress; to those in danger of shipwreck; or to criminals condemned to death. Although all these are in danger of death, it is not through illness, and St. James expressly says: *Infirmatur quis in vobis?*—is anyone among you sick?[2]

Q. Is this sacrament absolutely necessary for a sick person? Can it be received many times during the same illness?

A. This sacrament is not necessary by necessity of means, because a person can be saved without receiving it. But we can affirm that it is necessary by necessity of precept. No other proof is needed than these words of St. James: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call the priests of the Church, and let them pray for him,

anointing him with oil in the Lord's name." From this the Council of Trent concludes that reception of this sacrament is commanded for all in danger of death, and that whoever contemptuously neglects to receive it incurs a very great sin and injures the Holy Spirit: *Neque vero tanti sacramenti contemptus absque ingenti scelere, et ipsius Spiritus Sancti injuria esse potest*—contempt of so great a sacrament cannot be without an enormous offense and injury to the Holy Spirit. Thus we must not doubt that we are obliged to receive it, and that a parish priest sins gravely when through negligence he lets his parishioners die without this sacrament's help.

This sacrament may be repeated when a patient, after being in danger of death, recovers and subsequently falls again into the same danger. In this case it may be administered a second time. *Quod si infirmi, post susceptam hanc Unctionem convaluerint, iterum hujus sacramenti subsidio juvari poterunt: cum in aliud simile vitæ discrimen inciderint*, says the Council of Trent—if the sick recover after receiving this anointing, they may again receive this sacrament's assistance when they fall into another similar danger to life.

But if the patient does not recover, it should not be given twice during the same illness. St. Thomas observes that there are certain prolonged illnesses, such as consumption, dropsy and others of that kind, in which we should not hurry to give Extreme Unction, but wait until the patient is truly in danger. If he rallies, although he always has the same illness, and falls again into the same danger, this sacrament may be administered a second time. In a certain manner it is a different stage of illness, though strictly speaking not a different illness. This agrees with the Roman Ritual's teaching: *In eadem infirmitate hoc sacramentum iterari non debet, nisi diuturna sit, ut cum infirmus convaluerit, iterum in periculum mortis incidit*—this sacrament should not be repeated in the same illness unless it is prolonged, so that after recovering the patient again falls into danger of death.[3]

Q. With what dispositions should the sacrament of Extreme Unction be received?

A. These dispositions are outward or inward. The outward ones are indicated by this rubric of the Ritual: *Sacerdos operam dabit, ut quanta poterit munditia ac nitore hoc sacramentum ministretur*—the priest shall take care that this sacrament is administered with all possible cleanliness and dignity. Indeed, the following are necessary:

I. The patient's room should be clean.

II. There should be a table covered with a white cloth, upon which one or two lighted candles will be placed, a crucifix in the middle, a vessel of holy water, and another containing six or seven small balls of tow or cotton for wiping the anointed parts.

III. Care should be taken that the bodily parts to be anointed are washed. A man's beard should be shaved if it could prevent the anointing from touching his lips.

IV. After the sacrament's administration, water and bread are presented to the priest for washing and cleaning his fingers. What was used for this purpose is afterward thrown into the fire. The priest himself must burn the balls used to wipe the anointed parts, or, if convenient, take them to church to burn them and put them in the piscina, as the Roman Ritual commands. \[The *piscina* is the special drain for reverent disposal associated with the sacristy.\]

The inward dispositions with which the sick person must receive this sacrament are:

I. To place himself in grace. Therefore the Rituals order that Extreme Unction not be administered until after Penance, in order to remove any obstacles to grace in the patient's soul. If he cannot confess and is conscious, he should be told to endeavor to make acts of contrition, given absolution, and afterward Extreme Unction.

II. When the patient consciously receives Extreme Unction, he should accompany the priest's prayers in a spirit of penance and at each anointing ask God's forgiveness for the sins committed through each sense.

III. After receiving this sacrament, he should thank God for the benefit, offer Him his sufferings, bear them patiently and bring forth acts of the Christian virtues in his heart. Especially should he make acts of lively faith in God and Jesus Christ, hope in the Lord's mercy and charity, ardently desiring to see God and thinking only of eternity.

IV. He should resign himself entirely to God's will, offering Him the sacrifice of his health and life, penetrated with this maxim of St. Paul: no one lives for himself or dies for himself. *Nemo nostrum sibi vivit, et nemo sibi moritur*. If we live, we live for the Lord; if we die, we die for the Lord: *Sive enim vivimus, Domino vivimus; sive morimur, Domino morimur*. Whether we live or die, therefore, we belong to the Lord and must submit perfectly to His holy will: *Sive ergo vivimus, sive morimur, Domini sumus.*[4]

Q. What effects does the sacrament of Extreme Unction produce?

A. They are contained in these words of St. James: "The prayer of faith will save the sick person; the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him." Explaining these words, the Council of Trent says that the sacrament of Extreme Unction:

I. Confers the Holy Spirit's grace, that is, sanctifying grace which forgives sins and frees one from sin's remnants.

II. Relieves and strengthens the patient to bear courageously the severity of illness, resist the devil's temptations and not fear death's horrors. It sometimes gives health to the patient, if this is beneficial to him.

Although Extreme Unction was not instituted principally to forgive sins, it is nevertheless a proper effect of this sacrament to forgive unknown sins remaining in the soul after receiving the other sacraments. *Cujus unctio delicta, si quæ sunt adhuc expianda, abstergit*, says the same council—its anointing wipes away offenses, if any still remain to be expiated. And these words of the form the Church employs—*Per istam Unctionem, et Suam piissimam misericordiam, indulgeat tibi Dominus quidquid per visum, auditum*, and so forth, *deliquisti*—through this anointing and His most tender mercy, may the Lord forgive whatever sins you have committed through sight, hearing, and so forth—signify most clearly that Extreme Unction forgives the sins the patient committed through the senses. For the sacraments effect what they signify. Thus the Council of Trent pronounces excommunication against those saying that Extreme Unction neither confers grace nor forgives sins. For this reason the Fathers call this sacrament penance's perfection and consummation.

Extreme Unction also removes sin's remnants:

I. By freeing the patient, as St. Thomas teaches, from temporal punishment due for his sins. It does not, however, free him entirely except in proportion to the dispositions with which this sacrament is received.

II. By healing the weaknesses and spiritual languor remaining after the soul has been purified from sin and preventing its rising to God.

III. By calming the anxieties of conscience through confidence in divine mercy.[5]

Take pious care, then, my brethren, when ill, to have administered to you a sacrament giving you a powerful means of ending life holily and obtaining the death of the just. Do not wait until the last extremity to receive it. Danger of death is sufficient, and it is received more fruitfully when received with greater awareness. According to St. Charles, parish priests must make this known to the sick. *Extremæ Unctionis sacramentum curet parochus, ut ægroto, dum integris est sensibus adhibeatur*, this holy cardinal says—the parish priest should see that the sacrament of Extreme Unction is administered while the patient still possesses his senses.

When ill you immediately have recourse to physicians, and sometimes to superfluous remedies, yet forget the remedy Jesus Christ has placed in His Church. It can give you not only the soul's health but also the body's, if the Lord judges this useful for your sanctification. With reason you may fear the reproach made to Asa, king of Judah, for trusting during his illness more in physicians' knowledge than in recourse to the Lord: *Nec in infirmitate sua quæsivit Dominum, sed magis in medicorum arte confisus est*—even in his illness he did not seek the Lord but trusted more in physicians' skill. Let us therefore profit, my brethren, from this final sacrament and make every effort to die in God's grace, which will lead us to eternal blessedness.[6]

---

[1] Thomas, IV, distinction 23, q.2, a.3, question 3, in the cited arrangement.

[2] Trent, Session XIV, chapter 3; Roman Ritual; Charles Borromeo, fourth Council of Milan.

[3] Trent, Session XIV, chapter 3; Thomas, *Supplement*, q.33, a.2; Roman Ritual.

[4] Roman Ritual; Romans 14:7–8.

[5] James 5:15; Trent, Session XIV, chapter 2 on Extreme Unction; Thomas, *Against the Gentiles*, IV, chapter 73 in usual numbering (the source prints chapter 78).

[6] Charles Borromeo, fourth Council of Milan, section on Extreme Unction; 2 Chronicles 16:12.

Sacraments: Thirteenth Homily

On the Sacrament of Holy Orders

Original preacher not named.

Hoc facite in Meam commemorationem. (Luke 22.)

Do this in remembrance of Me.

Jesus Christ, as High Priest and universal Shepherd of the Church, instituted the sacrament of Holy Orders to establish ministers who would exercise His priesthood until the consummation of the ages. He established this sacrament on the night of Holy Thursday, the eve of His passion. After instituting the Eucharist, He Himself ordained His Apostles, fulfilling the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek. "Do this," He tells them, "in remembrance of Me": that is, do what I have done; offer the same sacrifice, administer the same sacraments and exercise the same priesthood. *Hoc facite in Meam commemorationem*. Do what you have seen Me do: for this purpose I establish you as priests.

Jesus Christ not only communicated His priesthood to His Apostles. He also gave them power to extend and communicate it to others and provide successors until the world's end for His Church's government. "As My Father has sent Me," He says, "I send you." I give you the same authority and power I received from My Father for building up the Church, whose foundation I have laid in you. I put you in My place so that you may establish other priests, and My priesthood—not according to Aaron's order but Melchizedek's—may be perpetual in My Church.

We are now going to treat of this sacrament. After speaking of the sacraments instituted for each individual Christian's sanctification, it is just that we should say something of those especially established for the Church's public and general good.[1]

Q. What is the sacrament of Holy Orders? Is it spoken of in Scripture?

A. Orders is a sacrament giving ecclesiastics the power to exercise sacred functions and the grace to discharge them. I say that Orders is a sacrament because it is a sensible sign conferring grace. The bishop's laying on of hands and prayer constitute the sensible sign. The power and grace to exercise sacred functions—serving at the altar, offering the holy sacrifice, preaching, forgiving sins and the ministry's other functions—are the grace this sign effects.

We see this in Scripture, which mentions the laying on of hands for the diaconate and priesthood. The sixth chapter of Acts, relating the election of the first seven deacons, expressly says that the Apostles ordained them through prayer and laying on of hands: *Et orantes imposuerunt eis manus*—and praying, they laid hands upon them. Concerning priesthood, the thirteenth chapter of the same book records that the Apostles, having resolved before separating to consecrate new ministers to God and offering the holy sacrifice to the Lord for this purpose—*Ministrantibus illis Domino*—were inspired by the Holy Spirit to choose Paul and Barnabas to ordain them bishops and apostles of the Gentiles. Then, St. Luke says, fasting, praying and laying hands upon them, they sent them to the work appointed for them: *Tunc jejunantes, et orantes, imponentesque eis manus dimiserunt illos*. Here the ceremonies of ordination the Church practices today are very expressly set forth in Scripture.

Orders gives not only power to exercise sacred functions but also grace to discharge them, as likewise appears from Scripture. In his First Epistle to Timothy St. Paul says: "Do not neglect the grace within you, given you according to a particular revelation through the laying on of priests' hands"—that is, bishops', as the original text says. In the second he says: "I counsel you to rekindle the fire of God's grace which you received through the laying on of hands." Thus spoke the Apostle, who had been the principal minister of Timothy's ordination, accompanied by the bishops of the province where the ceremony took place. For the Church's ancient practice was for several bishops to gather at a bishop's ordination, and even today she requires at least three. It is therefore certain that ordination is a sacrament conferring grace. The texts just cited suffice to show how far the rashness of Protestant ministers goes when they dare deny that Scripture speaks of it.[2]

Q. What are the effects of the sacrament of Holy Orders? Who is its minister? How many orders are there?

A. The effects of Holy Orders are: I. Power to exercise the functions proper to each order. II. Grace to exercise them with blessing. III. The character it imprints upon the soul, which makes it impossible to receive this sacrament twice. This character presupposes those of Baptism and Confirmation.

The bishop alone is this sacrament's minister. The bishop who may lawfully confer Orders, and to whom recourse must be had to receive them, is one's own bishop. By one's own bishop we ordinarily mean the bishop of the diocese where one was born. Sometimes the term also means the bishop of one's benefice or domicile. A bishop may ordain, without dimissorial letters from the bishop of origin, an ecclesiastic holding a benefice in his diocese, provided the benefice was not obtained by fraud, precisely to withdraw from his original bishop's jurisdiction. He may also confer Orders upon someone who has been a member of his household for three full consecutive years, according to the Council of Trent's provision, on condition that he at the same time appoint him to a benefice.

There are seven different orders. The first four, called minor, are porter, lector, exorcist and acolyte. The last three, called major or sacred, are subdiaconate, diaconate and priesthood, to which St. Isidore adds the episcopate. These orders are called sacred:

I. Because they bear a more immediate relation to the Eucharist.

II. Because some, like subdeacons, can touch and prepare the sacred vessels used for consecration; others, like deacons, can administer this sacrament in necessity and in the absence of priests; and others, like priests, can consecrate the divine Eucharist and administer it to the faithful.

III. Because in receiving them all consecrate themselves to God through perpetual continence and bind themselves to reciting the Divine Office, even if they hold no benefice.

According to St. Thomas each of these seven orders is a true sacrament. Nevertheless, some theologians do not regard the minor orders as sacraments. All agree, however, that there is only one sacrament of Orders, in

which one shares more or less abundantly according as the order received is more or less elevated. The different degrees composing Holy Orders are of divine institution. Tonsure is not an order but only a preparation and disposition for Orders.

Q. Is there any subordination among the Church's ministers?

A. It is of faith that a subordination exists among the Church's ministers: this is what is called the ecclesiastical hierarchy. *Si quis dixerit,* says the Council of Trent, *in Ecclesia catholica non esse hierarchiam divina ordinatione institutam, quæ constat ex episcopis, presbyteris et ministris: anathema sit*—if anyone says that in the Catholic Church there is no hierarchy established by divine ordinance, consisting of bishops, priests and ministers, let him be anathema.

This truth is clear and explicit in the most ancient Fathers. St. Paul himself gives the reason in chapter 12 of his First Epistle to the Corinthians. The Church, he says, is Jesus Christ's body, of which you are members. As not all the members of a natural body have the same functions, so in the Church offices and functions differ: *Quosdam quidem posuit Deus in Ecclesia primum Apostolos, secundo Prophetas, tertio Doctores*—God has appointed in the Church first Apostles, secondly Prophets, thirdly Teachers. There are therefore different classes of ministers established by God for His Church's government.

First is the pope. As successor of St. Peter, to whom Jesus Christ particularly entrusted the care of His flock, he is the Church's visible head and first among pastors. This primacy is not simply one of honor and dignity, but a preeminence of authority and jurisdiction, as we proved in the homily on the Church.

After the pope come bishops, who succeeded the Apostles and were established to govern dioceses and ordain priests and the other inferior ministers over whom they have jurisdiction. St. Paul expressly notes this in his Epistle to Titus, saying: "I left you in Crete so that you might arrange what remains to be arranged and establish presbyters in every city according to the order I gave you."

After bishops come priests, whom we may regard as successors of Jesus Christ's seventy-two disciples, particularly parish priests charged with parishes. Finally, below priests stand deacons, subdeacons and the other inferior ministers. Such is the subordination among the Church's ministers, in which her strength and glory consist. Hence she is compared to an army arrayed for battle, in which each officer knows his station and employment: *Terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata*—terrible as an army in battle array.

We must observe that this beautiful order is found only in the Catholic Church. Since Protestants had the misfortune to separate from her, they have lost everything belonging to the ordering of Church and religion. No vestige of ecclesiastical hierarchy is seen among them anymore. They are without head, bishops, priests, ministers, authority, sacraments or sacrifice. In a word, they are stripped of everything belonging to the new law, having lost truth's principle and foundation through schism and heresy.

Q. What dispositions are required for receiving Holy Orders?

A. Some of these dispositions are outward and others inward. The outward ones are:

I. To have the age the canons require: having begun one's twenty-second year for the subdiaconate, the twenty-third for the diaconate and the twenty-fifth for priesthood. Besides the appropriate age, it is necessary to have no canonical impediment, such as bigamy, the defect of illegitimate birth, suspension or other censures. The intervals prescribed by bishops must also have been observed.

The inward dispositions are:

I. Vocation: that is, one must be called by God to the ecclesiastical state. *Nec quisquam sumit sibi honorem, sed qui vocatur a Deo,* says St. Paul—no one takes the honor upon himself, but he who is called by God. No one should claim the honor of priesthood without being called by God. This is the most important maxim upon which those wishing to embrace the ecclesiastical state must examine themselves.

Fathers and mothers, you destine that child for the Church; you desire to make him a priest. Your desire is good, but have you consulted God and persons instructed in the Church's rules to learn whether your son is suited to a state so holy and elevated, and whether he inclines toward it for good purposes? Know that if he enters without a vocation, you do considerable harm to the Church, for which you will answer before God.

II. The second disposition is innocence and holiness of life. It is not enough, the Council of Trent says, to have the age necessary for receiving Orders: one must possess known wisdom and virtue. *Sciant tamen Episcopi non singulos in ea ætate constitutos debere ad eos ordines assumi, sed dignos dumtaxat, et quorum probata vita senectus sit*—bishops should know that not all who have reached that age should be admitted to these orders, but only the worthy, whose proven life is their maturity.

Your son is a young man of bad character, and you want him to be a priest? \[The Spanish *una mala cabeza*, literally "a bad head," means a reckless or badly behaved young person.\] You imagine that a few months in the seminary will make him a saint, and you deceive yourselves. St. Paul forbids ordaining a neophyte, not only in faith but also in conduct. *Inter neophytos deputamus qui adhuc novus est in sancta conversatione*, says St. Gregory—we count among neophytes one still new to holy living. We regard as a neophyte a newly converted person who has just emerged from a disorderly life and has not yet acquired the virtues proper to an ecclesiastic.

III. The third quality necessary in a minister of the Church is knowledge and zeal to labor for souls' salvation. "Provided my son knows how to sing and say Mass," you say, "I am satisfied." But God is not satisfied: He rejects the ignorant from the sacred ministry. *Quia tu scientiam repulisti, repellam te, ne sacerdotio fungaris Mihi*—because you rejected knowledge, I will reject you from exercising priesthood for Me. Jesus Christ is not satisfied, for He wills priests to be the world's light and the earth's salt. The Church is not satisfied, for she teaches that ignorance is an irregularity from which she never dispenses.

To enter the ecclesiastical state, therefore, one must be called by God, bring innocence of conduct and holiness of life, and possess sufficient knowledge and ability to serve the Church. *Nullus igitur ad sacra mysteria veniat indoctus*, says the Eighth Council of Toledo, *aut ignorantiæ tenebris cæcutiens, sed solus is accedat, quem morum innocentia, et litterarum splendor reddunt illustrem*—let no one therefore approach the sacred mysteries untaught or blinded by ignorance's darkness, but only one made distinguished by innocent conduct and learning's brightness.

Q. Among the dispositions necessary for entering the ecclesiastical state you included zeal. Would you explain what is particularly necessary for appointment to a benefice with care of souls, and what use a beneficiary must make of his benefice's income?

A. To answer your questions briefly, I say:

I. Although it is praiseworthy for an ecclesiastic to be solicitous, labor and serve the Church, he should not seek a benefice with care of souls for himself, but wait for Providence to provide it. *Si aliquis pro se rogat, ut obtineat curam animarum*, says St. Thomas, *ex ipsa præsumptione redditur indignus; et sic preces sunt pro indigno: licite tamen potest aliquis, si sit indigens, pro se beneficium ecclesiasticum petere sine cura animarum*—if anyone asks on his own behalf to obtain care of souls, that very presumption renders him unworthy, and thus the request is for an unworthy man. Nevertheless, if needy, a person may lawfully ask for himself an ecclesiastical benefice without care of souls.

II. An ecclesiastic cannot request, nor a collator promise, a benefice that is not vacant. *Nulla ecclesiastica ministeria, seu etiam beneficia, vel Ecclesiæ, tribuantur alicui, seu promittantur antequam vacent*, says the general Lateran Council held in 1179 under Alexander III—no ecclesiastical ministries, benefices or churches should be granted or promised to anyone before they become vacant. The Council of Trent confirmed this by abolishing expectative grants or reservations of benefices.

III. The benefice must be given to the most worthy. By the most worthy we do not always mean the most learned, but the one who, all things considered, is best suited to serving the Church in that vacant post. *Non ergo Episcopus tenetur semper dare meliori simpliciter; sed tenetur dare meliori quoad hoc*, says St. Thomas—the bishop is not therefore always bound to give it to the person better absolutely, but to the person better for this purpose.

IV. Being fit to serve a benefice is not enough. One must also be willing to maintain it, reside there and exercise its functions. *Præcipimus*, says Innocent III, *ut prætermissis indignis, idoneos assumant, qui Deo et Ecclesiis velint et valeant gratum impendere famulatum*—we command that, passing over the unworthy, they appoint suitable persons willing and able to render pleasing service to God and the churches.

V. Finally, canonical appointment to a benefice requires the absence of any confidential arrangement or promise to give it to a relative or friend after a certain time, or of simony, whether real, conventional or mental. \[Here the source distinguishes an executed exchange, an agreement, and an intention involving the buying or selling of a spiritual office.\] Simony renders appointments to benefices null. However long they have been possessed, there is an obligation to resign them, as Boniface VIII declares in this rule of law: *Beneficium ecclesiasticum non potest sine institutione canonica possideri*—an ecclesiastical benefice cannot be possessed without canonical institution.

As for benefice income, beneficiaries are not its proprietors but stewards and dispensers, for goods of this kind belong to the Church and are the patrimony of the poor. *Res Ecclesiæ*, says the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle, *vota sunt fidelium, pretia peccatorum et patrimonia pauperum*—the Church's goods are the faithful's offerings, the prices of sins and the patrimony of the poor.

Original Editorial Note

"This opinion of the author, which deprives beneficiaries of ownership of their income, is contradicted by a great number of authors. This led the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XIV, in his work *De Synodo dioecesana*, book VII, chapter 2, to admonish bishops not to decide this controversy in their synods, since the holy Council of Trent left it untouched, as Cardinal Pallavicino relates in his history, book XXIV, chapter 3. It seems sufficient to remind ecclesiastics of the strict obligation the sacred canons impose upon them to distribute their surplus income to the poor, without needing to affirm in this catechism that the obligation is one of justice rather than charity, as many celebrated authors, theologians and canonists teach."

Assuming this opinion, which is that of the holy Fathers and authors generally, we must say that the use beneficiaries should make of their income consists in the following:

I. Carefully making repairs in places belonging to their benefice and providing its church and dependent churches with the linens, vestments and sacred vessels necessary for properly performing the Divine Office, if providing these things is their responsibility.

II. Maintaining the number of priests, ecclesiastics or religious prescribed by the foundation or the superiors' ordinances.

III. After fulfilling all these charges, taking for themselves only what is necessary for subsistence and decent maintenance, and giving the surplus to the poor, principally those of the benefice's locality or localities. If their relatives are poor, they should assist them as poor persons. But giving to enrich them, or contribute to their luxury, sensuality and vanity, is an offense condemned by councils and holy Fathers. Nor is using the Church's goods for gambling, amusements and other superfluous expenditures a slight sin.

Every beneficiary should continually keep before his eyes these words of St. Jerome. He says that although St. Paul indeed permits ecclesiastics to live from the altar, he does not permit them to indulge themselves: *Tibi, o sacerdos, de altari vivere, non luxuriari permittitur*—you, priest, are permitted to live from the altar,

not live luxuriously.

Q. What obligations do the faithful have toward the Church's ministers, particularly their pastors?

A. They must:

I. Honor them as Jesus Christ's ministers and dispensers of His mysteries. They distribute the bread of the divine word to us, offer the holy sacrifice for us, reconcile us with God in penance's tribunal, distribute the Lord's body and confer the other sacraments. What respect should you not have for them? Never demand of them, my brethren, things unworthy of their character. If you have a priest son, do not misuse him by employing him in secular business and making him steward of your household. What would you say of someone who took an altar cloth to cover a tavern's table? You would certainly be horrified. Understand, then, that priests are even more consecrated to God than the Church's furnishings and vestments: *In tota anima tua time Dominum, et sacerdotes Illius sanctifica*—with your whole soul fear the Lord and reverence His priests.

II. Excuse their faults and not make them the subject of your satires and complaints. *Nolite tangere christos Meos, et in Prophetis Meis nolite malignari*—do not touch My anointed or harm My prophets. Do not touch the Lord's anointed, Scripture says, and do no evil to His prophets.

We have a beautiful example in Constantine the Great. When this emperor attended the Council of Nicaea, assembled by his order, he would not sit in that celebrated assembly until all the bishops were seated. Since many were illustrious confessors who had suffered for the faith, he treated them as God's angels—or rather, as Jesus Christ Himself—humbly kissing the scars the tyrants had inflicted. When some supporters of Arius presented complaints against Catholic bishops, he replied that it did not belong to him to judge priests, to whom God had given power to judge men. He added that if he saw a priest fall into a fault, he would cover him with his royal cloak so that the scandal might not harm the state's dignity and eminence. After speaking thus, Eusebius says, he threw the memorials presented to him into the fire without reading a single one.

Are the Church's ministers treated this way today? If a cleric or religious has the misfortune to forget himself, his fault is published everywhere, he is pointed out for blame, and there is no greater delight than in discrediting ecclesiastics.

III. If the Church's ministers are your pastors, you are obliged to obey them: *Obedite præpositis vestris, et subjacete eis*—obey your superiors and submit to them. When they rebuke you, never answer insolently. Rather, profit from their counsels and thank them for their care of your salvation: *Ipsi enim pervigilant quasi rationem pro animabus vestris reddituri*—they keep watch as persons who must render an account for your souls.

You must contribute willingly to their subsistence. Since they procure your spiritual good, is it not most just that they should share your temporal goods? *Si nos vobis spiritualia seminavimus, magnum est si nos carnalia vestra metamus?* the Apostle asks the Corinthians—if we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great matter if we reap your material things? He repeats the same in his First Epistle to Timothy and wishes priests who govern well to be honored doubly, especially those laboring in preaching and teaching the people.

"But," you will tell me, "they do not always lead orderly lives." Even if they were faulty like the Pharisees, you would not therefore be dispensed, my brethren, from honoring and obeying them, since they are your legitimate pastors and provided they command nothing contrary to God's and the Church's laws. *Super cathedram Moysi sederunt scribæ et pharisæi*, Jesus Christ says; *omnia ergo quæcumque dixerint vobis, servate et facite*—the scribes and Pharisees sit upon Moses' seat; therefore observe and do whatever they tell you. But if they live badly: *Secundum opera eorum nolite facere*—do not act according to their works. Do not do what they do, the Lord adds, but what they tell you on God's behalf.

It is a great evil when the Church's ministers do not live according to their state's holiness. But if they forget their obligation, let us not forget ours: let us fulfill it faithfully. *Honora Deum ex tota anima tua, et honorifica sacerdotes*—honor God with your whole soul and honor priests. Honor God with your whole heart, the Wise Man tells us, and respect priests. Here is a soundly drawn conclusion: one cannot do the one without the other. Whoever honors priests honors God; whoever despises them despises Him. *Qui vos audit, Me audit*, Jesus Christ says, *et qui vos spernit, Me spernit*—whoever hears you hears Me, and whoever despises you despises Me.

Love good priests and good pastors, Christians. Contribute to their maintenance; support them when they meet obstacles and opposition in their concern for your good: *Honorifica sacerdotes*. Pray for them to fulfill their ministry's obligations. Ask God to increase the number of priests and give you pastors according to His heart, who will nourish you well with the knowledge of salvation and direct you so wisely that you may deserve to reach with them eternal blessedness, the reward of pastors and faithful alike.[3]

---

[1] Luke 22:19; John 20:21; Hebrews 5–7.

[2] Acts 6:6; 13:2–3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6.

[3] Hebrews 13:17; 1 Corinthians 9:11; 1 Timothy 5:17; Matthew 23:2–3; Sirach 7:33 in the source's numbering; Luke 10:16 (the source prints 10:10).

Sacraments: Fourteenth Homily: On Matrimony

Original preacher not named.

Sacramentum hoc magnum est, ego autem dico in Christo et in Ecclesia. (Ephesians 5.)

This sacrament is great: I speak of Jesus Christ and the Church.

Marriage has great merit before God when it is entered with judgment and maturity. It is a holy state. It is holy in its origin: God established it under the law of nature for the human race's propagation. It was holy under Moses' law, and its dignity appeared in God's care to regulate its conditions and obligations Himself, promising a thousand blessings to spouses well united. But its holiness shone more brilliantly in the new law, when Jesus Christ honored the wedding at Cana with His presence and raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament, making it a source of graces for those receiving it with holy dispositions.

In the perfect union of two hearts forming a Christian society in the world, we admire a visible figure of the invisible covenant Jesus Christ has contracted with the Church. This made St. Paul say that this sacrament is great in Jesus Christ and His Church: *Sacramentum hoc magnum est in Christo et in Ecclesia*. It is great because it recalls the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, Who in the fullness of time espoused our nature to redeem all men. It teaches the two persons joined by a sacred bond to labor for their mutual sanctification. It is great because it sets before our eyes an image of the Savior's passion. He loved His Church and made her wholly beautiful, dying upon the cross to sanctify her. Thus married people must love one another with a wholly holy and pure love making them pleasing to God.

There is therefore nothing in Matrimony, with its mysterious significations, that is not great and holy. Nevertheless, we must confess with tears that very many enter it without reflecting upon this state's holiness or the obligations it brings. They ask for nuptial blessings when they deserve only curses from God. Let us endeavor to apply some remedies to a disorder all too common.[1]

Q. What is Matrimony? Is it one of the sacraments of the new law? Must it be received in the state of grace?

A. In its first institution, marriage is a natural and civil contract by which a man and a woman bind themselves to live together throughout their lives. Such were the Jews' marriages before Jesus Christ's

coming; such are still those of unbelievers, when contracted according to the laws of nature and the state. God is this contract's author. He established marriage in the state of innocence when, after forming Eve and presenting her to Adam, He blessed them both and said: "Increase and multiply." While Adam was still in paradise, Tertullian says, he spoke of conjugal union as a prophet inspired by God. Seeing Eve his wife, he exclaimed: "A man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two will be one flesh." These words led Jesus Christ, in answering the Pharisees, to say that marriage must remain indissoluble as God established it: *Quod ergo Deus conjunxit, homo non separet*—what God has joined together, let no man separate.

Christian marriage is not merely a natural and civil contract, as the heretics of recent centuries say. It is truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the new law, says the Council of Trent, which pronounced excommunication against those maintaining the contrary. St. Paul also teaches us this truth in his Epistle to the Ephesians. After exhorting husbands to love their wives as Jesus Christ loves His Church, he adds: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother to cleave to his wife, and, being previously two, they will become one flesh. This sacrament is great: I speak of Jesus Christ and the Church." *Propter hoc relinquet homo patrem et matrem suam, et adhærebit uxori suæ, et erunt duo in carne una: Sacramentum hoc magnum est: ego autem dico, in Christo et in Ecclesia*. Through these words the Apostle clearly teaches that the faithful's marriage is a sacrament.

Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted this sacrament to confer upon husband and wife the sanctifying grace they need to love one another with Christian love, live peacefully together until death and raise their children in the Lord's fear. Hence it follows that it must be received in the state of grace, since the sanctifying grace it confers is incompatible with sin. It is one of the sacraments theology calls "sacraments of the living," presupposing spiritual life through grace in their recipients. Marrying in mortal sin would be sacrilege.

It is therefore necessary to put oneself into a good state through the sacrament of Penance in order to receive Matrimony. Indeed, it is very fitting to confess as soon as possible, both to learn this state's obligations and obtain heavenly help to fulfill them, and to prepare by a good confession to receive Communion two or three days before marriage. One should present oneself to receive it modestly and devoutly, in a manner proper to a Christian who must conduct himself as holy, as the Council of Cologne of 1536 says: *In Domino sicut decet sanctos*—in the Lord, as befits the saints.

Q. Who may receive the sacrament of Matrimony? May persons deprived of reason, the mentally disturbed and those of limited understanding marry? May children of families do so without their parents' consent?

A. All who have reached the age required by law and have no impediment may marry. The age required is fourteen completed years for men and twelve completed years for women. A person cannot marry without sin before reaching this age. Although the marriage of those under puberty is sometimes valid in the forum of conscience, ordinarily speaking one cannot contribute to it without gravely offending God, since the Church's law is violated in a very important matter. *Districtius inhibemus*, says Pope Nicholas I, *ne aliqui, quorum uterque, vel alter, ad ætatem legibus vel canonibus determinatam non pervenerit, conjungantur*—we strictly forbid the union of persons of whom both, or one, have not reached the age determined by laws or canons.

Those entirely deprived of the use of reason, such as the mentally deranged or persons lacking understanding, cannot contract marriage validly. As Innocent III observes in the chapter *Dilectus*, *De sponsalibus et matrimonio*, they cannot give true consent, without which no marriage can be valid. Even if they had lucid intervals, it would not be fitting to marry them because they are little capable of bringing up children as Christians. The same is not true of persons of limited understanding whose understanding is not so slight that they do not know what they do: these can validly contract marriage. Nevertheless, if a

competent judge ordered a parish priest not to marry someone because of his lack of understanding, he should not do so while the order remains in force.[2]

To the third part of the question I answer that the respect and obedience children of families owe their parents, and the Decalogue's precept to honor them, require that they not proceed to marriage without parental consent. The Church has always regarded with horror marriages contracted by children of families without their parents' approval. Although valid if there was no clandestinity or abduction, they are nevertheless unlawful. Here is how the Council of Trent speaks: *Eos Sancta Synodus anathemate damnat… qui falso affirmant matrimonia a filiis familias, sine consensu parentum contracta irrita esse, et parentes ea rata vel irrita facere posse: nihilominus Sancta Dei Ecclesia, ex justissimis causis, illa semper detestata est atque prohibuit*—the holy synod condemns with anathema those falsely asserting that marriages contracted by children of families without parental consent are invalid, and that parents can make them valid or invalid. Nevertheless, God's holy Church has always, for most just reasons, detested and forbidden them.

Children marrying without their parents' permission expose themselves to grave penalties, which may be seen in the pragmatic decree of His Majesty Don Charles III. To avoid these difficulties they should be guided by the counsels of those to whom God entrusted the care of their establishment in life. *Filii, obedite parentibus vestris in Domino; hoc enim justum est*—children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is just. Fathers and mothers should take care not to abuse their authority over their children or irritate them by opposing their will without reason when it is prudent and according to God. *Et vos, patres, nolite ad iracundiam provocare filios vestros*—and you, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger. Practicing St. Paul's words would prevent countless troubles in families.

Q. What purposes should Christians set before themselves in marriage?

A. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul says that a widow may marry whomever she wishes, provided it be according to the Lord: *Cui vult nubat, tantum in Domino*. He thus teaches Christians thinking of marriage not to be guided by low and carnal views, but to have pure and holy intentions when entering the married state, upon which depend the happiness of life and the eternal salvation of those embracing it: *Cui vult nubat, tantum in Domino*.

The first purpose two Christians deciding to marry should propose is to help one another mutually, living in peace and unity and laboring reciprocally for their sanctification. God created the two sexes in this life. "It is not good," He says in Genesis, "for man to be alone; let Us make him a help like himself": *Non est bonum esse hominem solum: faciamus ei adjutorium simile sibi*.

The second purpose is to have children who fear the Lord and incline toward this fear through the education their parents take care to give them, instructing them in virtue. This is the purpose the angel Raphael told the younger Tobias to propose in taking Sarah as his wife: *Accipies virginem cum timore Domini, amore filiorum magis quam libidine ductus, ut in semine Abrahæ benedictionem in filiis consequaris*—you will take the maiden with fear of the Lord, led by love of children rather than lust, so that in Abraham's seed you may obtain blessing in your children.

According to the holy Fathers, the just of the Old Testament married only in the hope of seeing the Messiah born in their family and becoming ancestors of the promised Redeemer. Now that this motive no longer remains because all the prophecies are fulfilled, Christians should have the motive of giving new children to the Church, true disciples to Jesus Christ, examples of virtue to the world and saints to heaven. They must not stop simply at procreating children, St. Augustine says, but aim at having them so that they may be reborn in Jesus Christ. *Voluntas in connubiis fidelium non eo fine determinatur, ut transituri filii nascantur in sæculo isto, sed ut permansuri renascantur in Christo*—the will in the faithful's marriages is directed not merely to the birth of children passing through this world, but to their rebirth in Christ, in Whom they will remain.

The third purpose they may propose is to find in marriage a remedy for concupiscence's disorder. Thus those who know their weakness and cannot live chastely in celibacy or widowhood may have recourse to marriage. It is better to employ a lawful remedy than die of the disease, as St. Paul teaches through these words: *Quod si non se continent, nubant; melius est enim nubere quam uri*—if they do not practice continence, let them marry, for it is better to marry than burn. Christians must propose at least one of these purposes in marriage if they wish to draw heaven's blessings upon themselves.[3]

Q. With what dispositions should Matrimony be celebrated, and how should those who have contracted a betrothal behave?

A. The first thing those wishing to marry must do is ask God for help in making a good choice. A sensible and prudent wife and a man of orderly conduct are a gift and reward God grants to those who fear and serve Him: *Pars bona mulier bona in parte timentium Deum dabitur viro pro factis bonis*—a good wife is a good portion; she will be given among those fearing God to a man for his good deeds.

II. As far as possible, attention should be given to equality in age, possessions, social condition, temperament and inclinations. Above all, one should take care to unite only with persons of good reputation and conduct. A sensible and prudent wife is a gift from the Lord, Scripture says: *A Domino autem proprie uxor prudens*. Happy the man who has received her from His hand! He has found a great good and received from God a source of joy: *Qui invenit mulierem bonam, invenit bonum, et hauriet jucunditatem a Domino*—whoever finds a good wife finds a good thing and will draw gladness from the Lord.

III. They must be instructed in the married state's obligations and intend to fulfill them. They must know the Christian religion's mysteries, as every faithful Christian is obliged to do, and the commandments of God's law and holy Mother Church, so as to teach them to their children. *Uterque sciat rudimenta, cum ea filios suos docere debeant*, says the Roman Ritual—let both know the fundamentals, since they must teach them to their children.

IV. They must be in the state of grace, that is, free of every mortal sin when receiving the nuptial blessings. Otherwise they would sin and deprive themselves of the increase of sanctifying grace which Matrimony confers upon those receiving it holily.

As for the conduct of those who have pledged themselves in betrothal, I say:

I. They are obliged to fulfill their promise unless released for just and legitimate causes. *Ex tali promissione*, says St. Thomas, *obligatur unus alii ad matrimonium contrahendum, et peccat mortaliter non solvens promissum*—from such a promise one is obliged to the other to contract marriage, and sins mortally in failing to fulfill the promise.

II. They should marry as soon as they can if no fixed time was specified in the betrothal, since delay in celebrating marriage commonly brings bad consequences.

III. They should avoid living in the same house and meeting alone, so as not to permit familiarities contrary to Christian decency which expose them to sin and deprivation of Matrimony's grace.

IV. They should prepare for the celebration of Matrimony with intentions conforming to Jesus Christ's spirit, commending themselves to God in fervent prayers, expiating the sins of youth through alms and fasts, and purifying their hearts through pious exercises, so as to receive this sacrament's proper grace.[4]

Q. Would you say something about the state of widows? Is remaining in it praiseworthy? Is it more perfect than marriage?

A. Although the state of widows is inferior to that of virgins, it is nevertheless certain that it exceeds the married state in honor and merit. A widow may marry again, the Apostle says, but if she remains a widow, I judge she will be happier: *Beatior autem erit si sic permanserit*. The reason is that widows possess greater

facility and means to labor for their salvation. The married person's heart is divided, because it is very difficult to attend to this world's concerns and please one another without the heart being divided between God and the creature. But one living in continence has complete freedom to occupy himself solely with God and his salvation. *Et mulier innupta et virgo cogitat quæ Domini sunt, ut sit sancta corpore et spiritu*—the unmarried woman and virgin thinks of the Lord's things, that she may be holy in body and spirit.

St. Paul so esteemed those remaining widows that, writing to Timothy, he charged him to honor widows who truly live as such: *Viduas honora quæ vere viduæ sunt*. Widows are praised not only in the new law but also in the old. Even the Jews, despite being so coarse, held them in particular esteem, as we see in the praises they gave Judith, who had courage to cut off Holofernes' head. "You have acted with great courage," the high priest Joachim tells her, "and your heart has been strengthened in an awe-inspiring manner when Bethulia was about to fall into the Assyrians' hands." But from where came so much strength? *Eo quod castitatem amaveris, et post virum tuum alterum nescieris; ideo manus Domini confortavit te, et ideo eris benedicta in æternum*—because you loved chastity and, after losing your husband, would not marry another, God's hand has strengthened you, and you will always be blessed. Remaining in the state of widowhood is therefore praiseworthy.[5]

Q. How must widows live in order to sanctify themselves in their state?

A. Here are the obligations St. Paul imposes upon them:

I. To love retirement, apply themselves to governing their household well and give their children a Christian education, doing for them what their own parents did for them. *Si qua autem vidua filios aut nepotes habet, discat primum domum suam regere, et mutuam vicem reddere parentibus: hoc enim acceptum est coram Deo*—if any widow has children or grandchildren, let her first learn to govern her own household and repay her parents in turn, for this is acceptable before God.

If a husband has lost his wife or a wife her husband, what course should the survivor take? That of retirement. While they lived together, union and companionship suited them; now that death has untied this bond, solitude suits the survivor. Death has torn the husband from his wife's embrace; he is no longer in her company. What should be done after so sad a separation? She should confine herself to caring for her children and family.

II. To preserve widowed chastity and, for this purpose, withdraw from worldly company and profane amusements, gambling, dances, feasts, and so forth. For a widow living in luxury and delights is dead in God's eyes, though she appears alive in men's eyes: *Nam quæ in deliciis est, vivens mortua est*—she who lives in pleasures is dead while alive.

III. To place all her confidence in God. Having no longer support or consolation in the world, she must ask Him unceasingly to be everything for her, exercise herself in works of charity, frequent the sacraments and devote herself to every kind of good work. *Quæ autem vere vidua est, et desolata, speret in Deum, et instet obsecrationibus et orationibus*—she who is truly a widow and desolate should hope in God and persevere in supplications and prayers.

These are the obligations the Apostle imposes upon widows. But because they may perhaps seem difficult to practice, it is fitting to set before them an example taken from the Gospel. When Jesus Christ was presented in Jerusalem's Temple, not only the holy old man Simeon recognized Him as the Messiah, but also a holy widow called Anna, to whom St. Luke gives this praise. This woman, of Asher's tribe and Phanuel's daughter, had spent only seven years with the husband she married when very young, and remained a widow until the age of eighty-four. Her virtue was such that she was continually in the Temple and served God night and day in exercises of fasting and prayer. So great was her piety that she had received from God the gift of prophecy and spoke of Jesus to all awaiting Israel's redemption. *Non discedebat de templo, jejuniis et*

obsecrationibus serviens die ac nocte… et loquebatur de Illo omnibus qui expectabant redemptionem Israel. Here is a widow who practiced St. Paul's prescribed rules before St. Paul had prescribed them. Widowed ladies, endeavor to imitate her.[6]

Q. May widows marry again? What must they observe when wishing to remarry? Is it lawful to mock them with shouting and the noise of frying pans, saucepans and so forth when they marry?

A. It is incontestable that widowers and widows may marry: second, third and further marriages are not forbidden. How could we forbid them, St. Augustine says, when St. Paul authorizes them? Writing to the Corinthians, this Apostle permits marriage after one spouse's death, without specifying whether he means second, third or fourth marriages. Certainly there have been churches disapproving so many repeated marriages, and in the Greek Church fourth marriages are forbidden. But the Latin Church has not employed the same rigor. She would wish the widowed to have enough virtue to live in continence for the rest of their days. Yet because not all can do so, she permits them to marry as often as necessary. Sometimes it can even be counseled, especially when they are young and lack the virtue to preserve continence. *Volo*, says the Apostle, *juniores nubere, filios procreare, matres familias esse, nullam occasionem dare adversario maledicti gratia*—I wish younger women to marry, bear children, manage households and give the adversary no occasion for slander.

When widows wish to remarry, they must observe these things:

I. They should proceed to a second marriage only after mature deliberation and consultation with God to learn whether it is His will that they change their state: *Cui vult nubat, tantum in Domino*—let her marry whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

II. If they have children from their first marriage, they are indispensably obliged to preserve their rights. Since by marrying they risk being unable to benefit them, at least they must not take away what the children already possess. *Ne attingas parvulorum terminos, et agrum pupillorum ne introeas*—do not touch the little ones' boundaries or enter the orphans' field.

Although no law, at least in the Latin Church, removes widows' freedom to marry during the mourning year, it is nevertheless good to warn them that proceeding to a second marriage immediately after a husband's death is not at all honorable for a widow. There is even reason to fear that if she were pregnant she might present a supposed heir to the second husband or deprive a posthumous child of his right to his father's inheritance. In this case a confessor who knew she was pregnant should refuse absolution if she wished to marry before giving birth, since she would sin against the natural law forbidding harm to one's neighbor.[7]

To the third part of the proposed question I say that the Church strongly condemns the mockery and noise made at the doors of widows who remarry. She regards this sort of game as a public insult to the sacrament in the persons of the men and women receiving it a second time. \[The custom described is a derisive *charivari*, a noisy serenade with pans and other objects.\]

Here, then, is what concerns widows. If they can remain in this state, they will do well: *Bonum est illis si sic permaneant*—it is good for them if they remain thus. If remarriage is fitting for them, they must observe the Apostle's rules: not be rash and hasty, but act prudently and examine carefully whether it is God's will that they marry again. I do not explain married persons' obligations here because I have already spoken of them in this part. I pray God to grant them the grace to fulfill them faithfully, so that, after being sanctified together in this life, they may have the happiness of being united to God for all eternity.

---

[1] Ephesians 5:32; John 2:1–11.

[2] Innocent III, *Dilectus, De sponsalibus et matrimonio*; Sylvius on Thomas, *Supplement*, q.58, a.3, as printed.

[3] 1 Corinthians 7:39; Genesis 2:18; Tobit 6:22 in the source's Vulgate numbering; Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, I, chapter 8; 1 Corinthians 7:9.

[4] Sirach 26:3; Proverbs 19:14; 18:22; Roman Ritual; Thomas, IV, distinction 27, q.2, a.7, reply 2.

[5] 1 Corinthians 7:34, 40; 1 Timothy 5:3; Judith 15:10–11 in Vulgate numbering (the source prints chapter X).

[6] 1 Timothy 5:4–6; Luke 2:36–38.

[7] 1 Timothy 5:14; Proverbs 23:10; 1 Corinthians 7:39.

Decalogue: First Conference: On the Decalogue and the Commandments in General

Original preacher not named.

Custodi præcepta Domini Dei tui. (Deuteronomy 6.)

Keep the commandments of the Lord your God.

This is the admonition Moses gave the Israelites when God sent him to announce His holy law. Faithfully keep, he tells them, the commandments of the Lord your God. His words and precepts must be engraved upon your hearts. You will relate them to your children and meditate upon them at home and when walking, at night in the intervals of sleep and in the morning when you awake. In a word, you will continually keep them before your eyes: *Movebuntur inter oculos tuos*.

These very commandments of the old law are those Jesus Christ confirmed and authorized in the new. Since they are the source of all our obligations and the single rule of our conduct, I shall explain them familiarly, so that everyone may know what God requires of him for obtaining eternal happiness. The subject is vast, but being well instructed in it matters greatly to you. These are not mere counsels or works of supererogation addressed only to the perfect, but universal commandments indispensably binding great and small, rich and poor, masters and servants, kings and subjects.

These are the decisive points concerning our predestination or reprobation. If we fulfill them, we shall secure our eternal salvation. But if we break them, we expose ourselves to being lost forever. Since these are primary and fundamental laws whose observance is absolutely necessary, I have reason to hope that, however little the desire of salvation moves you, you will listen attentively to the explanation I am going to give. Today we shall speak only of the commandments in general. Afterward we shall descend to treating each individually.[1]

Q. What does "Decalogue" mean, and what commandments does it contain?

A. By the word Decalogue we mean the Ten Commandments God gave the Israelites through Moses' ministry. Scripture calls them the ten words of the covenant the Lord made with His people: *Scripsit in tabulis verba fœderis decem*—He wrote upon the tablets the ten words of the covenant. He gave the Israelites this law after the first Passover, fifty days after their departure from Egypt. It was proclaimed upon Mount Sinai amid thunderbolts, thunder and lightning, so that fear, interpreters say, would compel men to observe it and make them know what they must fear in the next life if they unfortunately broke it in this one. The Almighty's finger engraved it upon two stone tablets, which is why the Decalogue was called the written law.

The first tablet contains the first three commandments, regulating our obligations toward God: they order us to adore Him alone, respect His holy name and sanctify the day He consecrated to His service.

The second tablet contains the last seven commandments, indicating our obligations toward our neighbor, individually and generally. Individually, he must be given the honor due him: the precept to honor our parents prescribes this. Generally, we must harm no one by deed, word or thought. Our neighbor is injured by deeds against his person, which the fifth precept forbids: you shall not kill; against the person joined to him by marriage's bond, which the sixth forbids: you shall not commit adultery; or, finally, against his possessions, which the seventh forbids: you shall not steal. The eighth forbids harming our neighbor by

words: you shall not bear false witness. Finally, injuring him in thought, through the heart's desires, is forbidden by these two precepts: you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his goods.

Here are the ten commandments contained in the Decalogue, which are, as it were, the summary and compendium of all laws. God, St. Augustine says, commanded Moses many things, yet gave him only two stone tablets, called the tablets of the Testament, to be kept in the ark. All other laws flow from these ten, just as all are included in the two precepts of love of God and neighbor, embracing the whole law and the Prophets, as Jesus Christ says in His Gospel: *In his duobus mandatis universa lex pendet et Prophetæ*—upon these two commandments depend the whole law and the Prophets.[2]

Q. Is there an obligation to know the commandments? Does someone sin who through ignorance does something they forbid?

A. Every Christian who has reached the free use of reason is obliged to know, at least in substance, God's and the Church's commandments. He cannot regulate his life as he ought unless instructed, at least generally, in what God's law orders and forbids. Thus St. Charles says in his *Instructions to Confessors* that absolution should not be given to those failing to take proper care to know the Our Father, Creed and Commandments. They should be obliged to attend the explanation of the catechism until they learn everything necessary for salvation.

Concerning those who through ignorance infringe the commandments, it is certain that ordinarily they sin. Some Christians' ignorance of the obligations contained in or flowing from the Decalogue is not blameless. It results from negligence and often from ill will opposing God's light. Of this ignorance St. Bernard says in Letter 77 to Hugh of Saint-Victor: *Multa scienda nesciuntur, aut sciendi incuria, aut discendi desidia, aut verecundia inquirendi, et quidem hujusmodi ignorantia non habet excusationem*—many things that should be known remain unknown through carelessness about knowing, laziness in learning or embarrassment about asking; ignorance of this kind has no excuse.

Ignorance of natural law can diminish sin, as St. Augustine teaches. When vincible, however, it excuses no one possessing the use of reason. \["Vincible" ignorance can be overcome by reasonable effort; "invincible" ignorance cannot.\] Such is ignorance of the precepts contained in the Decalogue, since all belong to natural law. This kind of ignorance is very rarely wholly invincible and consequently is culpable in adults. *Ignorantia juris naturalis in omnibus adultis damnabilis est,* says a canon cited by Gratian—ignorance of natural law is blameworthy in all adults. Man almost always has sufficient light to know what belongs to natural law. If he does not know it, it is because he does not take sufficient care.

This is indisputable concerning natural law's first precepts and their nearest consequences. As for its more remote consequences, we must admit that invincible ignorance can exist, and then a person does not sin. Thus on December 7, 1690, Alexander VIII condemned, among other propositions, this one: *Tametsi detur ignorantia invincibilis juris naturæ, hæc in statu naturæ lapsæ non excusat a peccato formali*—even if invincible ignorance of natural law exists, in the state of fallen nature it does not excuse from formal sin.

Q. Are all men, Christians and Jews alike, obliged to observe the Ten Commandments in order to be saved?

A. All men possessing the use of reason and able to distinguish good from evil are obliged to keep the Decalogue's commandments. No one ever has been or ever will be saved without keeping them. The reason, as we have said, is that they belong to natural law, common to all men, against which it is never lawful to act. Breaking even one of these commandments suffices to incur God's wrath and expose oneself to eternal condemnation unless one does penance. *Quicumque autem totam legem servaverit, offendat autem in uno, factus est omnium reus,* says St. James—whoever keeps the whole law but offends in one point becomes guilty of all.

Why is this so, the Apostle continues? Because God wishes to be obeyed in everything He commands. The same God Who said, "You shall not commit adultery," said, "You shall not kill." Thus, although you are not adulterers, if you commit homicide you are guilty of violating the law and will be punished as transgressors. Jesus Christ clearly explains this truth in His answer to a young man asking what he must do to obtain eternal life. "If you wish to be saved," the Savior tells him, "keep the commandments": *Si vis ad vitam ingredi, serva mandata*. "And which commandments must I keep?" the young man replied. Those contained in the Decalogue, Jesus Christ answered.

Since someone might imagine that Our Lord came to dispense us from the law given to the Jews, He expressly declares that He came not to destroy the law but to perfect and fulfill it: *Nolite putare quoniam veni solvere legem: non veni solvere, sed adimplere*—do not think I came to abolish the law; I came not to abolish but to fulfill. Accordingly the holy Council of Trent pronounces anathema against those saying that the Gospel orders only faith; everything else is free and indifferent; and Christians are not obliged to keep the Ten Commandments.

Do not therefore deceive yourselves, brethren. To assert that we can go to heaven without keeping the commandments is an error condemned by the Church. We must all observe them with great exactness if we wish to be saved. This, the royal Prophet says, is what the Lord requires of us: *Tu mandasti mandata Tua custodiri nimis*—You have commanded Your commandments to be kept most diligently.[3]

Q. Have we sufficient strength to observe all the commandments? Is any one of them impossible for man?

A. We can keep all God's commandments with the help of His grace. *Viam mandatorum Tuorum cucurri, cum dilatasti cor meum*—Lord, the prophet king said to God, I have run along the way of Your commandments when through Your love You enlarged my heart.

Certainly, if we consider God's commandments in themselves, they seem difficult to observe, opposed as they are to the inclinations of nature corrupted by sin, which has a much greater propensity toward evil than good. But if we consider them accompanied by grace's help, we must say with the beloved disciple that God's commandments are not burdensome: *Mandata Ejus gravia non sunt*. With Jesus Christ Himself we must say that His yoke is sweet and His burden light.

Therefore it is blasphemy, impiety and heresy to maintain, as some innovators of recent centuries have done, that God's commandments are impossible, or that there are precepts even the just cannot keep however great their efforts. I say that this is a true blasphemy against God, Who Himself declared when laying His commandments upon us that He commands nothing beyond our strength: *Mandatum quod Ego præcipio tibi hodie, non supra te est*—the commandment I command you today is not beyond you. It is impiety, because the Lord promised His Holy Spirit, Who will make us walk in His commandments' path: *Spiritum Meum ponam in medio vestri; et faciam ut in præceptis Meis ambuletis, et judicia Mea custodiatis*—I will put My Spirit within you and make you walk in My precepts and keep My judgments. Finally, it is a heresy the Church has often condemned. The Council of Trent pronounced anathema against anyone saying God's commandments were impossible even for the just: *Si quis dixerit Dei præcepta homini etiam justificato et sub gratia constituto esse ad observandum impossibilia, anathema sit*.

It is therefore a truth of faith, which no Catholic may doubt, that we can keep the commandments with God's grace, and that God does not refuse it to those asking Him as they ought. With St. Augustine the Council of Trent says that God does not command the impossible. In commanding, He admonishes us to do what we can and ask for what we cannot, and helps us so that we can: *Deus impossibilia non jubet, sed jubendo monet facere quod possis, petere quod non possis, et adjuvat ut possis*.

We have proof of this truth in the Gospel. In Zechariah and Elizabeth, St. John the Baptist's parents, it shows us two just persons who faithfully kept God's commandments: *Erant justi ambo ante Deum incedentes in omnibus mandatis et justificationibus Domini, sine querela*—both were just before God, walking blamelessly in all the Lord's commandments and ordinances. Jesus Christ gives the same testimony concerning His Apostles: *Tui erant, et Mihi eos dedisti, et sermonem Meum servaverunt*—they were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept My word. We shall therefore have no excuse before God if we fail to observe His holy law: *Maledicti qui declinant a mandatis Tuis*—cursed are those turning away from Your commandments.[4]

Q. How must Christians keep the commandments?

A. They must keep them with greater perfection than the Jews. Unless your justice, Christ tells us, is fuller and more abundant than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. The Jews did not penetrate the law's spirit, contenting themselves with reforming the exterior while neglecting the interior. To prevent our falling into the same fault, the Savior willed to explain the commandments Himself and tear away the veil preventing our penetrating their true meaning.

It is not enough, He says, to love your friends. You must also love your enemies, do good to those doing evil to you, and pray for those persecuting and slandering you. It is not enough not to kill: you must repress anger. It is not enough not to commit adultery: you must not desire it in thought or will. It is not enough to avoid perjury: you must abstain from swearing. It is not enough to practice good works: you must do them with a right intention and the purpose of pleasing God, not men. It is not enough to avoid sin: you must flee its occasion and cut away everything that could occasion scandal, do violence to yourselves and walk the narrow path, and so forth. These and other explanations the Son of God gives in His Gospel show that Christians must observe the commandments with greater perfection than the Jews.

Another fault very common among the Jews was that they kept God's law only in a spirit of fear, like slaves acting solely through fear of penalties and punishment. But we, who are God's children and have received the spirit of adoption, as St. Paul says, must observe God's law from the motive of His love. *Hæc est caritas Dei ut mandata Ejus custodiamus,* says St. John—this is God's love, that we keep His commandments. Charity is so characteristic of Jesus Christ's disciples that anyone who does not love Him does not keep His commandments: *Qui non diligit Me, sermones Meos non servat*—whoever does not love Me does not keep My words.

For this reason St. Augustine spoke those celebrated words: *Brevis differentia legis, timor et amor*—briefly, the difference in the law is fear and love. In the old law fear dominated hearts; in the new, God's love must dominate and make us fulfill His commandments. But do we take care to fulfill them thus? Do we love God? Do we obey Him through love, as children should obey their parents? *Finis præcepti est caritas de corde puro, et conscientia bona, et fide non ficta*—the purpose of the commandment is charity from a pure heart, a good conscience and sincere faith.[5]

Q. What reward does God promise those who faithfully keep His commandments?

A. A very abundant reward. *In custodiendis illis retributio multa,* says the prophet king—in keeping them there is great reward. If you faithfully keep the Lord's law, He will fill you with good things and pour His holy blessings upon you, Moses told the Israelites: *Abundare te faciet Dominus omnibus bonis*. He will bless your persons, labors, lands, houses and children, and pour upon your posterity those graces of which the Prophet speaks: *Justitia Illius in filios filiorum, his qui servant testamentum Ejus, et memores sunt mandatorum Ipsius ad faciendum ea*—His justice is upon children's children, upon those keeping His covenant and remembering His commandments to perform them.

To say everything in one word, we gain God's friendship if we observe His commandments. What do people not do to obtain the friendship of a prince or a rich and powerful man? And what is a man's friendship worth compared with God's? Nevertheless Jesus Christ assures us that if we do what He commands, we shall be His friends and confidants. *Vos amici Mei estis si feceritis quæ Ego præcipio vobis*—you are My friends if you do what I command you. What should we not do to obtain so great an honor? To crown our happiness, the Lord promises whoever keeps His law that He will manifest Himself to him and make him contemplate His glory for all eternity: *Et manifestabo ei Meipsum*—and I will manifest Myself to him.[6]

What an impression the consideration of so many advantages found in keeping God's law should make upon us! Yet who thinks of this? A prince commands us, often unjustly, and we tremble. God commands things most just and useful: *Judicia Domini vera, justificata in semetipsa*—the Lord's judgments are true, just in themselves. Yet we do not fear to disobey Him. His commandments are more precious than gold and precious stones: *Super aurum et topazion*. Everything one can love on earth is nothing compared with this holy law. *Bonum mihi lex oris Tui*, the royal Prophet said, *super millia auri et argenti*—the law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands in gold and silver.

Nevertheless, how do we treat it? Let us glance through families, merchants' shops, courts of justice and so forth, and we shall see this law broken almost everywhere. For things of very little value people mock it, laugh at it and make a plaything of it: *Lacerata est lex*—the law is torn apart. O great God, where are we? No longer unbelievers but Christians calling themselves Your children have trampled upon Your law: *Omnis Israel prævaricati sunt legem Tuam*—all Israel have transgressed Your law. Yes, Christians who promised so solemnly to observe it and were told at Baptism: *Custodi Baptismum tuum et serva Dei mandata*—keep your Baptism and observe God's commandments.

Ah, since those happy days of your consecration, how often have you broken your promise? Think of this, humble yourselves and ask God's pardon. As the fruit of this instruction, attend seriously to these words with which the Wise Man concludes his book of Ecclesiasticus: *Deum time, et mandata Ejus observa, hoc est enim omnis homo*—fear God and observe His commandments, for this is the whole man. *Hoc est enim omnis homo*: if this is the whole man, it follows that everything else is nothing. However many riches you heap up, if you have not observed your God's law, all this will avail you nothing. *Deum time*, and so forth.[7]

Ask God to grant you grace to penetrate this important truth deeply. It is not enough to know the commandments by heart and recite them every day. You must also ask God for understanding of them, so that you comprehend what He commands and forbids: *Da mihi intellectum, et discam mandata Tua*—give me understanding, and I shall learn Your commandments. Review them frequently and, following the saints' example, make them the ordinary subject of your meditations: *In mandatis Tuis exercebor, et considerabo vias Tuas*—I will exercise myself in Your commandments and consider Your ways.

Above all, form an effective purpose never to break them. Yes, my God, in the presence of these holy altars I promise anew to obey Your commandments. I will not transgress Your holy law, even if gaining the whole world depended upon it, and even if I endangered my possessions, honor and life itself. I shall always endeavor to fulfill Your holy will, so as to deserve to fulfill it eternally in heaven: *Et custodiam legem Tuam semper, in sæculum et in sæculum sæculi*—and I shall keep Your law always, forever and forevermore. May God grant us this. Amen.[8]

---

[1] Deuteronomy 6:6–8.

[2] Exodus 34:28; Augustine, *Questions on Exodus*, question 150 in the source's numbering; Matthew 22:40.

[3] James 2:10–11; Matthew 19:17; 5:17; Trent, Session VI, especially canons 19–20 (the source prints canon 9); Psalm 119:4 (Vulgate 118).

[4] Psalm 119:32, 21; 1 John 5:3; Matthew 11:30; Deuteronomy 30:11; Ezekiel 36:27; Trent, Session VI, chapter 11 and canon 18; Luke 1:6; John 17:6.

[5] Matthew 5:20 and the Sermon on the Mount; Romans 8:15; 1 John 5:3; John 14:24; Augustine, *Against Adimantus*, chapter 17; 1 Timothy 1:5.

[6] Psalm 19:11 (Vulgate 18:12; the source misprints Psalm 118); Deuteronomy 28:11; Psalm 103:17–18 (Vulgate 102); John 15:14; 14:21.

[7] Psalm 19:9–10 (Vulgate 18:10–11); Psalm 119:72 (the source prints 118:70); Habakkuk 1:4; Daniel 9:11; Ecclesiastes 12:13.

[8] Psalm 119:73, 15, 44 (Vulgate 118).

Decalogue: Second Conference: On the First Commandment

Original preacher not named.

Ego sum Dominus Deus tuus, Qui eduxi te de terra Ægypti, de domo servitutis: non habebis deos alienos coram Me. (Exodus 20.)

I am the Lord your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt and the house of slavery. You shall not adore other gods in My presence.

With these words God begins the commandments He lays upon mankind. Wishing to inspire the Israelites with respect for His sovereign Majesty and the gratitude due Him, He recalls His benefits: "I am the Lord your God, Who brought you out of Egypt and the house of slavery." Through this motive He would move them to observe His holy law. We should note that this prelude speaks to us as well as to the Jews. The Jews rescued from Pharaoh's and the Egyptians' servitude prefigured Christians redeemed by Jesus Christ from slavery to the devil and sin. If deliverance from Egyptian captivity should have obliged the Israelites to obey the Lord's law, what submission will this law, renewed by Jesus Christ, not require of Christians? He delivered us from sin's tyranny and merited for us the grace to fulfill what the law commands. This is the conclusion we must draw from these words.

The words that follow, "You shall not adore other gods in My presence," contain a precept and a prohibition, as the Roman Catechism says. The Lord commands us to acknowledge and adore Him as true God: this is the precept. He forbids us to acknowledge other gods or render to anyone the worship due Him alone: this is the prohibition. Let us examine the meaning of this precept, the first and greatest of all commandments, according to Jesus Christ's words: *Hoc est primum et maximum mandatum*. The Church proposes it to us in these terms: "You shall adore one God alone and love Him above all things." Let us explain what is necessary to fulfill it.

Q. To what does the first commandment oblige us? What virtues must we practice to keep it?

A. This commandment orders us to render God the supreme worship we owe Him as our Creator and sovereign Lord of all things. It commands us to adore Him, love Him and unite ourselves to Him with all our soul's effort, as the One Who alone can be our happiness through the communication of the supreme Good, God Himself: *Dominum Deum tuum adorabis, et Illi soli servies*—you shall adore the Lord your God and serve Him alone.

This is the most essential of all our duties and the greatest of all commandments, containing all the others in summary. To fulfill it we must practice what St. Augustine says in chapter 3 of his *Manual*: adore God through faith, hope and charity. To these we may add the virtue of religion.

Through faith we rise to knowledge of the divine Majesty and honor the infallible Truth, God, by believing as true everything He has graciously revealed to us. Thus Scripture orders those who fear God to believe in Him: *Qui timetis Deum, credite Illi*. Hope gives us complete confidence in the Lord; through it we acknowledge God's omnipotence and honor His faithfulness to His promises.

Charity makes us love God above all things. Loving Him in this manner, we honor His sovereign goodness and render Him perfect and true adoration. Therefore St. Augustine says of charity: *Hic est Dei cultus; hæc*

recta pietas; hæc tantum Deo debita servitus—this is God's worship, this right piety, this the service due to God alone.

Finally, through the virtue of religion we venerate the excellence of God's being and His absolute dominion over everything. This virtue regulates the respect we owe Him and everything consecrated to His worship.

We readily understand, then, that the Decalogue's first precept, commanding mankind to adore God, orders the practice of these virtues. Pope Alexander VII therefore most justly condemned in his decree of September 24, 1666, the proposition saying: *Homo nullo unquam vitæ suæ tempore tenetur elicere actus fidei, spei et caritatis ex vi præceptorum divinorum ad eas virtutes pertinentium*—at no time in his life is a man bound to elicit acts of faith, hope and charity by force of the divine precepts pertaining to these virtues.

We spoke of faith in the first conference on the Creed. We shall therefore now treat only of hope, charity and religion.[1]

Q. What is hope? Is it a virtue distinct from faith and charity? Are we obliged to form acts of hope? At what times?

A. Hope is a theological virtue by which, with God's assistance and Jesus Christ's merits, we expect with certainty and confidence eternal blessedness and the means to attain it. It is a theological virtue because its object is God as our final end, Who is to be our eternal good. Through hope we await salvation with certainty and confidence. It is an anchor, St. Paul says, securing God's promises for us amid this life's temptations: *Confugimus ad tenendam propositam spem, quam sicut anchoram habemus animæ tutam ac firmam*—we have taken refuge to hold fast the hope set before us, which we possess as a safe and firm anchor of the soul.

We also hope for the means necessary to attain salvation because, as the Apostle says, eternal life is God's grace and gift: *Gratia Dei vita æterna*. Through this virtue we may also hope for temporal goods as means that can help us attain blessedness.

Only heretics confuse hope with faith and charity. The Apostle clearly distinguishes these three virtues when he says: *Nunc autem manent fides, spes et caritas, tria hæc*—now there remain faith, hope and charity, these three. Not only does he distinguish faith, hope and charity; he also compares them when adding: *Major autem horum est caritas*—but the greatest of these is charity. He therefore does not consider them the same virtue, because one cannot say a thing is greater in relation to itself, but only in relation to another.

For all who have reached the use of reason to be saved, it is necessary, both by necessity of means and of precept, to form acts of hope during life's course. Thus St. Paul says that we are saved by hope: *Spe enim salvi facti sumus*. According to the holy Council of Trent's doctrine, acts of hope must be formed to dispose oneself to justification.

There is a special obligation to make acts of hope:

I. When we reach the full use of reason and are sufficiently instructed that eternal blessedness is prepared for us.

II. At the point of death. Parish priests assisting the dying must then take great care to have them form acts of hope in the future resurrection and eternal life.

III. When violent temptations to despair attack us which cannot easily be overcome without making acts of hope.

IV. Finally, when we have an obligation to pray or receive the sacrament of Penance, because without hope, the saints say, there can be no true repentance: *Nemo potest bene agere pœnitentiam nisi speraverit indulgentiam*—no one can do penance well unless he hopes for forgiveness.

A Christian with any desire for salvation does not wait to produce acts of hope only in these cases. He makes them frequently during life, as the Prophet Hosea admonishes: *Spera in Deo tuo semper*—hope in your God always. He regards himself as a stranger on earth and sighs unceasingly for heavenly goods: *Gloriamur in spe gloriæ filiorum Dei*—we glory in hope of the glory of God's children.[2]

Q. What is charity? Is it absolutely necessary for salvation? Is habitual charity sufficient? Are we obliged frequently to produce acts of love of God?

A. Charity is an infused theological virtue making us love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for God's sake. It is theological because its first and principal object is God, considered as the sovereign Good containing every kind of perfection. It shares with faith and hope the character of an infused habit, as the Council of Trent says. Charity is not acquired through acts of natural love. It is a gift the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts, as St. Paul teaches: *Caritas Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum Sanctum Qui datus est nobis*—God's charity is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.

Charity makes us love God above all things, more than ourselves and more than everything in the world. This preferential love we owe God is what the Savior speaks of when saying: "Whoever loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." Charity also makes us love our neighbor for God. It would not be charity if we loved him for other ends. *Si quis quemlibet amat, sed propter Deum non amat*, says Pope St. Gregory, *caritatem non habet, sed habere se putat*—if someone loves another but not for God's sake, he does not have charity but thinks he has it.

Through charity we also love ourselves, but always in relation to God, referring everything we are to Him and seeking our happiness in Him alone. Here is the notion of this great virtue, without which we cannot observe God's commandments: *Qui non diligit Me, sermones Meos non servat*—whoever does not love Me does not keep My words.

Charity is absolutely necessary for us to be saved. To prove this truth, it suffices to read what St. Paul says in chapter 13 of his First Epistle to the Corinthians: *Si caritatem non habuero nihil sum*, and so forth—if I have not charity, I am nothing.

The habitual charity children received at Baptism suffices for their entrance into heaven when they die before reaching the use of reason. Adults, however, need actual charity by necessity of precept and are obliged to form acts of it. Jesus Christ commands us to practice this precept when He says in St. Matthew: "You shall love the Lord with your whole heart, your whole soul and all your strength. This is the first and greatest of all precepts." There is a particular obligation to make acts of love of God:

I. When a person reaches the use of reason and becomes capable of referring his actions to the final end. He is then obliged to turn to God, St. Thomas says, and refer all his works to Him as final end.

II. When, conscious of guilt for some mortal sin, he is obliged to administer a sacrament without being able first to receive a priest's absolution. He must then form an act of perfect contrition, which virtually includes love of God.

III. In present temptations where there is danger of losing charity.

IV. When we approach the holy Eucharist, in which we receive the priceless pledge of Jesus Christ's love for us.

V. We must produce these acts very often. The Church admonishes us of this when asking God to increase faith, hope and charity in us: *Da nobis fidei, spei, et caritatis augmentum*—give us an increase of faith, hope and charity. Thus Pope Innocent XI, in his decree of 1679, condemned these propositions: "It is enough to fulfill the precept of love of God to make a single act during life, or every five years, or when one must enter the state of grace and cannot do so by another means, or only at the point of death."

Q. What is the virtue of religion, and what are its acts?

A. Religion is a virtue making us render to God the honor and worship due Him. There are two kinds of religious acts: those proper to religion, which it immediately produces through itself, such as adoration and sacrifice; and others which religion does not produce immediately, but through the virtues it inspires in us. In this sense acts of mercy, temperance and many other virtues may be called acts of religion, as St. Thomas teaches. In the same sense St. James says pure and undefiled religion consists in visiting orphans and widows in their afflictions and keeping ourselves pure from the age's corruption. *Religio munda et immaculata apud Deum et Patrem hæc est, visitare pupillos et viduas in tribulatione eorum, et immaculatum se custodire ab hoc sæculo*.

Religion's proper acts are divided into interior and exterior. There are two principal interior acts: devotion and prayer. Devotion, according to St. Thomas, is a ready and effective will moving us to do everything belonging to God's worship with complete affection and promptness of heart. Prayer is a raising of our spirit to God, making us adore His infinite perfections and ask His grace. Without its assistance, we acknowledge that we can neither do any good, nor even think it, nor form holy desires.

To be truly religious and Christian, therefore, we must first profess sincere devotion: that is, preserve a heart wholly dedicated to God and solicitous to do nothing contrary to His worship, honor or holy law. Secondly, we must pray often through pious raisings of our spirit to God, adoring Him in spirit and truth and asking His grace always to be faithful to Him. These are religion's interior acts.

Its exterior acts are adoration, sacrifice, offerings, vocal prayers, praises, thanksgivings and the Church's ceremonies. We are obliged to render God outward worship as well as inward, because our body belongs to God as does our spirit. It is therefore just to honor and adore God with both parts of ourselves, according to the Psalmist's words: *Cor meum et caro mea exultaverunt in Deum vivum*—my heart and flesh have rejoiced in the living God.

Certainly interior adoration is what most pleases God and what He principally requires of us. But we must not despise exterior worship, as heretics do, for Jesus Christ and the Apostles practiced it. This reverence, these genuflections and movements of our body stir in our soul the sentiments of piety with which God's infinite Majesty should penetrate it.[3]

Q. What fruit must we draw from what you have said about adoration and God's worship?

A. We must convince ourselves that without practicing the virtues explained, we cannot fulfill the obligations the first commandment imposes. In whatever state or occupation you find yourselves—as merchant, soldier, and so forth—you must have zeal for religion and God's worship. The quality of being His servant must be our essential character: *Ego servus Tuus*—I am Your servant. It must stand above all the rest and be the soul of all our actions and the rule of our conduct.

We read in Holy Scripture that, when God commanded the Prophet Jonah to preach at Nineveh, he resolved to go to Tarshish to flee the Lord's presence. He embarked upon a ship sailing to that city, and the Lord sent a furious wind raising a horrible storm. The pilot, not knowing Jonah, questioned him: "Where are you from? What is your occupation? Where are you going? What is your people?" He answered: "I am a Hebrew, servant of the God Who made sea and land, and my occupation is to venerate and serve Him."

An admirable answer, Theophylact says! It is as though he said: I have no other occupation than serving God. In every country I find God and serve Him. Wherever in the world I go, there is my God, and I devote myself to rendering Him my service. I perform all my actions for God and with the purpose of pleasing Him. Whether I sleep or watch, eat or drink, remain in my own country or go to a foreign land, I apply myself in everything to serving my God. Here is my profession and occupation: *Servus Dei ego sum, et Dominum Deum cæli ego timeo, Qui fecit mare et aridam*—I am God's servant, and I fear the Lord God of heaven,

Who made the sea and dry land.

You, Christians, will say the same as Jonah. But do you say it with the same spirit and truth? You often tell men, “Sir, I am your servant,” but this is a mere compliment. Most Christians do the same with God. All call themselves the Lord’s servants: *Servus Dei ego sum*. Yet few are so in reality. Serving God consists in having no other master commanding us, renouncing love of the world and creatures and every other attachment incompatible with the service due Him. Serving God means being ready to suffer every evil rather than fail in fidelity to Him.

But have we served and adored God in this way? Let us promise to be more exact in fulfilling this sovereign Lord’s commandments henceforth and apply ourselves to serving Him with singular devotion and sincere piety. Inspire us, O my God, with these noble sentiments required by the religion we profess.

Through Your grace, cause all whom You have honored with the august character of Christians to recognize You alone as worthy of adoration upon earth; to love You alone; to hope for nothing outside You; and to seek their happiness in You alone here below, so that they may obtain the happiness of enjoying You eternally in heaven.[4]

---

[1] Matthew 4:10; Sirach 2:8; Augustine, *Enchiridion*, chapter 3, and *City of God*, X, chapter 4; Alexander VII’s decree of September 24, 1666.

[2] Hebrews 6:18–19; Romans 6:23; 8:24; 5:2; 1 Corinthians 13:13; Trent, Session VI, chapter 6; Ambrose, *On Penance*, chapter 1 in the cited edition; Hosea 12:6.

[3] Thomas, II–II, q.81, a.3, reply 1; q.82 (the source cites a.5); James 1:27; Psalm 84:2 (Vulgate 83:3).

[4] Psalm 116:16 (Vulgate 115); Jonah 1, especially 1:8–9.

Decalogue: Third Conference: On the Veneration the Church Gives to Saints, Relics and Images

Original preacher not named.

Non habebis deos alienos coram Me. (Exodus 20.)

You shall adore no other gods, but Me alone.

Through these words God expressly forbids idolatry: that is, the adoration of idols and the worship the Gentiles gave their false divinities. God alone must be adored. To adore anything else is to be an idolater and break the first of all commandments. The sin of idolatry can be committed in two ways, inwardly and outwardly. Inward idolatry consists in placing one’s love, confidence and dominant affection in something other than God. The Gentiles adoring idols were inwardly idolaters because they placed their confidence in idols, as Scripture reproaches them: *Ubi sunt dii eorum in quibus habebant fiduciam?*—where are their gods in whom they placed their trust? Lovers of the world are also in a certain sense inward idolaters, placing their love, confidence and dominant affection in this world’s honors, riches and pleasures.

Thus St. Paul calls avarice and impurity idolatry. Outward idolatry consists in rendering to something other than God the honor and inward and supreme worship due Him alone. This is what Gentiles did when prostrating themselves before their idols to adore them and render them divine honors.

Since heretics have rashly called the Church’s veneration of saints, their relics and images idolatry, we must show you that they are mistaken. In all this we practice nothing contrary to the first commandment.[1]

Q. Must we adore Jesus Christ, the most holy Virgin, the angels and the saints?

A. We must adore Jesus Christ because He is God, and also His sacred humanity, inseparably united to His divinity, because God and man are one person in Jesus Christ. But it is not lawful to adore the holy Virgin, angels or saints, understanding “adoration” as the worship of latria, or supreme worship, due God alone. That

would be idolatry, and the Church neither teaches, approves nor tolerates such an abomination.

This is taking "adoration" to mean latria. Sometimes, however, Scripture uses the word for every kind of honor and respect rendered to a person. We must observe this distinction with St. Augustine to answer the objections of heretics who misuse expressions of Scripture and the Fathers, confusing the latria due God alone with the honor we render the saints in heaven. Certainly this veneration differs from what we give the just living on earth. We honor the saints as God's stable and permanent friends who, having attained eternal glory, are secure in their lot and free of all danger of sinning, and as patrons and protectors of those still fighting on earth. In this capacity we owe them greater honor than the holy persons living in the world. Yet we are very far from rendering them the supreme worship due God alone.[2]

Q. Does the first commandment forbid venerating the holy Virgin, angels and saints?

A. It does not forbid venerating them as God's servants and friends. We honor them because of the graces with which the Lord filled them, the victories they obtained on earth with His help, and the glory with which He crowned them in heaven. To honor the saints this way is to praise God in them, as the prophet king invites us to do. This is what Catholics do: they refer to God the honor they render His saints. *Honoramus servos Dei*, St. Jerome says, *ut honor servorum redundet in Dominum*—we honor God's servants so that the servants' honor may redound to the Lord.

There is nothing in this practice that is not good. It is very surprising that heretics, who cannot be ignorant of the Church's doctrine on this point, have not preserved among themselves the honor rendered the Mother of God, brought from heaven by the archangel Gabriel and inspired by the Holy Spirit in St. Elizabeth. These scriptural words never resound in their churches: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women, and blessed the fruit of your womb." They have never used the *Magnificat*, in which the Virgin glorifies the Lord for working such great wonders in her, to thank God for what He did for the woman He chose as Mother of Jesus Christ His Son.

Yet it is not surprising that, refusing Jesus Christ's name the honor the Holy Spirit wishes us to render it when He says every knee must bow at Jesus Christ's name, they also fail to honor the most holy Virgin and saints. It is not surprising, I repeat, that they have abandoned so praiseworthy a custom, observed in the Church at all times and founded in Scripture. There we see Abraham, Lot, Joshua and others venerating angels who appeared to them, and the veneration of saints recommended in general.[3]

Q. But Masses are celebrated for saints, and churches and altars consecrated to them. Is this not idolatry, rendering creatures the honor due God alone?

A. When heretics reproach us for celebrating Masses for saints and consecrating churches and altars to them, they are mistaken on this point as on many others. The Church never offers sacrifice to saints. This worship belongs essentially to God alone and cannot in any manner be directed to a creature, as St. Augustine says. Everything the Church does at Mass comes down to naming the saints whose memory she celebrates, thanking God for their victories and asking Him favorably to hear our prayers through their intercession.

This is the Church's doctrine, taught by St. Augustine twelve hundred years ago and defined anew at the Council of Trent. The Church, this holy council says, offers sacrifice not to saints but to God alone, Who crowned them. The priest does not address St. Peter or St. Paul saying, "I offer you this sacrifice." Rather, thanking God for their victory, he asks their assistance so that those whose memory we celebrate on earth may graciously pray for us in heaven. This is how the Church honors the saints.

The same must be said concerning churches and altars bearing a saint's name. God alone is the One to Whom they are consecrated. We erect neither temples nor altars to martyrs, St. Augustine says, but to God alone, their God and ours. Certainly, to distinguish churches and altars from one another, they are given the name of a saint to whom the faithful have devotion. But the church or altar is dedicated not to that saint but to God.

Thus the saint is simply called patron: that is, our intercessor with God and the model of the life we should lead by following his virtues' example.[4]

Q. Is it lawful to pray to saints? Does invoking them not oppose the first commandment?

A. Here is what the Church teaches us:

I. It is good and useful to pray to saints to obtain through their intercession the graces and help we need.

II. Invoking them does not oppose the first commandment, since we pray to God and saints in very different ways. We pray to God to have mercy upon us and grant what we need. When we pray to saints, we ask only that they intercede with God for us.

Far from being contrary to Scripture, this practice agrees very well with it. We see St. Paul frequently commending himself to the faithful's prayers in his epistles. St. James expressly says that a just person's prayer is very powerful with God. The Lord Himself commanded Job's friends to have recourse to His servant to pray for them. If the prayers saints on earth make for their brethren agree with Scripture, and if it is good and useful for the faithful living to pray for us, why should it not be lawful to commend ourselves to the saints in heaven? They are more favored by God and more solicitous for our salvation than any faithful person living on earth. *De sua sorte securi*, says St. Cyprian, *sunt de nostra salute solliciti*—secure in their own lot, they are solicitous for our salvation. A practice so ancient, which St. Basil says belongs to apostolic tradition, must not therefore be rejected.[5]

Q. But saints, heretics say, do not hear our prayers. According to Ecclesiastes the dead know nothing of what happens on earth: *Mortui nihil noverunt amplius*. Praying to them will therefore be useless.

A. Since Holy Scripture teaches that angels and saints present our prayers before God's throne, rejoice in sinners' conversion and are associated with Jesus Christ in governing nations and judging them at the world's end, we must not doubt that they take part in what happens on earth and that God makes known to them the prayers addressed to them.

When it is said that the dead do not know what happens in the world, this means they lack the natural knowledge dependent upon the senses which they had in this life. It does not prevent the dead, especially the saints, from being instructed supernaturally. God, St. Gregory the Great says, manifests to the saints what it is fitting for them to know of everything happening here below. They see everything in His Word, as in a mirror freely manifesting all knowledge: *Omnia vident in Verbo*, as the schools explain. \["Freely manifesting" means that this knowledge depends on God's will, not that the saints possess independent omniscience.\]

Even if the saints did not hear prayers addressed to them—something that cannot be said without rashness—invoking them would not cease to be useful. For, as St. Augustine says: "How do we know whether they pray to God in general for all who invoke them, as we pray for the dead without seeing them, knowing where they are or what they do? Does St. Peter not tell the faithful addressed in his second letter that after death he will take care to remember them? And did the angel Raphael not say to Tobias: 'When you prayed with tears, I offered your prayers to the Lord'?" If the saints pray for us and angels offer our prayers to God, we may address them to intercede for us.

Q. At least, is having recourse to saints not an injury to Jesus Christ? Is it not acknowledging other mediators?

A. Certainly not, because when we have recourse to saints, it is so that they may pray to God for us and with us through Jesus Christ. Therefore the Church concludes all her prayers—which should be the model of ours—through Our Lord Jesus Christ. We confess and firmly believe that Jesus Christ is the only mediator through Whom we can approach God. We invoke saints only as intercessors with Jesus Christ. If they are

sometimes given the name mediators, it is understood solely as mediation of intercession. Jesus Christ alone is mediator absolutely, the sole mediator of redemption, the sole One Who redeemed us, in Whose name alone we can be saved.

Although we may approach Him directly, it is good and useful to have recourse to saints in order through them to approach Jesus Christ. They are more just and more closely united to Him on our behalf, and consequently more favorably heard.[6]

Q. Does the first commandment forbid the veneration given in the Church to saints' relics? Why do we render them this veneration?

A. The veneration we give saints' relics not only does not oppose the first commandment, but is most just and founded in Scripture, which relates that God repeatedly authorized it through miracles. We read that cloths which had touched St. Paul's body were applied to the sick and cured their diseases. From the earliest centuries saints' relics were exposed to the faithful's veneration. The holy Fathers relate the wonders God worked in their churches through these relics. St. Augustine recounts many which occurred when St. Ambrose translated the bodies of Sts. Gervasius and Protasius, as well as wonders God worked through St. Stephen the Protomartyr's relics, of which Augustine was an eyewitness.

The Fathers not only venerated saints' relics. They taught us that nothing in this opposed the veneration we owe God. *Honoramus reliquias Martyrum, ut Eum Cujus sunt Martyres adoremus,* says St. Jerome against the heretic Vigilantius—we honor martyrs' relics so that we may adore Him Whose martyrs they are. *Honoramus servos ut honor servorum redundet ad Dominum*—we honor servants so that the servants' honor may redound to the Lord.[7]

Q. But why do we venerate saints' relics?

A. With St. Ambrose I answer that we honor them because they are the precious remains of bodies that were temples of the Holy Spirit and will one day rise glorious and immortal; because they are consecrated to God in His saints' persons through the good use they made of them, in penance or martyrdom; and finally because God Himself wishes particularly to honor them through the manner in which He preserves them and the miracles He often works through them.

Catholics must not therefore be reproached for so ancient and well-authorized a practice. The Church's holy Fathers and Doctors venerated saints' relics, and we venerate them as they did. We cannot look without horror upon the indignity with which Lutherans and Calvinists have treated saints' relics in every place where they introduced their heresy.[8]

Q. Is the use of crosses and images placed in churches not contrary to these words of the first commandment: *Non facies tibi sculptile*—you shall not make yourself a graven image? What benefit does this practice have?

A. We must note that there are two kinds of images: those men have adored and those serving only as ornaments and memorials of holy things. Through these words—"You shall have no graven image or figure of anything in the world," *Non facies tibi sculptile,* and so forth—God forbids the Jews statues and images which pagans adored and served. He therefore immediately adds: *Non adorabis ea, neque coles*—you shall not adore or worship them. But He did not forbid images serving only as ornaments and memorials. On the contrary, Scripture approves their use. At God's command Moses placed two cherubim over the Ark of the Testament and erected the bronze serpent in the desert. Solomon, privileged to build the first earthly Temple in the true God's name and glory, placed two other cherubim and various statues in it for its adornment. Such are the images we place in churches: they are only ornaments or representations of the mysteries we venerate.

Images of Jesus Christ and the saints are placed in our churches first to serve as books for the unlearned. *Idcirco enim pictura in ecclesiis adhibetur,* St. Gregory the Great says to Serenus, bishop of Marseilles, *ut ii*

qui litteras nesciunt, saltem in parietibus videndo legant quæ legere in codicibus non valent—pictures are employed in churches so that those who do not know letters may at least read by seeing upon the walls what they cannot read in books. Secondly, they remind us of the persons or mysteries represented and move us through these images to gratitude for God's benefits, imitation of the saints and the practice of virtue.

This use cannot be rejected or said, with even the slightest appearance of reason, to oppose the first commandment. The Catholic Church adores none of these things, but God alone. We do not believe images contain any divinity or possess any power. We address our prayers only to Jesus Christ or the saints these images represent. Finally, we place no confidence in them as idolaters did in their idols. Thus the holy Council of Trent explains the matter.[9]

Q. What kind of veneration is given to images?

A. It is veneration referring solely to the originals: that is, the persons represented. When we kneel before the cross we adore Jesus Christ, crucified and dead upon it for us. When we salute or kneel before the most holy Virgin or another saint, this honor is directed to the Virgin herself or the saints. *Honor qui eis exhibetur refertur ad prototypa quæ illæ repræsentant*, says the Council of Trent—the honor shown them is referred to the originals they represent.

Thus, when venerating or praying before images, we address not the paintings but their originals. When we adore Jesus Christ while reading His passion, or venerate a saint while reading his life, this honor does not terminate in the paper. Likewise the signs of respect Catholic faithful customarily show images terminate not in paint or wood but in the living persons represented. There is nothing in all this that is not good and useful. Indeed, it is more fitting and pious to pray before a crucifix or an image of the holy Virgin or a saint, as Catholics do, than to bow and pray before a post, wall or sometimes profane statues, as heretics do.[10]

Q. At least, is the true cross upon which Jesus Christ died not adored?

A. We always adore Jesus Christ when kneeling before the cross upon which He suffered death. It would be idolatry to refer adoration to the wood considered in itself and separated from Jesus Christ, because this wood is not God and God alone must be adored. St. Ambrose expressly says that, after St. Helena, Emperor Constantine's mother, found the Savior's true cross with the title distinguishing it from the others, she adored Jesus Christ, King of kings, not the wood. Upon the cross she adored Him Who was put to death upon it, as the inscription indicated: *Invenit titulum, Regem adoravit, non lignum*—she found the title and adored the King, not the wood. Such is the honor the Church approves and gives the cross upon which Jesus Christ suffered.

But you will tell me: why does the Church sing on Good Friday, *Tuam Crucem adoramus, Domine*—we adore Your cross, Lord—and the following words: "Behold the wood of the cross, upon which Jesus Christ was nailed for the world's salvation; come, let us adore it," *venite adoremus*? If "adore" is understood as the supreme worship due God alone, the Church intends only to adore Jesus Christ nailed to the cross. She has always explained herself sufficiently on this point. These words mean only: let us prostrate ourselves before the cross to adore Jesus Christ, Who died upon it for our salvation.

The verb "adore" has a very extensive meaning in Greek, Hebrew and Latin. It generally means to bow and show veneration to another, which can apply not only to God but also to men. Every day we bow before men without thereby adoring them, and Scripture supplies many examples.[11]

Q. Is the use of images and crosses, and the honor rendered them, very ancient in the Church?

A. This practice is of the remotest antiquity. Tertullian relates that in his time Jesus Christ's image in the figure of the Good Shepherd was customarily engraved upon chalices. Scarcely had Emperor Constantine embraced our holy religion when he wished the cross to be venerated throughout his empire as the instrument of the Savior's death. The most learned Protestants acknowledge that images' use is very ancient in the

Church, and many do not object to having them in their houses. Why, then, do they reject Catholics' practice of placing them in churches, useful for the faithful's edification and instruction? As St. Gregory of Nyssa says: *Solet enim pictura jacens in pariete loqui, maximeque prodesse*—a painting upon a wall is wont to speak and be most profitable.

Therefore the Second Council of Nicaea, the seventh general council, celebrated in 787, decided that images should be venerated. This question was so greatly debated then, and general councils and many celebrated saints confirmed images' veneration against the impious Iconoclasts. It is very strange that those attacking them today should prefer to declare themselves disciples of heretics anathematized by the Church rather than imitate the saints. Many saints sealed this truth with their blood, and many others defending it experienced perceptible effects of God's protection.

We have a memorable example in St. John Damascene, a Greek priest and religious living in the eighth century. Emperor Leo the Isaurian, supporter of the Iconoclasts, was enraged against this saint, who wrote in defense of the veneration due holy images, and found a means to have his right hand cut off. The author of John's life says the saint asked to be given his hand as though to bury it. Having received it, he prostrated himself before an image of the holy Virgin, placed the severed hand against his arm and asked Jesus Christ, through His Mother's intercession, to reunite it as before. After his prayer he fell asleep, and upon awakening found his hand restored. Afterward he wrote many works with it for God's glory and His Church's benefit.

Q. What fruit must we draw from what you have said about images?

A. We must treat them respectfully, especially crucifixes; have them in our homes; place no image in churches unless first blessed and suited to stirring the faithful's piety; refer to Jesus Christ and the saints all the veneration given them; close our ears to libertines' mockery and heretics' contempt; and finally learn the Church's doctrine upon this point.

Indeed, if Protestants understood it, they could not help detesting their imagined Reformation. Its authors began like the ancient Iconoclast heretics, overthrowing images, crucifixes, crosses, statues of Jesus Christ and the Apostles, and everything representing the Savior's life's mysteries. According to them all these were idols that must be destroyed. What blindness! Yet this is a fact they cannot deny, for traces can still be seen today in many churches: so many monuments of their impiety and fury.

Let us therefore detest such excesses and venerate images as the Church wishes them venerated. Above all, let us endeavor to have the saints' images help us become saints ourselves, so that, imitating their lives on earth, we may deserve to accompany them in heaven. Amen.

---

[1] Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 32:37; Ephesians 5:5.

[2] Trent, Session XXII, chapter 3, and Session XXV on saints; Augustine, *City of God*, X, chapter 1, and *Against Faustus*, XX, chapter 21.

[3] Psalm 150:1 in the cited Vulgate reading; Jerome to Riparius; Luke 1:28, 42, 46–55; Philippians 2:10; Sirach 44:19 in the source's numbering.

[4] Augustine, *City of God*, X, chapter 4; VIII, chapter 27; Trent, Session XXII, chapter 3.

[5] James 5:16; Job 42:8 (the source misprints chapter XXIV); Cyprian, *On Mortality*; Basil, Letter 105 in the source's numbering.

[6] Trent, Session XXV on invocation of saints; compare 1 Timothy 2:5 and.

[7] Acts 19:11–12; Augustine, *Confessions*, IX, chapter 7, and *City of God*, XXII, chapter 8; Jerome, *Against Vigilantius* and the letter cited as 53 in the source.

[8] Ambrose, the sermon cited as 93 on Sts. Nazarius and Celsus.

[9] 2 Kings 18:4.

[10] Trent, Session XXV on sacred images.

[11] Ambrose, *On the Death of Theodosius*; the Good Friday liturgy; Genesis 23:7 and other examples of bowing (the source's additional references are garbled).

Decalogue: Fourth Conference: On Sins Opposed to the First Commandment, Especially Superstition and Divination

Original preacher not named.

Non habebis deos alienos coram Me. (Exodus 20.)

You shall have no other gods but Me.

We have explained the supreme worship which the first commandment orders us to render God. Afterward we treated things connected with and related to divine worship: the honor and invocation of saints, and the veneration due relics and images. We should now treat the sins opposed to this commandment. These include all sins opposed to faith, hope and charity, and especially to the virtue of religion, such as idolatry, sacrilege, superstition and divination. We shall speak here of the last two, since they are the most common among the people. We shall explain how people incur them, so that you may examine your conscience and avoid them.

Q. What do you mean by superstition, and how does someone incur it?

A. Superstition, according to St. Thomas, is improper worship and a vain and dangerous observance. This sin is committed in four ways:

I. When vain and useless practices which God forbids or which the Church has not authorized are employed in divine worship. Theologians call this false or superfluous worship: *Veri Dei cultus non verus*—untrue worship of the true God.

II. When the supreme worship due God alone is outwardly rendered to some creature. This is true idolatry and consequently mortal sin.

III. When some means is practiced which has no natural power, either of itself or through divine or ecclesiastical institution, to produce the expected effect. This is called vain observance and is a great sin, according to the Psalmist's words: *Odisti observantes vanitates supervacue*—You have hated those observing empty vanities.

IV. When, through an express or tacit pact with the devil—or even without any pact—a person wishes from curiosity to know the future or hidden things. This is called divination. It has many kinds: magic, sorcery, harmful spells, the art of knowing the future by inspecting some object, whatever it may be, judicial astrology, the observation of dreams, and so forth. All these kinds of superstition will be better understood through the cases we shall now propose.[1]

Q. Is it superstitious to use particular prayers to heal a wound or produce some other effect, or carry relics or another sign of piety to be delivered from unfortunate accidents?

A. It is not superstition to invoke God's name and respectfully recite a prayer approved by the Church, asking healing of a wound or illness or some other grace, provided the desired effect is expected from God's goodness and power alone. Otherwise it will be the sin of superstition, St. Thomas says.

For example, it is superstition to expect the requested effect from certain prayers and not others, or from a particular number of prayers said on a particular number of days, believing a smaller number would be useless for the purpose. Thus we may say generally that particular prayer formulas are very suspect of superstition if people expect to obtain their request from them rather than from other prayers, especially those approved by the Church. For this reason many councils have forbidden employing blessings and exorcisms other than those the Church uses. *Ne prætextu pietatis ulli exorcismi fiant, nisi qui ab Ecclesia probati sunt,* says the Council of Bourges of 1584—let no exorcisms be performed under pretext of piety except those approved by the Church.

As for relics and other signs of piety which the faithful carry to preserve themselves from unfortunate accidents, this is praiseworthy when done with a right intention and without contrived observance in how they are worn. It would, for example, be very dangerous superstition for someone to imagine that, however disorderly his life, he would not be wounded, die without confession or be condemned because he carried relics, a scapular, a rosary, and so forth.[2]

Q. Is the practice found in some places of applying the red-hot key of a church of St. Peter to animals' heads to preserve them from rabies superstitious?

A. This practice is true superstition. What basis is there for saying that the key of a church dedicated to God under St. Peter's name and invocation has power to preserve from rabies, while the key of another church bearing another saint's name does not? What reason is there to believe that, supposing the key had such power, it would lack it when cold? Is this imaginary power bound to fire's heat? If one says that the key produces its effect through St. Peter's intercession, applying it hot is wholly useless, since this gives St. Peter no greater honor. Moreover, why would the key of a church of St. Peter have this power and not the same church's vestments?

Among these false devotions must be included the custom practiced in some places of using the first silver coin given in the Good Friday offering, or being touched by a seventh son to cure scrofulous swellings, and many others which parish priests must take care to abolish. The Council of Mechelen prescribes this rule for them: *Doceant, superstitionem esse expectare quemcumque effectum a quacumque re, quem res illa nec ex institutione divina, nec ex ordinatione, vel approbatione Ecclesiæ producere potest*—let them teach that it is superstition to expect from anything an effect which it cannot produce through divine institution or the Church's ordinance or approval.[3]

Q. Is it superstition to believe blessed bread has power to cure rabies, and is it lawful to eat it with this intention? May it be given to animals for this purpose?

A. A person bitten by a rabid dog may without superstition eat blessed bread with the intention of preserving himself from the evil he fears. The reason is that blessed bread has the power to be useful not only to the soul's health but also to the body's when eaten with faith and devotion. The words the Church employs in blessing it indicate this: *Ut omnes ex eo gustantes inde corporis et animæ percipiant sanitatem*—that all who taste it may receive from it health of body and soul. But it should not be given to an animal, even a sick one. The Church designates blessed bread for the faithful's use alone, not for beasts, as the blessing's own words indicate.

Q. Is it superstition to observe days, months, the waxing and waning moon and similar things in regulating life's conduct?

A. When these observations are made only to know or procure natural effects supposed to depend upon the heavenly bodies' influence, there is no superstition. Thus a countryman may lawfully observe the time for cutting his trees, a gardener the time for planting, and a physician the time for applying remedies or gathering herbs. These and others may observe the waxing moon, month and suitable season for their work, provided their observations go no further—as they would if someone refused to work on a particular day of the month or week, or at a particular hour.

But if such observations concern chance events, as with those believing there are lucky and unlucky days for traveling or doing something else, this is a very evil superstition. St. Paul condemns it in the Galatians, as St. John Chrysostom observes: *Non audis Paulum dicentem: dies observatis, et menses, et tempora, et annos? Timeo vos ne forte sine causa laboraverim in vobis*—do you not hear Paul saying, "You observe days, months, seasons and years. I fear for you, lest perhaps I have labored among you in vain"?

Many Christians frequently fall into such faults. Through this superstition some refuse to marry in May or August, or on Wednesdays and Fridays, or refuse to join a company whose members make an odd number. They foolishly imagine they would not be happy if married in that month or on that day. In the same way people superstitiously judge the good or bad weather a season will have from whether a particular saint's day was clear or rainy; believe someone will die within a year if thirteen sit at one table; that a child born with his head covered in a thin membrane will be fortunate; or that certain herbs have a particular power if gathered on St. John's day.

There are many other vain and extravagant observances the devil inspires to ensnare simple and credulous souls more easily, as St. Augustine observes. Indeed, all these superstitions are only remnants of paganism. It cannot be denied that they contain at least an implicit pact with the devil, as the Faculty of Theology of Paris declared on September 19, 1398: *Intendimus pactum esse implicitum in omni superstitiosa observatione, cujus effectum non debet a Deo vel a natura rationabiliter spectari*—we understand an implicit pact to exist in every superstitious observance whose effect cannot reasonably be expected from God or nature.

Q. What do you think of sorcerers, diviners and magicians? What kind of people are they? What sin do they commit? Is it lawful to consult them to find lost things or for some other purpose?

A. Although the devil's power has been very limited since Jesus Christ's death, it cannot be denied that there have been, and may still be, sorcerers, diviners and magicians. Scripture speaks of them; many ancient and modern councils condemn them; and some rituals still prescribe the practice of excommunicating them at the Sunday parish Mass.

By sorcerers, diviners and magicians we ordinarily mean those who, through the devil's aid and artifice, undertake to disclose things unknown to men; those who through sorceries, illusions or harmful spells do or pretend to do extraordinary things surpassing nature's powers but not those of demons.

Those practicing these detestable professions, whether they achieve their purposes or not, commit a very enormous offense belonging to idolatry, which according to St. Thomas is the greatest of all sins. So great is this offense that anyone convicted of it deserves death according to divine and human laws: *Maleficos non patieris vivere*—you shall not permit sorcerers to live.

Hence it is easy to understand that consulting them to find lost things, or for any other effect whatsoever, is never lawful. *Non declinetis ad magos, nec ab ariolis aliquid sciscitemini, ut polluamini per eos*—do not turn to magicians or ask anything of diviners, lest you be defiled by them. Do not seek magicians or question those who divine to stain your souls, the Lord says in Leviticus. Lest anyone imagine the curiosity of consulting them a light fault, in the following chapter He assures us that whoever consults them will incur His indignation and be cut off from His people.

Q. Is it lawful to remove one harmful spell through another? When the person who cast it is known, may he be compelled to burn the object to which the spell is attached?

A. One cannot lawfully remove a harmful spell by means of another. To employ the devil or his ministers to produce such an effect would be a great sin, as theologians teach. When a man cannot produce an effect, St. Thomas says, it must be expected from God alone. Those expecting to obtain from the devil what depends solely upon God's power sin gravely.

Given this truth, I say that no one may lawfully do anything bearing even the slightest appearance of superstition on the pretext of destroying the spell afflicting him. Consequently one may not compel its author to burn the object to which the spell is attached. Employing the devil's minister to produce a cure would be having recourse to the devil. The cure must be expected from God alone, by practicing works of penance and having recourse to the Church's blessings, exorcisms and prayers.

Nevertheless, we must agree that, without having recourse to the spell's author, its signs may be burned with the sole purpose of destroying the devil's works. In this sense we must understand what the Roman Ritual says concerning exorcisms.[4]

Q. Is divination through astrology lawful?

A. There is natural and judicial astrology. Natural astrology rests upon certain principles and predicts what occurs according to the ordinary course God established in nature: eclipses of sun and moon, the course of stars and planets, their aspects and oppositions, the revolutions of seasons and similar things. These belong to the science called astronomy.

Judicial astrology attempts, through knowledge and consideration of the stars, to forecast chance events depending upon providence and men's free will. Natural astrology is permitted, but not judicial. Heavenly bodies can produce many effects and variations in sublunar bodies through their influences. It is lawful to study, observe and know this power and its effects in directing what should be done in many cases. Thus farmers choosing particular times to sow their fields, sailors avoiding navigation at the full or waning moon as dangerous seasons, and physicians observing critical days to employ the surest means of curing a patient, are not guilty in any of this.

But in matters concerning man's will and freedom, one cannot without great sin take the stars' power and influence as a certain rule. Our will cannot be subject to them. Otherwise free will would be destroyed and consequently there would be neither merit nor demerit in man. This is St. Thomas's reasoning. From it we infer that this science is useless, vain, false and condemned insofar as it concerns things depending upon the will.

For this reason Pope Sixtus V forbade this imagined science under grave penalties, excepting only agriculture, navigation and medicine, like St. Thomas. Finally, many councils condemned this kind of astrology, particularly the First Council of Toledo, held in 408 under Pope St. Anastasius, which declares excommunicated everyone giving it credence.[5]

Q. Is it lawful to cast a horoscope or tell good or bad fortune?

A. St. John Damascene, who appears to have had great understanding of the stars' movements, mocks the vanity of those claiming to know men's happiness or misfortune through constellations. The Gentiles, he says, believe everything in the world is governed by the various configurations and aspects of sun and moon, and in this astrology consists. Christians think quite the opposite. Although we agree that rain and clear skies, cold and heat, humidity and dryness, and similar things can be known through the stars, we nevertheless believe they cannot make us happy or unhappy and have no dominion over our actions. *A signis cœli nolite metuere quæ timent gentes, quia leges populorum vanæ sunt*, Scripture says—do not fear the heavenly signs the Gentiles fear, for the peoples' laws are vain.

Thus councils excommunicate not only those casting horoscopes but also those giving them credence. Those who through palmistry—a part of judicial astrology—claim to disclose the future in the lines of hands and announce good or bad fortune, and those believing them, are equally guilty according to Sixtus V's bull of 1585 cited above.[6]

Q. Is it sinful to seek knowledge or prediction of good or bad chance events through dreams?

A. To decide this difficulty we must first acknowledge four different kinds of dreams, some good and others bad. Some can come from God, Who sometimes employs angels' ministry to make certain things known to men. When there is moral certainty that God is the author of dreams, we must conform to them. Ordinarily God makes this known through an interior light illuminating the spirit of the person who has had them. God speaks of this kind of dream in Numbers: *Si quis fuerit inter vos propheta Domini, in visione apparebo ei, vel per somnium loquar ad illum*—if there is a prophet of the Lord among you, I shall appear to him in a vision

or speak to him through a dream.

Scripture supplies many examples. The patriarch Joseph knew in dreams that he would be raised above all his brothers. Nebuchadnezzar learned in the same way what would happen to him, as the Prophet Daniel explained. The Magi were warned in dreams not to return to Herod after finding and adoring Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. St. Joseph, the most holy Virgin's spouse, was warned in dreams to flee to Egypt.

Other dreams are purely natural and caused by the temperament of the person having them. For this reason, St. Thomas observes, physicians consider patients' dreams to judge their disposition better. It is very common for those in whom choler predominates over the other humors to have particular dreams hardly ever observed in persons of a phlegmatic temperament.

Others ordinarily arise from thoughts and desires we had during the day. Returning often to the imagination during sleep, these produce different ideas. Thus the Wise Man says that many cares are followed by dreams: *Multas curas sequuntur somnia*. Finally, other dreams are caused by the devil's malice and artifice. Scripture speaks of these when saying that dreams and vain illusions have led many into error: *Multos enim errare fecerunt somnia, et exciderunt sperantes in illis*—dreams have made many err, and those hoping in them have fallen.

Given this, we can readily understand that, since dreams' causes are so many and varied, we should not give them credence, because their true cause is very difficult to know. The devil, who seeks only to ensnare souls through the various objects he presents, often causes dreams, as Pope St. Gregory observes. People ordinarily incur superstition when giving dreams credence and attempting through them to know chance events with which the dreams have no connection.

Therefore, since dreams are ordinarily falsehood, error and vanity, divination through them is justly forbidden. It is forbidden not only in Scripture, which tells us expressly to disregard them—*Non augurabimini, nec observabitis somnia*, you shall not practice augury or observe dreams—but also by many councils, particularly those of Ancyra, Paris and Milan.

Let us conclude from everything said thus far that a true Christian's character is to await from God the decision of his lot \[his earthly and eternal destiny\], both in this life and in eternity. With the prophet king, in a spirit full of faith and submission, let us say: "My lot, O my God, is in Your hands": *In manibus Tuis sortes meæ*. You will determine it as You please. Never seek, brethren, except in God's wisdom and faithful observance of His holy law, the knowledge of what is to happen to you.

Far from you be every superstition! Live well, and your lot will be among the happiest. Love the Lord your God, adore Him and serve Him through the practice of pure religion as the Church teaches you. Then, without fear of any superstition, you will surely know everything a Christian needs to know: that after faithfully keeping the commandments you will obtain eternal life.[7]

---

[1] Thomas, II–II, q.92, a.1; Psalm 31:6 (Vulgate 30:7).

[2] Thomas, II–II, q.96, a.4 and reply 3; Council of Bourges, 1584.

[3] Council of Mechelen, 1607, chapter 3.

[4] Thomas, *On the Sentences*, II, distinction 7, q.3, a.2; Roman Ritual, title on exorcism of the possessed.

[5] Thomas, the *Opusculum* cited as chapter 26; Sixtus V, *Cæli et terræ*; First Council of Toledo, canon 16 in the cited edition.

[6] John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith*, II, chapter 7; Jeremiah 10:2–3; Sixtus V's bull, dated 1585 by the source.

[7] Psalm 31:15 (Vulgate 30:16).

Decalogue: Fifth Conference: On the Second Commandment: Vows

Original preacher not named.

Non assumes nomen Domini Dei tui in vanum. (Exodus 20.)

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

God is no less jealous of the honor of His name than of His own essence. Just as He is concerned to defend His glory, so He wishes His holy name to be respected; thus Scripture speaks equally of both. When the prophet king invites us to praise God, he at the same time invites us to praise His holy name: *Afferte Domino gloriam et honorem; afferte Domino gloriam nomini Ejus*—bring the Lord glory and honor; bring the Lord the glory of His name. Wishing to make us understand the profound respect he had for God's name, he shows that he does not dare pronounce it, contenting himself with saying that the name of His majesty should be eternally blessed: *Benedictum nomen majestatis Ejus in æternum*.

The Jews so greatly respected this venerable name that they considered it ineffable. Philo observes that the high priest alone could pronounce it when blessing the people, and even then with such precaution that the way he pronounced it remained unknown. This august name is what the second commandment orders us to venerate and forbids us to profane. We venerate it through prayer, holy and edifying words, a Christian life, just and legitimate oaths, and vows. We shall speak today about vows, reserving for another conference the sins through which God's holy name is profaned.[1]

Q. What is a vow, and what conditions are necessary for it to be valid?

A. A vow is ordinarily defined as a promise made to God, freely and deliberately, of a greater good. We say it is a promise to distinguish it from simple resolutions or purposes, which do not bind as vows do. For example, I have resolved to visit prisoners, but I do not intend to bind or oblige myself as I would if I said: "I make a vow and promise God to visit prisoners."

We say it is a promise of a greater good because the thing promised must be good and pleasing to God. Without this there is neither vow nor obligation. On the contrary, it would profane God's holy name to vow, for example, to attend the theater, take revenge, and so forth. *Displicet Ei stulta promissio,* Ecclesiastes says—a foolish promise displeases Him. Useless or impossible things cannot be the matter of a vow. Ordinarily one promises only things belonging to the counsels or constituting a more excellent good: *Est promissio facta Deo de meliori bono,* theologians say—it is a promise made to God of a better good.

One does not, for example, vow to marry, but one does vow to observe continence. Nevertheless, a person may bind himself by vow to something already obligatory by precept, such as never becoming drunk or never lying. Then there is a double obligation to abstain: one arising from the precept and another from the vow.

We say a vow is a promise made to God because, properly speaking, it can be made to God alone. Certainly someone may promise God to do something in a saint's honor; but the vow always refers to God, as St. Thomas says. Finally, a vow is a promise made freely and deliberately, because in order to bind oneself one must know what obligation one is undertaking and be free to undertake it.

It follows that three conditions are necessary for a true and valid vow: knowledge, freedom and the ability to dispose of the thing promised. This accords with St. Thomas's teaching. Since a vow is an act of the will, the person making it must deliberate upon what he wishes to do, form the resolution to do it and promise to fulfill what he has deliberated upon doing. *Sic ergo ad votum tria ex necessitate requiruntur*, says this holy Doctor: *primo quidem deliberatio, secundo propositum voluntatis, tertio promissio in qua perficitur ratio voti*—thus three things are necessarily required for a vow: first deliberation, secondly a purpose of the will, and thirdly the promise in which the nature of the vow is completed.

Q. Are there several kinds of vows? Will you give us an idea of them so that we may regulate our conduct in this matter more safely?

A. There are many kinds of vows: I. Absolute vows. II. Personal, real or mixed vows. III. Simple or solemn vows.

Absolute vows are those depending upon no condition. For this reason they must be fulfilled as soon as one can.

Conditional vows are those depending upon some condition. For example: "I promise to give the poor a hundred escudos if my father recovers from his illness." Here is a conditional vow, which does not bind until the recovery takes place.

Personal vows are those whose matter belongs to the person. For example: "I promise God to fast, go on pilgrimage," and so forth.

Real vows are those whose matter is not personal. For example: "I promise God to give a hundred escudos to the Church." These hundred escudos are the matter of the vow, and my heirs remain obliged to fulfill it if I do not.

Mixed vows are those whose matter is at the same time personal and real. For example: "I promise God to assist plague victims with my person and my property."

Solemn vows are vows made solemnly upon entering a religious order approved by the Church, after completing at least a year of novitiate.

Simple vows are all those the Church does not receive solemnly. Here we must observe that the Church receives no solemn vows other than those made in a religious order approved by the Holy See or when receiving sacred orders. All the others, even public ones, are only simple vows.

Q. Can children who have not reached puberty make valid vows? If they make them, are they obliged to fulfill them later?

A. Since the use of reason is necessary for someone to bind himself by vow, it follows, as St. Thomas says, that ordinarily speaking vows made before puberty—that is, before boys have completed fourteen years and girls twelve—are null through lack of knowledge and deliberation, and because the children are still under their parents' authority.

Nevertheless, the holy Doctor continues, it sometimes happens, although rarely, that because of extraordinary natural dispositions, which are not subject to human laws, the use of reason develops so early in some that they have sufficient judgment before puberty. Then they can bind themselves by simple vow in things within their own discretion. Ecclesiastical laws, however, render them incapable of binding themselves by solemn vow, because the Church, from whose authority a solemn vow receives its force, establishes laws for common cases, not the particular circumstances that rarely occur. Thus the Council of Trent declared religious professions made before the completion of sixteen years invalid.

But if children below puberty can sometimes bind themselves by simple vows, we must admit that their vows are not stable. St. Antoninus says they can be annulled by their parents and even by their guardians: *Nihilominus parentes illorum vel tutores omnia illa recte possunt irritare*—nevertheless their parents or guardians can rightly annul all these things. Many doctors judge that the vows cease to bind them upon reaching puberty.

Nevertheless, when their validity is uncertain, a dispensation must be requested from the bishop. In this case there is no need to have recourse to Rome, since only certain vows are reserved to the pope, and that when it is possible to have recourse to him.[2]

Q. Can a wife make vows without her husband's consent, a servant without his master's permission, a religious without his superior's, or a child without his father's?

A. The general rule St. Thomas establishes is that although someone subject to another's authority can bind himself by vow in matters within his discretion and disposal, he cannot without the other's express or at least tacit permission make a vow prejudicing the person to whom he is subject. The reason is that a vow is simply a promise made to God, and no one can promise something he cannot fulfill by his own authority.

Given this, a wife cannot bind herself against her husband's will to things disturbing the government of the household, such as making pilgrimages, rising at night to pray, and so forth. But she can bind herself to what is compatible with her duties, for example frequenting the sacraments or abstaining from dances, theatrical performances and the like.

The same must be said of a servant. He can make a vow in certain matters, but not in those incompatible with serving his master. A religious cannot make valid vows without his superior's permission: *Nullum votum religiosi est firmum nisi de consensu superioris*, the Angelic Doctor says—no religious's vow is firm except with his superior's consent. The same applies to a child under his father's authority.

Nevertheless, when these persons make vows, they do not thereby sin, for the vows are never considered absolute but conditional, the holy Doctor adds: *Non tamen peccant vovendo, quia in eorum voto intelligitur debita conditio, scilicet si suis superioribus placuerit, vel non renitantur*—they do not, however, sin in vowing, because their vow is understood to contain the requisite condition, namely, if it pleases their superiors or they do not oppose it.

Q. Can husband and wife make vows without each other's consent?

A. Some exercises of piety do not in any way prejudice the rights husband and wife have toward each other. They may bind themselves to these by vow without the one undertaking the obligation needing the other's consent. Other things are incompatible with the reciprocal duties of their state, and they cannot vow these without mutual consent.

Thus a married man cannot vow continence without his wife's consent, nor a wife without her husband's. Such a vow would be not only unlawful but invalid, St. Thomas says: *Non potest unus absque consensu alterius continentiam vovere, et si voverit peccat*—one cannot vow continence without the other's consent, and sins if he does.

The same must be said of long pilgrimages. Although the husband has more freedom than the wife in this matter, he cannot bind himself by vow without her consent if these are pilgrimages of devotion. I say "of devotion" because, in an urgent necessity to go to the Holy Land or elsewhere to assist Christians oppressed by unbelievers, he could vow to go and carry it out without his wife's consent. Innocent III so decided in his letter to the archbishop of Canterbury.[3]

Q. Is it sinful to delay fulfilling a vow through mere negligence? What should be done when there is doubt whether a vow is genuine or can be fulfilled?

A. No one should rashly commit himself to making vows. But once they have been made, there is no doubt about the obligation to fulfill them. It is much better, the Wise Man says, not to make vows than to make and not fulfill them: *Multo melius est non vovere, quam post votum promissa non reddere*. Breaking them is a great sin, as is delaying their fulfillment through mere negligence.

We read a very explicit passage about this in Deuteronomy. When you make a vow to the Lord, Moses says, do not delay fulfilling it, because the Lord your God will demand it of you; and if you delay, it will be reckoned to you as sin: *Cum votum voveris Domino Deo tuo, non tardabis reddere, quia requiret illud Dominus Deus tuus; et si moratus fueris, reputabitur tibi in peccatum*.

It is therefore certain that we are obliged under pain of sin to fulfill the vows we have made. If a vow is absolute, it must be carried out as soon as possible unless some just cause prevents it. If conditional, it must

be fulfilled as soon as the condition can be verified.

When it is doubtful whether something is a true vow or merely a simple resolution, provided the doubt is reasonable, as we suppose, and not an ill-founded scruple, one must take the safer course, which is fulfilling the vow, according to the maxim of canon law: *In dubiis via eligenda est tutior*—in doubtful matters the safer way must be chosen.

When the vow made cannot be fulfilled because of illness or another unforeseen occurrence, the obligation in conscience ceases. But when it is doubtful whether it can or cannot be fulfilled, the safest thing is to request a dispensation or ask the superior to commute the vow into some other good work that can be practiced.

Q. When someone has made a vow for another person, is the person for whom it was made obliged to fulfill it?

A. This often happens during illnesses or other dangers. As is their custom, the women or others attending the sick person offer God that, if he recovers, he will go on pilgrimage, make a particular gift to a church, and so forth. If the sick person, or another for whom a vow was made, does not ratify it after learning about it, he is not obliged to fulfill it, because vows must be voluntary. *Obligatio voti ex propria voluntate causatur*, the Angelic Doctor says—the obligation of a vow arises from one's own will.

But if, having learned about it, he ratifies it and promises to fulfill it, he is obliged in this case as though he himself had made it. Although it did not bind him initially, it binds him after he has accepted it freely and knowingly.

The same must be said of vows fathers and mothers make for their children. The children are not obliged to fulfill them unless they voluntarily ratify them after reaching puberty, because every personal vow made by another, and without one's own will, does not bind before God.[4]

Q. Is a vow made through grave fear valid and binding in conscience?

A. Grave fear means fear capable of shaking a steadfast man, such as fear of losing life or possessions. It can arise from an intrinsic and purely natural cause, or from an extrinsic and free cause. With this understood:

A vow made through grave fear arising from an interior and natural cause is valid. For example, a man overwhelmed by fear of a mortal illness, danger of shipwreck or remembrance of his sins vows to enter religious life. This vow is valid and binds him before God. This is proved by Innocent III's authority. Consulted by a bishop of Bohemia about an ecclesiastic who, at the point of death, had requested and received the habit of a canon regular but laid it aside after recovering his health, the pope replied that he must be obliged to take up the habit again, since by accepting it he had bound himself to observe the order's rule.

But if the fear arises from an extrinsic and free cause, the vow will be null. For example, a son whose father threatens to disinherit or kill him unless he enters religious life vows to do so in order to avoid his father's threats. His vow is null. As the Gloss upon a decretal Alexander III addressed to the bishop of Worcester says, since a vow is a promise made to God of a work of supererogation \[a good work beyond what a precept requires\], to which one is not bound by any precept, it is absolutely necessary for validity that it be made with full and entire freedom. *Votum per metum factum non tenet*, the Gloss's author says—a vow made through fear does not hold. For this reason the Council of Trent wisely ordered that young women wishing to enter religious life should first be examined by the diocesan bishop to discover whether any violence had been done to them.[5]

Q. Are vows made in an outburst of anger valid? For example, a man angry at having lost his money gambling vows never to gamble again or enter a particular house. Is his vow valid, and does it bind him before God?

A. If the anger is so violent that it deprives the man of the use of reason, his vow will not be valid, because he cannot then act deliberately. But if the anger does not reach the point of depriving him of judgment, his vow is valid and he is obliged in conscience to fulfill it. *Valet votum per iracundiam emissum a vovente, non penitus a suo judicio deturbato*—a vow uttered in anger is valid when the person vowing has not been wholly deprived of judgment—says Navarro. He testifies that Rome's tribunal of penance recognizes as valid every vow made by an angry man or someone moved by another passion, provided that passion does not deprive him of judgment.

Q. Are children obliged to fulfill their fathers' and mothers' vows, and heirs the vows of those who made them their heirs?

A. Vows, as we have said, are personal, real or mixed. A personal vow has as its matter the person or his action, such as undertaking particular fasts. This vow binds only the person who made it, and at his death the obligation ceases as regards his heirs.

The same does not apply to a real vow, whose matter is things outside ourselves, such as temporal possessions. Thus when someone vows to give the poor a particular sum, since this can be fulfilled by another, the obligation passes to the heirs.

But if the vow is mixed, or personal and real at the same time, such as going to a particular shrine and making a particular gift to a church, the children or heirs are obliged to fulfill the deceased's vow in its real aspect \[the part concerning property rather than his personal action\]. This is the common judgment of theologians, as St. Antoninus of Florence observes.[6]

Q. Who can dispense from vows or commute them into other pious works?

A. The supreme pontiff, Jesus Christ's vicar in the Church, has full power to dispense from all vows admitting dispensation, St. Thomas says. Other prelates can dispense from the more common vows, from which dispensation is more frequently needed, so that Christians, the holy Doctor adds, may have persons to whom they can more readily have recourse.

Thus bishops can dispense their diocesans from vows of certain pilgrimages, fasts and similar things. But dispensation from more considerable vows, such as perpetual chastity, entering religious life or going on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Rome or Santiago in Galicia, is reserved to the pope.

Nevertheless, we must observe that bishops can dispense from these five vows in two cases. The first is when the person making the vow imposed it upon himself as punishment for some sin; the second, when the vow is conditional, not absolute. *Est autem notandum*, Cardinal Toledo says, *ista quinque vota tunc reservari cum absoluta sunt; cum vero conditionalia vel pœnalia pertinent ad episcopum*—we must note that these five vows are reserved when absolute; when conditional or penal, they belong to the bishop.

Secondly, we must observe that the prelate's authority alone is insufficient for a dispensation or commutation of a vow to be valid. A just and legitimate cause for dispensing or commuting it is also needed. Otherwise the dispensation, whatever the authority granting it, is not only unlawful but invalid. The reason, St. Thomas says, is that the prelate's spiritual power, of which he is only steward and not owner, was conferred upon him to build up, not destroy.[7]

Q. Can a confessor absolve and release a dying person from every kind of vow?

A. Although every priest can absolve from every kind of sin at the point of death, he nevertheless has no faculty to dispense from vows. He can absolve from every sin and even every excommunication because the Church gives him this power, according to the Council of Trent. But it is not established that she conferred upon priests the power to dispense from vows, since there is not the same necessity as for absolving from reserved sins or excommunication. This is what all the doctors commonly teach, as Navarro observes.

All the confessor should do in this case is absolve the dying person from breaking his vows and advise him to be more exact in fulfilling them in future or to have recourse to the superior for dispensation. We must note only that if this occurred in a jubilee, when every confessor can commute most vows if the bull so provides, he can release the dying person from his vows or commute them into another good work, provided they are not among those the bull excepts.

Q. What fruit must we draw from this conference?

A. First, consider that vows made according to the Church's spirit are very pleasing to God, and that heretics act very wrongly in condemning them. As St. Thomas says, a vow is an act of religion leading us toward perfection, and a powerful bridle checking the will's inconstancy so that it perseveres in the promise made to God.

Secondly, act with great maturity and reflection when there is question of making a vow, and take counsel from a wise director who will examine whether you are in a position to carry it out. Those making vows rashly fall into many scruples and perplexities of conscience for which remedies are not easily found.

Thirdly, fathers and mothers must not dissuade their children from entering religious life when God calls them, because opposing their vocation would be a grave sin. The most parents should do is set before them the seriousness and consequences of this resolution and their obligation to pray to God and consult Him, so as not to do something of which they will later repent.

Fourthly and finally, once vows have been made, we must keep faith with God by fulfilling them: *Vovete et reddite Domino Deo vestro*—make vows and fulfill them to the Lord your God.

Let us examine the faults we have committed in this matter. We may affirm that nearly all of us have broken our baptismal vows and promises. We renounced Satan and promised to give ourselves to God. But have we kept this word? Let us ask God's forgiveness for our past infidelities, and pray to Him to give us grace to live more in accordance with our holy vocation.[8]

---

[1] Exodus 20:7; Psalm 29:1–2 (Vulgate 28; the printed verse is garbled); Psalm 72:19 (Vulgate 71:19).

[2] Thomas, II–II, q.88, a.8; Trent, the source's Session XXIV, chapter 13 (religious profession is treated in Session XXV); Antoninus, *Summa*, part II, title 11, chapter 2, section 76.

[3] Thomas, *On the Sentences*, IV, distinction 33, article 4; Innocent III, *Ex nulla*, chapter 9 as cited.

[4] Thomas, *On the Sentences*, IV, distinction 33, article 4.

[5] Trent, Session XXV, chapter 17; the source also invokes Innocent III and the Gloss on Alexander III's decretal to Worcester.

[6] Antoninus of Florence, *Summa*, part II, title 11, chapter 2, section 83.

[7] Thomas, II–II, q.88, a.12 and reply 2; Francisco de Toledo, *Instruction of Priests*, book 4, chapter 18, number 8 as cited.

[8] Thomas, II–II, q.88, articles 4–5; Psalm 76:11 (Vulgate 75:12).

Decalogue: Sixth Conference: On the Second Commandment: Oaths and Blasphemy

Original preacher not named.

Non assumes nomen Domini Dei tui in vanum: nec enim habebit insontem Dominus eum qui assumpserit nomen Domini Dei sui frustra. (Exodus 20.)

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold innocent the person who takes the name of his God in vain.

The second commandment is at the same time affirmative and negative. It commands us to honor God's holy name and forbids us to profane it. We honor God's name not only when we confess Him before men by professing the true faith; invoke Him in prayer or bless Him with our words; speak respectfully of God and

everything belonging to Him; and make vows in His honor. We also honor it when we make holy use of His name to attest a truth whenever necessity or the public good requires it. These words of Deuteronomy teach us this: *Dominum Deum tuum timebis, et Illi soli servies, ac per nomen Illius jurabis*—you shall fear the Lord your God, serve Him alone and swear by His name.

This commandment orders us to swear, when indispensable, with profound respect. It forbids abusing God's name through indiscreet and rash oaths and profaning it through perjury and blasphemy. Breaking vows and showing irreverence toward God and things consecrated to Him are likewise forbidden by this precept. St. Thomas includes all these sins under the name of irreligion.

The justice of this commandment is known to all men. Who does not know that when we love a person we speak of him with honor and respect, and that he would consider a different manner of speaking an injury? We have an indispensable obligation to love God. Therefore we must pronounce His name only with all the respect due His divine majesty. If we fail in this, we are guilty and deserve punishment from God, Who adds a threat to His command not to swear His name in vain: *Nec enim habebit insontem Dominus eum qui assumpserit nomen Domini Dei sui frustra*—the Lord will not hold innocent the person taking the name of the Lord his God in vain. In this conference we shall treat oaths and blasphemy.[1]

Q. What is swearing? Is an oath permitted in any case?

A. To swear is to call God as witness to what one does, says or promises. One swears not only by calling God as witness but also creatures, as Moses did when saying: *Testes invoco hodie cœlum et terram*—today I call heaven and earth as witnesses. When one swears by creatures, it is not with reference to them but in relation to God their Creator. Thus it is not creatures that give force and authority to the oath, but the majesty of the One shining forth in them.

Certainly an oath is sometimes lawful. Its purpose, as the Apostle says, is to confirm a truth difficult to believe: *Ad confirmationem est juramentum*—an oath serves for confirmation. St. Thomas says the same: *Nihil aliud est jurare, nisi dubium confirmare*—to swear is nothing other than to confirm something doubtful. Things not susceptible of any doubt and naturally manifest should be confirmed by reason alone. But in particular and uncertain facts it is often necessary to have recourse to God's own testimony to confirm the truth, this holy Doctor says.

To maintain the contrary would be to fall into John Wycliffe's error, whose doctrine on this point was condemned at the general Council of Constance, held in 1414. It would condemn the conduct of the holy patriarchs Abraham, Jacob and Moses, and St. Paul himself. On many occasions he confirms his words by oath, invoking God's holy name and calling Him as witness. *Testis mihi est Deus*, he says when writing to the Romans, *quod sine intermissione memoriam vestri facio*—God is my witness that I remember you without ceasing. To the Galatians: *Quod autem scribo vobis, ecce coram Deo quia non mentior*—as for what I write to you, behold, before God, I do not lie.

This manner of speaking is a true oath. Nevertheless, what could be holier, St. Augustine says? *Qui dixit ecce coram Deo quia non mentior jurat utique, et quid sanctius hac juratione?*—whoever said, "Behold, before God, I do not lie," certainly swears; and what could be holier than this oath?

It is lawful, then, to swear, provided the oath is accompanied by three conditions: truth, justice and necessity. *Jurabis, dicit Dominus, in veritate, et in judicio, et in justitia*, the Prophet Jeremiah says—you shall swear, says the Lord, in truth, judgment and justice. Thus rulers who swear to treaties they intend to keep; ministers of justice who take an oath upon entering office with the intention of faithfully observing it; and private persons swearing before a judge to establish the truth, oppose calumny and injustice and prevent innocence from being oppressed, not only do not sin but perform an act of religion very meritorious and pleasing to God. In this sense the prophet king says: *Laudabuntur omnes qui jurant in Eo*—all who swear by Him shall

be praised.

Q. When is it sinful to swear?

A. An oath can be lawful only through the good use made of it. For this it is necessary: I. That the person swearing do so only for a necessary cause. II. That what the oath confirms be true. III. That it be just. If any of these conditions is lacking, the oath is evil, St. Thomas says. We need only follow these rules to recognize easily when one sins by swearing.

I. Swearing without necessity is sinful: that is, without being required by a legitimate authority or the matter's importance. Such is the bad conduct of so many country people, merchants and craftsmen who cannot speak two consecutive words without swearing. Although these indiscreet and rash oaths are not always mortal sins, Scripture nevertheless teaches us that this habit is very dangerous and capable of drawing God's indignation upon us: *Vir multum jurans implebitur ab iniquitate, et non discedet a domo illius plaga*—a man swearing much will be filled with iniquity, and a scourge will not depart from his house.

II. Those who swear against the truth, affirming by oath something they believe false or promising by oath what they do not wish to fulfill, sin much more gravely. The Prophet speaks of them when saying their heart is empty as regards God's law and they count lying as nothing: *Non est in ore eorum veritas, cor eorum vanum est*—there is no truth in their mouth; their heart is empty. Dishonorable people swear and betray truth for a mouthful of bread, a glass of wine or something similar: *Pro buccella panis deserit veritatem*—for a mouthful of bread he abandons truth. To swear to something false is perjury, which only inadvertence or lack of attention can excuse from mortal sin.

III. Those also sin who swear against justice: that is, to do something evil and unjust, such as taking revenge or refusing reconciliation with their neighbor. They commit three faults: the first in swearing, the second in fulfilling the oath and the third in despising God, Whom they call as witness to the crime they intend to commit. *Si quis juret se facturum aliquod peccatum, et peccavit jurando, et peccavit juramentum faciendo*, St. Thomas says—if someone swears that he will commit a sin, he sins both in swearing and in carrying out the oath.[2]

Q. Is it lawful to demand an oath from a man when one knows, or at least doubts, that he will swear falsely?

A. We must distinguish whether the person demanding the oath holds public office. If he is a public person, for example a judge who through his official duty questions someone according to the order of justice, he does not sin in demanding an oath from a man, even though he believes or doubts that the man will swear falsely, provided those presenting him as witness believe he will not commit perjury. Otherwise, when the perjury is evident, the judge cannot cooperate in it.

The same does not apply to a private person. He sins when demanding another's oath while knowing or doubting that the other will swear falsely, because this action is wholly opposed to the charity we owe our neighbor. Thus St. Augustine, proposing this question, says that when demanding someone's oath we must consider whether we know he will swear falsely. If one does not know and demands the oath only to establish truth, "I shall not dare," the saint says, "affirm that this is sinful." It is nevertheless always a kind of temptation into which that man is placed.

But if we know with certainty that he did something and nevertheless oblige him to swear, knowing that he will swear falsely, we become guilty of spiritual homicide. The man swearing in this way gives himself death, while the one making him swear pushes his hand so that he plunges the dagger into his breast: *Ille enim se perjurio perimit, sed iste manum interficienti impressit et pressit*—the former destroys himself through perjury, but the latter has driven and pressed the killer's hand. Urging others to swear is therefore not so light a fault as people believe, especially when there is suspicion that they will swear falsely.[3]

Q. What is perjury? Is it always forbidden?

A. Perjury is a false oath; breaking what one has sworn is also perjury. Perjury is never lawful for anything in the world, not even to preserve one's own life or another's. When a lawful oath has been made deliberately, there is an obligation to fulfill it: *Non perjurabis in nomine Meo, nec pollues nomen Domini Dei tui*—you shall not swear falsely in My name or profane the name of the Lord your God.

As for perjury's enormity, it is by its nature a mortal sin. St. Thomas affirms that someone committing perjury even in slight matters sins mortally: *Ille qui jocose perjurat, non evitat divinam irreverentiam, sed quantum ad aliquid magis auget, et ideo non excusatur a peccato mortali*—someone who commits perjury in jest does not avoid irreverence toward God, but in a certain respect increases it, and therefore is not excused from mortal sin.

In 1679 Pope Innocent XI condemned this proposition: *Vocare Deum in testem mendacii levis non est tanta irreverentia propter quam velit, aut possit damnare hominem*—calling God as witness to a slight lie is not such irreverence that for it He would wish, or could, condemn a man. The perjurer is a man of ill repute who should not be called as witness. Charlemagne ordered his right hand cut off: *Propter perjurium quod commisit dextera manus amputetur*—because of the perjury he committed, let his right hand be amputated.

Q. Is there always an obligation to fulfill what one promises by oath? A father and mother have sworn to punish their child; if he promises to amend, can they not pardon him without becoming perjurers?

A. Everyone knows that no one is obliged to fulfill unlawful oaths and that an evil thing must never be done, even when promised by oath. *In malis promissis rescinde fidem,* St. Isidore says as cited in the canon—break faith with evil promises. Just as someone who has sworn can never be obliged to do evil, so an oath must not obstruct a greater good. *Sicut juramentum non est vinculum iniquitatis, ita nec impedimentum melioris boni,* Cardinal Cajetan says—just as an oath is not a bond of iniquity, neither is it an impediment to a better good.

From this principle he infers that when a man judges it will be more useful to pardon a fault than punish it, he is not obliged in conscience to carry out a threat he made by oath. He proves this through David's example. Although David swore to punish Nabal, he nevertheless pardoned him at Abigail's entreaties. *Juravit David temere,* St. Augustine says, *sed non implevit jurationem majori pietate*—David swore rashly, but with greater piety did not fulfill his oath.

Q. What is blasphemy? Is it a grave sin?

A. Blasphemy, taken in its general meaning, is an utterance injurious to God: *Blasphemia,* theologians say, *est injuriosa in Deum locutio*. This sin can be committed not only outwardly by the mouth but also inwardly in the heart, as the Psalmist proves: *Dixit insipiens in corde suo: non est Deus*—the fool said in his heart, "There is no God."

Blasphemy is divided into two kinds. One is called immediate and is against God Himself. The other is mediate: when it injures saints and falls back upon God, Who shines in them through His glory and goodness.

As for its enormity, every blasphemy uttered deliberately is a mortal fault, according to St. Thomas. He proves this through these scriptural words: *Qui blasphemaverit nomen Domini, morte moriatur*—whoever blasphemes the Lord's name shall be put to death. He says that since the death penalty is imposed only for mortal sin, it follows that blasphemy is such a sin. St. John Chrysostom calls it the greatest of all sins: *Blasphemia pejus nihil*—nothing is worse than blasphemy—this holy Doctor says.

The greatest crimes against the state are those directed against the sovereign's person, called crimes of lèse-majesté \[offenses against sovereign majesty\]. Now the blasphemer commits a crime against divine majesty. He injures God in His own person and would wish to destroy Him, attributing what cannot befit

Him, such as injustice or cruelty. Therefore he is worse than an assassin: he is a deicide who, insofar as it lies in him, takes God's life in his heart.

He is worse than a Gentile, St. Gregory Nazianzen says, and by his blasphemy renounces Baptism. When you were baptized, miserable blasphemer, you renounced the devil; today you regret this and disown your God. I dare say the blasphemer is in a certain way worse than demons, whom the violence of their torments makes blaspheme: *Blasphemaverunt Deum cœli præ doloribus*—they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains. But the unhappy blasphemer does it in cold blood and through pure malice. Demons condemn no one through their blasphemies, but this impious man occasions the ruin of countless souls through his scandalous words. It is therefore most certain that blasphemy is a very great sin: *Blasphemia pejus nihil*—nothing is worse than blasphemy.

Q. Is any penalty imposed upon blasphemers?

A. According to the ancient canons this crime was punished by deposition for ecclesiastics and excommunication for laypeople. *Si quis per capillum Dei vel caput juravit, vel alio modo blasphemia contra Deum usus fuerit*, one of these canons says, *si in ecclesiastico ordine est, deponatur; si laicus, anathematizetur*—if anyone has sworn by God's hair or head or otherwise used blasphemy against God, let him be deposed if in ecclesiastical orders, or anathematized if a layman.

The Council of Bourges of 1584 renewed this canon under the title *On Blasphemies*, adding that blasphemers should be denounced to secular judges. Gregory IX, in the chapter *Statuimus*, on evil speakers, orders that whoever blasphemes against God, the Virgin or a saint be excluded from church for seven consecutive Sundays. While Mass is sung he is to remain before the door, where everyone can see him. On the seventh Sunday he is to come barefoot, without a cloak and with a rope around his neck. During the seven weeks he is to fast on Fridays on bread and water and feed some poor people if his means permit.

If he refuses to fulfill this penance, entry into church is to be forbidden him and at death his body deprived of ecclesiastical burial. The Council of Ravenna of 1311 renewed this disposition. Finally, Popes Leo X and St. Pius V ordered confessors not to absolve blasphemers until after long and severe penance. Hence blasphemy is a case reserved to the bishop in most dioceses.

Q. Is it blasphemy to swear by the head, death, belly and so forth, adding God's name? Will it be sinful when this holy name is not pronounced completely?

A. There is no doubt that swearing by the sacred members of the Son of God, Who became man and died upon the cross for us, is blasphemy. Our divine Redeemer is dishonored by these detestable oaths. The One Who had the goodness to die for us all is crucified anew, as a synod of Troyes of 1427 explains.

As for those who do not pronounce God's name completely when swearing, they do not indeed commit formal blasphemy. But they often commit virtual blasphemy, as theologians say, because they give reason to believe that they are insulting God or Jesus Christ with words such as "By God's life," and so forth. They scandalize those hearing them and, especially when enraged, expose themselves to profaning God's holy name. We therefore do not believe them free from grave fault.[4]

Q. A man has become so accustomed to uttering blasphemies that this often happens without any deliberation of the will or taking notice of it. Can he be said to sin mortally whenever he blasphemes in this way?

A. To resolve this difficulty we must observe that undeliberated blasphemy can arise from two causes. The first is a sudden passion leaving no time to reflect upon what one says or attend to the meaning of the words pronounced. Then it is not mortal sin according to St. Thomas, because it does not go beyond material blasphemy.

The second cause of undeliberated blasphemy is the bad habit one has contracted of blaspheming. To judge the character of the sin the blasphemer commits in this case, we must distinguish two states in which he may be. If he is in a state of penance, truly sorry for past faults and working with all his strength to overcome the bad habit, we can say this disposition excuses him at least from mortal sin. A bad word can escape someone who had this habit, although at present he is truly repentant.

But if, on the contrary, the man has not repented of past blasphemies, or is content with being sorry without exerting every effort to overcome the bad habit, his undeliberated blasphemies cannot be excused from mortal sin. Although involuntary in themselves, they are voluntary in their cause, namely the habit, which must be considered truly voluntary when the person having it does not make every effort to destroy it.

The Angelic Doctor teaches this and proves it through the example of a man who voluntarily becomes drunk and in that state commits a crime. He is truly guilty of all the evil he then does, because he willed the cause from which it comes. From everything said we must conclude that whoever habitually blasphemes and does not work seriously to destroy the habit through true penance sins mortally whenever he blasphemes. But if, on the contrary, he makes every effort to correct and amend himself, the blasphemies escaping him without deliberation will not be sin, at least not mortal sin.[5]

Q. What means should those prone to swearing and blaspheming employ to correct their bad habit?

A. The first means is to have recourse to prayer and fervently ask God for grace to restrain themselves and curb this evil passion.

The second is to consider their danger of condemnation if they continue in so perverse a habit, form lively repentance for past oaths and watch carefully over themselves in future. The more difficult a habit is to destroy, the greater the application needed to overcome it: *Major consuetudo majorem intentionem flagitat*, St. Augustine says—a greater habit demands greater attention.

Thirdly, curb the tongue and anger, and avoid gambling, taverns and other places where swearing and blasphemy are customary.

Fourthly, impose a penance upon themselves when falling into such sins and be very exact in fulfilling it.

Fifthly, take care not to have God's name continually upon their lips unless to praise and bless Him. *Jurationi non assuescat os tuum, multi enim casus in illa*, the Wise Man says—do not accustom your mouth to swearing, for there are many falls in it. *Nominatio vero Dei non sit assidua in ore tuo*—let not the naming of God be constant in your mouth. At least take as much care of God's holy name, St. John Chrysostom says, as you take of a garment or precious jewel you greatly esteem.

Although naming God without respect is not always a mortal fault, it is nevertheless always an abuse of God's holy name which the Holy Spirit forbids: *Nominatio vero Dei non sit assidua in ore tuo*. He adds: *Et nominibus sanctorum non admiscearis, quoniam non eris immunis ab eis*—do not mix the saints' names into your profane discourse either, for in this you will not be free from sin. With greater reason, those making saints the objects of their jests and buffoonery are more culpable.

Q. What fruit must we draw from this conference?

A. First, conceive a great horror of blasphemy, which God often punishes even in this life. When the son of an Israelite woman committed this crime, God ordered Moses to bring the blasphemer outside the camp to be stoned. Antiochus was struck with an incurable wound. Nicanor and all his troops were defeated in punishment for their blasphemies. One of Julian the Apostate's principal officers vomited all his blood through his mouth for mocking Jesus Christ and the holy Virgin. These and countless other examples, which would take too long to relate, show how greatly this crime displeases God and the horror we must have of it.

Secondly, to avoid it we must flee everything having the appearance of an oath. *Ante omnia fratres mei nolite jurare*, St. James tells us, *neque per cœlum, neque per terram, neque per aliud quodcumque juramentum*—above all, my brethren, do not swear by heaven or earth or any other oath whatsoever.

But you, Christian souls who through God's grace are free of the crime we are discussing: when you hear blasphemers, rebuke them. If you cannot correct them, bless the Lord's adorable name while those swearing profane it. Say with the prophet king: "O my soul, praise your God, for you can never do so sufficiently. I shall praise Him without ceasing and bless Him throughout my life": *Benedicam Dominum in omni tempore, semper laus Ejus in ore meo*—I shall bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall always be in my mouth.

I shall bless Him in the morning, because I must consecrate the day's first fruits to Him. Afterward I shall bless Him often, because by His command the sun gives me light. I shall bless Him in the evening, because He is the end and perfection of my actions. The night too will serve me for praising Him, and I shall praise Him in prosperity as in adversity. Finally, I shall not cease blessing Him in this life, so as to deserve to bless Him eternally in the next.[6]

---

[1] Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 6:13; Thomas, II–II, q.122, a.3.

[2] Thomas, II–II, q.89, a.3 and a.7, reply 2; Sirach 23:12 in the source's numbering; Psalm 5:9–10; Proverbs 28:21.

[3] Thomas, the source's II–II, q.98, a.7; Augustine, Sermon 180, formerly 28 on the Apostle's words, chapter 10.

[4] Sylvius on II–II, q.13, a.1; synod of Troyes, 1427.

[5] Thomas, II–II, q.13, a.3, reply 2, and I–II, q.77, a.7 (the source abbreviates the latter inaccurately).

[6] Leviticus 24:14; 2 Maccabees 9:5; Nicephorus, book I, chapter 29 as cited; James 5:12; Psalm 34:1 (Vulgate 33).

Decalogue: Seventh Conference: On the Third Commandment

Original preacher not named.

Memento ut diem sabbati sanctifices. (Exodus 20.)

Remember to sanctify the Sabbath day.

Let us admire, Christians, the care the Lord takes in laying the third commandment upon us. In the others He is content that we apply our understanding and will; but to fulfill this one He also wishes our memory to be faithful. He commands us not to forget so important an obligation as sanctifying feast days: *Memento ut diem sabbati sanctifices*.

Pastors of souls, remember to speak often about this to the people God placed in your care, so that they may reflect seriously and frequently upon it: *Memento*—remember. Ecclesiastical and secular superiors, whose duty is to prevent the profanation of feast days, remember to secure the exact observance of these holy days which the Lord designated for His worship. For that unhappy time will come—and we have already often seen it in many parishes infected by heresy—when the impious will cry out, according to the prophet king's prediction: "Let us banish from the world the solemnities the faithful's piety has always religiously observed": *Quiescere faciamus omnes dies festos Dei a terra*—let us make all God's feast days cease from the earth.

And you, Christian people, remember that these holy days were granted you to glorify God and employ them in His service. If unhappily you strayed from your duties during the week, remember to return within yourselves on these days. If through culpable forgetfulness you neglected what concerns your salvation, if you fell into sin by allowing your disordered passions to carry you away, remember to expiate your faults through penance and good works. The powerful means you must employ is sanctifying the Sabbath and sanctifying yourselves: *Memento ut diem sabbati sanctifices*.[1]

Q. Has God reserved a particular day in the week to be employed in His service? What day was it under the old law, and why was it transferred to Sunday?

A. The servants of the true God have always had a particular time designated for adoring the supreme Majesty, addressing their prayers to Him and offering Him sacrifices. Although we do not know precisely which day was prescribed under the law of nature for fulfilling this obligation, we do not doubt that God imposed it upon men from the world's beginning.

The day He sanctified under the old law, which the Decalogue indicates to us, was Saturday, the week's seventh day. Scripture gives it the name Sabbath, meaning rest, in remembrance that after employing six days in the world's creation, God rested on the seventh: that is, He ceased producing new creatures. Thus Exodus says: *Septimus dies erit vobis sanctus, sabbatum, et requies Domini*—the seventh day shall be holy for you, a Sabbath and the Lord's rest.

Under the new law, the Church, taught by Jesus Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, changed this day to Sunday. Here we must observe with the Catechism of the Council of Trent that in this third commandment one thing is unchangeable and another is not. It is unchangeable that men must designate a day for God's worship. But that this day should be Saturday is not unchangeable, because this is a purely ceremonial observance belonging to the old law, which ceased with all the other figures of the Jewish law at Jesus Christ's death.

Thus the Church, instructed by her Savior and enlightened by His Spirit, could change Saturday to Sunday, as she did. We see this change established from the Apostles' time. St. Augustine expressly says in his letter to Januarius that the custom of solemnizing Sunday began on Our Lord's resurrection day. Since this fact is not disputed and Protestants agree with us, it is useless to confirm it with further proofs.

The Church's reason for transferring the Sabbath solemnity to Sunday is that God accomplished the greatest and most remarkable things on Sunday. I. On this day Jesus Christ rose and began to enjoy eternal rest after consummating our redemption's work through His death. II. On a Sunday the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles at Pentecost. III. This is the week's first day, upon which God began the work of creating the world. IV. On this day Jesus Christ gave the Apostles the Holy Spirit with power to forgive sins. All this comes from St. Leo's letter to Dioscorus. Regarding Christians this commandment is explained thus: "You shall keep Sunday by serving God devoutly."[2]

Q. How should Sunday and the feast days the Church commands us to observe be sanctified?

A. To sanctify something according to the law, St. Thomas says, is to employ it in divine worship: *Ea enim dicuntur sanctificari in lege, quæ divino cultui applicantur*. This holy Doctor says we must distinguish two things in the precept of sanctifying feast days: the end and the means. The end is employing Sundays and feast days in God's service; the means consist in avoiding servile works, ordinarily incompatible with divine service. Thus, to employ these holy days well, St. Gregory the Great says, one must abstain from all servile work and devote oneself wholly to works of piety: *Dominico vero die a labore terreno cessandum est, atque omnino orationibus insistendum*—on the Lord's Day one must cease earthly labor and apply oneself wholly to prayer.

Sanctifying feast days therefore requires, first, employing these days in good works. Those principally ordered us are hearing Mass and, without a legitimate impediment, attending the sermon, the explanation of doctrine, catechism and generally the entire divine office. Afterward the day's remainder should be spent in works of piety: confession, Communion, reading good books, exercising works of mercy, visiting the sick and imprisoned, instructing children—in a word, consecrating these holy days to God's glory.

II. To employ Sundays and feast days in this way, one must abstain from servile works: that is, manual labor and generally everything a man does for another who pays him for his work. *Die dominico oportet omnes*

christianos a servili opere in laude Dei, et gratiarum actione usque ad vesperam perseverare, says the Council of Tours of 813—on Sunday all Christians ought, \[ceasing\] from servile work, to persevere in praising God and giving thanks until evening.

Sin is also servile work according to these words of the Savior: *Qui facit peccatum servus est peccati*—whoever commits sin is sin's servant. Although sins are always forbidden, they are nevertheless much graver when committed on Sundays and feast days, St. Thomas says. If a sin is formally opposed to sanctifying feast days, such as drunkenness or failing to hear Mass as one should, theologians say this is a circumstance one is obliged to explain in confession.

Q. Is every kind of work forbidden on Sundays and feast days? Which works are permitted and which forbidden on these holy days?

A. Although every kind of work was absolutely forbidden the Jews on the Sabbath, the same does not apply to us. *Observare tamen diem sabbati non ad litteram jubemur*, St. Augustine says—we are not commanded, however, to observe the Sabbath day according to the letter. The Church permits some works on Sundays and feast days, such as those concerning God's worship: sweeping, cleaning or adorning a church and preparing everything necessary for divine service. In this sense it is said: *Sacerdotes in templo sabbatum violant, et sine crimine sunt*—the priests in the Temple break the Sabbath and are without fault. Nevertheless, as far as possible these things should be done on working days, not Sundays and feast days, unless some necessity exists.

II. Spiritual actions belonging more to the spirit than the body are not forbidden either. Thus one can study, teach, write, give advice, settle disputes and so forth, provided they do not obstruct God's service. *Nullius spiritualis actus exercitium est contra observantiam sabbati: puta si quis doceat verbo vel scripto*, St. Thomas says—the exercise of no spiritual act is contrary to Sabbath observance, as when someone teaches by word or writing. The same must be said of servile works relating to life's necessities. Hence it is lawful to prepare food and sell everything necessary for man's sustenance and the treatment of his illnesses.

III. Bodily works for avoiding a threatened harm are also permitted. *Opus corporale quod ordinatur ad imminens damnum rei exterioris vitandum non violat sabbatum*, the Angelic Doctor continues—bodily work directed toward avoiding imminent damage to an external thing does not violate the Sabbath. He supports this with Jesus Christ's authority in the Gospel: "Which of you, seeing a sheep fall into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lift it out?"

Since the Church is a loving mother and we live under the law of grace, she does not wish to bind us to abstain from servile works with all the old law's rigor. Hence at harvest, vintage and other public necessities she grants permission to work. But to avoid sin in these cases the necessity must be urgent, the work after hearing Mass, and recourse made to the ecclesiastical superior for dispensation whenever this can conveniently be done, because judging the necessity for such a dispensation belongs to him.

As for works forbidden on Sundays and feast days, everyone knows them well enough. It is not lawful to practice any mechanical craft or engage in manual work ordinarily done to earn a living, such as sowing or tilling the earth; the work of blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, sculptors, painters, merchants and those trading at fairs and markets; and so forth. The excuse that one works without scandal or contempt for the feast does not avail. In his decree of 1679 Innocent XI condemned this proposition: *Præceptum servandi festa non obligat sub mortali seposito scandalo, si absit contemptus*—the precept of keeping feast days does not bind under mortal sin when scandal is excluded, if contempt is absent.

Do not say either that you spend only a short time in this, because less than you imagine suffices to violate feast days. Here is a remarkable example. When a Jew went to gather a little wood on a Sabbath, the whole people were scandalized and brought him before Moses. Moses consulted the Lord to know what to do with

the offender, and He expressly ordered that the man be stoned to death by the people's hands. *Dixitque Dominus ad Moysen, morte moriatur homo iste, obruat eum lapidibus omnis turba extra castra*—the Lord said to Moses: let this man be put to death; let the whole multitude stone him outside the camp.

So great is the Lord's horror of those profaning days consecrated to His worship. Attend to this, you who work or make your children or servants work on holy days, and know that God will not leave you unpunished. *Irritaverunt Me*, He says through His prophet Ezekiel, *sabbata Mea violaverunt vehementer*—they provoked Me; they grievously violated My Sabbaths.

Q. After hearing Mass on Sundays and feast days, may someone go hunting or fishing and spend the rest of the day in diversions? What should be thought of those employing Sundays and feast days in this way?

A. Hearing Mass is not enough to sanctify these holy days. They must be employed in continual practices of piety, as far as human frailty permits, especially attendance at divine offices and parish priests' sermons. *Diebus dominicis et festis in suas parœcias populus conveniat, et missæ, concioni ac vesperis intersit*, says the Council of Reims held by Cardinal Guise in 1583 and approved by Gregory XIII—on Sundays and feast days let the people assemble in their parishes and attend Mass, the sermon and Vespers.

Since the Church has repeatedly commanded the same thing, it cannot be denied that those who, after hearing Mass, spend the rest of the day hunting, fishing, gambling and pursuing other vain diversions sin against the sanctification of Sundays and feast days.

Q. Is it lawful to hold fairs and markets on feast days? Or may at least some things be bought and sold on them?

A. Fairs and markets must neither be held nor tolerated on Sundays and feast days. The Council of Reims already cited forbids them under pain of excommunication: *Nundinæ publicæ, mercatus et auctiones ne fiant diebus festis sub pœna excommunicationis a parochis in prono denuntianda*—let public fairs, markets and auctions not be held on feast days, under penalty of excommunication to be announced by parish priests from the pulpit. The Council of Aix of 1585 commands the contrary custom abolished and markets transferred to the day after or before the feast.

On Sundays and feast days it is lawful to buy and sell things concerning divine worship, things necessary for sustenance and the treatment of the sick. There are other things, not so strictly necessary, which nevertheless need buying. They can be bought on feast days if postponement to another day would cause harm, according to St. Thomas's rule already cited: *Opus corporale quod ordinatur ad imminens damnum rei exterioris vitandum, non violat sabbatum*—bodily work directed toward avoiding imminent damage to an external thing does not violate the Sabbath.

On this principle itinerant shopkeepers displaying their wares in villages on Sundays and feast days are excusable. There appears some necessity for doing so, and this trade cannot be entirely forbidden without causing great harm to the sellers and notable inconvenience to buyers. Nevertheless, the bishop's toleration must first be obtained, and care taken that this is not done at church doors, before Mass or during divine offices.

Q. Can carriage drivers and muleteers continue their journeys on Sundays and feast days?

A. Carriage drivers with fixed travel days for public benefit do not sin in continuing their journey on Sundays and feast days, provided they hear Mass. They can also set out on these days to convey someone obliged to travel who cannot do so without a driver to carry him or his luggage. We may also say that if bad weather threatens or the driver fears another harm, he can travel without sin.

This is proved through St. Thomas's authority. He teaches that a neighbor's necessity or benefit is sufficient cause to excuse fault on these occasions. As for drivers not in the cases mentioned, whose only purpose is their private gain, they sin against the third commandment if they do not stop where they are on Sundays and principal feasts. The same must be said of muleteers.[3]

Q. Is it lawful for tavern keepers to serve food and drink to every kind of person, even during divine-office hours?

A. Those coming to taverns to eat and drink are either local inhabitants or travelers and passersby. Tavern keepers can without sin serve the latter food and drink at any hour, since it must reasonably be supposed they do not request it without necessity. Thus councils except them. *Tabernarii*, says the Synod of Chartres of 1525, *durante missa parochiali et vesperis dominico die cessent a venditionibus, nisi ex causa necessaria et pro viatoribus transeuntibus*—during parish Mass and Vespers on Sunday, let tavern keepers cease selling except for a necessary cause and passing travelers.

But regarding residents and neighbors, councils very expressly forbid tavern keepers to admit them on Sundays and feast days during divine office. The Council of Rouen of 1581, approved by Pope Gregory XIII, commands parish priests to declare excommunicated those violating these holy dispositions. Here are its decree's own words: *In prono pro excommunicatis denuntient qui post admonitionem ausi fuerint dominicis, et festis diebus tempore servitii, parochianos in domum suam ad potandum, ludendum, aut aliud non necessarium agendum recipere*—from the pulpit let them announce as excommunicated those who, after warning, have dared on Sundays and feast days during service to receive parishioners into their house to drink, gamble or do something else unnecessary.

The Council of Tours of 1583, approved by the same pope, makes the same prohibition to tavern keepers under pain of excommunication. Here we should observe that such a penalty is imposed only for mortal sin. They are also very culpable when permitting parishioners to remain in their house during the night, thereby fostering many people's drunkenness. This is the many-headed hydra \[a source of evils continually multiplying\] from which come quarrels, oaths, impurity, theft—in a word, the origin of all vices, as a capitulary of Charlemagne says: *Magnum malum ebrietatis, unde omnia vitia pullulant, modis omnibus cavere præcipimus: qui autem hoc vitare noluerit, excommunicandum esse decrevimus usque ad emendationem congruam*—we command that the great evil of drunkenness, from which all vices spring, be avoided by every means; whoever will not avoid it, we have decreed must be excommunicated until suitable amendment.

You exercising so dangerous an occupation as tavern keeping will permit me to ask: what care have you taken to conform to these Church laws? How do you observe Sundays and feast days? Is your house closed to drunkards? How is God served in your family? Ah, how few tavern keepers will be saved!

Q. Can barbers and ministers of justice work at their professions on Sundays and feast days?

A. Barbers' custom of practicing their trade in their houses on feast-day mornings does not appear excusable, because this occupation is servile and there is no necessity for exercising it on holy days. If this all too common abuse cannot be destroyed, they must at least be forbidden to work during divine offices and the parish sermon, as many bishops have commanded. They must obey them.

Ministers of justice can practice only acts performed *sine strepitu judiciali*: that is, without noise or contention. For example, they cannot take an accused person's confession or receive witnesses' statements on Sundays and feast days. But judges may examine cases they must decide, and advocates and procurators may answer consultations and make petitions, provided they attend divine offices, especially parish Mass. This work does not appear servile and can be exercised *sine strepitu judiciali* \[without the bustle of formal contentious proceedings\].

As for notaries, ordinarily speaking they cannot draw up records or deeds on Sundays and feast days. This is usually accompanied by disputes and noise greatly distracting from the works of piety to which the faithful are more particularly obliged on these holy days. Thus St. Charles forbids it in his Third Council of Milan, as does the Council of Bourges in 1584, making this exception: *Nisi quæ ex necessitate testamentorum aut matrimoniorum causa differri non possunt*—except things which out of necessity in matters of wills or marriages cannot be postponed.

From this we can infer that where there is public or private necessity, such as executing the will of a sick person or someone going away, or something similar, notaries can lawfully serve those seeking them on Sundays and feast days. But if neither necessity nor charity obliges them, they should leave it for another day, according to Gregory IX's exception: *Nisi necessitas urgeat, vel pietas suadeat*—unless necessity presses or piety advises it.

Q. Who can contribute most to sanctifying feast days?

A. Ecclesiastical and secular superiors. Bishops, by wise decrees preventing abuses introduced among the people on Sundays and feast days. Parish priests, by keeping their parishioners occupied in hearing salutary instructions and establishing, outside divine-office times, congregations and conferences of piety to prevent dissipation in profane works and diversions.

Magistrates, and generally all charged with the public good, must secure observance of Church and state laws; rebuke and punish those breaking them, holding fairs or markets, working or publicly engaging in any other labor on feast days; and prevent dances, theatrical performances, gambling, drunkenness and so forth. *Dies festos majestati altissimæ dedicatos, nullis volumus voluptatibus occupari*—we forbid spending in culpable diversions the holy feast days consecrated to God's most high majesty—the emperors Leo and Artemius say. This, gentlemen magistrates and ministers of justice, is what you must do.

Fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses are obliged to see that Sundays and feast days are exactly observed by those under their government: that none engage in servile works and all be exact in God's service and worship. What am I saying about serving God on Sundays and feast days? These are the days on which He is most offended!

Yes, brethren, judging by most of the faithful's conduct, Sunday appears to be the entire week's sewer or cesspool. Having neither opportunity nor means to offend God on working days, they reserve it for Sunday. For many it is not the Lord's day but the devil's, to whom they prostitute it through dissoluteness and excess. Formerly demons were seen leaving the bodies of the possessed on feast days and withdrawing into deserts, as though unable to tolerate the faithful's piety and devotion. Now, however, they are let loose and possess countless Christians' hearts, precipitating them on these days into a thousand brutish actions.

After this, should we be surprised to find ourselves overwhelmed by calamities and miseries? God treats us as we treat Him: *Odi, et projeci festivitates vestras, et non capiam odorem cœtuum vestrorum*—I have hated and rejected your feasts and shall not delight in the fragrance of your assemblies.

Q. What fruit must we draw from this conference?

A. Here it is in the prophet king's words: *Convertere anima mea in requiem tuam, quia Dominus benefecit tibi*—return, my soul, to your rest, because the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. You have often sinned against the sanctification of feast days. Ask God's forgiveness, turn back and give yourselves to Him wholeheartedly, especially on these holy days: *Convertere*—return.

Sunday is called the Lord's Day. This means that if you occupied yourselves with worldly business on the other days, on this one you must give yourselves to God and His service. It is robbery—or better, sacrilege—to steal it from Him and employ it in vain diversions. If you have done this until now, you must change your conduct: *Convertere anima mea in requiem tuam*—return, my soul, to your rest.

Have you worked on the other days for your body's necessities? Work on Sunday to relieve your soul's necessities. Are you a merchant who has spent every weekday reckoning accounts with creditors and debtors? On this day enter into accounts with your God \[examine what you owe Him and how you have answered His gifts\]. Are you a farmer who has cultivated and cleared the earth? Cultivate and clear your conscience at least once each week. Are you a minister of justice who has brought proceedings against many? Bring them now against yourself: judge and punish your offenses. Your office is to see that each receives his due; give God what is due Him on this holy day.

Imitate the holy man Nehemiah. Seeing many going to sell all kinds of merchandise in Jerusalem on the Sabbath, he stationed his men at the city's gate to prevent their entering. He threatened those merchants so forcefully that they did not return to trade on the Sabbath. *Itaque ex tempore illo non venerunt in sabbato*, Scripture says—from that time they did not come on the Sabbath.

Finally, remember on Sunday the benefits divine goodness has bestowed upon you: *Quia Dominus benefecit tibi*—because the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. You must bless Him and thank Him in the faithful's assembly: *In medio Ecclesiæ laudabo Te*—in the midst of the Church I shall praise You. If you cannot come to church to fulfill this obligation, make your house a domestic church and an oratory, so that after celebrating feast days holily you may deserve to enter that happy rest and divine joy which will last for all eternity. Amen.[4]

---

[1] Exodus 20:8; Psalm 74:8 (Vulgate 73:8).

[2] Exodus 35:2 (the source misprints 33:2); Augustine, Letter 55 to Januarius, number 12; Leo, Letter 81 to Dioscorus, chapter 1, as cited.

[3] Thomas, II–II, q.122, a.4 (the source's I–II is a misprint).

[4] Psalm 116:7 (Vulgate 114:7); Nehemiah 13:21 (the source's 2 Esdras); Psalm 22:22 (Vulgate 21:23).

Decalogue: Eighth Conference

On the Fourth Commandment: Duties of Masters and Servants

Original preacher not named.

Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam, ut sis longævus super terram, quam Dominus Deus tuus dabit tibi. (Exodus 20.)

Honor your father and mother, that you may live long upon the land the Lord your God will give you.

This is the fourth commandment and the first of the second tablet. God wished to attach to it a reward in this life to encourage us to observe it perfectly: *Quod est mandatum primum in promissione,* St. Paul tells us—it is the first commandment with a promise. Although this precept expressly mentions only the fathers and mothers who gave us being, doctors commonly judge, with the approval of the Catechism of the Council of Trent, that all superiors are included under the name of fathers and mothers. Inferiors must honor them as fathers, and superiors for their part must love their inferiors as children.

"Superiors" includes all charged with caring for others, spiritually or temporally, who exercise some authority over them: bishops, parish priests, priests, kings, governors, magistrates, lords, godfathers and godmothers, guardians and curators, masters, husbands, and even the elderly. These must be regarded as fathers, especially if prudent and irreproachable in life. Scripture orders us to rise in their presence to show the respect with which we treat them: *Coram cano capite consurge, et honora personam senis*—rise before the gray head and honor the elderly person's presence.

The name "children" generally includes everyone subject to anyone having authority over them. We shall not explain here all these persons' obligations, for this would take too long. We shall speak only of what masters

owe their servants and servants their masters, having elsewhere treated fathers' and mothers' duties toward their children and children's toward them.

Q. How should masters regard their servants?

A. They must regard them as their brothers according to the order of nature and grace. Your servant is a man like yourself. God is his Master as He is yours; he is God's creature as you are. You have the same nature as he: formed from nothing like him, and the same Creator Who formed you formed him equally. *Numquid non in utero fecit me Qui et illum operatus est?*, the holy man Job says—did not He Who fashioned him also make me in the womb?

Thus St. Augustine observes very well that before sin God gave man dominion over the sea's fish, the earth's animals and the sky's birds, but not over other men: *Nomen servi culpa meruit, non natura*, this Father says—sin, not nature, merited the name of slave. St. John Chrysostom makes the same observation, saying that at the world's beginning the ancient patriarchs and first just men were shepherds of flocks rather than princes and sovereigns of men: *Pastores pecorum magis quam reges hominum constituti sunt*—they were appointed shepherds of flocks rather than kings of men.

Indeed, Scripture does not contain the name of slave or servant until after Ham's sin, who merited this punishment for mocking his father: *Maledictus Chanaan, servus servorum erit fratribus suis*—cursed be Canaan; he will be a servant of servants to his brothers.

Given this, we may truly say that by nature all men are equal. Consequently a master must regard his servant not as a slave but as a brother, not only according to nature but also according to grace's privileges, for he is a Christian like himself. St. Paul makes this observation when writing to a noble man of Colossae named Philemon on behalf of his slave Onesimus, whom Paul had converted. He asks Philemon to receive him not as his slave but as his brother, regenerated through the same Baptism in the same Church's bosom and sharing the same sacraments: *Tu autem illum suscipe, jam non ut servum, sed pro servo charissimum filium*—receive him, no longer as a slave but in place of a slave a most dear son.[1]

Q. What are masters' obligations toward their servants?

A. These obligations concern spiritual and temporal matters. In temporal matters masters' first obligation is to provide their servants' sustenance and employ them in moderate work. Masters' obligation to maintain their servants rests upon divine and natural law. The laborer, Jesus Christ says, is worthy of his sustenance: *Dignus est operarius mercede sua*—the worker is worthy of his wages. Servants devote their time and sweat to you, and it is most just that you provide their maintenance.

We do not say you must give them delicate food, for this would foster their insolence and arm them against you. But do not render them incapable of serving you by refusing what is necessary, because this would make you guilty of their complaints, thefts and the excesses they commit when opportunity offers.

You must also employ them. Send your servant to work, Sirach says, so that he is not idle, for idleness teaches much evil: *Mitte servum tuum ad operationem, ne vacet: multam enim malitiam docuit otiositas.* Make them work, but moderately. Do not oppress or exhaust them through excessive work, abusing your authority over them. Less sensitive to humanity's laws than to sordid gain, you treat a horse gently while oppressing a poor servant! Is this acting as the Apostle charges you? *Domini quod justum est et æquum, servis præstate: scientes quod et vos Dominum habetis in cælo*—masters, render your servants what is just and equitable, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.[2]

Q. What other temporal obligations do masters have toward their servants?

A. They must assist them in their necessities, care for them when ill, protect and support them. If you have a prudent servant, the Wise Man says, cherish him and do not allow him to fall into misery after faithfully

serving you. If you have a faithful servant, love him as your life and treat him as a brother: *Si est tibi servus fidelis, sit tibi quasi anima tua: quasi frater eum tracta*.

See in the Gospel the centurion's concern for his paralyzed servant's health. Both personally and through his friends he asked Jesus Christ to heal him. His faith was so great that he deserved to be heard.

Finally, masters must pay their servants punctually: *Non morabitur opus mercenarii tui apud te usque mane*—the hired worker's wages shall not remain with you until morning. Do not retain your domestic servants' wages. Whenever they need them, you cannot do this without committing an injustice whose cry reaches God's throne, as St. James says. Nevertheless, how do you pay servants? Sometimes they are made to wait whole years, their wages diminished under various pretexts, and payment made in a manner disproportionate to their labors.[3]

Q. What are masters' obligations toward servants regarding spiritual matters?

A. First, they must watch over their conduct; care for their salvation; see that they are instructed in the faith's mysteries; pray morning and evening; attend parish Mass and sermons, especially catechism instruction; frequent the sacraments; keep the fasts, vigils and feasts the Church commands; avoid gambling, taverns and bad company; and are not swearers, drunkards and so forth. In a word, they must be good Christians who fear God.

But is this care taken of servants? People think only of profiting from their service. Far from directing them toward virtue, they never speak of it. They oppress them with so much work that they have no time to pray or fulfill Christian duties. In view of this, should we be astonished that they are so vicious when no one tries to correct them? Nevertheless, according to the Apostle this is a very grave fault: *Si quis suorum et maxime domesticorum curam non habet, fidem negavit, et est infideli deterior*—if anyone does not care for his own, especially his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

II. Masters must correct servants. "But they have many faults," you will tell me. Who does not? They must be rebuked, but without enraging or treating them harshly, rather with gentleness and charity. Overlook some things without making a great commotion about matters of little importance. Do not take offense because they break a glass. In a word, do not make yourself troublesome and unbearable at home to those subject to you.

Remember that you have the same Lord in heaven as they, and He will not regard differences of condition: *Scientes quia et illorum et vester Dominus est in cœlis, et personarum acceptio non est apud Eum*—knowing that their Lord and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him. Finally, if after some prudent warnings you recognize your servant as incorrigible, you should dismiss him rather than continue in disagreements contrary to charity.

III. Masters must give their servants good example. People commonly say: as the master, so the servant. If you are virtuous, your servants will be moved to imitate you; if vicious, they will be so too. They will communicate their vices to your children and bring the Lord's curse upon your family. If you want good servants, be good masters yourselves. Be the first to show your family examples of virtue and piety. Employ your authority over servants to direct them toward God: *Non est potestas nisi a Deo*—there is no authority except from God.

Your power comes from God. You must use it holily so your servants will respect you. But if you abuse it to pervert them, commit injustices, corrupt that poor maidservant and make her the victim of your passion, you will be an unhappy master—or rather a detestable thief, robbing that poor maiden of her most precious treasure. Better for her to have entered a lion's den than your house, or encountered a tiger or leopard that tore her to pieces! Then she would have lost only a perishable life. You have made her lose what is most precious: the life of grace, her salvation, her honor and her right to the eternal inheritance.[4]

Q. Are masters responsible for their servants' faults?

A. A servant can commit a fault in his master's house or outside it, with the master's knowledge or without it. Masters are not responsible for evil their servants do outside their house and without their knowledge. Natural equity does not permit someone to be punished undeservedly; punishment should therefore be imposed only upon those committing a fault. *Pœna suum auctorem teneat,* Pope Boniface VIII says—let punishment attach to its own author.

Civil laws, however, make masters responsible for domestic servants' faults while actually in their house. Thus if a servant, for example, throws something out a window and harms a neighbor, civil law orders the master obliged to repair it, even without his knowledge: *Insciente domino*. Nevertheless, since this kind of penal law concerns only public order and outward discipline, we may say with certainty that when a master has no share in his servant's fault, or that of another person in the house where he lives, he is not obliged in conscience to make any reparation until the judge orders it.

In this case he can seek recovery from the person causing the harm, who consequently is obliged by natural law to repair it. But if the master knew of his servant's fault, whether committed in or outside his house, he is undoubtedly responsible if he could have prevented it and did not: *Digni sunt morte non solum qui faciunt ea, sed etiam qui consentiunt facientibus*—worthy of death are not only those doing such things but also those consenting to the doers.[5]

Q. What fruit must we draw from what you have said about masters' obligations toward servants?

A. First, masters and heads of households must consider how important their own good lives are for ordering and directing their household holily. *Religiosus ac timens Deum cum omni domo sua*—devout and fearing God with his whole household. Scripture says this of the centurion Cornelius, whom all Christian masters must imitate.

II. They must watch over their domestics as people who will one day answer for them before God, and not tolerate evil habits in them.

III. Since good servants are difficult to find, they must retain those who are sensible and serve God well, preferring them to others even more capable and better-looking. Such was David's conduct: *Ambulans in via immaculata hic mihi ministrabat*—the one walking in an unstained way ministered to me. Needing some people near me to serve me, he says, I sought those most faithful to God, who observed His commandments and led irreproachable lives. I did not tolerate the proud or men of evil tongue in my house: *Non habitabit in medio domus meæ qui facit superbiam, qui loquitur iniqua*.

It is a king speaking, gentlemen and ladies: a king obliged to keep many domestics, who sought to admit only the virtuous. *Qui virtutis studiosi erant, et cujuslibet sceleris expertes*, Theodoret says upon this passage—those devoted to virtue and free of every crime. Do the same. Employ servants who are good Christians, edify them through your life's holiness, and you will contribute to their salvation while sanctifying yourselves.[6]

Servants' Duties toward Their Masters

Q. How should a Christian servant regard his quality and condition as a servant?

A. First, he should regard it as a state arranged by God according to His providence's dispositions. God wishes there to be subordination in the world and mutual dependence among us. These reciprocal dependencies God has established are arranged, St. Paul says, in an admirable order: *Quæ autem sunt, a Deo ordinata sunt*—the powers that exist have been ordered by God.

Thus, if you are a servant, God placed you in this state, and perhaps it is His will that you remain in it. *Servus vocatus es? Non sit tibi curæ*, the Apostle tells you—were you called as a servant? Let it not trouble you. It is

as though he said: if you held an office, you might fear ambition or avarice had raised you to it; but finding yourself in a state of service, live peacefully and believe that God called you to it and wishes to save you through humiliation's path. Even when able to leave this state, do not leave it lightly, for perhaps there is no other in which you could acquire greater merits: *Sed si potes fieri liber, magis utere*—but if you can become free, rather make use of it.

II. Regard it as a state Jesus Christ sanctified. Being God, equal and consubstantial with His Father, He wished to empty Himself and take a servant's form. Since servants characteristically do not do their own will but another's, serve those of the household and do not answer when rebuked, He assures us in His Gospel that He came down from heaven not to do His will but His Father's; came not to be served but to serve others; and during His passion behaved as a man with nothing to reply: *Factus sum sicut homo non audiens, et non habens in ore Suo redargutiones*—I became like a man not hearing, with no replies in His mouth.

All this shows that servants' state is one of suffering, work and submission in which they can readily sanctify themselves by fulfilling God's will in their masters' will.[7]

Q. What are servants' obligations toward their masters?

A. St. Paul teaches us these in several places in his epistles, especially the one written to the Ephesians. "Servants," he tells them, "obey your temporal masters with fear and respect and simplicity of heart, as Jesus Christ Himself": *Servi obedite dominis carnalibus in timore et tremore, in simplicitate cordis vestri, sicut Christo*. This is servants' first obligation toward masters: simple, respectful obedience accompanied by fear of God.

Do not serve them only when their eye is upon you, as though thinking only of pleasing men, but do God's will wholeheartedly as Jesus Christ's servants: *Non ad oculum servientes, quasi hominibus placentes, sed ut servi Christi, facientes voluntatem Dei ex animo*. The second obligation is entire and perfect fidelity.

Serve them affectionately. Regard the Lord in them, not men: *Cum bona voluntate servientes, sicut Domino, et non hominibus*. Servants' third obligation toward masters is affection full of respect. They must apply themselves to serving wholeheartedly, without grumbling or contradiction, but joyfully, pleasantly and with a cheerful countenance, for God's love and a desire to please Him: *Ut servi Christi*—as Christ's servants.

Since it is easy to serve good and moderate masters willingly, St. Peter adds that hard and troublesome masters must be served in the same way: *Servi, subditi estote in omni timore dominis non tantum bonis, et modestis, sed etiam dyscolis*—servants, be subject with all fear to your masters, not only good and gentle ones but also the difficult.

These, servants, are your obligations as Scripture prescribes them. Happy the one fulfilling them! Happy the master possessing such a servant! A good domestic can do much good in a family. St. Paulinus, bishop of Nola and Sulpicius Severus's friend, thanks him for sending his domestic Victor to assist him during an illness. He says that through that good servant's holiness God granted him many graces and blessings he did not deserve. The Lord looks favorably upon the servant fulfilling all his obligations to his master. Let us explain them in greater detail.[8]

Q. Can a servant serve and obey his master in unlawful things when he fears the master will become angry if he refuses, or that he will lose his wages or be dismissed?

A. A servant must be convinced that he cannot obey his master in things God's law forbids. Thus if the master wishes him to miss Mass on Sundays and feast days or work on them; orders him to steal, quarrel or do another evil action; he is not only unobliged to obey but would sin if he did.

Abstaining from unlawful things is not enough: a servant must not participate in his master's evil works. He sins if he gives assistance or helps in his master's revenge, unchaste desires and so forth. He must tell his

master fearlessly that he cannot serve him in such matters, representing submissively that he must obey God before him: *Si justum est in conspectu Dei, vos potius audire quam Deum, judicate*—judge whether it is just before God to listen to you rather than God.

If despite this the master continues ordering unlawful things, the servant must leave him even at the cost of his wages, because his salvation must be dearer to him than everything else. This is the Angelic Doctor's teaching: *Non tenetur inferior suo superiori obedire, si aliquid præcipiat in quo ei non subdatur*—an inferior is not bound to obey his superior if the latter commands something in which he is not subject to him.

Q. What is servants' second obligation toward masters?

A. Fidelity. A servant must be faithful in everything and take as much care to preserve and increase his master's property as his own. Faithful in the tongue, speaking little and at the proper time, which is the means of avoiding many sins: *Qui odit loquacitatem, extinguit malitiam,* the Wise Man says—whoever hates talkativeness extinguishes evil. He must not go outside recounting what is said or done within the house.

Oh, how many servants' tales occasion quarrels and disagreements, speaking to the master against the mistress or the reverse, flattering some and making others enemies! Nothing causes so much disturbance in families as a servant's evil tongue.

Faithful in the mouth, abstaining from gluttony's vice and taking nothing to gratify his sensuality or treat his friends. Faithful in the hands, keeping them pure not only of great thefts but small ones too; not tolerating other servants, or even the household's children, stealing wheat, wine, linen or other things entrusted to him.

Finally, faithful in the whole body, employing himself entirely in his master's service without wasting time in vain diversions or waiting to be ordered to do his duty, whether his master is absent or present. *Non fraudantes, sed in omnibus fidem bonam ostendentes,* St. Paul says—not defrauding, but showing good fidelity in everything—so that through their good conduct everyone will respect the doctrine of Jesus Christ our Savior: *Ut doctrinam Salvatoris nostri Dei ornent in omnibus*—that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. See in Genesis how faithfully Jacob served Laban for fourteen years.[9]

Q. May domestics secretly take something from their masters by way of compensation when paid low wages?

A. A servant who agreed with his master to serve for a particular wage is guilty of theft, and consequently obliged to restitution, if he takes something, even by way of compensation. The reason is that he has no ground for accusing the master of injustice, even though his wage is low and less than what is given other servants.

This appears evident from the Gospel parable in which the householder refused to heed complaints from some workers he hired. They grumbled because he gave an equal reward to those working less than themselves. "My friend," he says to one, "I do you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius each day? Take what belongs to you and go. If I wish to give the last as much as you, may I not do what pleases me in this?" *Nonne ex denario convenisti mecum? Tolle quod tuum est, et vade: volo autem et huic novissimo dare sicut et tibi: aut non licet mihi quod volo, facere?*

This answer clearly shows that the pretext of having worked more than others cannot authorize a day laborer or servant to allot himself a greater reward than the one agreed with his master.

This decision entirely accords with the Holy See's doctrine. In his decree of March 1679 Innocent XI condemned this proposition: *Famuli et famulæ domesticæ possunt occulte heris surripere ad compensandam operam quam majorem salario suo judicant.* That is, male and female domestic servants can secretly take their masters' goods to compensate themselves for the service they render when they judge it greater than the wage received. The pope characterized this opinion as dangerous, forbidding its maintenance or teaching

under pain of *ipso facto* excommunication reserved to the Holy See.

Nor may servants give anything belonging to their masters to maintain their own obligations \[those whom they must support\], whom they will be able to sustain if they work reasonably.[10]

Q. What is servants' third obligation toward masters?

A. They must love and serve them wholeheartedly, without imitating their vices and faults: *Cum bona voluntate servientes*, as the Apostle says—serving with good will. When you serve your masters grudgingly and have no affection for them, they are dissatisfied, and you even lose before God the merit of your sacrifices.

Through carelessness you allow your masters' property to be lost, fail in what is entrusted to you by shifting it onto others, and spend an hour on an errand you could complete in a quarter-hour. Gerson, in his treatise on the faithful's manner of living, consideration XVIII, warns servants to take great care to avoid a fault seeming slight to them: staying out a long time when masters send them on business. *Missi cito revertantur*—when sent out, let them return quickly.

Listen to what I say, back-answering maidservants! You like talking with everyone and seek only to waste time. Does this not show that you have no affection for your master's service? You cause your master to become angry and displeased, the children to despise you, and people to grumble against God's word and the sacraments, because they see you frequenting them without becoming better. They indeed act wrongly, but you are the cause.

Therefore do everything entrusted to you promptly and wholeheartedly, considering that you do it to please God, not men: *Quodcumque facitis, ex animo operamini sicut Domino, et non hominibus*, St. Paul tells you—whatever you do, work wholeheartedly as for the Lord, not men—knowing that one day you will receive the eternal inheritance from the Lord in reward for your services: *Scientes quod a Domino accipietis retributionem hereditatis.*

Q. What is domestics' final obligation toward masters?

A. Respect. *Quicumque sunt sub jugo servitutis, dominos suos omni honore dignos arbitrentur, ne nomen Domini et doctrina blasphemetur*, St. Paul says—let all under the yoke of service consider their masters worthy of every honor, lest the Lord's name and doctrine be blasphemed.

All under service's yoke must know they are obliged to render their masters every veneration, so as not to occasion exposure of God's name and doctrine to men's evil speaking. Thus whether your master is of high or low birth, virtuous or vicious, you must never lose respect for him, because he remains your master and superior. His power comes from God, and everything coming from God must be respected and loved: *Omni honore dignos arbitrentur*—let them consider them worthy of every honor.

You must honor them with inward respect, considering in them the person of Jesus Christ Our Lord, as the Apostle says: *Domino Christo servite*—serve the Lord Christ. Never despise them in your heart; excuse their faults and imperfections; pray for them. You must also honor them with inward respect, neither mocking nor ridiculing them, neither grumbling nor publishing their faults, nor answering arrogantly, but submissively and simply, even when they are not right.[11]

Let us conclude this discourse with St. Gregory the Great's admonition to servants and masters, equally useful to both. This holy pope says:

Aliter admonendi sunt servi, aliter domini: servi scilicet, ut in se humilitatem conditionis semper aspiciant: domini vero ut naturæ suæ qua æqualiter sunt cum servis suis conditi, memoriam non amittant. Servi admonendi sunt, dominos ne despiciant, ne Deum offendant si ordinationi Illius superbiendo contradicant. Domini quoque admonendi sunt, quia contra Deum de munere Ejus superbiunt, si eos quos per conditionem

tenent subditos, æquales sibi per naturæ consortium non cognoscant. Isti admonendi sunt ut sciant se servos esse dominorum; illi admonendi sunt ut cognoscant se conservos esse servorum.

\[Servants must be admonished in one way, masters in another: servants to consider always their lowly condition; masters not to forget the nature in which they were created equal to their servants. Servants must not despise masters, lest proudly opposing His ordering they offend God. Masters are warned that they grow proud against God concerning His gift if they fail to recognize as equals by shared nature those subject to them by condition. The former must know they are their masters' servants; the latter must recognize themselves their servants' fellow servants.\]

Servants must be admonished in one way, lords in another. Servants are to be admonished to bear their state humbly and patiently, honoring their masters and serving without despising them. But masters must be reminded that their domestics are men like themselves, created in God's image and capable of enjoying the same happiness in heaven. Consequently they must have compassion upon them, not grow proud over the superiority God has given them. This is what religion inspires in masters and servants. If they practice it, all will deserve to receive from our common Lord the reward of eternal beatitude.

---

[1] Job 31:15; Augustine, *City of God*, XIX, chapter 15; Chrysostom, Homily 29 on Genesis; Genesis 9:25; Philemon 12, 16.

[2] Matthew 10:10; Sirach 33:28–29 in the source's numbering; Colossians 4:1.

[3] Sirach 33:31; Matthew 8:5–13 and Luke 7:1–10; Leviticus 19:13; James 5:4.

[4] 1 Timothy 5:8; Ephesians 6:9; Romans 13:1.

[5] Boniface VIII, *Si compromissarius* as cited; Romans 1:32.

[6] Acts 10:2; Psalm 101:6–7 (Vulgate 100); Theodoret's commentary.

[7] Romans 13:1; 1 Corinthians 7:21; Philippians 2:6–7; John 6:38; Matthew 20:28; Psalm 38:14 (Vulgate 37:15).

[8] Ephesians 6:5–7; 1 Peter 2:18; Paulinus, Letter 11 as cited.

[9] Sirach 19:5; Titus 2:10; Genesis 29–31.

[10] Matthew 20:11–15; Innocent XI, decree of March 1679.

[11] 1 Timothy 6:1; Colossians 3:24.

Decalogue: Ninth Conference: On the Fifth Commandment: Homicide

Original preacher not named.

Non occides. (Exodus 20.)

You shall not kill.

God Our Lord, Who wishes us to have the same charity toward our neighbor as toward ourselves, forbids us through the fifth commandment to injure him in body or soul. Regarding his body, He forbids any private individual to wound or kill another man by his private authority. I say "by his private authority" because it is not evil when done by public authority in a legitimate war or in executing magistrates' sentences. Thus rulers, or judges appointed by them, do not sin against this commandment when taking the lives of those deserving to lose them, for their authority comes from God. *Dei minister est*, St. Paul says—he is God's minister. When they kill, St. Augustine says, it is God Who kills, just as a sword's stroke is attributed not to the sword but to the person wielding it.

Apart from this power coming from God, of which sovereigns are the depositaries, no private person has a right over another's life. This commandment also forbids injuring our neighbor in his soul. Since many sins lead to this spiritual homicide, we shall speak of them after explaining the principal matters concerning bodily homicide.[1]

Q. If a man who does not love his neighbor kills an animal belonging to him, will he sin against the fifth commandment?

A. This man sins, first, against charity by killing his neighbor's animal, since he acts from hatred and a kind of revenge never lawful for a Christian. Secondly, he sins against justice if the animal was necessary and useful to his neighbor, such as a horse, ox, donkey, sheep or dog suited to guarding the house or livestock. In this case he is obliged in conscience to repair all the harm his neighbor suffered or may suffer in future.

But he has not in fact sinned against the fifth commandment. When God says *Non occides*—you shall not kill—this precept must not be understood of beasts of whatever kind, since killing them is lawful whenever for our use, according to Scripture: *Omne quod movetur et vivit, erit vobis in cibum*—everything moving and living shall be food for you. Thus this commandment must be understood only of homicide, as St. Augustine observes: *Restat ut de homine intelligamus quod dictum est non occides*—it remains that we understand the saying "you shall not kill" as concerning man.[2]

Q. Is it lawful for a man to kill another in defending his life? How must he conduct himself in such a case?

A. Killing an unjust aggressor to preserve one's life is permitted, provided one does not exceed the limits of just and moderate defense: *Cum moderamine inculpatæ tutelæ*—with the moderation of blameless defense. According to natural law we have a greater obligation to defend and preserve our own life than another's. But to remain within the limits of simple defense, it is necessary:

I. That the person attacked have no other means of defending his life. If he can do so by fleeing or merely wounding the attacker, killing him is unlawful.

II. He must not use more violence than necessary to defend himself. For example, if the aggressor is unarmed, the person attacked cannot kill him with weapons he himself possesses. *Si aliquis ad defendendam propriam vitam, utatur majori violentia quam oporteat,* St. Thomas says, *erit illicitum*—if someone uses greater violence than necessary in defending his own life, it will be unlawful.

III. He must intend only to defend himself, not to kill: *Illicitum est quod homo intendat occidere hominem, ut seipsum defendat, nisi ei qui habet publicam auctoritatem*—it is unlawful for a man to intend to kill another to defend himself, except for one possessing public authority.

That is, according to this holy Doctor, to kill without sin someone unjustly attacking one's life, one must: I. Remain within the moderation of just defense, doing no more than indispensable to save one's life. II. Have no intention of killing, but only of defending oneself.

But since in practice it is very rare and difficult for someone unjustly attacked to do no more than indispensable and necessary to repel the violence, without being carried away by passion and the impulse of revenge, someone who has killed his aggressor must declare it in confession and ordinarily have a proportionate penance imposed upon him.[3]

Q. Is someone guilty of homicide if he kills a thief robbing him? Or will it at least be lawful to kill a nighttime thief?

A. Since man's life is much more precious than our temporal goods, undoubtedly, according to charity's rules, taking it even from a thief to preserve goods of this kind is a great sin. This is St. Augustine's opinion in *On Free Choice*, book I, chapter 5.

Alexander III decides this difficulty in his reply to an abbot of St. Benedict who consulted him about two religious. One killed a thief at night who wanted to steal their habits. This pope declares both guilty: one for helping restrain the thief, the other for killing him. He adds that they should rather have lost cloak and tunic than commit such a crime for things so paltry and passing. Upon this decree the Gloss observes that homicide must never be committed to avoid losing temporal goods: *Pro amissione rerum temporalium nullus debet homicidium incurrere*.

Thus Pope Innocent XI, in his decree of March 1689, very rightly condemned these propositions which some casuists dared maintain:

Regulariter occidere possum furem pro conservatione unius aurei. Ordinarily speaking, it is lawful to kill a thief to preserve a gold escudo.

Non solum licitum est defendere defensione occisiva, quæ actu possidemus, sed etiam ad quæ jus inchoatum habemus, et quæ nos possessuros speramus. It is lawful to defend, even by taking life, not only things we currently possess but also those to which we have a right and hope to possess.

Licitum est tam hæredi, quam legatario contra injuste impedientem, ne vel hæreditas adeatur, vel habentibus in Cathedram vel Præbendam, contra eorum possessionem injuste impedientem. It is likewise lawful for an heir or legatee to defend himself to the point of taking the life of someone unjustly preventing possession of an inheritance or fulfillment of legacies. The same is permitted someone entitled to a professorial chair or prebend against a person unjustly preventing possession.

Regarding a nighttime thief, certainly the laws do not punish the person killing him as a murderer, because he cannot discern whether the thief comes to take his life or rob him. Nevertheless, it is unlawful to kill someone coming only to steal, because this would contravene charity's rules and the new law's spirit. What Exodus 22:2 says must be understood in this sense.[4]

Q. Is it lawful to kill an aggressor to defend honor unjustly defamed, or to kill oneself in such a case? Is honor preferable to life?

A. A Christian's solid and true honor, which he must prefer to life, consists in imitating Jesus Christ and, after His example, forgiving the greatest injuries. Our true glory consists in living so that our conscience reproaches us with nothing: *Gloria nostra hæc est testimonium conscientiæ nostræ*—our glory is this, our conscience's testimony. In a word, the true Christian must rejoice in affronts and reproaches unjustly received, because in this he most resembles his divine Master: *Beati estis cum maledixerint vobis homines*—blessed are you when men revile you—and so forth. Given this Gospel truth:

We must answer that no one can take the life of someone wishing to rob him of honor without becoming guilty of homicide. Nor is it lawful for a woman to kill someone attempting to rob her of chastity. She is obliged to defend herself as far as she can; but if unable to resist violence, she still preserves her soul's purity before God: *Violentia non violatur pudicitia*, St. Augustine says, *si in mente servetur*—chastity is not violated by violence if preserved in the mind.

Such was the saints' conviction. It moved St. Lucy to answer the tyrant Paschasius, who threatened to have her forcibly dishonored: *Si me invitam jusseris violari, castitas mihi duplicabitur ad coronam*—if you order me violated against my will, my chastity will be doubled for my crown. This doctrine so accords with the Gospel that further proofs are useless. We shall add only that in his decree of March 2, 1679, Innocent XI condemned the following proposition concerning this matter:

Fas est viro honorato occidere invasorem, qui nititur calumniam inferre, si aliter hæc ignominia vitari nequit. Idem quoque dicendum, si quis impingat alapam, vel fuste percutiat, et post alapam vel ictum fustis fugiat. That is: it is lawful for an honorable man to kill an aggressor attempting to defame him by calumny if it cannot otherwise be avoided. The same must be said if someone strikes him with a stick or slaps him and then flees.

As for the second question, whether someone may kill himself to avoid losing his honor, with St. Thomas we answer that taking one's own life is never lawful: *Se ipsum occidere omnino illicitum*. Descending to the particular case under discussion, the holy Doctor clearly decides that a woman cannot do this to save her honor: *Non licet mulieri se ipsam occidere ne ab illo corrumpatur. Non debet in se committere crimen maximum, quod est sui ipsius occisio; quia non inquinatur corpus nisi de consensu mentis*—a woman may

not kill herself lest another corrupt her. She must not commit against herself the very great crime of self-killing, because the body is not defiled without the mind's consent.

If the contrary example of some women saints is alleged, the answer is that they are very few and none acted without a strong inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Q. Must someone be considered guilty of homicide if he kills another accidentally without intending to kill him?

A. Ordinarily speaking, what is accidental is not sin, St. Thomas says, because it is not voluntary. Scripture proves this truth when saying that if two men go into the woods to cut timber and stand near one another, and one's axe accidentally slips from his hand and the other is killed, this accident does not make the killer guilty and his life must be preserved.

It is undeniable that purely accidental homicide is not sin, absolutely speaking. The reason is that only the will is the true cause of actual sin: *Non nisi voluntate peccatur*, St. Augustine says—sin is committed only by the will. Nevertheless, what is not actually voluntary in itself can happen to be sufficiently voluntary indirectly to render someone guilty: for example, if through culpable negligence or lack of due precaution he killed a man while believing he was killing a beast.

This can happen in two ways, St. Thomas continues: first, by doing an unlawful thing; secondly, by failing to exercise the necessary diligence and precaution when doing a lawful thing. Hence we readily conclude that someone killing a man by pure accident, without any direct or indirect intention, is not guilty of homicide. But he will be guilty if it happened through doing something unlawful, or if while doing something lawful he negligently failed to use all the care and attention he should.

Q. A man carried away by anger mistreats a pregnant woman who miscarries shortly afterward. Is he guilty of homicide? Would the woman be guilty if the same happened through excessive dancing, although neither intended homicide?

A. The decision depends upon St. Thomas's principle already mentioned: accidental homicide can happen in two ways, first by doing an evil thing, secondly by doing a lawful thing without necessary precaution. In either case there is guilt of homicide. This is the holy Doctor's principle. Following it in the proposed question, a man is guilty of the child's death because by mistreating the pregnant mother he did something forbidden.

Ille qui percutit mulierem prægnantem—these are his words—*dat operam rei illicitæ, et ideo si sequatur mors mulieris, vel pueri animati, non effugiet homicidæ crimen*—someone striking a pregnant woman engages in an unlawful thing; therefore, if the woman's death or that of an ensouled child follows, he does not escape the crime of homicide.

Certainly, then, in the proposed case the man is guilty of homicide if the infant was ensouled when he mistreated the woman. If not, he nevertheless committed a great crime by beating a pregnant woman who miscarried as a result of this mistreatment. According to St. Antoninus the same must be said of a pregnant woman who exposes herself to miscarriage's danger through dancing or other excesses.

Q. Are fathers and mothers who put their newborn children in bed with themselves guilty of homicide if they accidentally suffocate them?

A. Certainly fathers, mothers and others who put newborn infants in bed with themselves and suffocate them through failure to exercise every necessary precaution are truly guilty of homicide before God. This appears from an ancient canon of Pope Stephen V. Writing to Hubert, bishop of Mainz, he says parents must be warned not to put their infants in bed with themselves because of the danger of carelessly suffocating them and becoming guilty of homicide. They cannot be excused from this crime when those procuring an unborn

child's death through abortion also commit it.

Even if parents take every necessary precaution to avoid this accident and it nevertheless occurs, they will still be guilty before God because they voluntarily exposed themselves to its danger. Hence in many dioceses it is a reserved case for parents to put children in bed with themselves before the age of a year and a half.

Q. Is it lawful to procure a woman's abortion or give her remedies to make her sterile?

A. It is never lawful to cause a woman's unborn offspring to perish through drinks or other means, even before ensoulment, because this is an offense forbidden by the fifth commandment. Councils and ancient Fathers consider those procuring a woman's abortion, in whatever way, homicides. St. Basil expressly says in his letter to Amphilochius, canon 2, that a woman who procured abortion must suffer homicides' penalty, and that no account should be taken of those examining whether the fetus was ensouled: *Quæ de industria fœtum corrumpit, cædis pœnas luat, formati autem vel informis subtilitas a nobis non attenditur*—let one deliberately destroying the fetus suffer homicide's penalties; we pay no attention to the subtle distinction between formed and unformed.

Some casuists rashly employed this distinction to excuse a woman procuring abortion to save her life or honor from sin. But in his decree of March 1679 Pope Innocent XI condemned these propositions:

First: a woman may lawfully procure abortion before the fetus is ensouled if she fears discovery will cost her life or honor. *Licet procurare abortum ante animationem fœtus, ne puella deprehensa gravida occidatur aut infametur*.

Second: it seems probable that every fetus, while in its mother's womb, still lacks a rational soul and begins to have it only upon entering the world; consequently homicide is never committed in procuring abortion. *Videtur probabile omnem fœtum quamdiu in utero est carere anima rationali, et tum primum incipere eamdem habere cum paritur, ac consequenter dicendum erit: in nullo abortu homicidium committi*.

Physicians or apothecaries giving a woman remedies either to abort or make her sterile must also be regarded as homicides. Thus says the chapter *Si aliquis*, on voluntary or accidental homicide, cited in the Roman Penitential under homicide, chapter 32: *Si aliquis causa explendæ libidinis, vel odii meditatione, homini aut mulieri aliquid fecerit vel ad potandum dederit, ut non possit generare, aut concipere vel nasci soboles, homicida teneatur*—if someone, to satisfy lust or with hatred in mind, does something to a man or woman or gives something to drink so that he cannot beget or she conceive or offspring be born, let him be held a homicide.

Q. May a pregnant woman dangerously ill take a remedy likely to save her life if it is morally certain she will lose the fetus?

A. Some doctors consider this lawful because, they say, she can prefer her own life to that of the child in her womb. Nevertheless, we answer that if the fetus is ensouled, a Christian mother cannot in conscience take such a remedy. Her child's soul's life must be incomparably dearer to her than her own bodily life. She is obliged to prefer the child's salvation—who would never see God and would suffer the punishment of loss if dying without Baptism—to a perishable life such as her body's.

This is what Sylvius teaches, supported by many authors' judgment and St. Ambrose's authority: *Si non potest subveniri alteri, nisi alter lædatur, commodius est neutrum juvari quam gravari alterum*—if one cannot be helped without harming another, it is better that neither be helped than the other burdened. Cabassut held the same opinion.

Since this is the safest course in practice, we must conclude that a pregnant woman cannot take a remedy likely to cure her if it is morally certain the fetus will lose its life, whether ensouled or not. The safest course for conscience is to abandon her life to divine providence rather than wish to preserve it through a means

such learned doctors judge unlawful.

Q. What obligations does someone who wounds or kills another have?

A. When a man kills another outside the case of just defense of his own life, he is obliged, first, to undertake severe penance. Ancient councils subjected voluntary homicides to penance lasting their whole life. They were admitted to Communion only at the point of death, as a canon of the Council of Ancyra of 314 shows. Although greater indulgence is now employed toward killers, the Church always wishes rigorous penance proportionate to the offense's gravity imposed upon them.

Secondly, someone committing homicide must repair all the harm caused, according to equity and the assessment of prudent and instructed persons. Thus, if the deceased supported a family through his work, the killer must provide their maintenance, as St. Antoninus says.

Someone wounding another must compensate all the damage the wound caused. If it made him incapable of earning a living as before, he must make good all this harm insofar as possible, St. Thomas says. We add that attention must be paid not only to the wound's character but to the person suffering it. Restitution binds more regarding a poor person than a rich one and must extend to his family suffering greater harm.

Irregularity, a canonical impediment rendering a man incapable of receiving sacred orders, is the final penalty attached to homicide. Someone committing unjust or unlawful homicide or mutilation incurs irregularity *ex delicto*, arising from an offense. If the homicide is neither unjust nor unlawful, the irregularity will be only *ex defectu*, arising from a defect.

Q. Is it permitted to wish for one's death?

A. Undoubtedly, just as killing oneself or cutting off or having a bodily member cut off is unlawful unless necessary to preserve life, so wishing for death through anger or impatience against God's ordering is unlawful. Giving and taking life belongs to Him, as He says in Deuteronomy: *Ego occidam, et Ego vivere faciam*—I shall kill and I shall make live.

Nevertheless, we must observe that death may be desired for a good motive: for example, because of this life's countless attendant evils and danger of falling into sin, or through ardent desire for eternal union with God. For these reasons death may lawfully be desired, provided the desire is accompanied by entire and perfect submission to God's will.

Indeed, no one can be just without loving God perfectly, and someone not wishing to see and possess Him does not love Him in this way. This can be attained only through death, the door through which we must pass to enjoy God's presence, according to this Gospel saying: *Transiit a morte ad vitam*—he has passed from death to life. Hence St. Paul said his most ardent desire was to die: *Desiderium habens dissolvi, et esse cum Christo*—having a desire to depart and be with Christ.

The saints were always penetrated by these sentiments. Witness St. Augustine and the devout author of the *Soliloquies* found among this Father's works. Carried away by love, he said to God: *Eja Domine moriar ut Te videam, nolo vivere, volo mori*—ah, Lord, let me die to see You; I do not wish to live, I wish to die.

Therefore a soul forming such desires in its heart must undoubtedly be praised, provided it submits perfectly to God's will. Such was St. Augustine's submission when, seeing his episcopal city Hippo besieged by enemies and its inhabitants about to be put to the sword, he asked God to take him from this life lest he witness so great a calamity. God granted this, as Possidius, author of the holy bishop's life, relates.[5]

Q. What fruit must we draw from this conference?

A. First, consider how greatly homicide's crime displeases God: *Virum sanguinum et dolosum abominabitur Dominus*—the Lord will abhor the bloodthirsty and deceitful man—and the punishment attached to it. If

someone sheds another man's blood, his own will be shed in return, He says in Genesis: *Quicumque effuderit humanum sanguinem, fundetur sanguis ejus*.

What a terrible threat! God wishes not only that someone killing his brother die miserably, and someone killing by the sword die by the sword, but, according to St. Ambrose's judgment, that he die in despair like Cain. His conscience is to be his own executioner, continually setting the crime before his eyes.

Secondly, avoid quarrels, tavern disputes and the company of certain perverse men inciting revenge. Never lend an ear to these blowers upon discord's embers \[people who fan and inflame conflict\]. However humble, gentle and patient David was, he found no better means than this to restrain himself from killing Saul.

The opportunity could not have been better. His enemy was in his hands. The soldiers withdrawn with him into the cave advised killing him and even alleged reasons of justice. "At last," they told him, "the day has come when the Lord promised to deliver your enemy into your hands. Here he is; kill him with your sword." What would David not have done had he wished to listen? But he answered with admirable firmness: "God forbid that I do what you advise and lay hands upon my lord": *Propitius sit mihi ne faciam hanc rem domino meo christo Domini mei, ut mittam manum meam in eum*—may He be gracious to me that I not do this to my lord, my Lord's anointed, and lay my hand upon him.

Oh, if you imitated this great prince! Your passion would weaken little by little. Driving far from you those seducers who foster your anger and revenge, you would imperceptibly return within yourselves. Ask God to communicate this holy king's moderation and gentleness to you. This will be the means of living peacefully with everyone and deserving the reward the Lord promises peacemakers.[6]

---

[1] Romans 13:4; Augustine, *City of God*, I, chapter 21.

[2] Genesis 9:3 (the source's chapter III is erroneous); Augustine, *City of God*, I, chapter 20.

[3] Thomas, II–II, q.64, a.7 (the printed article number is defective).

[4] Alexander III, *Suscepimus*, on voluntary homicide; Augustine, *On Free Choice*, I, chapter 5; Innocent XI's condemnation; Exodus 22:2.

[5] Deuteronomy 32:39 (printed verse erroneous); John 5:24; Philippians 1:23 (source 1:22); Augustine on Psalm 141, number 8; Possidius's life.

[6] Psalm 5:6 (Vulgate 5:7–8 in the source); Genesis 9:6; Ambrose, *On Noah and the Ark*, chapter 18; 1 Samuel 24:4–6 (source 1 Kings 24:5).

Decalogue: Tenth Conference: On Hatred and Enmities

Original preacher not named.

Non occides. (Exodus 20.)

You shall not kill.

The fifth commandment is not limited to forbidding consummated homicide, which brings bodily death. As the Savior explains it, it also forbids anger, hatred and revenge: very dangerous passions which, although not always outwardly manifested, nevertheless make us guilty before God. To observe this commandment, therefore, avoiding actual homicide which takes our neighbor's life is insufficient. We must examine evil's hidden root within the heart and correct in ourselves every movement of hatred and revenge making us desire the destruction of the person we abhor.

Homicide consists not only in staining one's hands with brothers' blood but also in retaining hatred against them in one's heart. The Apostle St. John does not hesitate to say that someone hating his brother is a homicide: *Omnis qui odit fratrem suum homicida est*. There is very little difference, Salvian says, between those who kill and those who hate with murderous hatred: *Non sunt longe ab occidentibus, qui animo*

occisionis oderunt. This is the vice we must combat. Since hatred is the ordinary cause of enmities, we shall explain both and afterward give some remedies for avoiding them.[1]

Q. What is hatred, and what is the character of a man subject to this vice?

A. Hatred is generally understood as an aversion to what we believe contrary to our good, inclinations and interests. As good is love's object, evil is hatred's: *Odium est fuga mali*—hatred is flight from evil. This passion, like the others, can be good or bad. If someone hates what should be hated, it is good; if he hates what should be loved, it is vicious.

Thus hatred of our neighbor, whom God commands us to love, is very evil and much more culpable than anger, as St. Augustine observes. *Quid est odium?*, this Father asks—what is hatred? *Ira inveterata; ira festuca est, odium trabs*—inveterate anger; anger is a straw, hatred a beam.

Anger is a passing movement, but hatred an inveterate resentment. Anger is a brief agitation of wrath which flares up and is extinguished in a moment: no more than a speck or straw in the eye. Hatred is a beam tearing it apart. A revengeful man cannot bear seeing the person he hates or hearing him spoken well of. He thinks only of casting his vices and faults in his face.

He resembles, St. Basil says, those filthy flies which leave what is good and healthy to feed upon sores and ulcers, or vultures and ravens which never go to meadows of lovely flowers like other birds, but only where rotting corpses lie. Such is the mind of a man hating another. He conceals every good quality in hatred's object, and if there is a vice, there he stops and fixes his gaze. He cannot regard him kindly; everything the other does displeases him. He reproaches his weaknesses and his family's, his personal faults or his debtors'. He resembles the sea, which buries in its depths the gold, stones and everything most precious in a ship, but casts ashore corpses and every useless remnant of a sad shipwreck.

Here is hatred and the character of a man subject to this vice: *Odium est ira inveterata*—hatred is inveterate anger. To avoid being overcome, we must resist anger at its beginnings: *Sol non occidat super iracundiam vestram*—let not the sun set upon your anger.[2]

Q. Is it sinful to hate a person living a disorderly life?

A. St. Thomas says we must consider our neighbor as man and sinner, distinguishing in him what belongs to God from what belongs to man. What comes from God is nature's and grace's gifts; what comes from man is vice and sin. If we consider our neighbor as God's work, hating him is never lawful.

Charity's precept obliges us to love our greatest enemies if we wish to be children of the heavenly Father, Who makes His sun rise upon good and bad and rain fall upon just and sinners. But if we consider our neighbor as a sinner living in disorder, we are permitted to hate in him sin and what separates him from sovereign justice.

This is the perfect hatred the prophet king speaks of: *Perfecto odio oderam illos*—I hated them with perfect hatred. In sinners he hated not their nature but their malice and the impiety making them enemies of the God he loved. St. Augustine explains these words in this way: *Iniquos odio habui, et legem Tuam dilexi*—I hated the wicked and loved Your law. This is the disposition we must have toward evildoers.

"But they are drunkards, scoundrels, unchaste people," you will say. It makes no difference: hate their disorders and vices, not their persons. If heretics, combat their errors but preserve charity. St. Leo gives this rule when writing to Rusticus, bishop of Narbonne: *Odio habeantur peccata, non homines*—let sins be hated, not men.[3]

Q. Can someone without sin wish temporal misfortunes upon an enemy, such as illnesses or reverses in his business or possessions?

A. If someone wishing these misfortunes upon an enemy who unjustly persecutes him intends only their contribution to his eternal salvation or usefulness for his conversion, he does not sin, St. Thomas says. One may also wish an enemy not to recover from a misfortune into which he has fallen, so that he cannot harm oneself or one's relatives, provided in these cases one acts from pure zeal for justice. The Prophet says: *Zelavi super iniquos, pacem peccatorum videns*—I was moved to zeal concerning the wicked, seeing sinners' peace.

This doctrine accords with Pope St. Gregory's: *Evenire plerumque solet ut non amissa charitate, inimici nos ruina lætificet, et rursus ejus gloria sine invidiæ culpa contristet, cum et ruente eo quosdam bene erigi credimus, et proficiente illo plerosque injuste opprimi formidamus*—it often happens that without losing charity an enemy's downfall gladdens us, while his glory saddens us without the fault of envy, when we believe his fall allows some rightly to rise and fear his advancement will bring unjust oppression upon many.

But wishing an enemy evil from a spirit of revenge or hatred sins against charity's precept toward our neighbor. According to this, a Christian is obliged in conscience to love even his own enemy; keep his heart ready to wish and procure his good; pray for him; forgive his offenses; and finally assist his urgent spiritual and bodily necessities as he would any other Christian. Jesus Christ commands this: *Diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his qui oderunt vos, et orate pro persequentibus, et calumniantibus vos*—love your enemies, do good to those hating you, and pray for those persecuting and calumniating you.[4]

Q. Is there an obligation to give enemies outward signs of friendship? May these be denied in any case?

A. St. Bernardine of Siena proposes this question: are all Christians obliged before God to give their enemies outward signs of friendship? He answers that apparently they are obliged, according to Jesus Christ's words: if you greet only those greeting you, do you do more than the Gentiles? *Nonne et ethnici hoc faciunt?* In these words the Lord seems to warn us that showing benevolence through outward signs to friends is insufficient; we are obliged to do the same toward enemies.

Nevertheless, this saint acknowledges possible exceptions to the general rule. Here is his explanation. We must know, he says, that some outward signs are necessary to make the heart's charity known, and all the faithful are obliged to practice them. Someone absolutely refusing to manifest charity through them gives reason to believe hatred alone, rather than love, reigns in his heart.

The commonest signs are greeting others, whether taking the initiative or answering their greeting, and speaking when occasion offers. Hence someone refusing to greet an enemy, or avoiding meeting him so as not to speak and give this sign of charity, manifests by this conduct the hatred hidden in his heart—unless he refuses to speak to or withdraws from his enemy to avoid a greater evil or for another legitimate reason. In that case, the saint adds, he must make it known to those present lest they be scandalized.

This, in my judgment, is the whole answer to the difficulty proposed. One must love one's enemy with Christian charity and not refuse signs of this love unless there is reason to fear another evil will result. Nevertheless, there is no obligation to give him outward signs of tender and familiar love such as those ordinarily given a special friend, or confer benefits not required by a just and urgent necessity. It suffices to keep one's heart disposed to do so in a necessary case. This is St. Thomas's doctrine.[5]

Q. What ordinary rule should be followed concerning forgiveness of enemies?

A. The ordinary rule in these cases is, first, that someone who offended his neighbor and made himself his enemy through deeds or words should take the initiative in asking forgiveness and seeking reconciliation. This is the Savior's meaning: "If, when presenting your offering at the altar, you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar and go to reconcile with your brother; then return to offer your gift."

Secondly, someone offended is obliged inwardly to forgive the injury received. If the aggressor wishes reconciliation, he must be ready to receive and forgive him wholeheartedly. St. Augustine teaches this: *Si ille non læsit*, this Father says, *non opus est pergere ad reconciliationem, non enim veniam postulabis ab eo qui tibi fecit injuriam, sed tantum dimittes, sicut tibi dimitti a Domino cupis quod ipse commiseris*—if one has not inflicted injury, there is no need to go seeking reconciliation; you will not ask pardon from someone who wronged you, but only forgive, as you desire the Lord to forgive what you yourself committed.

Thirdly, the offender must repair the damage done to another's person, goods or honor. Without violating charity, the injured person may seek fitting satisfaction through justice when he cannot obtain it otherwise.

Fourthly, both are obliged to abandon hatred and enmity. Without this they can neither deserve forgiveness of their sins, be absolved in the sacrament of Penance nor perform any good work pleasing to God: *Si charitatem non habuero, nihil mihi prodest*—if I have not charity, it profits me nothing. Indeed, with the Apostle I say that even if the revengeful person suffered martyrdom he would not be saved. According to St. Gregory he would be the devil's martyr, not Jesus Christ's: *Sua dedit et se diabolo*—he gave his possessions and himself to the devil. Ecclesiastical history gives us a famous example.

During the emperors Valerian and Gallienus's time, a lay Christian named Nicephorus lived in Antioch. He was the particular friend of a priest of the same city named Sapricius. They lived together like brothers. After a long time in such good relations, through some misfortune unknown to me their friendship cooled and finally ended in an open rupture. Their enmity grew so great that neither could bear the other's sight.

They remained thus for a long time. Finally Nicephorus came to himself and, considering hatred a diabolical vice, approached Sapricius's friends to obtain reconciliation. He sent word that he acknowledged his fault, deeply regretted offending him and begged forgiveness and restoration to friendship. Sapricius would not listen to Nicephorus's pleas and despised his submission.

Despite this refusal Nicephorus again entreated him through other friends, who obtained nothing. Thinking this insufficient, he went personally to seek Sapricius, threw himself at his feet and begged him through Jesus Christ to forgive. But this hard man remained inflexible.

During Valerian's persecution against the Church, Sapricius was arrested, brought before the governor and condemned to death. Learning this, Nicephorus followed him to the place of execution, continuing to beg forgiveness. At last it seems God had abandoned this inexorable man to his heart's hardness. Seeing the executioner ready to take his life, Sapricius cowardly denied Jesus Christ.

Then Nicephorus, considering this unhappy man's salvation entirely lost, cried out that he was Christian. Loudly confessing Jesus Christ's name, which that apostate had renounced, he deserved to receive martyrdom's crown. The revengeful Sapricius lost it because he would not abandon the hatred in his heart.[6]

Q. What ordinary causes produce hatred and enmities?

A. Antipathy, pride, self-interest and gossip are this vice's commonest causes. Antipathy, or opposition of dispositions, often originates disputes, quarrels and aversions. We are obliged to live with people whose inclinations oppose ours. One is cheerful, another melancholy; one lively, another phlegmatic; one talkative, another sad and silent. These natural temperaments cannot agree. If grace does not correct nature, they produce hatreds never ending.

Secondly, pride is another cause generating and maintaining enmities: *Inter superbos semper jurgia sunt*, the Wise Man says—among the proud there are always quarrels. This fierce and insolent passion despises everyone and cannot bear anyone's contempt. A biting word, slight lie, jest, disputed precedence, omitted courtesy or one offered with a bad air inflames and irritates it. Those formerly living as friends no longer even speak.

Thirdly, self-interest often separates the greatest friends, introduces discord into families and arms brother against brother. When "mine" and "yours" are at issue, scarcely a man fails to lose friendship with everyone.

Fourthly, gossip also contributes greatly to enmities: *Lingua tertia multos commovit, et dispersit illos de gente in gentem*, the Holy Spirit says—a third tongue has disturbed many and scattered them from nation to nation. What is this third tongue? The gossip's. If someone said a word against you, the gossip exaggerates it, and this is how hatreds form.

Nothing is more pernicious than these flatterers who, believing they make everyone friends, carry reports between both sides of everything said and done. St. Paul calls them abominable in God's eyes: *Susurrones Deo odibiles*—whisperers hateful to God. These are serpents' tongues, plagues of the commonwealth, blowers upon discord, sowers of lawsuits, capable of disturbing everything among families, friends, relatives and neighbors. *Vir peccator turbabit amicos, et in medio pacem habentium immittet inimicitiam*—a sinful man disturbs friends and introduces enmity among those at peace.

These are hatred's ordinary causes. If any of you is subject to this vice, examine its origin carefully to apply the remedy.[7]

Q. Having disclosed the causes producing enmities, will you tell us what remedies to oppose to them, since a Christian cannot have enemies?

A. You are right to say a Christian should not have enemies. *Amicos diligere omnium est*, Tertullian says, *inimicos autem christianorum; christianus nullius est hostis*—loving friends belongs to everyone, but loving enemies to Christians; a Christian is no one's enemy. Since the contrary happens very often, we must examine the cause of aversion toward our neighbor to combat it.

I. If it comes from antipathy and opposing dispositions, the great remedy is patience, remembering the Apostle's words: "Bear one another's burdens, and thus you will fulfill Jesus Christ's law." Avoid contradicting people with whom agreement is difficult. A man takes pleasure in his own opinions and obstinately maintains them, as Scripture observes: *Lætatur homo in sententia oris sui*—a man delights in his mouth's judgment. He cannot be contradicted without irritation. The weaker and more imperfect such people are, the greater the moderation and prudence needed toward them.

II. If they are such that tolerating them in conscience without offending God is impossible, one must separate from them. But if it is a husband or wife, two brothers in the same family or two neighbors in one house, what should be done? Strive to conquer yourselves and hope that grace corrects nature. You cannot entirely extinguish that repugnance and opposition of disposition, but feeling temptation is one thing, consenting to it another.

When you succeed in overcoming this aversion and living peacefully with troublesome people, you will have merited much, practiced works of mercy and fashioned daily many precious crowns which you will afterward find in heaven. Take courage, beloved brethren. Accustom yourselves to gentleness, and imperceptibly you will win those rebellious spirits: *Verbum dulce multiplicat amicos, et mitigat inimicos*, the Holy Spirit says, *sapiens in verbis seipsum amabilem facit*—a sweet word multiplies friends and softens enemies; the wise man makes himself lovable through his words.

III. When pride causes enmities, oppose it with humility. Do you wish to preserve your souls in peace, the Savior tells us? Learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart. Repressing hatred and being outwardly humble are insufficient if you are not inwardly so. The heart must instruct the tongue and regulate our words: *Cor sapientis erudiet os ejus*—the wise man's heart will instruct his mouth.

Try to acquire this wisdom and humility of heart to repress that perverse inclination leading you to return injury for injury and evil for evil. "But if you knew the harm done me!" They have not done you as much harm as was done to Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Scripture teaches that He answered nothing to all the

outrages heaped upon Him: *Jesus autem tacebat*—but Jesus was silent.

Do you not know that one word calls forth another and an indiscreet saying suffices to throw any man off his course \[disturb his composure\]? Thus the Wise Man so earnestly asked God to set a guard upon his mouth and seal his lips lest his tongue bring his ruin: *Quis dabit ori meo custodiam, et super labia mea signaculum certum, ut non cadam ab ipsis, et lingua mea perdat me?*—who will set a guard upon my mouth and a sure seal upon my lips, lest I fall through them and my tongue destroy me? This is what we must do to prevent pride from precipitating us into hatred and enmities.

IV. If self-interest causes discord with your brethren, submit to prudent and instructed persons' judgment. Surrender something of your right to obtain peace. Above all, do not rashly engage in lawsuits, which often produce revenge and irreconcilable hatreds.

V. Finally, if gossips set you at odds with your neighbor, do not listen. Regard those flattering you as suspect, St. Bernard says, and those wishing you to be your brother's enemy as enemies. Nothing is more pernicious than those perverse men whose gossip incites hatred and revenge. The best means of avoiding their seduction is to stop their mouths as soon as possible: *Linguam nequam noli audire*—do not listen to an evil tongue.[8]

I shall conclude with an admirable example teaching how readily you must forgive offenses. Those who have read something of St. Augustine's works know that his mother St. Monica was adorned with every virtue desirable in a Christian woman. She was very devout, attended the holy sacrifice daily, and possessed such prudence and moderation that she won her husband Patricius for God and converted him to the faith.

She was so chaste that the most slanderous tongues could say nothing against her; so zealous for God's glory and souls' salvation that she followed her son by sea and land to Rome, Ostia and Milan to draw him from the Manichaeans' error into which he had fallen. Everyone knows St. Augustine's conversion was the fruit of the tears his holy mother shed for him.

Nevertheless, when Augustine prays for his mother's soul and pleads her virtues before God's throne to deliver her from purgatory if she entered it, he recalls neither her devotion, chastity nor zeal for God's glory and her husband's and son's conversion. He passes all this over in silence, saying only that she wholeheartedly forgave those offending her.

"O Lord," he says to God, "I know my poor mother lived very Christianly, according to Your holy laws' rule. But I also know she needs Your mercy. Woe even to the best-ordered life if You examine it rigorously! *Væ etiam laudabili vitæ, si remota misericordia discutias eam*—woe even to a praiseworthy life if You examine it with mercy removed. Remember that she was merciful. You promised to forgive all debts to someone forgiving his brother; this suffices, Lord, to incline You to forgive the woman who always forgave. *Scio misericorditer operatam, et ex corde dimisisse debita debitoribus suis; dimitte illi et debita sua*—I know she acted mercifully and wholeheartedly remitted her debtors' debts; remit her debts also."

Imitate this example, beloved hearers. Win so glorious a victory over yourselves. Wholeheartedly forgive those offending you, abandon hatred and revenge and reconcile with your enemies if you have any. Trust that if you show mercy in this world, you will receive it in the next.[9]

---

[1] Matthew 5:22; 1 John 3:15 (source reference garbled); Salvian, *On Providence*, cited as 28.

[2] *deudores.*

[3] Thomas, II–II, q.34, a.3; Matthew 5:45; Psalm 139:22 (Vulgate 138); Augustine on Psalm 118:113 in Vulgate numbering; Leo's letter to Rusticus, cited through the canon *Odio*.

[4] Thomas, II–II, q.83, a.8, reply 3; Psalm 73:3 (Vulgate 72:3); Gregory, *Morals*, XXII, chapter 26; Matthew 5:44.

[5] Bernardine of Siena, Sermon 28 for Tuesday after the third Sunday of Lent; Matthew 5:47; Thomas, II–II, q.25, a.9.

[6] Matthew 5:23–24; Augustine, *On the Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, I, chapter 10, number 27; 1 Corinthians 13:2–3; life of Nicephorus, martyrology for February 9.

[7] Proverbs 13:10; Sirach 28:16 and 11 in the source's numbering; Romans 1:29–30.

[8] Printed p. 371 reads *audire*.

[9] Augustine, *Confessions*, IX, chapter 13.

Decalogue: Eleventh Conference: On the Sixth Commandment: The Vice of Impurity

Original preacher not named.

Non mœchaberis. (Exodus 20.)

You shall not commit adultery.

In the sixth commandment God forbids not only adultery's crime but every kind of impurity, of whatever nature, as St. Augustine explains in book II of the *Questions on Exodus*, question 71. Although this vice is widespread and wreaks great havoc in the world, I shall speak of it briefly so as not to offend chaste ears.

The brevity with which the Lord lays this precept upon us plainly indicates that lengthy discourses on it are unsuitable: both to avoid teaching innocent souls what they do not know and to avoid bringing things all too well known back to memory and imagination. Observing this restraint, I shall confine myself to showing how dangerous it is to fall into this vice forbidden by the sixth commandment; the causes leading to it; the effects it produces; and the difficulty of abandoning it once it has become habitual.

Since I cannot set before you with complete clarity so dangerous a vice, which condemns so many souls, I beg you yourselves to supply what modesty obliges me to suppress and inwardly make a salutary application of the little I shall say.[1]

Q. What vice does the sixth commandment forbid us? Is it easy to incur it?

A. This vice is impurity, which stains soul and body: a vice so infamous that it should not even be named among Christians. *Fornicatio autem et omnis immunditia nec nominetur in vobis, sicut decet sanctos*, St. Paul says—but let fornication and all uncleanness not even be named among you, as befits saints.

It consists in a disordered love of carnal pleasures and is committed in many ways which must be explained in confession, but not here. I shall content myself with telling you generally that falling into it is very easy because of our nature's corruption and propensity: *Sensus enim et cogitatio humani cordis in malum prona sunt ab adolescentia sua*, Scripture tells us—the inclination and thought of the human heart are prone to evil from its youth.

What brought the Flood upon the earth and fire from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah? Was it not this abominable sin, to which the men of that time abandoned themselves without restraint, as Holy Scripture also teaches? *Omnis quippe caro corruperat viam suam*—for all flesh had corrupted its way.

As St. Jerome observes, this vice attacks every kind of person: men and women, poor and rich. It hides no less in poor people's rags than rich people's sumptuous garments. *In serico et pannis eadem libido dominatur*, this holy Doctor says, *nec regum purpuras timet, nec mendicantium spernit squalorem*—the same lust rules in silk and rags; it neither fears kings' purple nor disdains beggars' squalor.

It attacks the old as well as the young. Solomon gave us a very tragic example. Solomon, that great king who pronounced oracles of justice and wisdom and was the whole earth's admiration, abandoned himself to this vice at his life's end: *Cum esset jam senex, depravatum est cor ejus per mulieres*—when already old, his heart was corrupted through women. So completely did he surrender to this infamous passion that his salvation is very doubtful to us.

We have another example in those wicked elders who wanted to corrupt chaste Susanna. God grant there be no foolish old men today imitating them, degrading and debasing their gray hairs through this shameful

crime, concealing impure fire beneath white hair! Having lived mired in it during youth, they would bury in lust an old age less decrepit than corrupted.

There is therefore no age or condition in which this sin need not be feared, because falling into it is very easy. Hence St. John Climacus gives this lesson: while in this life, do not trust that impure clay of which your body is composed or place confidence in it until appearing before Jesus Christ's tribunal.[2]

Q. Are young people not more inclined to this vice?

A. This vice must be feared at every time, but especially in youth. Many fall into it at their tenderest age. This comes from fathers' and mothers' negligence in failing to watch over their children as they should, allowing them to amuse themselves with others and putting brothers and sisters in bed together, and so forth.

Moreover, youth has three or four defects not found to the same degree at other ages, as St. Ambrose says: *Juventus ad amorem liberior, ad lapsum incautior, ad infirmitatem fragilior, ad correctionem durior*—youth is freer toward love, less cautious against falling, frailer in weakness and harder toward correction.

I. Youth is freer, softer and more susceptible to profane love. Young people's dominant passion is loving and being loved. This suffices to corrupt and pervert them, because loving creatures is impossible without exposure to sinning with them or at least incurring the heart's impurity of which the Gospel speaks: *Qui viderit mulierem ad concupiscendum eam, jam mœchatus est in corde suo*—whoever looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery in his heart.

You will tell me seeing a woman is not sinful. But looking at her with an evil intention is: *In oculo visus est, in corde peccatum*—sight is in the eye, sin in the heart. Who is more inclined to such faults than young people, seeking only company that makes them laugh, pleases and entertains them? *Ad amorem liberior*—freer toward love.

II. Youth has less judgment and is more inconsiderate. It neither foresees dangers nor takes precautions against them. Fond of amusement and dissipation, it makes no effort to flee dangerous company and sin: *Ad lapsum incautior*—less cautious against falling.

III. It is weaker and frailer. Lacking other ages' experience of human weakness, it falls more easily into snares laid by salvation's enemies: *Ad infirmitatem fragilior*—frailer in weakness.

IV. Finally, it is less responsive to correction and advice. However much young people are shown vice's horror, its accompanying punishments and disastrous consequences, this makes little or no impression: *Ad correctionem durior est*—it is harder toward correction. Hence, if they do not sin with others, they sin with themselves, wallowing in the infamous vice sufficient to ruin and condemn them. The Apostle says all committing it will not enter God's kingdom: *Neque molles regnum Dei possidebunt*—nor shall the effeminate possess God's kingdom.[3]

Q. What steps lead to impurity's vice?

A. Its commonest causes are curiosity, pride, idleness, familiar and frequent intercourse with persons of the other sex, reading bad books, drunkenness, gambling, dances and spectacles. We shall now treat some of these causes; the others will be discussed in following conferences.

I. Curiosity is often this vice's first cause. Hence the Wise Man warns: *Virginem ne conspicias, ne forte scandalizeris in decore illius*—do not gaze upon a maiden lest perhaps you stumble through her beauty. Curiosity of the eyes consists in looking at what it is forbidden to see. David walks upon his gallery, sees a woman bathing and fixes his gaze rather than averting it: *Vidit mulierem se lavantem*—he saw a woman washing herself. She was far from him, but concupiscence was near, St. Augustine says: *Mulier longe, libido prope*. This imprudent glance led him to adultery, which gave him cause to weep all his remaining days.

There is also curiosity in dress. People wish to make themselves conspicuous, look attractive and dress fashionably. To what end all this luxury, vanity and immodest adornment, unless to foster an unchaste passion or manifest pride more insolently? Tertullian says: *Aut ut negotietur luxuria, aut ut gloria insolescat*—either that lust may ply its trade or vainglory grow insolent.

There is also curiosity in company. A woman wishes to see and be seen, to be spoken about or speak of other women. Day and night she goes everywhere curiosity leads. Dinah, Jacob and Leah's daughter, had no intention of sinning with Shechem when she went out to see her country's women. Nevertheless, she was seized by force and became the victim of his passion. What caused her misfortune? Curiosity inciting her to see idolaters' feasts and assemblies: *Egressa est ut videret mulieres regionis illius*—she went out to see that region's women.

Finally, there is curiosity of the ears. People delight in hearing or holding perverse conversations, singing or hearing lascivious verses whose effeminate tone inspires only impurity. After this it is unsurprising that they fall. Do you wish to avoid this sin? Watch over your senses. *Ascendit mors per fenestras*, a prophet says—death has climbed through the windows. Through the senses this vice enters the soul. They are so many doors and windows admitting it, which must be closed and mortified: *Mortificate membra vestra, quæ sunt super terram*—put to death your members which are upon the earth.[4]

Q. Is idleness also often a cause of falling into impurity's vice?

A. Holy Scripture says this expressly. Describing a dissolute woman, it says she is an idler who sits at her house's door to amuse passersby: *Sedit in foribus domus suæ… ut vocaret transeuntes per viam, et pergentes itinere suo*—she sat at her house's doors to call those passing along the road and going their way.

It expressly says too that when David sinned it was a time when he was doing nothing, although he should have cared for his kingdoms by warring against the enemy: *Eo tempore quo solent reges ad bella procedere*—at the time when kings customarily go out to war. It adds that gluttony and idleness brought the Sodomites into this abominable vice: *Hæc fuit iniquitas Sodomæ sororis tuæ, superbia, saturitas panis et abundantia, et otium ipsius, et filiarum ejus*—this was your sister Sodom's iniquity: pride, fullness of bread and abundance, and her own and her daughters' idleness.

They and their children did nothing, thinking only of passing time in diversions and excesses. This ruined them and today ruins countless people living like them in idleness and pleasures. To avoid the flesh's dangerous temptations, you must love work and occupy yourselves usefully. Someone working has only one devil to combat; an idle person is exposed to every devil's assaults. He resembles a city open on all sides, unable to defend itself and easily falling into its enemies' hands.

Thus one counsel St. Jerome gives a young man who embraced monastic life is always to do something so as not to give the devil entry: *Facito semper aliquid operis, ut te semper diabolus inveniat occupatum*—always do some work, that the devil may always find you occupied. The holy Doctor himself practiced this, repelling impurity's burning arrows through continual study of Holy Scripture, long vigils and fervent prayers.

And you believe you can be chaste while living without doing anything, or spending time in pleasure, gambling or frivolous amusements! Know that Asmodeus, impurity's demon, is expelled only through prayer and mortification of the senses. The mortification suitable for us all is work, the penance imposed upon all Adam's children. Apply yourselves to it, so that the enemy, that roaring lion who never sleeps, may find no opening to attack you: *Nolite locum dare diabolo*—give no place to the devil.[5]

Q. Why do you include frequent and familiar intercourse with persons of a different sex among the causes leading to the vice you combat?

A. Because we must always fear the contagion sin spread over creatures, which become occasions of temptation to men and a snare often making them fall: *Factæ sunt in tentationem animabus hominum: et in*

muscipulam pedibus insipientium—they have become a temptation to men's souls and a trap for fools' feet.

Very familiar and continual conversation with persons of a different sex imperceptibly leads to dangerous intimacies, which St. Jerome calls fatal contests for purity and the moral beginning of its loss: *Principia morituræ virginitatis*—beginnings of a virginity about to die.

"But this is excessive rigor," you will tell me. "Is speaking to and visiting women not lawful?" Certainly it is permitted when charity, necessity or courtesy requires. But when these conversations are useless, we must avoid them, the Wise Man says: *In medio mulierum noli commorari*—do not linger among women.

"Must young people always remain shut up at home? How will they marry unless they see one another?" Visit one another, then, but decently, with a right intention and the purpose of marrying, in your parents' presence. Never flee their sight to contract particular friendships ordinarily ending in great disorders. Someone visiting you to marry has a good intention or not. If not, you must have lost every sense of honor if you see him continually and secretly. If he does, he will esteem you all the more for being prudent, modest and reserved. Hence one should converse with persons of a different sex only with great circumspection.[6]

Q. Is reading bad books not also an incentive to impurity's vice?

A. Some books are very pernicious to readers, directed toward corrupting the heart and purity of morals. Such are books of obscene stories, unchaste or indecent songs, love novels, comedies and other works of this kind. All these books incite impurity and are no less pernicious than lascivious pictures.

Nevertheless, people read them under the pretext, they say, of learning to speak fluently and enliven conversation. The truth is that they read them to learn evil and inspire it in others with greater boldness and shamelessness. *Non omnino per hanc turpitudinem verba illa commodius discuntur*, St. Augustine says, *sed per hæc verba turpitudo illa confidentius perpetratur*—those words are not better learned through such obscenity; rather, through these words obscenity is committed more confidently.

Frequent reading of these books fills the heart with profane love, inflames passion and makes the devil reign within it. Thus the Church forbids printing, keeping and retaining them. The Council of Tours of 1583 imposes excommunication incurred *ipso facto*. Under profession of faith it says: *Ne libri ad luxuriam et luxum provocantes imprimantur, vendantur, legantur, aut retineantur omnino… jubetque sicubi reperti fuerint comburantur sub ejusdem anathematis pœna, quam ipso facto incurrent qui minime paruerint*—let books provoking lust and luxury not be printed, sold, read or retained at all; it orders any found to be burned, under the same anathema, incurred by the very fact by those disobeying.

The best casuists judge those keeping or reading them unworthy of absolution. This reading is so pernicious, the celebrated Gerson says, that excusing those devoted to it from mortal sin is very difficult. He concludes that the confessor must oblige possessors of such books to burn or tear them up.

This judgment is authorized by Scripture's example, relating that the Apostles obliged possessors of bad books to throw them into the fire, although very valuable: *Multi autem ex eis, qui fuerant curiosa sectati, contulerunt libros, et combusserunt coram omnibus*—many who had practiced curious arts brought together their books and burned them before everyone.

Q. Is conversion difficult for a man subject to this vice?

A. So difficult that most unchaste people die impenitent. Converting one of these sinners is no less a miracle than raising a dead man, a Father of the Church says. He is deaf, hearing nothing said about his danger of condemnation. Lot warned his sons-in-law to leave Sodom because the Lord was going to destroy that city. But they mocked him, thinking he jested: *Visus est eis quasi ludens loqui*—he seemed to them to be speaking in jest.

He is blind. Although everyone sees his disorders, passion makes him alone fail to recognize them. Everywhere people speak of him contemptuously. He is the public's laughingstock, the neighborhood's reproach and his family's disgrace, drawing dishonor upon it that will never be erased, as Scripture says: *Turpitudinem et ignominiam congregat sibi, et opprobrium illius non delebitur*—he gathers shame and ignominy to himself, and his reproach will not be erased.

Nevertheless, he sees none of this, or wishes to see none. Witness that foolish woman Jeremiah speaks of: *Desperavi, nequaquam faciam: adamavi quippe alienos, et post eos ambulabo*—I have despaired; I shall not do it; I have loved strangers and shall follow them.

A maiden gives much cause for talk and scandalizes everyone through the frequent visits she receives from that young man. But if warned to amend she considers it madness: *Desperavi, nequaquam faciam*—I have despaired; I shall not do it. Tell her: "You risk your honor, are the world's laughingstock and live in a proximate occasion of sin. You cannot be absolved; if absolved, it will be sacrilege. In a word, you condemn yourself." Nothing can move her to abandon her foolish loves: *Adamavi alienos, et post eos ambulabo*—I have loved strangers and shall follow them.

Finally, what makes an unchaste person's conversion difficult is his seeming deprivation of every sentiment of Christian life. He has neither faith nor fear of God, despises His threats and the terror of His judgments, doubts hell and eternity, mocks Gospel maxims and hates all works of penance. Oh, how difficult for such a sinner to convert! Thus the Wise Man tells us he will lose his soul through the folly of a heart passionately attached to creatures: *Propter cordis inopiam perdet animam suam*—through want of understanding he will lose his soul. He will die as he lived.

See Jezebel's end, Ahab king of Israel's wife. When Jehu entered Jerusalem with his troops, she believed she could attract him through beauty and painted her face for that purpose. But what did Jehu say? "Throw that infamous woman out the window." When afterward they went to bury her, they found only skull and extremities of feet and hands, because dogs had devoured her whole body according to Elijah's prediction. Oh, what fine honor and how well rewarded! *Hæccine est illa Jezabel?*—is this that Jezebel?—passersby said contemptuously.

See Herod's end, whom St. John the Baptist so often rebuked for his incestuous relations with Herodias: *Consumptus a vermibus expiravit*—consumed by worms, he expired.[7]

Q. What means must an unchaste person employ to convert and escape the danger threatening his salvation?

A. He must recognize continence as God's gift and ask Him for it most urgently and fervently, invoking for this purpose the most holy Virgin and saints especially distinguished by this virtue. *Ut scivi quoniam aliter non possem esse continens nisi Deus det*, the Wise Man says, *adii Dominum, et deprecatus sum Illum ex totis præcordiis*—when I knew I could not otherwise be continent unless God granted it, I approached the Lord and besought Him from my whole heart.

Secondly, he must entrust himself to a wise director who will give the remedies and counsels needed to avoid this crime henceforth and conceive a true horror of everything inciting it. Many ask God for conversion and would, so to speak, regret being converted. They share the disposition St. Augustine says he had when young: *At ego adolescens, miser et valde miser, petieram a Te castitatem, et continentiam, sed noli modo*.

"I, a miserable young man, asked You, O my God, for chastity; but at the same time begged You not to grant it so soon." *Timebam enim ne me cito exaudires et sanares a morbo concupiscentiæ, quam mallebam expleri quam extingui*—for I feared You might quickly hear me and heal concupiscence's disease, which I preferred to have satisfied rather than extinguished.

Thirdly, he must flee everything leading to this sin: *Fugite fornicationem*—flee fornication. Some sins must be resisted and faced in combat. But in temptations against purity one must flee, avoid all occasions and withdraw from every object capable of kindling an impure flame within us: *Fugite fornicationem*.

Only by flight can we triumph over so dangerous an enemy. Chaste Joseph found no better means of escaping Potiphar's wife's solicitations than leaving her house as quickly as possible, abandoning his cloak in that unhappy woman's hands when she incited him to sin: *Relicto in manu ejus pallio, fugit, et egressus est foras*—leaving his cloak in her hand, he fled and went outside.

Consider this crime's terrifying ugliness. None imprints a more shameful stain upon man: *Omne peccatum quodcumque fecerit homo extra corpus est: qui autem fornicatur, in corpus suum peccat*—every sin a man commits is outside the body; whoever fornicates sins against his own body. What are its effects and disastrous consequences? *Qui se jungit fornicariis, erit nequam*, Sirach says, *putredo et vermes hereditabunt illum*—someone joining himself to prostitutes will be wicked; rot and worms will inherit him.

Shameful diseases, disagreements, divisions, divorces and enmities in this life; in eternity much more horrible punishments: *Fornicatoribus pars erit in stagno ardenti, in igne et sulphure*—fornicators' portion will be in the burning lake, in fire and sulfur. A lake of fire and sulfur! See, unchaste people, your eternal dwelling if you do not convert and do penance!

Yes, unhappy impure man—and you a thousand times unhappier, who stained the marriage bed and violated matrimony's holiness through infamous adultery—this will be your torment for all eternity! How much better to extinguish concupiscence's fire now!

These are the remedies against the vice discussed. Well practiced, with grace's assistance they can produce an unchaste person's conversion. But ah, Lord, Your ministers' voice is very weak in moving such sinners. Speak Yourself, O my God, to these hardened hearts! Open these willfully blind eyes, whose owners miserably condemn themselves for a momentary pleasure. Pity these unhappy people who have no pity upon themselves, so that they may recognize their danger, do penance and deserve pardon from You.[8]

---

[1] Exodus 20:14; Augustine, *Questions on Exodus*, book II, question 71 as cited.

[2] Ephesians 5:3; Genesis 8:21; 6:12; Jerome to Salvina; 1 Kings 11:4 (source 3 Kings); Daniel 13; John Climacus, *Ladder*, step 18, number 15 as cited.

[3] Ambrose, Sermon 16 on Psalm 118, number 8; Matthew 5:28; 1 Corinthians 6:9–10.

[4] Sirach 9:8 in the source's numbering; 2 Samuel 11:2 (source 2 Kings); Augustine; Tertullian, *On Women's Dress*; Genesis 34:1–2; Jeremiah 9:21; Colossians 3:5 (printed verse 8 erroneous).

[5] 2 Samuel 11:1; Ezekiel 16:49; Jerome to Rusticus; Tobit 3:8–17; Ephesians 4:27.

[6] Wisdom 14:11; Jerome to Nepotian; Sirach 42:12 (the source reference is garbled).

[7] Jerome to Eustochium, Letter 12 in the source's numbering; Genesis 19:14; Proverbs 6:32–33; Jeremiah 2:25 (source 2:23); 2 Kings 9:30–37; Acts 12:23 (printed reference defective).

[8] Wisdom 8:21; Augustine, *Confessions*, VIII, chapter 7 (the source says chapter 6); 1 Corinthians 6:18; Genesis 39:12; Sirach 19:3 in the source's numbering; Revelation 21:8.

Decalogue: Twelfth Conference: On Gluttony and Drunkenness

Original preacher not named.

Nolite inebriari vino, in quo est luxuria. (Ephesians 5.)

Do not give yourselves to drunkenness, which leads to lust.

When St. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, forbids drunkenness as impurity's source, he makes us understand sufficiently that intemperance is the commonest cause of the sin forbidden in the sixth commandment. Drunkenness is a work of darkness leading to every kind of dissoluteness and disorder. A man heated with

wine recognizes neither reason, shame, fear nor religion.

Someone abandoning himself to drunkenness, St. Jerome says, will soon experience impurity's most shameful movements: *Venter mero æstuans, despumat in libidines*—the belly seething with wine foams over into lusts. I shall never believe, this holy Doctor says, that a man subject to wine and gluttony preserves chastity: *Numquam ebrium castum putabo*—I shall never consider a drunkard chaste.

St. John Climacus affirms that intemperance produces a flood of evil thoughts, a spring of every kind of corruption and an inexhaustible sea of secret and detestable impurities. Someone making himself his belly's slave while claiming to overcome impurity's demon, this saint adds, resembles a man wishing to extinguish fire with oil.

After treating impurity's vice in the last conference, in this one we shall speak of gluttony and drunkenness, which lead to it, and give some counsels to tavern keepers, who often occasion these faults.[1]

Q. What is gluttony? In how many ways is it committed?

A. Gluttony is a disordered appetite for eating and drinking: *Appetitus inordinatus edendi et bibendi*, St. Thomas says. Although not always mortal, this sin is numbered among the capital sins because it originates many others. It is committed in five ways contained in this verse:

Præpropere, laute, nimis, ardenter, studiose.

That is, someone incurs this sin:

First, by eating and drinking before the appointed time without any necessity.

Secondly, by diligently seeking exquisite, delicate foods and maintaining a sumptuous table disproportionate to his state.

Thirdly, by eating excessively, as the Sodomites did, filling themselves with food and drink, which caused their ruin.

Fourthly, by eating with great eagerness and craving, as Esau did when returning from the hunt. He sold Jacob his birthright for a dish of lentils his brother had in his hands.

Fifthly, by eating with excessive delight, as Eli's sons did, carefully seeking new sauces and seasonings and refusing cooked meat, wanting it raw to prepare to their taste.

Here are the several ways of committing gluttony's sin, which often becomes mortal: for example, when excessive expenditure upon the table causes failure to pay debts or the commission of other injustices.[2]

Q. Does someone sin mortally if he becomes ill through eating too much or eating things he knew were contrary to his health?

A. St. Thomas judges that someone falling into excess so considerable and harmful to health cannot be excused from mortal sin whenever this happens knowingly and with deliberate purpose. Here are his words: *Si quis tamen scienter propter immoderatam concupiscentiam cibi grave suo corpori detrimentum inferret, nimis comedendo, et nociva sumendo, non excusaretur a peccato mortali*—if someone knowingly, through an immoderate craving for food, gravely harmed his body by overeating and taking harmful things, he would not be excused from mortal sin.

Therefore, according to this holy Doctor's teaching, we must affirm that if food's or drink's quality or quantity caused grave harm to health, and this was done with sufficient deliberation, excusing it from mortal sin is difficult. Much more so if the person committing the excess has experienced it before.

Q. Does someone commit sin by eating or drinking to satiety principally to taste the food's pleasure, even without exceeding so far as to harm himself?

A. Certainly one may without sin experience, even voluntarily, the pleasure God placed in eating and drinking, when this enjoyment is not proposed as the action's ultimate end and one eats or drinks to restore bodily strength and preserve health.

St. Augustine's reason is that not only must we nourish ourselves to preserve health, but things taken for this purpose must have agreeable flavor and taste, although we do not use them for the pleasure they cause. But someone eating or drinking with pleasure rather than necessity as the ultimate end acts against right reason and sins.

Thus Innocent XI condemned this proposition in his decree of March 2, 1679: *Comedere et bibere usque ad satietatem ob solam voluptatem non est peccatum, dummodo non obsit valetudini, quia licite potest appetitus naturalis frui actibus suis*. That is: eating and drinking to satiety for pleasure alone is not sinful, provided it does not harm health, because the natural appetite may lawfully enjoy its proper acts.

This censure accords with the saints' doctrine. They teach that we should use foods only as medicine necessary to restore strength: *Hoc me docuisti*, St. Augustine said, *ut quemadmodum medicamenta, sic alimenta sumpturus accedam*—You taught me to approach food's reception as I would medicines.[3]

Q. In what does drunkenness consist? Is it a mortal sin by its nature?

A. Drunkenness, St. Thomas says, consists in immoderate use of wine. Someone incurs this sin when voluntary excess deprives him of reason's use or notably disturbs it.

Sometimes drunkenness is involuntary: for example, a man unaccustomed to wine becomes drunk because he does not know its strength or has not experienced the amount he could drink without this happening. Then drunkenness is not sin, at least not mortal. This is what people believe happened to Noah the first time he drank wine, consequently not knowing its power. *Primus Noe vineam plantavit: dedit naturam, sed ignoravit potentiam*, St. Ambrose says as cited by Gratian—Noah first planted a vineyard; he gave it cultivation but did not know its power.

Voluntary drunkenness is by its nature mortal sin. St. Paul says so, placing this vice among those depriving one of beatitude: "Do not be deceived: neither the unchaste nor drunkards will inherit God's kingdom." Hence St. Thomas concludes that drunkenness in itself is mortal sin: *Ebrietas per se loquendo est peccatum mortale*.

The reason is that no vice makes men more like beasts. Someone becoming drunk is deprived of the reason distinguishing him from them and consequently incapable of all social intercourse: *Homo, cum in honore esset, non intellexit: comparatus est jumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis*—man, though placed in honor, did not understand; he was compared to senseless beasts and became like them.

We may even say he becomes inferior to animals. Which animal's hearing, sight or feet are so weak as a drunken man's? What animal transgresses nature's limits as he does? This shows drunkenness's inherent disorder; we shall better recognize this sin's enormity through its effects.[4]

Q. What effects does drunkenness cause?

A. They can be considered regarding the soul, the body and the family of someone subject to this vice.

I. Regarding the soul, it precipitates it into many sins. This vice inflames almost every passion. The drunkard is unchaste: *Luxuriosa res est vinum*, the Wise Man says—wine is a lustful thing. He has no scruple about the most impure words, songs and actions. This vice fosters anger: *Et tumultuosa ebrietas*—and drunkenness is tumultuous.

A drunkard quarrels and swears, unable to bear someone rebuking him. He is violent, seeking only to fight and commit every kind of action contrary to reason. Finally, this vice makes a man stupid and incapable of

instruction in religion. A drunkard lives without piety, love of God or compassion for his neighbor. He has no god other than his belly, thinking only of it, serving it alone and working only for it: *Hujuscemodi Christo Domino nostro non serviunt, sed suo ventri*—such people serve not Christ Our Lord but their own belly.

II. Regarding the body, drunkenness weakens health and shortens life. The Wise Man warns us of this, saying that intemperance has killed many and a sober man lives longer: *Propter crapulam multi obierunt; qui autem abstinens est, adjiciet vitam*—many died through surfeiting; the abstinent man will add to his life.

Experience confirms this truth. Every day we see the strongest people becoming ill through their disorders. The drunkard's stomach is a cesspool for every tavern filth, exhaling a thousand vapors to the brain and causing every kind of illness. Hence arise indigestions and undigested accumulations, weakness of nerves, gout, paralysis, colic, cold humors and sharp pains making life unbearable: *In multis enim escis erit infirmitas*—in many foods there will be infirmity.

III. Drunkenness introduces disorder into families through loss of temporal goods squandered in these excesses. Someone loving banquets, the Wise Man says, will find himself needy; someone loving wine and gluttony will not grow rich.

You complain that business worsens and your children must beg. But what causes it? Your bad conduct, frequenting taverns and consuming in food and drink on Sunday everything earned during the week: *Operarius ebriosus non locupletabitur*—a drunken worker will not become rich.

These sad effects of drunkenness must make you recognize this vice's enormity and the horror you must have of it. From what we have said we must conclude that a drunkard is responsible before God for all his drunkenness's evil consequences.

Q. May someone suffering tertian fever drink wine excessively until drunk to induce vomiting because the physician judges this the most effective cure?

A. No one can without mortal sin become drunk to cure tertian fever through vomiting caused by excessive wine. St. Thomas's reason is that inducing vomiting does not require an intoxicating liquor: warm water and countless other things can produce the same effect.

Nec tamen ad vomitum provocandum requiritur quod sit potus inebrians, this holy Doctor says, *quia etiam potus aquæ tepidæ vomitum causat, et ideo propter hanc causam non excusaretur aliquis ab ebrietate*—an intoxicating drink is not required to provoke vomiting, since drinking warm water also causes vomiting; therefore this reason would not excuse someone from drunkenness.

These final words plainly indicate that drinking excessively in such a case would be mortal sin, since according to this saint drunkenness is such by its nature. St. Antoninus understands and explains him thus, adding that the physician prescribing it and someone giving the patient wine would also be guilty of mortal sin.

Q. Are those depriving themselves of reason's use or drinking wine until vomiting the only people committing drunkenness's sin?

A. Someone imagining only those losing reason's use through wine or exceeding to vomiting are drunkards is mistaken. Many others cannot be excused from this sin: those who, without losing reason's use, feel their head heated and tongue sluggish, so that wine's vapors make them incapable of working.

The Prophet Isaiah condemns excessive drinkers: "Woe to you rising in the morning to immerse yourselves until night in gluttony and drink until wine heats you with its vapors!" Such also are those whose robust constitution allows them to drink great quantities without becoming drunk. The same prophet rebukes them: "Woe to you so strong at drinking wine and mighty in drunkenness!" *Væ qui potentes estis ad bibendum vinum, et viri fortes ad miscendam ebrietatem.*

Here he condemns those abandoning themselves to intemperance and excess under pretext of having a strong head and tolerating wine. Moreover, besides the precept forbidding drunkenness, another commands temperance. Everything beyond necessity, St. John Chrysostom says, is not nourishment but poison; excessive drinkers cannot be excused from sin.

True, sometimes people praise their strong constitution. But they are all the more culpable, St. Augustine says, for abusing this strength allowing them to drink without experiencing its bad consequences: *Tanto nequior quantum sub poculo invictior*—all the worse in proportion as he is unconquered by the cup.[5]

Q. How must a confessor act toward people frequenting taverns, remaining at improper hours, drinking excessively, swearing and singing unchaste things, and usually choosing Sundays and feast days for these disorders?

A. For these people the tavern is a proximate occasion of sin. Unless they withdraw, they must be treated as unworthy of the sacraments. Here are Tertullian's principles concerning occasions leading to sin. He affirms that one must either abandon them or ensure no sin occurs in them. But someone continuing to offend God has no other means or security than fleeing: *Aut deserendum, aut omnibus modis cavendum ne quid adversus Deum committatur*—either it must be abandoned or every care taken that nothing against God be committed.

According to St. Charles the tavern is an occasion in which people cannot be absolved until renouncing it or promising abstention. His doctrine says someone who promised two or three times to withdraw and failed to fulfill it must actually do so before being absolved.[6]

Q. What conduct must be observed toward tavern keepers who serve drink at improper hours, during parish Mass and Vespers; receive drunkards and dissolute people swearing, singing unchaste songs and speaking obscenely; give wine to fathers ruining their families or children against their parents' will; or serve on fast days local people with no necessity who request it merely to pass time?

A. Every divine and human law forbids tavern keepers to serve food and drink at improper hours, such as during parish Mass and Vespers on Sundays and feast days. Nor should they serve drink before Mass or at night without true necessity.

They must not admit ill-living people or libertines swearing, speaking foul words and singing scandalous songs; fathers ruining their families through drunkenness; or children going to taverns against their parents' will.

During fasting and abstinence they must not serve meat even to Protestants, who as baptized persons are subject to Church laws; they may serve it only to those unwell. Nor must they give food or drink to people wishing without necessity to violate Church precepts. Finally, they must not give wine to those they know will become drunk.

Tavern keepers not observing all this make themselves guilty of sins committed in their houses. St. Paul's doctrine says guilt attaches not only to someone doing evil but someone consenting: *Quoniam qui talia agunt, digni sunt morte: et non solum qui ea faciunt, sed etiam qui consentiunt facientibus*—those doing such things deserve death, and not only those doing them but also those consenting to the doers.

As for tavern keepers lacking sufficient courage to observe these prescribed rules, they must be warned that they are obliged in conscience to abandon so dangerous an occupation. St. Charles teaches as a principle that any occupation occasioning proximate sin must be left. They will vainly allege inability to earn a living otherwise. Their salvation is preferable to everything else. There can be no necessity to sin, Tertullian says, for someone recognizing only one necessity, that of not sinning: *Nulla est peccandi necessitas, ubi una est non peccandi necessitas*.

Q. Are tavern keepers giving wine to drunkards alone guilty of their drunkenness? Are those inciting and frequently inviting them to drink not also accomplices?

A. St. Thomas affirms that someone inviting another to drink and someone accepting are equally guilty when not ignorant of the danger to which they expose themselves: *Sed si ignorantia desit, neuter excusatur a peccato*—if ignorance is absent, neither is excused from sin.

This holy Doctor's doctrine rests upon St. Augustine's: one must resist an invitation so harmful to the soul, inciting offense against God. *Non sit tibi amicus qui te Dei vult facere inimicum*—let no one wishing to make you God's enemy be your friend. If to gain a friend you induce a man to drink much or become drunk yourself, perhaps you will gain a friend, but God will be your enemy: *Si te et alium inebriaveris, habebis hominem amicum, Deum inimicum.*

Consider whether it is just, this Father adds, to separate yourself from your God to join a drunkard. Do not therefore believe yourselves innocent if you press others into drunkenness, whether for amusement or maliciously. St. Antoninus expressly says this is mortal sin.

Q. What remedies can be opposed to drunkenness in general?

A. First, tavern keepers would need to be exact in refusing wine to those abusing it, faithfully observing the kingdom's edicts and laws concerning the times and persons to whom they may sell it.

Secondly, reduce taverns' number and especially reform those situated in public places of gambling and dissoluteness. Where there are more taverns, there are more drinkers and drunkards.

Thirdly, magistrates and officers of justice should unite with parish priests to watch over these disorders' extirpation. Country people's, craftsmen's and laborers' continual drunkenness is a public sin not merely in one parish but all: a spring of crimes and scandals. Someone banishing it from parishes would close hell's door and open paradise's to most farmers. Nevertheless, except for a few zealous parish priests, no one thinks of opposing it or takes the trouble to cut off so many crimes' root.

Fourthly, parents should watch over their children, not allow them to become accustomed to wine, give good example and require an account of money handled, lest they squander it as often happens. Is it not shameful that children and women are not free from this vice? In passing I tell you that under Charlemagne French craftsmen and day laborers did not drink wine. Today, however, they drink most and profane Sundays and feast days through every disorder originating in wine.

Q. What must a drunkard seriously thinking of conversion do?

A. First, attentively consider drunkenness's grave evils, which perhaps he has personally experienced. *Vinum multum potatum*, the Wise Man says, *irritationem, et iram, et ruinas multas facit*—wine drunk in abundance causes irritation, anger and many ruins. It is a many-headed hydra \[a continually multiplying source of evils\] from which arise quarrels, deaths, oaths, blasphemies, impurities, thefts, injustices, mistreatment, poverty, neglect of salvation, profanation of feast days and so forth. Will the sight of so many crimes not make a drunkard come to himself?

Secondly, he must leave his companions in this vice, enter taverns only through necessity, frequent the sacraments, prescribe himself a rule of life and impose a penance sufficiently strong to uproot so evil a habit, accustoming himself to little wine mixed with water.

Some have never tasted wine again after becoming drunk once. If this is necessary for your correction, you too must do it. Experience shows going entirely without wine is much easier than drinking without excess. He must remember he can die drunk and, being then incapable of asking God's forgiveness for his sin, be condemned forever. *Attendite autem vobis, ne forte graventur corda vestra in crapula, et ebrietate: et superveniat in vos repentina dies illa*, Jesus Christ tells us—take heed lest your hearts be weighed down by

surfeiting and drunkenness and that day come upon you suddenly.

Fourthly, he must reflect upon drunkards' tragic end. King Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, abandoned himself to drunkenness to the point of drinking with his concubines from sacred vessels his grandfather had taken from Jerusalem's Temple, singing impious songs in honor of false gods.

But at that very moment, Scripture says, *in eadem hora*—in that same hour—an invisible hand wrote his condemnation upon the wall of the hall where he drank: *Mane, Thecel, Phares*. Daniel interpreted these words thus:

Mane: Numeravit Deus regnum tuum, et complevit illud. God counted your kingdom's days, marked them and set its end.

Thecel: Appensus es in statera, et inventus es minus habens. You were weighed in the balance and found very deficient.

Phares: Divisum est regnum tuum, et datum est Medis et Persis. Your kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

Punishment followed sin so closely that Belshazzar was killed that very night: *Eadem nocte interfectus est Baltassar*. From hell's depths, into which his excesses precipitated him, he teaches you that unless you return to temperance's rules you will become food for eternal flames.

Finally, constantly ask God for conversion through the merits of Jesus Christ, Who was tormented with gall and vinegar. Remember that you must mortify yourselves and share the Savior's sufferings if you wish to accompany Him in His kingdom.

---

[1] Ephesians 5:18; Jerome, Letter 33 to Oceanus and commentary on Titus as cited; John Climacus, *Ladder*, step 14.

[2] Thomas, II–II, q.148, a.1; Genesis 25:29–34; 1 Samuel 2:13–16 (source 1 Kings, verse reference defective).

[3] Augustine, *Against Julian*, IV, number 6; *Confessions*, X, chapter 31 (source chapter 32); Innocent XI, March 2, 1679.

[4] Thomas, II–II, q.150, a.2; 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; Ambrose as cited by Gratian, *Sexto die*, distinction 35; Psalm 49:20 (Vulgate 48:21).

[5] Isaiah 5:11, 22; Chrysostom, Homily 44 on Matthew; Augustine, Sermon 155 as cited.

[6] Tertullian, *On the Crown*, chapter 11; Charles Borromeo, instructions to confessors.

Decalogue: Thirteenth Conference: On Dances, Plays and Masquerades

Original preacher not named.

Non mœchaberis. (Exodus 20.)

You shall not commit adultery.

For a soul desirous of salvation it is not enough to avoid the sin forbidden by the sixth commandment. It must also withdraw from everything that induces it. There are certain worldly gatherings at which men and women come together, which often become proximate occasions of impurity. Such are the dances, masquerades and plays of which we shall speak today.

For this purpose we shall use the spiritual sword the Lord has placed in our hands: I mean God's word. With it we shall cut away such abuses, so harmful to souls. Scripture makes their danger well known when, through the Wise Man's mouth, it warns us not to associate with a woman who delights in singing and dancing: *Cum saltatrice ne assiduus sis*—do not be constantly with a dancing woman. Nor should we look at her or listen to her, lest she make us perish through the power of her attractions: *Nec audias illam, ne forte pereas in efficacia illius*.

If nothing were to be feared from dances, as the world affirms, would the Holy Spirit take such care to dissuade us from them? Let us therefore examine in this conference whether this kind of entertainment is as

innocent as people wish to persuade us.

Q. What is dancing? Is this action evil by its nature?

A. By the word dancing we ordinarily understand leaping for joy, walking, turning, bending down and rising in rhythm. This action does not appear evil or unlawful by its nature. We can prove this from the Wise Man's words: *Omnia tempus habent; tempus plangendi, tempus saltandi*—everything has its time: a time for mourning and a time for dancing.

Scripture gives us a celebrated example. Miriam, sister of Aaron and Moses, joined the other women, who danced separately from the men and sang songs praising the Lord after God's people obtained victory over the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea. *Sumpsit ergo Maria prophetissa soror Aaron tympanum in manu sua*, the sacred writer says, *egressæque sunt omnes mulieres post eam cum tympanis, et choris*, etc.—Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dances.

To this example we may add David's. Moved by religion and piety, he danced before the Lord's ark to manifest his joy at seeing it enter Jerusalem: *David saltabat totis viribus ante Dominum*—David danced with all his strength before the Lord.

Hence, with St. Thomas we may conclude that dancing is sometimes permitted, provided three conditions indispensable to its innocence accompany it.

First, the people dancing must do so with decency and modesty, giving scandal to no one. Otherwise it would be sinful: for example, if an ecclesiastic or religious committed this indecorum. *Ut non sit persona indecens, sicut clericus vel religiosus*—the person must not be one for whom it is unsuitable, such as a cleric or religious.

Secondly, it must take place only at a time of joy, such as public rejoicing: *Ut sit tempore lætitiæ, ut liberationis gratia vel in nuptiis, et ejusmodi*—at a time of joy, for example over deliverance or at weddings and the like.

Thirdly, propriety and decency must be observed in songs, gestures, place, time and the other accompanying circumstances. These are the conditions St. Thomas requires if a dance is to be free from fault. Without them it is undoubtedly vicious and reprehensible. Thus he adds: *Si autem fiat ad provocandum lasciviam, et secundum alias circumstantias, constat quod actus vitiosus est*—if it is done to provoke lust, and according to other such circumstances, it is plainly a vicious act.

Since these circumstances are very rarely fulfilled at dances, we believe with the Church's holy Fathers that abstaining from them is especially characteristic of Christian prudence.[1]

Q. What do the holy Fathers think about dances?

A. St. John Chrysostom says the devil is present in lascivious dances. These are the games pleasing him most, through which he most easily ruins souls: *Ubi saltus lascivus, ibi diabolus certe adest … in tripudiis diabolus saltat*—where there is a lascivious dance, there the devil is certainly present; in such revels the devil dances.

He calls them Satan's pomps, which we renounced at Baptism. He adds that the dancing hall is the devil's shop, where he displays every kind of vice and sets impure passions aflame. St. Ambrose affirms that dancing is pleasure's and lust's companion: *Deliciarum comes atque luxuriæ*. He says that to dance one must be drunk or have lost one's judgment.

St. Ephrem holds the devil to be dances' author and inventor. Who taught Christians to dance? this holy deacon of Edessa asks: *Unde suas didiscere choreas? Quis talia christianos docuit?* It was not St. Peter,

St. Paul or any other apostle, but the devil, that impure spirit who inspired men with impurity and idolatry. This detestable custom came from him: *Qui docuit idola colere, docuit etiam ludere*—he who taught the worship of idols also taught such reveling.

Such is the saints' judgment of dances. It led a theologian of St. Francis's Order to say that dancing is a circle with the devil at its center and his angels around its circumference: *Chorea mundana est circulus, cujus centrum est diabolus, et circumferentia angeli ejus circumstantes*. Hence he concludes that dancing almost never fails to be sinful: *Et ideo raro aut numquam fit sine peccato*—therefore it rarely or never occurs without sin.[2]

Q. Will it not at least be permitted to watch dances and attend them and plays?

A. The holy Fathers teach us that such spectacles are unworthy of a Christian. Tertullian calls them impurity's private assembly, where only liberties intolerable elsewhere receive approval: *Est privatum consistorium impudicitiæ, ubi nihil probatur quam quod alibi non probatur*.

St. Clement of Alexandria says these assemblies are shameful and filled with wickedness: *Magna confusione, et iniquitate hi cœtus pleni sunt*. St. Augustine believes that a virtuous man cannot see someone dancing to instruments without lamenting him: *Da hominem qui in Domino vivit, quando respexerit hominem saltantem ad organum, plus illum dolet insanientem, quam phreneticum febrientem*—give me a man living in the Lord: when he sees someone dancing to an instrument, he grieves more over that madness than over someone delirious with fever.

Salvian plainly says that the theater is among the devil's pomps Christians renounced at Baptism, and attending it is in a certain way apostasy: *In spectaculis quædam apostasia fidei est, et a symbolis ipsius lethalis prævaricatio*—in spectacles there is a certain apostasy from faith and a deadly violation of its very profession.

His reason is that the devil is present at spectacles he invented. Attending them means abandoning Jesus Christ and passing over to the devil's side. Hence we conclude that one cannot innocently attend these entertainments. They are ordinarily schools of flirtation and licentiousness, where even the strongest virtue is unsafe and purity always suffers damage. This led Tertullian to say: *Theatrum proprie sacrarium Veneris est*—the theater is properly Venus's sanctuary.

Nevertheless, since the world never lacks excuses to justify its conduct, we must endeavor to refute them.

Q. You undertake a difficult task in trying to persuade us that we must abstain from plays and dances. This is an ancient custom approved by many. Why should it not be lawful to follow it?

A. We must not rely upon custom when the world's licentiousness and corruption introduced it. A custom not founded upon justice and truth is merely an old error, St. Cyprian says: *Consuetudo sine veritate vetustas erroris est*.

Jesus Christ did not say, "I am custom," but, "I am the truth." Therefore neither time's passage, men's authority nor nations' privileges have power to make an evil custom legitimate. Thus Tertullian reasons.

Finally, a custom contrary to the Church's laws and canonical constitutions has no authority and is truly an abuse. *Consuetudo*, Pope Innocent III says when writing to the Bishop of Poitiers, *quæ canonicis obviat institutis, nullius debet esse momenti*—a custom opposing canonical enactments must carry no weight.

Such is the custom people attempt to justify. It is an abuse the holy Fathers combated as formally opposed to religion's principles. God Himself has often manifested His anger against those following it. Tertullian relates an example, calling God as witness to it. He says that a Christian woman went to a play and returned possessed by the devil. When they exorcised this impure spirit, rebuking him for daring to attack a Christian, he answered: *In meo inveni*—I am justified, for I found her in a place belonging to me.

We must not therefore defend or follow such a custom, so contrary to the Gospel's principles: *Christus veritatem se, non consuetudinem cognominavit*—Christ called Himself truth, not custom.

Q. Our parents, the young people say, permit us to attend these assemblies. Then attending them will not be sinful?

A. Your parents permit you to go to dances and the theater and lead you along these paths of perdition? They will belong to those impious people of whom holy Job speaks: "Their children are seen coming from their houses in troops, dancing and leaping for joy. They hold harps and timbrels in their hands and amuse themselves to instruments' sound."

But what will their end be? *Ducunt in bonis dies suos, et in puncto ad inferna descendunt*—they spend their days in prosperity and in an instant descend to the underworld. Here is the "beginning" toward which you lead them and toward which you yourselves walk, unhappy fathers and mothers, so indulgent toward your children that you dare not oppose their licentiousness.

What! Your fathers and mothers permit you to dance? Then they imitate infamous Herodias, whose daughter received as her dance's prize and recompense the head of the greatest and holiest of all the sons of men: *Saltavit filia Herodiadis, et placuit Herodi*—Herodias's daughter danced and pleased Herod.

I would scarcely dare tell you what St. Ambrose adds: *Saltet, sed adulteræ filia*—let whoever wishes dance, but this befits only an adulteress's daughter. A prudent mother, however, known to be chaste must concern herself with teaching her daughter not dancing but Jesus Christ's religion and morals: *Quæ vero pudica, quæ casta est, religionem doceat, non saltationem.*[3]

Q. They say we must take some recreation on Sundays and feast days after working all week.

A. Wholesome entertainments are not forbidden, only those harmful to salvation. As a Father of the Church says: *Non animi relaxationem interdictam volo, sed petulantiam coerceo*—I do not wish relaxation of mind forbidden; I restrain wantonness.

Rejoice, but let it be in the Lord, as the Apostle commands. Be joyful and glad, but in the manner befitting Christians and saints. So were Bethulia's people at the festivities they celebrated after Judith delivered them from Holofernes's hands: *Erat populus jucundus secundum faciem sanctorum*—the people were joyful in the manner of the holy ones.

But dances are more forbidden on Sundays and feast days than at any other time. Therefore the Fathers of the Council of Paris in 1212, under Pope Innocent III, say that dancing on holy Sunday is a greater sin than cultivating the soil: *Teste Gregorio, melius est dominico die arare vel fodere, quam choreas ducere*—as Gregory testifies, it is better to plow or dig on Sunday than to lead dances.

Excusing oneself because the dances occur after divine services is useless: the entire day is equally holy. If it is unlawful to occupy oneself in servile works after celebrating the divine office simply because work prevents dedication to spiritual things, with much stronger reason worldly rejoicings and dances must be avoided. They are incomparably more capable than any work of making us forget God and spiritual things.

At ille recogitavit eo tempore Deo positus illic ubi nihil est de eo?, Tertullian says—but did that person think of God then, placed where there is nothing of Him? Thus St. Augustine said, as St. Thomas relates, that working on a feast day would be less sinful than spending it at this kind of dance, where licentiousness always reigns.

The Third Council of Toledo, in the year 589 under Pope Pelagius I, declares the custom of dancing at saints' feasts impious. It orders priests and magistrates to devote themselves to abolishing so harmful an abuse throughout Spain.

We could cite here eight provincial councils held in France after Trent, all condemning dances, especially on Sundays and feast days. It only remains to conclude that all those to whom God entrusted His authority are obliged in conscience to oppose with all vigor so evil a custom, which is more pagan than Christian.

Q. If I am invited to a wedding where people amuse themselves with a dance, will dancing not be permitted me on this occasion?

A. Although, speaking absolutely, we do not condemn certain dances conducted modestly and decently on a marriage's occasion, nevertheless we must confess that these gatherings of young men and maidens almost always produce some disorders.

The glances, laughter, ambiguous words, quarrels, evil desires, unchaste songs and indecent liberties both sexes take almost always make those attending culpable. Thus the Council of Laodicea, in Pope St. Sylvester's time, forbade dances even at weddings: *Non oportet christianos ad nuptias venientes, se turpiter et indecore gerere vel saltare, sed modeste cœnare, et prandere, ut decet christianos*—Christians coming to weddings ought not to behave shamefully and indecorously or dance, but to dine and eat modestly, as befits Christians.

Examine carefully, my brothers, what happened at Abraham's, Isaac's, Jacob's and other saints' weddings mentioned in Scripture. You will see that none mentions dancing or other such entertainments.

On the contrary, Sarah, wishing to draw God's mercy upon her marriage with young Tobias, declares that she always abhorred dances and never joined those dancing: *Numquam cum ludentibus miscui me; neque cum his, qui in levitate ambulant, participem me præbui*—I never mingled with revelers, nor made myself a companion of those walking in frivolity. Nevertheless she was married many times.

If you act thus, God will bless your marriages; if you abandon yourselves to dances and other excesses, you will incur His indignation.

Q. Is it lawful to disguise oneself and dress in clothing belonging to the other sex, as happens at dances and plays?

A. The old law expressly forbids people of every kind to disguise themselves thus: *Non induatur mulier veste virili, nec vir utetur veste feminea*—a woman must not put on men's clothing, nor a man use women's clothing. It calls whoever does this abominable: *Abominabilis enim apud Deum est qui facit hæc*—someone doing these things is abominable before God.

We must observe that this prohibition must not be considered merely legal, as a precept abolished by the Gospel. On the contrary, it must be regarded as a moral precept now binding Christians as it bound the Jews. St. Thomas teaches this. He says that by this prohibition God intended not only to keep the ancient people from the idolatry men committed by dressing as women to worship Venus and women as men at Mars's festivals, but also to keep them from the lust these disguises occasion.

The same holy Doctor expresses himself more clearly elsewhere, saying this disorder is evil by its nature: *De se vitiosum est quod mulier utatur veste virili, aut e converso*—of itself it is vicious for a woman to use men's clothing, or conversely. He gives the reason already stated: *Et præcipue quia hoc potest esse causa lasciviæ*—especially because this can occasion lust.

In this he follows St. Augustine, his master, who calls people disguising themselves thus infamous actors: *Veros histriones verosque infames sine dubitatione possumus vocare*—we may without doubt call them true actors and truly infamous.

This decision conforms to the Apostle's doctrine recommending that the faithful each dress as befits their sex and saying the contrary is shameful. Moreover, forbidden games and dissoluteness almost always follow such disguises, circumstances making them more culpable.[4]

Q. Will it not at least be lawful to wear a Carnival disguise in clothing conforming to one's sex, even though unsuitable to one's state?

A. People disguising themselves with masks at Carnival cannot be excused from sin, even if they use clothing conforming to their sex but unsuitable to their state. Through the disguise they may be taken for infamous people and jesters, as we said with St. Augustine. Moreover, these disguises easily induce actions contrary to modesty and Christian propriety, especially at a time of dissoluteness and licentiousness like Carnival, when many Christians abandon themselves to culpable excesses with no one restraining them.

Meanwhile we shall observe:

First, since wearing masks is a most harmful disorder forbidden by the kingdom's laws, magistrates and other superiors must oppose it and prevent it as far as they can.

Secondly, fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses allowing their children and servants to wear masks participate in all the sins they commit on this occasion.

Thirdly, craftsmen and merchants making and selling Carnival masks exercise a profession evil in itself. Consequently, if they wish absolution they are obliged to leave it, since they give their neighbor occasion to offend God.

The excuse that one does not intend to consent to mask wearers' sin is worthless. If no craftsmen made and sold masks, so many would not be seen in streets and dances to good people's great scandal. We can apply to them what Tertullian said of those manufacturing pagan idols: *Quidquid idolatra committit, in artificem quemcumque et cujuscumque idoli reputetur necesse est; quomodo enim renuntiavimus diabolo et angelis ejus si eos facimus?*—whatever an idolater commits must be charged to the maker of whatever idol; how have we renounced the devil and his angels if we make them?[5]

Let us conclude with these words St. Paul addresses to the Ephesians: *Hoc igitur dico et testificor in Domino, ut jam non ambuletis sicut et gentes ambulant in vanitate sensus sui*.

With the Apostle I tell you, and by the Lord I beseech you, my brothers: leave all these follies and do not live like pagans, whose conduct follows the vanity of their desires. Enchanted with the world's empty objects, they seek only to fill their hearts' emptiness with things that entertain and distract them.

Do not imitate them. Withdraw forever from places of dissoluteness where only vice is learned and God's Spirit is never found. Renounce dances, plays and spectacles, relics of paganism. Remember that this is not what you learned in Jesus Christ's school, if indeed you have truly heard His doctrine: *Vos autem non ita didicistis Christum, si tamen illum audistis, et ab ipso edocti estis, sicut est veritas in Jesu*—you did not so learn Christ, if indeed you heard Him and were taught by Him, as truth is in Jesus.

You were taught that at Baptism you renounced Satan, his pomps and the world's principles, to live only in Jesus Christ. Imitate His holiness and consider how far you are from it, how much you have displeased God, angels and saints by attending those worldly gatherings.

Indeed, what have you not done to be present there! You disobeyed your superiors; abandoned God's word and divine service; spent nights outside your home while holy souls occupied themselves in prayer and singing the Lord's praises.

Consider that while you danced a million people lay in death's agony, suffering cruel pains. A day will come when you find yourselves in the same extremity. Time passes and death approaches; you will be compelled to account for all your empty entertainments. Finally, they are unworthy of a soul truly wishing salvation: *Non sunt ista*, a Father of the Church says, *salvari cupientium*—these are not the pursuits of those wishing to be saved.[6]

[1] Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4; Exodus 15:20–21; 2 Samuel 6:14 (source 2 Kings); Thomas, commentary on Isaiah 3 as cited.

[2] Eliginus," *Catholic Catechism*, IV, chapter 14.

[3] Job 21:11–13; Matthew 14:6–11; Ambrose, work cited as *On Virgins*, chapter 5.

[4] Deuteronomy 22:5; Thomas, I–II, q.102, a.6 and II–II, q.169, a.2, reply 3; Augustine, *Soliloquies*, chapter 16 as cited.

[5] Tertullian, *On Idolatry*, chapter 8 as cited.

[6] Ephesians 4:17, 20–21; Eligius, Homily 5 as cited.

Decalogue: Fourteenth Conference: On Gaming and Gambling

Original preacher not named.

Non mœchaberis. (Exodus 20.)

You shall not commit adultery.

Do not be surprised, beloved brothers, if, continuing the explanation of the sixth commandment, I place gaming among the causes leading to the vice of impurity. Certainly games are not evil in themselves. They are sometimes permitted and can be regarded as a remedy necessary for a man's mental relief, just as sleep is necessary to restore the body's strength.

But if some games are lawful, others are not; if there is innocent entertainment in them, there is also culpable entertainment; if some are wholesome recreation, others are contrary to decency and propriety. It will therefore not be out of place to treat gaming here, since it so often has evil consequences, as even the pagans recognized. Gaming, Horace says, causes quarrels, disputes and anger:

Nam ludus genuit strepitum, certamen, et iram.

Even if it brought no other evil than the loss of time, no more powerful motives would be necessary to end the abuse of gaming in which so many squander time prodigally. Time is so precious that we shall render a strict account of it to God; time ought to be employed entirely in practicing Christian virtues; time is something of which the damned would wish to have even a single day for penance, yet it will be denied them eternally. Thus we can call the passion for gaming a frenzy in those allowing it to dominate them. This is what I come to combat today.[1]

Q. Before explaining the excesses to which gamblers abandon themselves, you must tell us what gaming is and whether there are various kinds, so that we can distinguish the lawful from the unlawful.

A. In general, all exercises we undertake for amusement are called games. In particular, however, gaming is defined as a kind of contract made among several people who, for recreation, agree that a certain amount will belong to whoever wins.

Since gaming is a contract, the rules of justice and the essential, necessary conditions of contracts must be observed in it. Thus, when a game is lawful and decent, and justice and the necessary conditions have been observed, someone winning according to its rules has the right to appropriate and retain his winnings. Someone staking his money consents, if he loses, to transfer its ownership to the winner.

This is permitted when he owns his goods and has authority to administer them, provided neither laws nor a particular agreement prevent him from disposing of them.

Several kinds of games are distinguished. The first consists of games in which ingenuity or dexterity has the principal part: draughts, backgammon, ball games, billiards and others with nothing evil about them. It is lawful to play these under the conditions already stated, which we shall explain further below.

The second consists of entertainments containing something deformed, such as dances, masquerades and plays. They must be avoided, as we said in the last conference, because they commonly incite the vice of

impurity.

The third consists of games of pure chance, such as dice and many card games, forbidden by canonical and civil laws.

Finally, there are so-called mixed games, depending partly on chance, such as *malilla* and other card games. Many casuists do not consider these unlawful, provided no circumstance makes them vicious. They support this opinion on St. Thomas's authority. He says: *Quidam ludi sunt nullam turpitudinem habentes, et ideo servatis circumstantiis, possunt laudabiliter fieri ad quietem propriam, et aliis laudabiliter convivendum*—some games contain no indecency; therefore, with the circumstances observed, they can commendably be played for one's own rest and to enjoy commendable company with others.

Q. Is spending much time at a game sinful, even when the game is itself lawful?

A. A man may lawfully take some wholesome recreation for mental relief. But he must guard, St. Ambrose says, against abusing this innocent liberty and losing the arrangement and harmony of good works under pretext of relaxing his mind. *Caveamus itaque*, this Father says, *ne dum animum relaxare volumus, solvamus omnem harmoniam, et quasi concentum bonorum operum*—let us beware lest, wishing to relax the mind, we dissolve all the harmony and, as it were, concert of good works. This is what ordinarily happens through excessive gaming.

St. Thomas says there can be excess in gaming in two ways.

The first concerns the game's very matter: when it consists in actions or words contrary to religion or good morals, or notably harmful to one's neighbor. Then the game is by its nature mortal sin, the saint says.

The second concerns the circumstances of the game: its time or place or the people playing. For example, one plays on a feast day, for a long time in a sacred or public place, with scandal, or in a state of life forbidding it, such as that of priests, religious and magistrates. Then it is unlawful through its circumstances, and sometimes mortal sin: when one plays with excessive passion, or prefers gaming's pleasure to the love owed God or a Church precept.

To answer the proposed case directly, I say, first, that someone spending a considerable time gaming sins even if the game is lawful. Secondly, this vice is more culpable in an ecclesiastic than a layperson. Thirdly, it can often occasion mortal sin through the game's circumstances: becoming furious and swearing, spending days and nights at it, or most of Sundays and feast days. These circumstances make the sin graver.

According to St. Thomas's principle, for gaming to be lawful its purpose must be mental relief and the person's just and reasonable recreation, not making gaming one's principal occupation. Only the foolish, the Wise Man says, regard life as a time given us merely for play: *Æstimaverunt ludum esse vitam nostram, et conversationem vitæ compositam ad lucrum*—they considered our life a game and life's business arranged for gain.[2]

Q. Are games of pure chance forbidden to every kind of person?

A. It is established that games of pure chance are evil and reprehensible in themselves. Thus even laypeople are forbidden them by canon 42 among those attributed to the Apostles, cited by Gratian in his decree. Not only ecclesiastics playing them but also laypeople are threatened with deprivation of communion.

This certainly proves that they can be mortal sin in various circumstances, since the Church does not impose this penalty for venial sins, as St. Raymond observes.

Nevertheless, this must be understood according to St. Antoninus's explanation. He says that laypeople do not sin mortally at games of chance: first, when they play for amusement and without passion; secondly, when the stake is small relative to their means; thirdly, when they play moderately, without spending much

time and never time that should be spent sanctifying feast days.

Ludus aleæ est peccatum mortale secundum Raymundum, quod credo verum, this saint says, *quando ex cupiditate quis ludit, scilicet principaliter motus, non ad recreationem, sed ad acquirendum quid notabile per ludum; nam ludere quid modicum, ut pueri faciunt, vel ob recreationem, et moderate, non videtur mortale.*

That is: according to Raymond, gambling is mortal sin; I believe this true when someone plays from greed, chiefly moved not toward recreation but toward acquiring something considerable through gambling. Playing for something small, however, as children do, or for recreation and moderately, does not appear mortal.

Only under these circumstances does the saint excuse players of pure chance from mortal sin. Another circumstance that should move us to abstain, and that motivated canonical and civil prohibitions, is the swearing and blasphemies of people losing money. *In nullo exercitio,* St. Antoninus says, *ita frequenter blasphematur Deus, et tota curia cælestis*—in no exercise are God and the entire heavenly court so frequently blasphemed.

Q. Is card playing forbidden to every kind of person?

A. There are different kinds of card games. Some are pure chance, with no part for skill, such as *banca*, *sacanete* and others. In mixed games, chance and skill decide the outcome; players know them well.

These latter games may be excused from sin in laypeople who do not play habitually and spend moderate time and money, since the Church's and State's laws do not forbid them.

St. Thomas says rulers' ordinances prohibiting games do not bind if custom shows that the rulers tolerate them: *Nisi contraria consuetudo prævaleat*—unless a contrary custom prevails. It is evident that these laws do not speak of games of skill or mixed games played lawfully by private individuals without violating the rules making them lawful and decent.

Nevertheless, we shall observe that some theologians classify mixed games with games of pure chance. Chance certainly remains the principal factor in winning, and all skill becomes useless when chance deals a player bad cards. Thus St. Antoninus says it seems every card game should be counted among games of pure chance, since losing and winning depend on it.

Ludus aleæ, this holy Archbishop of Florence says, *intelligitur omnis ludus qui innititur fortunæ, ut ludus taxillorum; et idem videtur de chartis, quamvis sit ibi aliquid industriæ, principaliter tamen est fortuna*—gambling means every game depending on fortune, such as dice; the same appears true of cards: although there is some skill, fortune is nevertheless principal.[3]

Q. Are ecclesiastics more especially obliged than laypeople to abstain from games of chance?

A. Ecclesiastics are very reprehensible and sin when they play for money at games of pure chance. These are forbidden them as contrary to the holiness of their conduct, which must correspond to their state's dignity, placing them far above laypeople.

We shall support this decision upon the sacred canons, the Church's laws, to which ecclesiastics must submit more closely than anyone else.

The Fourth General Lateran Council, held under Innocent III in 1215, absolutely forbids clerics games of chance, even being present and watching players: *Clerici ad aleas, vel taxillos non ludant, nec hujusmodi ludis intersint*—clerics must not play games of chance or dice, nor be present at such games.

The Provincial Council of Bordeaux in 1583 likewise forbids ecclesiastics card games, publicly or privately: *Ab alea, tesseris, chartis, et quovis alio vetito, et indecoro ludo tum privatim tum publice penitus abstineant*—let them abstain entirely, privately and publicly, from gambling, dice, cards and every other

forbidden and indecorous game.

The Council of Sens in 1528 makes the same prohibition. Following Lateran's example, it wishes clerics not to attend games. Here are its words: *A ludo alearum aliisque quæ a sorte pendent, abstineant, neque ludentium fautores, spectatores, aut testes existant*—let them abstain from dice and other games depending on chance, and be neither supporters, spectators nor witnesses of players.

Finally, the holy Council of Trent and St. Charles Borromeo, so zealous an observer of its decrees, forbid clerics not only games of chance but watching gamblers or allowing such games in their houses, which would authorize the excesses.

These prohibitions must not be considered severe if, with the same Council of Trent, we consider that sins appearing slight in laypeople are very grave in ecclesiastics, who must edify the faithful by their works: *Levia enim delicta, quæ in ipsis maxima essent, effugiant, ut eorum actiones cunctis afferant venerationem*—let them avoid even slight offenses, which in them would be very great, so their actions may inspire reverence in all.

Thus councils forbid clerics publicly playing even games of pure skill, especially those requiring them to remove their clerical clothing, such as mall, ball games and the like. As the Council of Mexico says, these games in such circumstances do not suit the gravity and modesty of an ecclesiastic, always obliged to act as God's minister according to the Apostle's words: *In omnibus exhibeamus nosmetipsos sicut Dei ministros*—in everything let us show ourselves God's ministers.

Q. Is it lawful to manufacture or sell dice or playing cards?

A. St. Antoninus answers this question thus: "Those making or selling cards or other instruments for games of chance apparently cannot be excused from mortal sin, and consequently cannot be absolved until they abandon this trade."

Videtur dicendum de factoribus vel venditoribus alearum, taxillorum, chartarum, quod quia in pluribus homines utuntur his ad peccatum mortale propter avaritiam, ideo non videtur tales posse excusari a mortali, unde nec absolvendi sunt nisi talia dimittant—it seems this must be said of makers or sellers of gaming implements, dice and cards: since people commonly use them for mortal sin through greed, such people seem inexcusable from mortal sin and must not be absolved unless they give these things up.

Nevertheless, with some very learned casuists we may say that these men should not be condemned absolutely, but rather persuaded to earn their living in other occupations. Their reasons are:

First, many games played with cards and dice are not pure chance, and one may lawfully recreate oneself with them under the proper circumstances.

Secondly, there are games of pure chance that laypeople can play without sin when doing so merely for recreation, without greed, passion, scandal, notable waste of time or any other vicious circumstance.

In this sense we must understand St. Thomas, St. Raymond, St. Antoninus and the other theologians condemning these games in people who devote themselves to them through greed, make them their ordinary and principal occupation, or finally exceed in some other way condemned by ecclesiastical and civil laws.

Q. What should we think of those making their house an academy of forbidden card and dice games \[a gambling establishment\]?

A. These people's conduct is very culpable. By providing opportunities to commit gamblers' sins they become accomplices in them all. Without gambling houses, very many people would never have gambled and would consequently avoid many sins.

Someone opening his house for gambling, St. Bernardine of Siena says, or providing table and dice, participates in every fault committed at the game. No confessor can absolve him, and his salvation is impossible unless he abandons this wicked business.

Such are this saint's words in one of his sermons: terrible words, certainly, which must move those acting thus to amend promptly.

In his Instructions St. Charles Borromeo forbids confessors to absolve anyone without a true resolution to abandon all mortal sins and all occasions of committing them. Among these he specifies maintaining houses prepared for others to play cards and dice: *Nec eos absolvant qui cum peccatis mortalibus, simul etiam occasiones vitare plene non proponunt, ut sunt qui domum tenent in hunc finem aliis paratam ut tabellis chartaceis vel aleis ludant*—nor must they absolve those not fully proposing to avoid occasions along with mortal sins, such as those keeping a house prepared for others to play cards or dice.

The same must be said of tavern keepers maintaining gambling gatherings in their houses where many excesses and impieties occur. In another sermon St. Bernardine of Siena called such houses profane and filled with wickedness: *O domus profana, et omni iniquitate plena!*—O profane house, filled with every wickedness![4]

Q. Are gaming winnings always legitimately acquired? Is restitution obligatory in some cases?

A. Players very easily believe their winnings belong to them. But they are mistaken, since according to St. Thomas many cases oblige them to restitution.

The first is when losers lack authority to alienate their goods: minors, those deprived of reason, and wives playing without the consent of husbands to whom they are subject.

The second is when losers were forced to play, whether through open violence or importunities they could not resist.

The third is when a winner exploits the slight skill of those he knows to be ignorant of a game's tricks and contingencies.

In all these cases restitution must be made to those who lost. Only the sum's smallness, St. Antoninus says, can dispense from it: one reasonably believes parents or wards' guardians and husbands consent to such small losses.

Regarding other cases, St. Thomas and many canonists judge that where games of chance are prohibited by civil laws actually in force, restitution of winnings is obligatory: not to those who lost, for they made themselves unworthy by breaking the legal prohibition, but to the poor or other pious works.

Yet since knowing whether laws prohibiting these games retain their force is not always easy, a prudent confessor may command this restitution as penance, wholly or partly, according to the penitent's present means. This salutary rigor is to oblige him to renounce habitual gambling forever. Someone obstinately refusing so useful a penance would show that, wishing to enjoy his sin's fruits, he was insufficiently disposed to abandon it.

These are the cases in which gamblers are especially obliged to restitution.

Q. What fruit must we draw from what you have said in this conference on gaming?

A. First, examine before God the sins committed in gaming, into which perhaps you yourselves have fallen: oaths, frauds, profanation of feast days, loss of goods, ruin and desolation of families.

Someone frenzied at play and losing wishes to continue, hoping finally to recover everything. At last he stakes everything he has and loses it. In a fit of despair he stakes even his inheritance, losing that too through God's just punishment.

Most terrible and dangerous for these senseless gamblers' salvation is that their ruin drags countless innocent creditors into ruin with them. Having lost everything, how will they pay their debts? Such are the disorders into which gambling's passion precipitates people.

But even if it caused no evil except lost time, what torment the memory of employing it so badly will be to gamblers at death's hour! They sacrificed Sundays and the most solemn feast days to gaming like every other day, with no religious act except hurriedly hearing a Low Mass, immodestly and inattentively. They missed the principal Mass, Vespers, catechism and the other exercises of piety that should occupy a Christian.

Do not believe, no, that these are slight faults, St. Antoninus says. People abandoning divine things on such holy days to spend their time gaming sin more gravely than those cultivating the soil on them: *Lusores propter hoc, ut habeant majus tempus ad ludendum, negligunt divina, missas, et vesperas, orationem, prædicationes … negligunt festa servare, quia in illis permaxime ludunt, et plura committunt peccata, et graviora, quam si terram colerent, quod est festa violare.*

Players neglect divine things, Masses, Vespers, prayer and preaching to have more time for gaming. They neglect observance of feast days, playing on them most of all and committing more and graver sins than if they cultivated the earth—which is violating feast days.

Secondly, the memory of so many sins committed in gaming must move you to avoid it and do penance, repairing the evils you have committed.

Thirdly, resolve never to grow attached to gaming. If you sometimes need recreation, do not play games of chance or games contrary to Christian decency and propriety, but permitted games suitable to your state. Never become habituated to gaming. Play without greed or scandal, with irreproachable people, so that you always remain able to return to your duties' care.

Finally, conduct yourselves then, as on every occasion, in a manner worthy of a Christian: *Omnia autem honeste, et secundum ordinem fiant*—let everything be done decently and according to order.[5]

---

[1] Horace, *Epistles*, I.19.48.

[2] Ambrose, *On Duties*, I.20; Thomas, discussion of excessive play, II–II, q.168, a.3 (source gives q.138); Wisdom 15:12.

[3] Thomas, II–II, q.32, a.7; Antoninus, source cited above.

[4] Bernardine of Siena, Sermon 33 for the Fourth Sunday of Lent, and Lenten Sermon 42, article 3; Charles Borromeo, *Instructions*, chapter 8.

[5] Antoninus, *Summa*, part II, title I, chapter 23, section 6; 1 Corinthians 14:40.

Decalogue: Fifteenth Conference: On the Seventh Commandment: Theft

Original preacher not named.

Non furtum facies. (Exodus 20.)

You shall not steal.

This commandment is the one all men most approve in general, and at the same time the one they most violate individually. Everyone admits that we must not take another's goods; nevertheless, although this happens very frequently, scarcely anyone wishes to acknowledge his guilt. Someone praising the severity of laws against manifest theft inwardly delights in concealing his own plunder too, thinking he can be summoned only before the tribunal of his conscience.

Holy Scripture teaches us that the two vices causing the greatest devastation in the world are theft and impurity: *Furtum et adulterium inundaverunt*—theft and adultery have flooded everywhere. Nevertheless no one judges himself equitably in this matter or accuses himself of such sins. When Your ministers, O my God, rebuke Your people for this vice, they contradict and mock them: *Populus enim tuus sicut hi qui contradicunt*

sacerdoti—Your people are like those contradicting the priest.

Whence, then, comes so strange a disorder? From the fact that almost everyone constantly flatters himself that he does not commit it; that people attribute to their neighbor a sin of which they are as guilty as he; and that they form for themselves a false security of conscience. Thus someone enriched through another's spoils says to God with the Pharisee's very blindness and insolence: I thank You, Lord, that I am not a thief or adulterer like other men, especially this miserable publican.

In view of this, should we be astonished that theft, which everyone condemns in general, has spread through almost every state of life, until in towns and cities alike we hear of nothing but injustices, extortions and plunder? I shall therefore show you that you are right to condemn theft, because this vice is so hateful. But it would be much better to examine whether you yourselves have committed it, since it is so common.[1]

Q. To what does the seventh commandment oblige us? What is theft, and in how many ways is it committed?

A. The seventh commandment, like all the others, has two parts, the Catechism of the Council of Trent says. It forbids one thing and commands another. It forbids taking or unjustly retaining another's property and causing our neighbor any harm in his goods. It commands assisting him in his needs and being merciful toward him: that is, it forbids theft and prescribes almsgiving.

Both are contained in the precept of natural law commanding us to do to others what we wish them to do to us. In this, the Lord says, consist the whole Law and the Prophets: *Omnia ergo quæcumque vultis ut faciant vobis homines, et vos facite illis: hæc est enim lex, et Prophetæ*. We shall begin with what concerns theft and afterward treat almsgiving.

Theft in general means every kind of unjust appropriation of another's goods. *Furti nomine*, St. Augustine says, *bene intelligitur omnis illicita usurpatio rei alienæ*—by the name theft we rightly understand every unlawful appropriation of another's property.

Another's goods can be taken unjustly in three ways.

First, secretly and without the injured person's knowledge. This is properly called theft, St. Thomas says.

Secondly, with violence. If this is done treacherously, as highway robbers do, it is called brigandage; but if the violence is public, it is called rapine. Such was Ahab's crime when he seized Naboth's vineyard.

Thirdly, through fraud, surprise or deceit, as buyers or sellers do when cheating in weight, measure, number or some other way.

The different kinds of theft are also distinguished according to the quality of the things stolen. Stealing a private person's goods is properly called theft. If the goods belong to the public, it is called peculation \[embezzlement of public property\]. Such is the sin of those who, invested with public office or handling the Royal Treasury, fail in justice or fidelity when administering or exercising their ministries or offices.

Finally, stealing a sacred thing, or a nonsacred thing in a sacred place, is called sacrilege and is the most detestable theft of all. Nevertheless, it is more common than people think. Apart from impious people stealing in churches, many abuse ecclesiastical goods and make goods intended for God's worship, His ministers' maintenance and the poor's relief serve their passions. According to the holy Fathers, this is true injustice, robbery and sacrilege.

Q. Is theft a great sin? Are those committing many small thefts guilty of mortal sin?

A. All theologians agree with St. Thomas that theft is mortal sin by its nature. The Apostle St. Paul clearly warns of this in his First Letter to the Corinthians: neither thieves nor those plundering others' goods will inherit God's kingdom. *Neque fures, neque rapaces regnum Dei possidebunt.*

Tobit was so convinced of this truth that, hearing a little goat bleat in his house and doubting whether it had been stolen, he told his wife to return it to its owner. It was not lawful for him to eat or even touch something belonging to another: *Videte ne forte furtivus sit, reddite eum dominis suis, quia non licet nobis edere ex furto aliquid, aut contingere*—see whether perhaps it is stolen; return it to its owners, since we may not eat or touch anything obtained by theft.

The evil consequences of robbery are manifest proof of this sin's gravity. From it arise lawsuits, enmities, hatreds and discord. It casts many into hell because of the difficulty of restoring another's goods after appropriating them. Therefore the Prophet Habakkuk exclaims: "Woe to him who gathers what is not his!" *Væ ei qui multiplicat non sua!* How long will he heap piles of mud against himself? *Usquequo et aggravat contra se densum lutum?*

These heaps of mud signify the various crimes making the thief hateful to everyone. Even the stones of the buildings he erects will cry for vengeance against him, as the same Prophet says: *Lapis de pariete clamabit*—the stone will cry out from the wall.

Finally, theft's enormity is manifested by civil laws punishing those guilty of this crime with death. Theft can sometimes be venial through smallness of matter, St. Thomas observes, and because one may believe the owner would not take it very badly and would readily consent to being deprived of the stolen thing.

But the Angelic Doctor adds that if someone stealing a thing of little importance intends to steal another of greater value and cause his neighbor considerable harm, he will sin mortally even without accomplishing his design. *Si tamen habet animum furandi, et inferendi detrimentum proximo, etiam in talibus minimis potest esse peccatum mortale, sicut et in solo cogitatu per consensum*—if he intends to steal and harm his neighbor, there can be mortal sin even in these smallest matters, as also in thought alone through consent.

Since theft's gravity is proportionate to the harm caused our neighbor, fixing the amount necessary for mortal sin is not easy. We must consider the circumstances of the person robbed and the dispositions of the person committing it.

Someone taking a small coin from a person with nothing else for that day's food sins mortally. So does someone taking an instrument an artisan absolutely needs to earn his living, even if it has very little value.

The same must be said of someone committing small thefts with the intention of continuing until a considerable sum is reached. Thus Pope Innocent XI, in his decree of March 1679, condemned the following proposition: no one is obliged under mortal sin to restore what he stole in small installments, however great their total amount. *Non tenetur quis sub pœna peccati mortalis restituere quod ablatum est per pauca furta, quantacumque sit magna summa totalis*.

Q. Are children who take their parents' goods or fail to account to them for their earnings guilty of theft and sin against the seventh commandment?

A. Many children living in their parents' household take money, grain, furniture and other things from the house for gambling, dissipation and other follies, believing they can do so without injury to conscience.

But let them hear the Wise Man: someone robbing his father or mother and affirming this is not sinful shares a murderer's crime. *Qui subtrahit aliquid a patre suo et a matre, et dicit hoc non esse peccatum, particeps homicidæ est*.

These words show well the injury children do those whom they owe sincere love and the highest respect. Taking their fathers' and mothers' goods, which they do not inherit until after their death, they seem in a certain way to wish to take their lives: *Particeps homicidæ est*—he shares with a murderer.

Thus St. Antoninus does not fear to say that a son stealing something important from his father sins mortally. Certainly, the saint adds, something constituting grave matter and consequently mortal sin in a stranger will

be a venial fault in a son. A father feels less repugnance at his son's taking some things of no great importance than at a stranger's doing so. Thus we can say that when the father suffers no grave harm and the son makes good use of what he takes, he does not sin mortally.

Finally, according to St. Paul, parents must lay up treasure for children and assist their needs: *Nec enim debent filii parentibus thesaurizare, sed parentes filiis*—children ought not to lay up for parents, but parents for children. Hence it follows that children must account to parents for earnings from their skill or manual labor. They must not retain or do anything important without parental consent. Children with private earnings must attend closely to this.

Q. Do wives sin against the seventh commandment if they take or give something important without their husbands' permission?

A. A married woman may possess goods of different kinds. Some are called dotal, others paraphernal. Dotal goods are those she delivered to her husband to sustain marriage's burdens, to which he has a right for that purpose while both spouses live.

Paraphernal goods are those outside the dowry, *quæ præter dotem habet*, the law says—what she has apart from the dowry—whether bequeathed or given to her personally.

Given this distinction, I say written law permits a married woman to dispose as she chooses of her paraphernal goods without her husband's consent, unless at marriage she gave him as dowry all her present and future property. In that case she can possess no paraphernal goods. Not only everything brought at marriage but everything afterward belonging to her through succession, donation or any other cause must be considered dotal. She cannot dispose of it without her husband's authority and consent, unless the kingdom's laws provide otherwise.

As for dotal goods, it is established that a wife cannot dispose of them without her husband's consent. The usufruct belongs to him to support marriage's burdens—unless the husband is a man of bad conduct who, through avarice or disorders, refuses to provide for his family's needs.

Then the wife may take what is necessary for her decent maintenance or to pay the family's debts. But she should resort to these extremes only after sufficiently admonishing her husband of his obligation to contribute to necessary things.

Q. May a husband, without his wife's consent, dispose of goods, furniture, money, rents and the like, or real estate acquired during marriage, to enrich relatives, friends or stepchildren? Will the wife have the same power?

A. Although spouses cannot bring judicial claims against one another for thefts of this kind, someone diverting their common goods to such uses certainly commits mortal fault. The husband has no greater authority in this than the wife. Hence we must conclude that if the harm one causes the other is notable, there is undoubtedly a grave sin of injustice.

Founded upon this principle, Pope Honorius III wrote to La Rochelle's magistrate and inhabitants about the custom permitting a husband who had dissipated or lost his own goods to alienate his wife's movable or immovable property. He condemned the custom as abusive and declared conformity to such unjust practices unlawful.

The wife has still less right. This is clearly proved by the letter St. Augustine wrote to a lady named Ecdicia. Without her husband's knowledge she had given almost all their common goods to two monks as poor men. Here are his words: *Nihil ergo de tua veste, nihil de tuo auro, argento, vel quacumque pecunia, aut rebus ullis tuis sine arbitrio ejus facere debuisti*—you ought therefore to have done nothing with your clothing, gold, silver, money of any kind or any goods of yours without his decision.

He adds that she ought humbly to ask her husband's forgiveness for rashly disposing against his will of goods whose administration belonged to him.

But we must observe that a woman does not need her husband's consent to assist her father or mother when either is in urgent need and the husband refuses help. The same must be said regarding a brother, sister or children of a first marriage suffering equal need.

Q. When do servants, artisans and day laborers sin against this commandment?

A. All these people often defraud their masters or employers, although the Apostle St. Paul expressly recommends fidelity: *Non fraudantes, sed in omnibus fidem bonam ostendentes*—not defrauding, but showing good fidelity in everything.

First, servants sin against this commandment when they steal their masters' goods or fail to take proper care of them.

Secondly, when they secretly take things under pretext of almsgiving or rewarding people who helped them in their master's service.

Thirdly, when, on pretext that their wages are small, they refuse to work or take for themselves more than agreed. Thus the Universities of Paris and Louvain, and afterward the Holy See, condemned this proposition: "Male and female servants may steal from their masters what they judge proportionate to their work, if wages do not equal it."

We must observe regarding domestic thefts by servants, children and wives that people concealing stolen things for them are equally guilty. These receivers favor their crime and cause such thefts: *Qui cum fure participat odit animam suam*, Scripture says, *adjurantem audit, et non indicat*—someone sharing with a thief hates his own soul; he hears the adjuration but does not disclose it.

Day laborers and artisans likewise sin against this commandment when they fail to perform their work faithfully, take more than the agreed price, cheat or pay themselves with their own hands \[take compensation on their own authority\]. Tailors do this when retaining pieces of fabric on pretext that payment does not equal the clothes' workmanship.

Finally, all those receiving and collecting wages for any private or public employment are true thieves, the Catechism of the Council of Trent says, if they fail in their obligations. *Illi numero furum reponendi sunt, qui cum ad privatum aliquod, vel publicum officium conducti sunt, nullam vel parvam operam navantes munus negligunt, mercede tanquam pretio fruuntur*—among thieves must be numbered those hired for private or public office who neglect their duty, doing no work or little, while enjoying wages as its price.

Q. Are poor people taking something from the rich to relieve their misery guilty of theft?

A. Some believe stealing from the rich is not sinful, on pretext that the harm is so slight they can scarcely notice it. A miserable excuse, the Catechism of the Council of Trent says: *Misera sane et pestifera defensio!*—truly a miserable and pernicious defense! You will not find permission to steal from the rich in God's commandments.

Nevertheless, to resolve the question we must suppose three kinds of need into which poor people can fall: common need, grave need and extreme need.

Common need is that of people begging from door to door. It cannot excuse poor people who steal. It is a frivolous pretext condemned by St. Paul, who, after forbidding theft, admonishes the poor to work, teaching that work will provide their maintenance. Consequently, they are very culpable if instead of applying themselves to work they believe theft lawful. The Wise Man expressly says idleness is the mother of all vices: *Multam enim malitiam docuit otiositas*—idleness has taught much wickedness.

Grave need is that reducing a man below his state, so that earning his living obliges him to work in a way unsuitable to his station. Nor does this need excuse from sin those stealing from the rich what they require to live.

Pope Innocent XI decided this question by condemning in his decree of March 2, 1679 the proposition teaching: *Permissum est furari non solum in extrema, sed etiam in gravi necessitate*—stealing is permitted not only in extreme but also grave necessity.

Indeed, this need is ordinarily incurred only through one's own fault: failure to work and excessive expenditure. Hence come borrowing and never repaying. Someone seizing others' goods remains ever poorer, because God does not bestow His blessing on those acting thus. *Alii dividunt propria, et ditiores fiunt,* Scripture says, *alii rapiunt non sua, et semper in egestate sunt*—some distribute their own goods and grow richer; others seize what is not theirs and remain always in want.

Extreme need is the absolute lack of life's necessities, so that without assistance the sufferer is in danger of death. All theologians unanimously agree that poor people in this need may take what they require to avoid dying of hunger.

They give these reasons:

First, then no law forbids taking what is necessary: *Necessitas non habet legem*—necessity has no law. Jesus Christ did not rebuke His disciples when hunger pressed them to pluck ears of grain for food.

Secondly, in such cases goods are common. Someone in so straitened a necessity then has a right to them, as does someone owning them by particular laws. God commands all men to give assistance on such occasions. We may say someone refusing alms is the poor person's murderer: *Si non pavisti, occidisti*—if you have not fed him, you have killed him. These are St. Thomas's reasons.

Nevertheless, some qualification must be placed upon this doctrine.

First, the need must be truly extreme, with no other means of escaping it.

Secondly, nothing beyond what is absolutely necessary for preserving life at its bare requirements must be taken, and this must be done only with great moderation. Anyone using this pretext to steal or take a considerable amount would be guilty and violate justice's rules.

Thirdly, such counsel must never be given to the poor. On the contrary, exhort them to patience and work, warning that if caught in the act they could be punished by judges with an infamous penalty. Hence, since they cannot and ought not expose themselves to such dishonor, there are cases in which they should rather abandon themselves to Providence than steal anything from anyone.[2]

Q. Does lack of firewood authorize poor people living in the countryside to take it from forests belonging to the king or private owners?

A. First, when no law of the kingdom permits the poor to gather wood in royal forests or woods, only custom can authorize it. To be legitimate, this custom must rest upon the owners' express or tacit consent.

Secondly, in extreme necessity poor people lacking wood for warmth or baking bread and cooking food may take it from royal or private forests, although having no right to their use.

In this case they commit no theft. Theft requires taking another's goods against the owner's will, and in extreme necessity goods are common. Nor is it credible that in such circumstances a woodland owner would resent a poor person's taking a little wood to relieve need.

Those suffering less urgent need, however, cannot take any wood without the owners' express or tacit consent. By virtue of this consent, authorized by custom in many places, the poor publicly gather small wood fallen on the ground without the guards preventing them.

The poor must content themselves with this. They may not damage forests or cut wood for sale under pretext of supporting their families.

Q. Do people harming their neighbor, or failing to prevent harm when able, sin against this commandment?

A. Not only those stealing their neighbor's goods sin against the seventh commandment, but also those causing him harm. This can happen in many ways.

First, by unjustly retaining another's property. Thus people fail through bad conduct to pay their debts, or, much worse, refuse to acknowledge them to avoid payment, or practice fraud upon creditors.

Secondly, when those charged with others' goods allow them to be lost or deteriorate through negligence or malice; or, after enjoying their use as guardians, administrators or lessees, fail to render a faithful account.

Thirdly, by contributing to harm caused our neighbor: commanding it, supplying aid, counsel or consent, or not preventing it whenever one can. Such are servants failing to warn a master of harm done him; shepherds allowing livestock into others' pastures; masters knowing and tolerating this; hunters and others damaging meadows, vineyards, grain and other fruits of the earth.

Fourthly, by failing to prevent thefts, rapine, extortions and monopolies, as is the obligation of magistrates and everyone whose employment requires safeguarding public or private goods. All these are guilty of the harm their negligence causes and sin against the seventh commandment.

Q. What fruit must we draw from this conference?

A. Here it is contained in St. Paul's words: *Qui furabatur, jam non furetur: magis autem laboret, operando manibus suis, quod bonum est, ut habeat unde tribuat necessitatem patienti*—let someone who stole steal no longer; rather let him labor, working with his hands at what is good, so that he may have something to give a person suffering need.

Have you had the vice of taking what belongs to others? Henceforth steal no more. Commit no more injustices, deceits, rapine or brigandage. You must abandon and renounce it all forever: *Qui furabatur, jam non furetur*.

But since idleness ordinarily leads to this accursed sin, you must work with greater application than hitherto: *Magis autem laboret*—rather let him labor. Since not all work is sufficient and some occupations are unlawful, the Apostle wishes you to work with your hands in a spirit of penance, earning your living in some good, praiseworthy and useful work: *Operando manibus suis quod bonum est*.

Yet something more is required to make a thief a perfect penitent. He must repair his injustices and every evil he has caused, applying himself so diligently to work that economy and good conduct enable him to give alms and blot out past iniquities with holy works: *Ut habeat unde tribuat necessitatem patienti*—that he may have something to give someone suffering need.

Here is the great remedy I propose with the Apostle to everyone who has had the misfortune of breaking the seventh commandment. But if someone is so obstinate as to despise it and resolves to die without repairing his injustices, he is a reprobate to whom I have nothing to say.

If, however, the desire for salvation moves you at all, beloved brothers, reflect seriously upon this. Think and penetrate this truth well: hell was made for thieves, and heaven for those loving justice, with clean hands and conscience.

Consider carefully and be convinced that if you lose your soul, you lose everything. If you save it, though you lose everything, you will save all by possessing forever the eternal goods that constitute the saints' happiness.[3]

[1] Hosea 4:2, 4; Luke 18:11.

[2] *Roman Catechism*; Ephesians 4:28; Sirach 33:28–29; Innocent XI, March 2, 1679; Proverbs 11:24; Thomas, II–II, q.66, a.7 (source q.67); Matthew 12:1–8.

[3] Ephesians 4:28. Matthew 25:41.

Decalogue: Sixteenth Conference: On Commerce

Original preacher not named.

Non furtum facies. (Exodus 20.)

You shall not steal.

Since I have undertaken, in explaining the seventh commandment, to show you the injustices committed in different trades and professions, I must not omit those that are so common among merchants. I know well that nothing in civil life is more useful or necessary than commerce. Without having exquisite fabrics brought from the most distant parts of the world, without the trouble of fitting out ships, and without exposing himself to shipwreck or to falling into the hands of pirates, anyone can find in the shops everything most precious that the Indies and other regions produce. These advantages are great, and it is just that those who procure them for the public should have their profit. But this profit is often so fraudulent and so excessive that Salvian does not fear to say that the life of those engaged in trade and commerce is fraud and perjury: *Quid autem aliud est cunctorum negotiantium vita, quam fraus atque perjurium?*—what else is the life of all traders but fraud and perjury?

It is not my intention to make this conference a satire, nor to offend anyone by supposing imagined faults. I know well that there are in commerce upright, faithful, innocent and just men who, amid the dangers of their profession, preserve the spirit of Christianity. But since there are others whose conduct is entirely opposite and who wish to live in culpable ignorance, it will be fitting to instruct them on certain points in which they believe themselves innocent, in order to help them accuse themselves and amend.[1]

Q. How must a Christian engage in commerce?

A. He must trade, first, without deceit and without usury. He must never deceive in the sale or purchase of merchandise. Fidelity is the soul of commerce; it is what makes it prosper and what always honors those who practice it: *Vir fidelis multum laudabitur*, says the Wise Man, *qui autem festinat ditari, non erit innocens*—a faithful man will be much praised, but he who hastens to grow rich will not be innocent.

Secondly, without swearing or lying. The principal rule of virtuous merchants is good faith. “But if I am sincere,” you will tell me, “I shall earn nothing; and what will become of my business?” But I ask you: what will become of your soul if you are a swearer or a liar? And what will you gain if you lose it through your perjuries and multiplied deceptions?

Thirdly, he must not employ in commerce the time destined for God’s service. The Lord will curse your dealings if you profane Sundays and feast days, and what you earn on such days will be reduced to nothing. *Mercedes congregavit*, says the prophet Haggai, *misit eas in sacculum pertusum*—he gathered wages and put them into a bag with holes.

Fourthly, he must trade with a good purpose: to support his family, to help the poor and to be useful to the public. If commerce is not carried on with one of these motives, but merely to grow rich, then commerce is vicious, says St. Thomas; for, according to the Apostle, covetousness is the root of all evils: *Radix omnium malorum cupiditas*. Those who seek only to become rich fall into temptation and into the snares of the devil, and give themselves up to many vain and harmful desires, which plunge men into the abyss of their ruin and damnation: *Qui volunt divites fieri incidunt in tentationem, et in laqueum diaboli, et desideria multa vana et*

inutilia, quæ mergunt homines in interitum, et perditionem.[2]

Q. What injustices are ordinarily committed in commerce?

A. A person sins against the fidelity that commerce requires, first, when he sells with false weight or false measure: *Nolite facere iniquum aliquid in judicio, in regula, in pondere, in mensura: statera justa, et æqua sint pondera*. Commit no injustice in your weights or measures, and let your balances be just and equal, God says to His people in Leviticus. You know well that every Sunday those who commit such frauds are excommunicated.

"But shall I be doing wrong," you will say, "if, being content with a small profit, I clip a little from the weight and the measure?" You ask whether you do wrong? Hear what Scripture says: You shall not have different weights or measures, some for buying and others for selling; for the Lord your God abhors the one who does this: *Abominatur enim Dominus Deus tuus eum qui facit hæc, et aversatur omnem injustitiam*—for the Lord your God abhors him who does these things, and He hates all injustice. There are merchants who, although they have just measures, do not cease to deceive buyers in the manner of weighing or measuring. An upright heart abhors all these injustices.

Secondly, he sins who sells one article in place of another of a different kind from what is asked for, or of the same kind but not of the same quality; or who sells merchandise having defects that he ought to disclose and does not. For example, cloth burned in the dyeing is sold as good, and nothing is said to the buyer.

Thirdly, he sins who sells or buys at more or less than the just price, taking advantage of another's necessity or ignorance in order to sell more dearly or buy more cheaply; or who buys goods from persons who have stolen them or have no right to sell them.

Fourthly, he sins who makes monopolies or unjust agreements harmful to the public. *Monopolium* is a Greek word meaning "one who sells alone." This etymology makes it easy to understand that monopoly consists in some merchants, craftsmen or other persons agreeing that they alone will sell certain goods, or do certain work, in order to sell it at the highest price, because of the necessity in which they place the public of depending on them. These monopolists sin against justice and charity and are condemned by canonical and civil laws. Those also are guilty of rapine who, in time of scarcity of grain and other things necessary for life, lock them up and hide them so as to make them much dearer. Of these it is said in Proverbs, chapter 11, that they will be cursed by the peoples: *Qui abscondit frumenta, maledicetur in populis*—he who hides grain will be cursed among the peoples.

Finally, those commit injustice who, by fraudulent bankruptcies and other deceits, keep other people's goods. These are the principal frauds committed in commerce, all of which are condemned in general by this rule of law: *Locupletari non debet aliquis cum alterius injuria vel jactura*—no one ought to be enriched through another's injury or loss.[3]

Q. Is it ever lawful for merchants to mix the goods they sell?

A. We must distinguish. It is never lawful for merchants to make any mixture that deteriorates their goods and makes them of lower value, and nevertheless to sell them at the current price as if they had not been adulterated. To sell, for example, wine mixed with water at the same price as pure wine is to deceive in the very substance of the thing, says St. Thomas. Therefore the Faculty of Theology of Paris in 1666 condemned the following proposition: *Licitum est tabernariis vinum aqua miscere, et agricolis triticum paleis, et communi pretio vendere, dummodo deteriora non reddantur eis, quæ communiter venduntur*—it is lawful for tavern keepers to mix wine with water, and for farmers to mix wheat with chaff, and to sell at the common price, provided the goods are not made worse than those commonly sold. This doctrine, the censure says, is contrary to good faith and public justice.

But we do not believe it is an injustice to make certain mixtures which, far from harming buyers, improve and strengthen the goods they buy. For example, a merchant may in conscience preserve the color and strength of wines with some ingredient that is not harmful.[4]

Q. Are merchants obliged to disclose the defects of the thing they sell?

A. There are two kinds of defects: some essential and others accidental. Essential defects are those which make a thing entirely useless for the use it has in commerce, or which so diminish that use, or make it so inconvenient, that if the buyer had known of them he would not have taken it at that price. For example, a rotten beam is useless for a building; a restless horse is less useful for service and more troublesome. These defects suffice to rescind the sale.

Accidental defects are those which merely prevent the use of a thing from being as advantageous as expected. For example, if a horse is merely hard to the spur, or if the wine is not as delicate nor of as fine a taste as was believed, this is not sufficient cause to annul the sale.

Given this distinction, I say that there is no strict obligation to declare the accidental defects of things sold, provided the price is fair and takes account of the defects. Thus someone who sells a horse that is hard to the spur is not obliged to tell the buyer, says St. Thomas, because the buyer would not want to give him what it was worth. But neither must the seller take the same price as for another horse that obeys the rider who spurs it.

As for essential defects that can harm the buyer of the thing, we must distinguish whether the defects are evident—that is, whether the buyer can easily notice them. For example, if a horse is one-eyed or lame, the seller is not obliged to point it out to the buyer, because these are defects easily noticed. Given this decision, Sylvius says:

First, the buyer must be able to recognize the defect; for if he is short-sighted, or so blind that he cannot notice it, the seller must declare it to him.

Secondly, the buyer must be a man of understanding; for it is not lawful to abuse a neighbor's simplicity.

Thirdly, the defect must not expose the buyer to evident danger: a very spirited horse can throw its rider if he is not a strong man.

Fourthly, the seller must not use fraud to prevent the buyer from noticing the defect of the thing. For example, a horse is lame, but this is not noticed when it is heated, and so it is made to trot a long course just then; if the buyer cannot notice the defect, it is through the fraud of the seller.

In a word, the basis of the theologians who decide that there is no obligation to disclose an evident defect in a thing sold rests on the supposition that the buyer wishes to buy despite the defect he notices in the thing: *Scienti et volenti non fit injuria, nec dolus*—no injury or fraud is done to one who knows and consents.

But if the essential defects of a thing cannot be noticed by the buyer, probity and justice oblige that he be warned of them, says St. Thomas, because it is not lawful to sell him a thing that, through his not knowing it, could cause him harm. For example, I sell a fiery horse that could kill its rider if he does not know of this defect; I commit an injustice if I do not warn the buyer. *Dare alicui occasionem periculi, vel damni, semper est illicitum*—to give anyone an occasion of danger or loss is always unlawful—says the Angelic Doctor.[5]

Q. In what cases are those who sell horses obliged to take them back and restore the price?

A. There are three ordinary cases, called redhibitory because they give grounds for rescinding the sale of the horse. These cases are broken wind, glanders, and curb or swelling of the legs. When a horse suffers from any of these diseases, the sale is void and can be undone within the time prescribed by custom or settled between seller and buyer by express agreement.

Besides these cases, which are always excepted, the horse may have other secret defects that make it useless or harmful to the buyer. Then, if the seller would not declare these defects, he is obliged to take back his horse or indemnify the buyer: *Si hujusmodi vitia sint occulta, et ipse non detegat*, says St. Thomas, *erit illicita et dolosa venditio, et tenetur venditor ad damni recompensationem*—if such defects are hidden and he does not reveal them, the sale will be unlawful and fraudulent, and the seller is bound to compensate the loss.

But it must be noted that if the seller did not know of these hidden defects and sold the horse in good faith, without guaranteeing that it had no defect, it does not seem just to condemn him to indemnify, provided that when he sold it he set the price taking account of the possibility that it might turn out defective.[6]

Q. Is it lawful to sell or buy things at more or less than they are worth? What is the ordinary price of merchandise?

A. The general rule is that a thing must never be sold for more than it is worth, nor bought for less than its just value. The contract of sale and purchase was introduced among men for the mutual convenience of seller and buyer, and there must be equality between the thing sold and the price given for it, so that seller and buyer have their common advantage. This equality is destroyed when the price given exceeds the just value of the thing sold, or the value of the thing exceeds the price; consequently there is no justice in such a sale or such a purchase: *Et ideo*, says St. Thomas, *carius vendere vel vilius emere rem quam valeat, est secundum se injustum et illicitum*—and therefore to sell a thing more dearly or buy it more cheaply than it is worth is in itself unjust and unlawful.

For greater clarity we must distinguish two kinds of price. The first is called the legal price, that is, the one fixed by the prince or his ministers. This price can be neither increased nor decreased. For example, if the price of wine or meat is regulated by the magistrate of police, one may not sell more dearly nor buy more cheaply, for that would be injustice.

The second price is called natural, common and discretionary, because it is not fixed or assessed. It is the price at which the thing sold is commonly valued by persons intelligent and instructed in judging its just value. This price does not consist, like the first, in a determined point; it has a certain range, according to the greater or lesser esteem in which the thing is held. Theologians mark three degrees: the highest, the middle or moderate, and the lowest; but between them there cannot be a notable difference: *Justum pretium rerum non est punctualiter determinatum, sed magis in quadam æstimatione consistit*, says St. Thomas, *ita quod modica additio vel minutio non videtur tollere æqualitatem justitiæ*—the just price of things is not fixed to a point but consists rather in a certain estimate, so that a slight addition or diminution does not seem to destroy the equality of justice.

This supposed, it must be said that a merchant sells goods more dearly than he ought when the price at which he sells them exceeds the highest; and he buys them for less than they are worth when the price he gives for them is below the lowest.[7]

Q. Is it lawful to sell merchandise at whatever price one can, provided it is not very exorbitant, since the law says: *Res tantum valet quantum vendi potest*—a thing is worth as much as it can be sold for?

A. Although merchants may lawfully have some profit on their goods, after deducting the expenses they must incur for journeys, servants, premises and so forth, they are not permitted to sell them at the highest price they can get if it exceeds the highest current price; for that would be an injustice, which the law never authorizes. When the law says that a thing is worth as much as it can be sold for, this is understood, says St. Antoninus, if it does not exceed its just price. This is the true meaning of the law, which elsewhere states that the price of things must be regulated by their estimation: certain proof that it does not wish the price of things to depend on the greed of the seller, or that they be worth as much as they can be sold for, but only what they are commonly valued at by persons intelligent in commerce.

It is true, says St. Thomas, that the law tolerates and does not punish those who sell merchandise for more than it is worth, provided the buyer is not enormously harmed nor pays more than half again what the thing is worth. The law, which cannot prevent all the injustices it disapproves, was obliged to establish this maxim to cut off an infinity of lawsuits that would arise from purchases and sales if, for a slight harm, one were allowed to seek reparation in court. But this does not prevent that, by the law of God, which condemns the smallest injustices, one is obliged in conscience to indemnify the person who suffered harm in the purchase or sale through having sold more dearly or bought more cheaply.

To avoid all injustice, therefore, the seller must confine himself to an honest profit, and the buyer must pay a reasonable price. This is what the Wise Man admonishes us when he says: *Sicut in medio compaginis lapidum palus figitur, sic et inter medium venditionis et emptionis angustiabitur peccatum*—as a stake is driven in the middle of the joints of stones, so between selling and buying sin will be pressed in.[8]

Q. Is it lawful to sell things for more than they are worth when they are sold on credit?

A. Pope Urban III, being consulted whether a merchant sins who sells his goods at a higher price because he gives the buyer a long time for payment, answered that, according to the words of Jesus Christ, one must lend without hope of reward: *Mutuum date nihil inde sperantes*—lend, hoping for nothing in return. Consequently those who sell more dearly because of the delay of payment they grant the buyer, with the aim of gaining, become guilty of usury and are obliged to restitution.

The First Council of Milan in 1565 and the Council of Bordeaux in 1583 declare the same. *Ne quis rem aliquam ob dilatam solutionem carius vendat justo pretio,* says the first—let no one sell anything above the just price because payment is deferred. *Ne quis ob dilatam solutionis diem carius vendat quam justi pretii ratio ferat,* says the second—let no one, because of a deferred day of payment, sell more dearly than the reckoning of the just price allows.

St. Thomas teaches the same doctrine and says that a merchant who sells more dearly because of the delay of payment he grants the buyer is no less guilty of usury than one who lends a sum for a certain time at interest; for he sells more dearly only to draw profit from the benefit he does the debtor: *Unde quidquid ultra justum pretium pro hujusmodi expectatione exigitur, est quasi pretium mutui, quod pertinet ad rationem usuræ,* says this holy Doctor—hence whatever is demanded beyond the just price for such waiting is as it were a price for a loan, which belongs to the nature of usury.

It is, therefore, a manifest injustice to sell things for more than they are worth because they are sold on credit. Legitimate profit, whether one sells on credit or for ready money, is contained within the three degrees of the just price. The most a merchant selling on credit can do is choose the highest just price, to compensate lawfully for the loss he suffers in selling on credit.

It is also lawful for the merchant to ask compensation of those to whom he sells on credit if they do not pay him by the term he set them, or if a year passes when he prescribed no limited time. The *Dictionary of Decisions* does not allow a merchant who sells on credit to have the interest on his money paid until a year has passed after the sale of such goods. The reason is that he already has in the sale the profit that naturally belongs to his trade; and if he could, from the moment of sale, take interest on the money he is slow to collect, he would draw a double profit from it. But since at the end of the year he is presumed no longer to have any profit in the goods he sold on credit, and to suffer harm from the delay of payment, it is just that the debtor who delays it should compensate him.[9]

Q. May merchants trade in every kind of merchandise and buy from every class of persons?

A. To the first question I answer that there are certain forbidden goods, called contraband, whose trade is not permitted; and merchants are obliged to obey the laws of the prince that forbid it: *Omnis anima potestatibus sublimioribus subdita sit,* says St. Paul—let every soul be subject to the higher powers. In some cases the

transgression will be a mortal sin: for example, if the law imposes the penalty of death, the galleys or another grave penalty—not only because of disobedience to the sovereign, but principally because of the danger, to which the one apprehended by the royal officers is exposed, of losing life, liberty and goods; to which danger no one may voluntarily expose himself without committing mortal sin. To this is added that smugglers commonly profane Sundays and feast days, and so forth. Besides goods prohibited by the prince, there are others that the natural law forbids, such as books contrary to religion and good morals, whose trade is absolutely forbidden with greater rigor.

To the second question I answer that they must not buy from children, the insane, or any others who are naturally incapable of contracting; nor from those whom the law declares incapable, such as prodigals, minors, wives who are subject to the authority of their husbands, and those suspended by justice, if they contract to their own harm. Much more unlawful is it to buy from those who have stolen the things they sell, or when there is suspicion of it.[10]

Q. Do merchants who defraud the royal duties sin and are they obliged to restitution?

A. A merchant cannot without offending God defraud the payment of duties legitimately established by the prince; for he has power to require of his subjects the necessary tributes to meet the needs and burdens of the State. Nor is it any use to say that the taxes are exorbitant and are increased every day. This cannot justify merchants; for it does not belong to them or to other private persons to judge whether the tributes are excessive or not, because they cannot, nor even should, know the needs of the State, to which all subjects must contribute.

This decision is founded on the words of Jesus Christ, Who says that we must render to Caesar what is Caesar's: *Reddite quæ sunt Cæsaris Cæsari*. The Savior Himself practiced it, having paid the tribute for Himself and for St. Peter, as St. Matthew relates. St. Paul recommends this obligation to us in his Epistle to the Romans and tells us that princes are God's ministers, who serve Him in exercising the functions of their office.

Those who defraud the prince's duties steal what belongs to another, and their sin is mortal if the fraud is considerable: *Justitia porro vectigalium est commutativa, quia viget utrique*, says Cabassut: *Principi enim salus, et securitas populi ex ejus officio incumbit: populo autem præstatio tributorum, et obedientiæ, atque is qui justitiam commutativam violat in re gravi, peccat eo ipso mortaliter, cum restituendi obligatione*—the justice of taxes is commutative, for it binds on both sides: the welfare and security of the people falls upon the prince by his office; upon the people, the payment of tributes and obedience; and whoever violates commutative justice in a grave matter by that very fact sins mortally, with the obligation of restitution.

The law commanding the payment of tributes to princes is not a merely penal law, but a law conformed to natural law, which commands us to contribute to princes the help and assistance to govern the State, defend their peoples and keep them in peace. False, therefore, is the maxim of those who believe it lawful to defraud the royal taxes.[11]

Reflect a little here, merchants, upon your profession. All merchants must have good faith and probity. Without these two virtues commerce will be nothing but robbery. Do you hold these virtues in due esteem, as the Apostle charges us when he says: *Ne quis supergrediatur, neque circumveniat in negotio fratrem suum*—let no one overreach or defraud his brother in business? No more frauds, no more tricks and deceptions, no more injustices in your promises, in your words, in your contracts and in your dealings.

In all the years you have exercised the profession of merchants, what has your conduct been? *Virum fidelem quis inveniet?* How rare it is, says the Wise Man, to find a faithful man in the world! Let us add: especially in commerce. How many wicked deeds are committed in it! Consider before God whether you are guilty of any of them. How have you sold? How have you bought? Are you one of those artful men who, to use the

Prophet's expression, use deceits as subtle as a sharpened razor, which cuts the hair without being felt? *Sicut novacula acuta fecisti dolum*—like a sharp razor you have worked deceit.

Have the profits you have drawn never been excessive or unjust? Have you always been exact in your accounts and dealings? Have you deceived anyone? *Virum fidelem quis inveniet?* I leave to you the care of examining yourselves on all this, and I pray the Lord to grant you the grace to keep the justice, rectitude and good faith that He so recommended to us, so that, having traded in a Christian manner, you may deserve to receive the eternal goods in reward.[12]

---

[1] Salvian, *On the Government of God*, III (source *De Provid.*).

[2] Proverbs 28:20; Haggai 1:6; Thomas, II–II, q.77, a.4; 1 Timothy 6:9–10.

[3] Leviticus 19:35–36 (source 19:33, 36); Deuteronomy 25:13–16; Proverbs 11:26.

[4] Thomas, II–II, q.77, a.2.

[5] Thomas, II–II, q.77, a.3; Sylvius as cited; Thomas, *Quodlibet* (source citation garbled).

[6] Thomas, II–II, q.77, a.3 and reply 1.

[7] Thomas, II–II, q.77, a.1 and reply 1.

[8] *laesio enormis*.

[9] *Diccionario de las sentencias*.

[10] Romans 13:1.

[11] Luke 20:25 (source 20:23); Matthew 17:24–27 (source 17:26); Romans 13:6; Cabassut, *Juris canonici*, VI, chapter 11, number 5.

[12] 1 Thessalonians 4:6; Proverbs 20:6; Psalm 52:4 (Vulgate 51:4).

Decalogue: Seventeenth Conference

On Usury

Original preacher not named.

Non furtum facies. (Exodus 20.)

You shall not steal.

Since usury is one of the sins most frequent in commerce, we must now speak of it. After treating the injustices merchants commit, we must combat usury, a vice so common in civil society and authorized by the practice of so many persons. Some believe that putting their money out for gain, securing the principal and reserving the right to reclaim it at the agreed time, is not sinful. Others even flatter themselves that on certain occasions they perform an act of charity. Or, if they do not think thus, they believe at least that when usurious contracts are concluded voluntarily between the parties, they contain no injustice. To make this practice less odious, they take away the name usury from the gain they draw from the loan and give it the more respectable name of interest.

To strip usurers of the veils with which they cover themselves, therefore, we must explain what a loan is, since it gives occasion and pretext to all the usuries practiced. Afterward we shall see in what usury consists, whether it is forbidden and when it is committed.

Q. What do you understand by a loan? What difference is there between a loan for use and a simple loan?

A. By a loan in general is understood a contract by which one person, gratuitously and for a certain time, deprives himself in favor of another of a thing belonging to him. We say "gratuitously" to distinguish a loan from hire, which produces profit; and we say "for a certain time" to distinguish a loan from a gift.

Lending is divided into two kinds. One is called a loan for use, in Latin *commodatum*; the other a simple loan, *mutuum*. A loan for use is a gratuitous contract by which one person grants another the use of a thing that is not consumed by being used, but without giving him its ownership. For example, I lend my horse to a friend for a journey; but I always remain its master and owner, and he must return it to me as soon as he has made the use for which I granted it.

A simple loan is a contract by which one person gratuitously lends another a thing consumed by use, such as money, wheat, wine and other things, so that the borrower has ownership, on condition of returning their value, as the case may be, in things of the same quality or nature.

From this we can easily recognize the difference between a loan for use and a simple loan.

First, the matter of a loan for use consists of things not consumed by being used, such as a horse or a house lent to a friend. The matter of a simple loan consists of things consumed, such as wine, wheat and money spent on what one buys.

Secondly, in a loan for use there is an action to demand the very thing lent. In a simple loan there is no right to demand the thing lent *in individuo,* as theologians say \[that very individual object\], but only a thing of the same kind, quality and value.

Thirdly, in a loan for use ownership is not transferred, but only use; in a simple loan both are transferred, because, as we have said, the matter of this loan consists of things consumed, whose use is inseparable from ownership.

I lend a hundred pesos: the person receiving them is their owner and may spend them as he thinks fit. This principle decides that if the money lent perishes in the debtor's hands, or diminishes through a fall in the currency, he is responsible for the loss. If, on the contrary, it rises, the gain is his. It is enough that the debtor return the same sum he received. Loss and gain are on his account, because he became owner of that amount the moment he received it on loan: *Res perit domino, res fructificat domino*—a thing perishes for its owner and bears fruit for its owner. All agree on these principles, which it has been necessary to presuppose to give a notion of usury.

Q. What is usury? Is it divided into many kinds?

A. Usury, St. Thomas says, is the price of the use of money given on loan: *Usura est pretium usus pecuniæ mutuatæ*. St. Antoninus defines it more clearly, saying that usury is a profit drawn, or chiefly intended to be drawn, from the loan of something made to another: *Usura est lucrum ex mutuo principaliter intentum*.

Let us explain this definition. It is a profit: that is, something having value, for example money, wheat, wine, goods or merchandise; even service and labor—in a word, everything that can be valued in money and is demanded beyond the thing lent, *ultra sortem* \[beyond the principal\].

It is a gain made on account of the loan, because only in this is usury committed. Although usury can certainly be found in other contracts, for example sales, it always amounts implicitly to a loan. Thus I sell a measure of wheat for twenty reales and ask you one real more because you ask me to wait a year for payment: this is the same as lending you twenty reales with the obligation that at the year's end you pay me twenty-one.

We have said it is a profit drawn or intended to be drawn, because someone can be guilty of usury through the intention alone of demanding something more than he lent, just as someone is simoniacal who wills to acquire a benefice through a temporal thing, although this intention is accompanied by no agreement.

It is added that usury is a profit demanded chiefly on account of the loan, because a lender is not forbidden to hope for some gratitude from the debtor, provided his principal intention is to give his neighbor signs of charity and favor him in his necessities. This will easily be known, St. Antoninus says, if the lender is so

disposed that he would not refrain from lending even if he expected no advantage.

This advantage cannot be demanded. Therefore Pope Innocent XI, in his decree of March 2, 1679, condemned the proposition saying: it is not usury to demand something beyond the principal when it is demanded under the title of gratitude and benevolence, because usury is committed only by demanding it as a debt of justice. *Usura non est dum ultra sortem aliquid exigitur tamquam ex benevolentia et gratitudine debitum, sed solum si exigatur tamquam ex justitia debitum*. The censure forbids defending or teaching this proposition, under penalty of excommunication *ipso facto*, reserved to the Holy See.

There are many kinds of usury. There is real usury and mental usury. Real usury is that committed through an express or tacit agreement to demand some profit from a loan; mental usury is committed through the intention alone of demanding it.

There is express usury and disguised usury. Express and explicit usury consists in drawing some profit from a loan precisely as a loan. Disguised usury is found in other contracts, for example a sale: such is the usury of those who, selling on credit, ask more for their goods than they are worth.

Two other kinds are also distinguished: usury on the principal, when interest is taken on money lent; and usury on usury, when interest is taken on usurious interest whose payment is delayed.[1]

Q. Is usury forbidden in such a way that someone practicing it is obliged to restitution?

A. Undoubtedly it is forbidden, first, by natural law. All theologians agree that the Decalogue's precepts belong to natural law, and the Decalogue forbids usury. It is robbery, the holy Fathers say: *Si quis usuram acceperit, rapinam facit*—if anyone takes usury, he commits rapine. It is included in the seventh precept, St. Bernard says: *In furtu comprehenditur usura*—usury is included in theft.

The Master of the Sentences affirms the same. Here are the reasons he employs to prove usury theft and consequently opposed to natural law. It is against natural law to demand a double price for one thing, to sell it twice, to sell what does not exist, or to have oneself paid for what does not belong to oneself. This is what someone demanding interest on a simple loan does.

First, he demands a double price for the same thing or sells it twice. Someone demanding something above the principal does so either on account of the principal, that is, the money lent, or on account of the use of that money. If on account of the money lent, he receives a double price for one thing, since he receives the capital sum and also interest: thus he sells the same thing twice.

If the interest he demands is on account of the use of the money, he sells something that does not exist, since money's use cannot be distinguished from the money itself. In things consumed by use, use cannot be separated from the thing: for example, bread's use is inseparable from the bread itself. This reasoning belongs to the Catechism of the Council of Trent, generally approved throughout the Latin Church: *Qui fœnerantur bis idem vendunt, aut vendunt id quod non est*—those lending at usury sell the same thing twice or sell what does not exist.

Secondly, someone lending at interest sells what does not belong to him. Money is sterile by its nature and produces nothing of itself, but only through the borrower's industry. Someone wishing to draw profit from the loan because the person to whom he lends has the industry to make it produce wishes to sell what is not his: another's industry.

For these reasons St. Thomas concludes that usury is contrary to natural law, evil in itself, and obliges the usurer to restitution: *Et sicut alia injuste acquisita tenetur homo restituere, ita restituere tenetur pecuniam quam per usuram accipit*—just as a man must restore other things unjustly acquired, so must he restore money received through usury.

Secondly, usury is forbidden by divine law, in both the Old and New Testaments. "You shall not lend to your brother at usury," Moses says in Leviticus, "nor demand from him more than you have given." Here is usury most plainly forbidden.

"Lord," David says, "who will dwell in Your tabernacle, and who will rest upon Your holy mountain? He who lives innocently, observes justice's rules and does not lend his money at usury." The Prophet Ezekiel also declares that a man is not just and cannot hope for beatitude if he lends at usury and receives from his brothers more than he lent them in their necessities.

Jesus Christ renewed usury's prohibition in His Gospel. "Lend," He says, "and hope for no reward": *Mutuum date, nihil inde sperantes*. These first words, *mutuum date*—lend—are only counsel, since not everyone is obliged to lend. But those following, *nihil inde sperantes*—hoping for nothing from it—contain a formal precept, since no one may lawfully draw profit precisely by reason of the loan.

St. Thomas explains them thus, in conformity with the sacred canons and popes' constitutions: *Mutuum dare non semper tenetur homo: et ideo quantum ad hoc ponitur inter consilia; sed quod homo lucrum de mutuo non quærat, hoc cadit sub ratione præcepti*—a man is not always obliged to lend, and therefore in this respect it is placed among counsels; but that he should not seek profit from a loan falls under the nature of a precept.[2]

Finally, usury is forbidden by human law, both ecclesiastical and civil: by councils' canons, popes' decretals, the Church's Fathers and the kingdom's laws. In a word, the Church so abhors this vice that in some places usurers are excommunicated at the parish Mass every Sunday.

Popes Alexander VII and Innocent XI condemned this proposition: *Usura etsi esset prohibita Judæis, non tamen Christianis, lege veteri in judicialibus præceptis abolita per Christum*—although usury was forbidden to the Jews, it is not forbidden to Christians, because Christ abolished the old law as regards judicial precepts.

Q. Are there any cases in which something more than the sum lent can be demanded without injustice?

A. Although the general rule is that usury consists in demanding more than was lent—*Usura est ubi amplius requiritur quam datur*—nevertheless the Church does not disapprove a lender's demanding indemnification from his debtor in two cases. They may be considered two exceptions to the law forbidding usury: actual loss and profit forgone, *damnum emergens et lucrum cessans*, as theologians say. We shall explain what is meant by these two titles and when they suffice for demanding compensation for a loan.

Actual loss means the harm or loss someone suffers because he lent to another. For example, someone asks me to lend a sum I had intended for repairing my house. I lend it, and this loan prevents me from repairing or letting the house. It is just that I demand something beyond the amount lent to compensate my loss, according to the maxim that no one is obliged to procure another's good at his own expense: *Nemo tenetur cum damno suo de proprio facere beneficium*.

But lest we deceive ourselves or conceal true usury under pretext of compensating an imaginary loss, let us see the conditions theologians require for the title of actual loss to be legitimate.

First, the loss must be real and true, caused by the loan and not other accidents unrelated to it. If the loss is not real, or the loan does not cause the harm, in either case the creditor can collect no more than his capital.

Secondly, the compensation demanded of the debtor must be exactly proportionate and equal to the harm suffered; otherwise it will be usury.

Thirdly, creditor and debtor must agree at the time of the loan that the debtor will compensate the loss occasioned, so that he has full liberty to accept or refuse a loan under such a condition: *Juvari nos non decipi beneficio oportet*, the law says—we ought to be helped, not deceived, by a benefit.

Profit forgone means the gain a lender would have acquired with his money had he not lent it. For example, a merchant intended to employ his money in commerce and could not do so or gain thereby because he lent it. This is profit forgone. Does it authorize demanding interest on a simple loan? Theologians agree that it is a legitimate title for demanding something beyond the principal whenever these four conditions are fulfilled:

First, what is lent must have been destined for commerce. Otherwise it cannot be said that the lender ceased to gain by lending. Thus Sylvius says rich people who do not trade cannot invoke the title of profit forgone.

Secondly, the merchant who lends must have no other money available for lending except that employed in commerce or needed for household expenses. If he has other money, he cannot truly say that lending it makes him cease to gain.

Thirdly, the profit forgone must not be merely possible and remote but probable and proximate: he must have reasons and grounds for expecting a gain from money exposed to commerce. Hence, although profit forgone differs from actual emergent loss, it does not differ from probable future loss; otherwise it would not suffice as a title to demand anything beyond the principal.

The last condition is that someone prevented from gaining because of a loan not demand of his debtor all the profit he might have had. An expected thing is less valuable than a thing possessed, St. Thomas says, because one is certain and the other uncertain.[3]

Q. Are contracts usurious in which interest is stipulated without alienating the principal?

A. Undoubtedly, because interest can never be demanded from a loan as such. The contract of which you speak is an agreement in which the creditor transfers ownership of the thing he lends only for a certain time fixed in the contract, reserving the right to regain possession of it as soon as the term ends and obliging the debtor to deliver it.

If this contract is executed before a notary, it is a formal obligation; without that requirement it is a simple promise. However it is made, whenever anything is demanded without alienating the principal it is usury: *Amplius recipitur quam datur*—more is received than is given.

Alleging that the interest demanded is very small is useless: of whatever kind it may be, it is forbidden unless the title of actual loss or profit forgone is verified. Nor does it avail that these contracts are tolerated in some parts of the kingdom. Although not void under civil law, they are always unlawful in the forum of conscience: *Cum omnis usura et superabundantia prohibeatur in lege*, Pope Urban III says—since every usury and excess is forbidden by law.

It is likewise useless to say the person giving the money undertakes not to ask for it until a certain time. In his decree of March 18, 1666, Pope Alexander VII condemned this proposition: *Licitum est mutuanti aliquid ultra sortem exigere, si se obliget ad non repetendam sortem usque ad certum tempus*—it is lawful for a lender to demand something beyond the principal if he obliges himself not to reclaim the principal until a certain time.[4]

Original Editorial Note

“In this question the triple contract, so widely accepted and current in Spain even after the noisy controversies raised about it not many years ago, is treated as unlawful. Although our author’s opinion is followed by Natalis Alexander, Genet, Concina, Ferrer and other most learned modern writers, it is also certain that not a few canonists and moralists defend the contrary: Covarrubias, Cardinal de Lugo, Gabalino and others, as may be seen in Benedict XIV’s work *On the Diocesan Synod*, book X, chapter 7.

“Although this learned pontiff considers the first opinion more consonant with Sixtus V’s bull *Detestabilis*, His Holiness warns that, since the contrary has not been censured by the Apostolic See, moderation must be used and bishops must abstain from deciding this dispute in their synods. What is certain is that by His

Majesty's order many extensive consultations were held on this matter, and the result was that the triple contract continued without the least impediment."

Hence it follows that notaries cannot execute contracts involving usury. Ignorance does not excuse them, since they must know everything pertaining to their profession. If they execute them, they sin and become accomplices in the usurer's injustice and consequently are obliged *in solidum* \[jointly liable for the whole\] to restitution.

Q. What fruits must we draw from this conference?

A. First, we must convince ourselves that usury is a sin forbidden by God's law and that lending at usury is never lawful, whether to poor or rich.

Secondly, avoid every usurious contract and endeavor to be instructed on this point. The world is full of evildoers and usurers: they are in cities and villages, shops and public squares, found everywhere. This must make us groan with the Prophet: *Vidi iniquitatem, et contradictionem in civitate … et non defecit de plateis ejus usura, et dolus*—I saw iniquity and contradiction in the city, and usury and fraud did not depart from its streets.

Nevertheless, scarcely anyone seeks instruction, accuses himself or confesses guilt. "What harm do I do?" they say. "No one lends gratuitously today. Demanding interest on a simple loan is customary; I do no more than others." Know, beloved brothers, that Jesus Christ, Who will be your judge and mine, is not called custom but truth. Is this the custom? Know that custom cannot make lawful what God's law forbids or make an unjust contract just and legitimate. Thus usury will be evil as long as God's law condemns it.

Thirdly, repair all the harm you have done in this matter, and henceforth practice a very different usury, of which Scripture speaks when saying that someone who has compassion on the poor and helps his misery lends to the Lord at usury, and the Lord will repay him: *Fœneratur Domino qui miseretur pauperis: et vicissitudinem suam reddet ei*—he who has mercy on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will repay him.

Often you are anxiously considering where to put your money. Should it be in a life annuity \[an investment in which the capital is surrendered\]? You fear it will be entirely lost to you. Should you keep it in your chests? But it yields you nothing. Should you buy houses? Fire reduces them to ashes. Should you entrust it to bankers or merchants? Bankruptcies are very frequent. What, then, will you do? Put it into the hands of the poor.

Here, St. Ambrose tells you, is a new kind of commerce and a holy usury substituted for what God forbids: *Fœneratur*, and so forth. Do you wish your money to yield gains? Entrust it to safe and faithful persons. Who are they? The poor—yes, the poor—who, although unable to give you anything, have a good guarantor who will pay for them. This is Jesus Christ. His Gospel, which cannot deceive us, assures us of it: *Evangelium Ejus cautio est*—His Gospel is the guarantee.

You readily trust a rich man, this Father adds, when he stands surety for another, and you do not hesitate to lend your money. Will God's word not be worth as much as a man's? Do you fear falling into poverty when He assures you that He will repay a hundredfold what you do for His own? You give little and will receive much; you give on earth and your payment will be in heaven. *Minimum datis, et multum recipietis: in terra datis, et vobis solvetur in cælo*.[5]

---

[1] Thomas, II–II, q.78, a.1; Antoninus, *Summa*, II, title I, chapter 7, section 1; Innocent XI, March 2, 1679.

[2] Leviticus 25:37; Psalm 15 (Vulgate 14); Ezekiel 18:8–9; Luke 6:35; Thomas, II–II, q.78, a.1, reply 4.

[3] Sylvius on II–II, q.78, a.1, question 4; Cardinal Toledo, *Instructions for Priests*, V, chapter 33; Thomas, II–II, q.61, a.4 as cited.

[4] Urban III, *Consuluit*, chapter 10, on usury; Alexander VII, March 18, 1666.

[5] Psalm 55:10–12 (Vulgate 54); Proverbs 19:17; Ambrose, *On Naboth*.

Decalogue: Eighteenth Conference

On Restitution

Original preacher not named.

Non furtum facies. (Exodus 20.)

You shall not steal or retain what belongs to another.

The seventh commandment forbids us not only to steal other people's goods but to keep and retain them unjustly, so that whoever has them must restore them. This restitution is necessary for salvation and is founded on natural and divine law. Natural law forbids us to do to our brothers what we do not want them to do to us. Clearly we do not want them to retain our goods against our will; therefore we cannot retain theirs against their will.

Divine law also forbids us to violate the rules of justice. *Reddite omnibus debita*—render to all their dues—St. Paul tells us. The Prophet Ezekiel assures us that a sinner who stole another's goods or retains them unjustly cannot recover grace unless he restores them to those to whom they belong: *Si egerit pœnitentiam, et pignus restituerit … rapinamque reddiderit … vita vivet*—if he does penance, restores the pledge and returns what he seized, he shall surely live.

Since this point of morals is of the greatest importance and can be treated only generally in a sermon, it will not be useless here to descend to individual cases and propose at least the most frequent. In these, many people, deluded by their greed, believe themselves exempt from restoring ill-acquired goods and repairing the damage they have caused.[1]

Q. What is restitution? Who must make it when many have participated in the same theft, and to whom must it be made?

A. Restitution is an act of justice obliging us not only to return to our neighbor goods taken from him or unjustly retained but also to compensate the damage we have caused him. This definition is St. Thomas's. To restore, the holy Doctor says, is to put a person back into possession of what belongs to him and, as far as possible, into a condition equal to that in which he was before his goods were taken or the harm caused: *Restituere nihil aliud esse videtur quam iterato aliquem statuere in possessionem vel dominium rei suæ.*

It is certain, first, that everyone retaining another's goods, in whatever manner, must restore them as soon as he can. Voluntary delay is a new sin, more or less grave according to the greater or lesser harm the neighbor suffers through deprivation of what was stolen. The person who committed the theft must therefore restore, whether by his own hand or through another, to preserve his reputation.

Secondly, when many have concurred in one theft, all are jointly obliged, each for the others, to restore—even one alone for all if the other accomplices cannot or will not do so. Accomplices in the same theft are contained in these two verses:

Jussio, consilium, consensus, palpo, recursus,

Participans, mutus, non obstans, non manifestans.

Here is the explanation:

Jussio: those who command the theft, for example a master ordering a servant or a father his son.

Consilium: those who advised it.

Consensus: those who consented, whether they profited from the theft or had no intention of profiting.

Palpo: those who praise or approve the theft.

Recursus: those concealing thieves by sheltering them in their house to facilitate their means of stealing.

Participans: those who profit from the theft or helped commit it.

These six concur directly in the theft. The following three concur only indirectly:

Mutus: someone silent when obliged to speak to prevent an injustice.

Non obstans: someone who does not prevent it when able and obliged to do so.

Non manifestans: someone who does not disclose the person who committed it.

Although these nine accomplices are jointly obliged to restitution and reparation for the harm, two things must be observed.

First, the first to restore the whole discharges the others as regards the injured person; but all participants in a theft are each obliged, for their own part, to compensate the one among them who restored the whole. It is not just that one alone pay for a theft divided among many.

Secondly, those obliged to restore what was stolen fall into two classes. Some are its principal cause: those who ordered it, executed it or profited from it. Consequently they have a direct obligation in justice to restore. Others are only a less principal cause of the injustice and are obliged to restitution only subsidiarily, in place of the first, when those cannot or will not restore. Thus, when the principal causes have restored, the others are not obliged to restore either to the injured person or to those who were the principal cause.

To the last question we answer that restitution must always be made to the person from whom the theft was committed. If he is unknown, he must be sought; if distant, it must be sent to him through a trustworthy person; if dead, restitution must be made to his heirs. Finally, if this is impossible, St. Thomas says it must be devoted to alms and to praying to God for him.[2]

Q. Is someone who buys a stolen thing obliged to restitution?

A. A stolen thing may be bought in good or bad faith. Someone buying in bad faith must restore it to its owner without being able to ask him for what he paid or return it to the thief under pretext of recovering the price paid. It is just that he himself bear the harm caused by his own bad faith, according to this rule of law: *Damnum quod quis sua culpa sentit, sibi debet, non aliis imputare*—the loss a person suffers through his own fault must be imputed to himself, not others.

If he bought in good faith, without just grounds for believing the thing stolen, and it perished through some chance occurrence while he held it in good faith, he is not obliged to restitution. *Bonæ fidei emptor*, St. Raymond says, *si durante bona fide ipsius periit res, non tenetur restituere; idem credo si alienavit durante bona fide*—a buyer in good faith is not bound to restore if the thing perished while his good faith continued; I believe the same if he alienated it while acting in good faith.

But if he still keeps it, he must restore it. However good his faith, ownership could not be transferred by the seller because the seller was not its owner, according to Boniface VIII's rule: no one can give another more right over a thing than he himself has. *Nemo potest plus juris transferre in alium, quam sibi competere dignoscitur*.

Q. Is someone who found a thing obliged to restore it, and to whom? Before returning it, may he demand the reward promised to anyone finding it?

A. There are certain things a finder can justly retain: things that never had an owner, for example precious stones or pearls found in the sand at the seashore. *Talia occupanti conceduntur*, St. Thomas says—such things are granted to the first taker.

Other things have an owner, such as a purse of money. These may be kept only with the intention of returning them to their owner. *Si quid invenisti, et non reddidisti, rapuisti,* St. Augustine says—if you found something and did not return it, you seized it.

St. Antoninus affirms that a found thing of considerable value cannot be kept without mortal sin. Such prudent inquiry as is possible must be made to discover the person to whom it belongs. If, after this diligence, he does not appear, the thing or its just value must be given to the poor, unless the finder himself is poor, in which case he may retain it with the approval of his bishop or confessor.

Quod si per se nescit cujus sit, faciat publice denuntiari in Ecclesia, this holy archbishop says; *et si isto modo nec reperiretur cujus esset, debet erogari pauperibus, nisi ipse inventor esset multum pauper, quia tunc posset cum licentia episcopi, vel pœnitentiarii sui, vel confessarii illud sibi retinere; quando scilicet non invenitur cujus est*—if he does not himself know whose it is, he should have it publicly announced in the church; if its owner is not discovered in this way, it must be distributed to the poor, unless the finder is very poor, for then he could retain it with permission of his bishop, penitentiary or confessor, when its owner cannot be found. This is also theologians' common judgment.

The finder ought not to demand the reward promised to those finding the thing and may receive it only when freely given. It would be best to take nothing, following that poor grammarian of whom St. Augustine speaks: finding a purse containing two hundred escudos, he returned it to its owner and would accept none of what the owner offered.

Q. Are those asking and receiving alms under false pretexts or without need obliged to restitution? If so, to whom must they make it?

A. Pretended poor people who could reasonably maintain themselves according to their station if they worked, but obtain alms from charitable persons by false pretexts, out of greed or to live without restraint and trouble, are obliged to restitution. They acquire the alms they receive only by fraud. Certainly those giving would not do so if they knew these people were not needy and begged only from greed, dissolute living or idleness.

This decision is founded on the law ordering that whoever commits fraud must not profit from it: *Fraus et dolus,* Innocent III says, *alicui patrocinari non debent*—fraud and deceit must not afford anyone protection. These pretended poor must be accounted true thieves, the Catechism of the Council of Trent says: *Furtum facere videntur qui factis simulatisque verbis, quive fallaci mendicitate pecuniam extorquent, quorum eo gravius est peccatum, quod furtum mendacio cumulant*—those who extort money through contrived and feigned words or fraudulent begging are seen to commit theft; their sin is the graver because they heap lying upon theft.

All these pretended poor are obliged before God to restore what they collected this way to the truly poor, not to those giving the alms, even when able to return it to them. When making the gift, charitable persons formally intended to divest themselves of ownership in favor of the truly poor. By restoring it to these, the recipients will act in conformity with the intention of those giving the alms.

Original Editorial Note

"In the following question the author treats the injustices and frauds committed by those commissioned to collect tributes and royal taxes in France. Since these differ greatly from Spain's in their form and collection, its translation is omitted. It can only be added that those paying contributions and those charged with collecting them are alike bound in conscience to observe the laws and orders of His Majesty and of the tribunals and magistrates competent to deal with these matters."

Q. Many persons are obliged to restore others' goods but cannot do so. Does this impossibility dispense them from restitution?

A. Before answering this case, we must distinguish two kinds of impossibility. One is called physical, when someone lacks goods with which to restore; the other moral, when restitution cannot be made, at least at present, without notable harm, for example exposure to loss of reputation or life. This being supposed:

I say, first, that someone in physical impossibility of restitution is exempt from making it or at least can defer restitution without harm to his conscience. This is all theologians' judgment. The reason is that no one is obliged to the impossible. The precept of restitution binds one only to restore what is unjustly retained against its owner's will. In such a case the owner is presumed to consent, according to charity's precept, that his debtor be exempt or at least delay restoring what he owes as long as unable to do so.

But since many deceive themselves concerning moral impossibility of restitution, we shall explain it in different propositions taken from Sylvius, the celebrated commentator on St. Thomas.

I. Someone is presumed unable to restore if he and his family need the goods he would have to relinquish for restitution, under penalty of falling into extreme necessity. This impossibility, if true, gives a right to defer restitution and even dispenses from it entirely, although the person to whom restitution is due is equally poor. This is the decision of many learned theologians and of St. Thomas himself, who says: *Quando aliquis non potest statim restituere, ipsa impotentia absolvit eum ab instanti restitutione facienda; sive etiam totaliter absolvitur si omnino fit impotens*—when someone cannot restore immediately, his very inability releases him from making immediate restitution; he is even entirely released if he becomes altogether unable.

II. Someone who cannot restore without causing himself considerable harm, for example without falling from his natural station, that of his birth, and without selling his goods at a low price, may defer restitution of what he owes, provided the person to whom he owes does not suffer equal harm through the delay. This arrangement is very reasonable, Sylvius says, since a debtor not in extreme necessity must attend more to the harm his creditor suffers than to his own. This doctrine of Sylvius rests upon a law in Exodus ordering someone entitled to demand a sum from his neighbor not to exact it like a tyrant unwilling to grant his debtor any delay: *Non urgebis quasi exactor*—you shall not press him as an exactor.

Hence it follows that a debtor can delay payment until able to make it conveniently.

IV. The ordinary means someone unable to restore at once must take is to ask for a delay from the creditor who can grant it. *Quilibet tenetur statim restituere si potest*, St. Thomas says, *vel petere dilationem ab eo, qui potest usum rei concedere*—everyone must restore at once if able, or ask a delay from the one able to grant use of the thing.

V. One may in conscience defer restitution or even be released from it if the person to whom it must be made consents. But two conditions are necessary.

First, the person consenting must have the right to do so and to give what he grants. If the person is a minor, a married woman, mentally incompetent or anyone else forbidden by law to alienate property, these persons' consent cannot dispense from the precept of restitution.

Secondly, the person granting delay in restitution or releasing someone from it must do so freely and with knowledge of the case. If the debtor employs violence or deception \[*sorpresa*: taking unfair advantage\], he will not be released before God: *Fraus et dolus nemini patrocinari debent*—fraud and deceit must afford no one protection.

Q. What fruit must we draw from this conference?

A. That of seriously reflecting on the necessity of restitution. Let us not deceive ourselves on a point of such importance. The saints assure us that true penance cannot be done without restoring others' goods whenever

possible, and that otherwise the penance is false. *Si res aliena propter quam peccatum est*, St. Augustine says in his letter to Macedonius, *cum reddi posset non redditur, non agitur pœnitentia sed fingitur*—if another's property, on account of which the sin was committed, is not returned when it could be, penance is not done but feigned.

St. Charles Borromeo was so convinced of this truth that in his Instruction to Confessors he tells them not to trust promises in this matter from a penitent who has already made similar ones and has not endeavored to fulfill them: *Ante factam restitutionem nemo absolvatur, nisi aut impotentia, aut gravis et periculosa infirmitas obstiterit*—let no one be absolved before restitution is made, unless inability or grave and dangerous illness has prevented it. Thus this holy cardinal expresses himself.

Do you wish, then, to secure your salvation and quiet your conscience? Restore what belongs to others if you possess it. Return promptly those ill-acquired goods; pay your debts, so that God may forgive what you owe His justice. Do not leave fulfillment of these obligations to your heirs.

It is better to be poor and go to heaven than to be hurled into hell laden with ill-gotten treasures. If obedience to God's law makes you suffer the deprivation of some temporal goods, in heaven you will find possession of eternal goods.

---

[1] Romans 13:7; Ezekiel 33:14–15.

[2] Thomas, II–II, q.62, articles 1, 7 (including reply 2), and 5, reply 3.

Decalogue: Nineteenth Conference: On Almsgiving

Original preacher not named.

Non furtum facies. (Exodus 20.)

You shall not steal.

At the beginning of our explanation of the seventh precept, we said that these words, *Non furtum facies*, not only forbid taking or unjustly retaining others' goods but also command us to give our neighbor a share of our own and assist him in his necessities whenever we can. After dwelling sufficiently on the unjust retention of others' goods and the harm resulting, it remains to speak of the almsgiving we must practice toward our needy brothers. We must show our love not through good words costing nothing, but through works, as St. John says, relieving them with true and effective assistance: *Non diligamus verbo, neque lingua, sed opere et veritate*—let us love not in word or tongue, but in deed and truth.

If God has given us more goods than we need, it is so that we may help those without enough. This is called giving alms: an act of charity and mercy through which, for love of God, we give the poor something of our goods to assist them in their misery. To give us an idea of this mercy, St. Augustine says it is the affection of a heart moved with compassion at the neighbor's misery, to whom assistance is given: *Animi dolentis affectus cum additamento beneficii*—the feeling of a sorrowing heart with the addition of a benefit.

Hence the virtue of almsgiving contains two things. The first is interior, proceeding from the heart; the second exterior, setting the hand to work in pouring out generosity. This calls forth compassion for their indigence and effective assistance: compassion when we can do nothing else, and outward assistance when able to give it. If you lack goods, your good heart must supply the deficiency. If rich, good will is not enough unless accompanied by alms proportionate to your means. Alms must be given. But when must we give them, and how? This we shall explain in the present conference.

Q. Is almsgiving obligatory? Or is it rather a counsel God gives us than a precept He imposes?

A. Almsgiving is an indispensable obligation for all able to practice it. This is one of the principal duties of love of neighbor. We cannot love him, St. John says, while leaving him unassisted in his necessities: *Qui habuerit substantiam hujus mundi, et viderit fratrem suum necessitatem habere, et clauserit viscera sua ab eo, quomodo charitas Dei manet in eo?*—if someone has this world's goods, sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does God's charity remain in him?

The obligation of almsgiving is as old in the world as religion. There will always be poor among you, God says to His people in Deuteronomy; therefore I command you to open your hands to assist your needy brother: *Idcirco Ego præcipio tibi, ut aperias manum fratri tuo egeno et pauperi*. Is there any other commandment more formal and express?

Give alms from your goods, the holy man Tobias tells his son. Do not turn your face from the poor, and thus you will obtain that the Lord not turn His from you. Be charitable as far as you can; if you have much, give much; if little, give from that little with a good heart, and you will gather a great treasure for the day of need. Admirable words, showing that almsgiving was already regarded in the Old Testament as an indispensable duty of religion.

But the Holy Spirit says still more in Ecclesiasticus: *Eleemosynam pauperis ne defraudes*—do not defraud the poor of his alms. As though saying: you owe them to him and cannot refuse them without fraud. Further on: lend your ear to the poor without annoyance; give him what you owe and answer favorably and gently. *Declina pauperi sine tristitia aurem tuam, et redde debitum tuum, et responde illi pacifica in mansuetudinem*.

Rich people of this world, weigh these words: *Redde debitum tuum*—pay what you owe. You must fulfill what you owe the poor. This is not a mere counsel but a precept; not sheer liberality, but an obligation and a debt: *debitum*. Stealing others' goods and not giving one's own to someone lacking them are, in Scripture's language, equal injustice, because God has given you more goods than others only that you may give them a share in their necessity.

You owe them the money you squander on so many follies, sumptuous meals, costly and ostentatious furnishings, magnificent clothes unsuited to your station, and all that money spent on gaming and amusement. Give that surplus money to the poor, to whom it belongs, and discharge so just a debt: *Redde debitum tuum*. This, in short, is not a work beyond obligation but a strict precept.

St. Paul, writing to his disciple Timothy, tells him: command the rich to give readily to the poor. The Apostle does not say advise the rich, exhort them or entreat them, but command them to give alms to the poor with a good heart: *Divitibus hujus sæculi præcipe … facile tribuere*. This is therefore a true obligation for the rich, and almsgiving one of their most essential duties.

We could also support this truth by the holy Fathers' authority; but this has already been done in a book entitled *On Christian Almsgiving*. We shall therefore refrain from citing them and pass to other questions.[1]

Q. Does the precept of almsgiving bind under mortal sin, and in what cases?

A. Certainly the precept of almsgiving binds all able to practice it under mortal sin. No other proof is needed than the terrible sentence the Son of God will pronounce against the reprobate for not assisting the poor: *Discedite a Me, maledicti, in ignem æternum*—depart from Me, accursed, into eternal fire. On lack of mercy, the Gospel says, this fatal sentence of condemnation will be founded: go, accursed, into eternal fire. *Illic conjiciuntur*, St. Gregory Nazianzen says, *quia Christum per pauperes minime curarunt*—they are cast there because they cared nothing for Christ in the poor.

You ask on what occasions this precept binds. With St. Thomas I answer that, being affirmative, the precept of almsgiving does not bind at every moment, but ordinarily when these two circumstances concur. The first is having surplus goods, according to Jesus Christ's words, *Quod super est, date eleemosynam*—give as alms

what is left over; the second, the neighbor's being in need. To know when this precept binds us, therefore, we must examine what is called surplus and what the poor person's need is.

Everything someone has beyond what is necessary is called surplus. There are two kinds: first, goods not necessary for preserving our life; secondly, goods not necessary for maintaining the propriety of our station. There are three kinds of need in which the poor may find themselves: extreme, urgent and common. This being supposed, I say:

First, those with goods beyond what is necessary to preserve their life, although needed for their station, are obliged under mortal sin to give alms to a neighbor in extreme necessity, reduced to such misery that he is in evident danger of dying without assistance. The reason is that charity's order requires us to prefer our neighbor's life to the propriety of our station. We must fall from that station rather than let our brother perish for lack of help.

In illo enim casu, St. Thomas says, *locum habet quod Ambrosius dicit: Pasce fame morientem, si non pavisti, occidisti*—in that case Ambrose's saying applies: feed the man dying of hunger; if you have not fed him, you have killed him. The bishops of the first centuries were so convinced of this truth that, although adorning the Lord's temples is preferable to maintaining a private person's station, they stripped churches of ornaments and sold gold and silver vessels to maintain the poor in famine and ransom captives from barbarians' hands, as St. Ambrose did.

II. Someone possessing goods surplus to his station is obliged under mortal sin to assist a neighbor suffering urgent need. Jesus Christ warns us that on judgment day He will say to the reprobate: depart from Me, accursed; go into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. I was hungry and you did not feed Me; thirsty, and you did not give Me drink; a stranger, and you did not lodge Me; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick and imprisoned, and you did not visit Me.

These words indicate not extreme needs but urgent needs, such as those the poor experience in famine, excessive cold or an enemy invasion. Nevertheless, those failing to assist the poor in such necessities must fear, St. Augustine says, being counted among the reprobate.

Certainly there is no obligation to give the poor suffering urgent need everything needed to maintain honestly the propriety of one's station, because no one is obliged to draw a neighbor out of urgent need by falling into an equal need himself. Nevertheless, among the things used to maintain one's station, many can be dispensed with without great inconvenience. Their possessor is obliged to deprive himself of them to assist the poor in urgent need.

III. Rich people possessing absolutely surplus goods must give a good part of them to the poor in common need. Goods absolutely surplus for the rich are necessary for the poor, as St. Augustine observes in his fiftieth tractate on St. John's Gospel: *Si habes superflua, da pauperibus, et Domini pedes tersisti: tibi superflua sunt, sed Domini pedibus necessaria sunt*—if you have surplus goods, give to the poor and you have wiped the Lord's feet; they are surplus for you but necessary for the Lord's feet.

Elsewhere he says that if we retain surplus, we retain what belongs to others: *Superflua divitum necessaria sunt pauperum; res alienæ possidentur cum superflua possidentur*—the rich person's surplus is the poor person's necessity; others' goods are possessed when surplus goods are possessed.

This doctrine is so certain that it suffices to confront the rich with Pope Innocent XI's condemnation, in the year 1700, of the following proposition: "Among laypeople, and even among kings themselves, one will scarcely find anything surplus to their station; thus no one is obliged to give alms if he must give them from what is surplus to his station."

Q. "We have nothing surplus," many rich people say; "how can we give it to the poor?" Others say: "Our children are the first poor; we have a large family to maintain. Shall we not be exempt from

almsgiving?"

A. You have nothing surplus, you rich people of this world? I answer with the Gospel that you do. Jesus Christ says to give alms from what is left over and you will cleanse your sins: *Quod super est, date eleemosynam, et ecce omnia munda sunt vobis*—give alms from what is left over, and behold, all things are clean for you.

What remains beyond necessities is certainly surplus. But let us see whether you actually have it. Certainly if income is to be measured against ambition or pleasures, few will be found to have surplus; they will scarcely even have enough, because they do not know how to regulate themselves. Vanity, greed and pleasures increase in proportion to goods. One wishes to outshine what one's means permit; more is spent than one has, and despite the Savior's declaration nothing remains for alms. But someone who knows how to regulate himself in a Christian manner according to his station always has something left to give.

Have you nothing surplus? Reform what you spend on gaming, amusements, excesses, magnificent furniture and costly clothes, and much will remain for the poor.

"But I have a large family and many children to educate and establish \[*dar estado*: provide for their settled place in life\]." Provide for their necessities and establishment: that is most just. But you must also gain God's protection for them through almsgiving. *Filios habes?* St. Augustine asks you—have you children? Count one more and give something to Jesus Christ: *Unum plus numera, et da aliquid Christo*.

If instead of four children you had five, would you abandon the last? Would you not maintain him like the others? Does not experience show every day that families with more children are those God blesses more abundantly when they serve Him faithfully? Give the poor, then, the bread you would give a fifth child, and let Jesus Christ enter his place as a member of your family.

Will it not be a great honor for you and your children to have Jesus Christ for their brother? You will gain them a charitable guardian after your death, and they will obtain a firmer establishment than all human prudence could procure, according to the Wise Man's words: *Qui dat pauperi non indigebit*—he who gives to the poor will not be in need.[2]

Q. Another pretext some use to dispense themselves from almsgiving is that there are wicked poor people who do not deserve it.

A. I agree there are wicked poor to whom alms can and even should be refused: those who, robust and healthy, prefer begging to working for their maintenance—men generally of perverse habits and so little religion that they are almost never seen frequenting the sacraments. Civil laws punish these sturdy beggars, as St. Thomas observes: *Lex autem civilis imponit pœnam validis mendicantibus, qui non propter utilitatem vel necessitatem mendicant*—civil law imposes a penalty on able-bodied beggars who beg neither for usefulness nor necessity.

But if there are wicked poor, there are also good, and distinguishing one from another is not easy. Thus this pretext cannot dispense us from giving alms. I add that since charity's precept obliges us to love and do good to all people, good or wicked, friends or enemies, believers or unbelievers—*Benefacite his qui oderunt vos*, do good to those hating you—it follows that we are obliged to assist the poor even if wicked, since almsgiving's precept is no less general and absolute than love of neighbor's.

Nor must we reject a wicked poor person under pretext that, being out of God's grace, his prayers are useless. We must expect reward not from their efficacy but from the alms, which by their nature are suited to obtaining from God the graces we need, provided we otherwise place no obstacle. *Conclude eleemosynam in sinu pauperis*, the Wise Man says, without distinguishing good and wicked: *et hæc pro te exorabit ab omni malo*—lay up alms in the poor person's bosom, and these will plead for you against every evil.[3]

Q. May a married woman give alms without her husband's knowledge, and even against his will in some cases?

A. A distinction must be made in answering, because this woman gives alms either to a poor person in extreme need or to one suffering common and ordinary need. If he is in extreme need, and she judges he cannot escape without the assistance she gives, certainly she can and must give the alms necessary for her neighbor to escape that condition, although her husband expressly forbids it.

The reason is that by natural law all things are common in such cases, as St. Thomas teaches. He says not only a wife but also children and servants can then give alms from the father's or master's goods: they must presume he will approve, because he himself would be obliged to give if present.

It is otherwise when the poor person's need is merely common. In this case a wife cannot without her husband's consent give more than those moderate alms she judges he would not disapprove if he saw the poor person's need. But according to this holy Doctor, a woman may give alms without her husband's consent from what she earns by her industry or from goods not included in the dowry. Even here she must exercise moderation so as not to harm her family or impoverish her husband: *Ne ex earum superfluitate vir depauperetur*, the saint says—lest the husband be impoverished by their extravagance.

Q. May children living under their father's authority give alms from his goods, and servants from their masters' goods?

A. A son's goods belong to his father, St. Thomas says; therefore he cannot give alms unless so small that he has no just reason to believe his father would disapprove if present. But if his father grants him free disposition of something, undoubtedly he may use it to assist the poor. This is the rule children and servants must follow, without flattering themselves too much with the plausible pretext of charity or of the household father's tacit consent.

To make clearer what should be understood by small alms, the same saint gives an example: a son may sometimes give as alms some pieces of bread or similar things of little importance. He says the same of servants, adding that even a domestic entrusted with administering all his master's goods may not give larger alms, because all the power given him in this case is for preserving the goods, not distributing them.

Nevertheless, observe that a son under paternal authority who has gained goods in war or by practicing medicine, law or another honorable profession is absolutely owner of what he thus acquired. Consequently he can give alms and dispose of it as he pleases, without his father having a right to oppose him.[4]

Q. What conditions must accompany almsgiving for it to be useful and meritorious?

A. Giving alms would avail little without the qualities required to make them pleasing to God. I could point out many contributing to almsgiving's merit and perfection, and tell you it must be gentle and patient, so as not to be annoyed by the poor's bad manners and importunity; humble and modest, to give them the assistance they need as secretly as possible; wise and prudent, to distinguish true miseries from pretended ones; generous and magnificent, to imitate God's goodness, Who pours His gifts abundantly upon us—*Qui dat omnibus affluenter*, Who gives to all abundantly; holy and religious, to honor Jesus Christ in the persons of the poor. But beyond these qualities Scripture indicates, here are three others receiving little attention.

I. Alms must be given from our own goods, not those acquired unjustly. Do not think some alms will efface your injustices, thefts and so forth. God does not approve, or even deign to look upon, presents unjust men make Him: *Dona iniquorum non probat Altissimus, nec respicit in oblationes iniquorum*—the Most High does not approve the wicked's gifts or regard the offerings of the unjust. Give alms, Tobias told his son, but see that they are not from others' goods but your own: *Ex substantia tua fac eleemosynam*.

II. Alms must be proportionate to our means and the poor's need. Sometimes you ask how much you must give the poor. I do not know the nature, amount and quality of your goods; but the general advice I can give is what Tobias tells his son: if you have much, give much; if little, give little, but with a good heart. *Quomodo potueris, ita esto misericors; si multum tibi fuerit, abundanter tribue: si exiguum tibi fuerit, etiam exiguum libenter impertiri stude*. Consider the poor's need, and as it grows let your charity increase.

III. Alms must be given promptly and joyfully. This is a debt to be paid gladly. What use is that money growing moldy in your chests, that wheat rotting in your granaries and those clothes destroyed by moths? All this, St. Basil says, belongs to the poor.

Until when are you waiting to give it to them? Why let them waste away in their misery? With what eyes do you think God will regard those tardy alms, given unwillingly and wrung from your hands by the poor's importunity rather than charity? God despises them, because He does not want giving under compulsion: *Hilarem enim datorem diligit Deus*—God loves a cheerful giver. This is how alms must be given.

Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem: in die mala liberabit eum Dominus—blessed is he who considers the needy and poor; in the evil day the Lord will deliver him. Happy the man, happy the rich man, happy the holder of a benefice who understands and fulfills his obligation to give alms! *Beatus qui intelligit*. Happy the layman, happy the ecclesiastic who understands so important a truth and practices it! *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem*. Happy he who, considering himself a dispenser of the goods he possesses, gives a share to the poor and miserable! *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem: in die mala liberabit eum Dominus*.

On the last day, a fatal day for many others, when the tempter, so ingenious in destroying souls, wishes to lay snares for him, the Lord's grace will deliver him: *In die mala liberabit eum Dominus*. I do not remember, St. Jerome said, having seen anyone charitable in life end with a bad death. Those many who pray for him and take an interest in his salvation cannot possibly go unheard: *Non memini me legere mala morte mortuum, qui libenter opera charitatis exercuit; habet enim intercessores multos, et impossibile est multorum preces non exaudiri*.

When illness comes knocking at his door, divine mercy will extend Its arms to him and console him: *Dominus opem feret illi super lectum doloris ejus*—the Lord will bring him help upon his bed of pain. While the miser, unjust man and usurer vomit their iniquitous riches with their souls into hell, the charitable and merciful man will go to receive in heaven the reward of his alms: *Centuplum accipiet, et vitam æternam possidebit*—he will receive a hundredfold and possess eternal life.

---

[1] 1 John 3:17; Deuteronomy 15:11; Tobit 4:7–9; Sirach 4:1, 8; 1 Timothy 6:17–18.

[2] Luke 11:41; Augustine on Psalm 38; Proverbs 28:27.

[3] Thomas, II–II, q.187, a.5; Luke 6:27; Sirach 29:15.

[4] Thomas, II–II, q.32, a.8; *Sentences* IV, distinction 15, article 2 as cited.

Decalogue: Twentieth Conference: On the Eighth Commandment: False Witness and Lying

Original preacher not named.

Non loqueris contra proximum tuum falsum testimonium. (Exodus 20.)

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Thus far we have spoken of the Decalogue's precepts regulating the duties of justice we must practice toward our neighbor and forbidding harm to his person or goods. Now we shall treat the eighth commandment, which forbids injuring our neighbor's reputation through false witness or lying. Therefore we ordinarily

recite this precept: do not bear false witness or lie.

It forbids not only false witness and lying—*Non loqueris contra proximum tuum falsum testimonium*—but also detraction, calumny, offensive words, biting jokes, mockery, flattery, suspicions and rash judgments, and every word or thought contrary to the justice and charity owed our neighbor. For now we shall confine ourselves to false witness and lying.

Q. What is false witness? Is it a grave sin?

A. By false witness is ordinarily understood a judicial deposition contrary to truth, calling God to witness that one will tell it. If, instead of clearly saying what we know concerning matters the judge asks and has a right to ask, we conceal, lie or use equivocations to take the judge unawares and deceive him, this is false witness. The judge's intention, to which witnesses must conform their answers, is to oblige them to declare the fact's truth, whether it condemns or acquits the accused; the oath they take binds them absolutely to this.

From this it is easy to conclude that false witness is a grave sin obliging reparation of all harm caused by failure to tell the truth. Someone suppressing it sins against justice: *Testis iniquus*, Scripture says, *deridet judicium*—an unjust witness mocks judgment.

St. Thomas affirms that false witness contains three sins: perjury, injustice and lying. Perjury, because all witnesses are obliged to swear they will tell the truth; injustice, because harm is done to a neighbor toward whom charity and justice must be kept; lying, because the false witness affirms or denies something contrary to the truth he knows.

Ecclesiastical and civil laws have pronounced various penalties against false witness. Francis I imposed the death penalty on false witnesses. Theodulf, bishop of Orléans, who lived at the end of the eighth century, observes in chapter 27 of his Capitularies that the Church punished false witnesses by excommunication if laymen and deposition if ecclesiastics. Today false witness is commonly a case reserved to the bishop.[1]

Q. You said a false witness must repair harm maliciously caused the accused. But if he departed from truth through defective memory, would he be guilty and obliged to restitution?

A. If this defect of memory is purely natural and, after sufficient examination, the person swearing is persuaded he tells the truth, he cannot be accused of mortal sin, St. Thomas says. St. Antoninus adds that he must likewise be free from restitution.

But a witness must always take great care not to trust his memory too much, affirming nothing he does not know for himself rather than through another's report. He must declare things as he knows them, without asserting the doubtful as certain. *In testimonio ferendo*, the Angelic Doctor says, *non debet homo pro certo asserere, quasi sciens id de quo certus non est, sed dubium sub dubio proferre, et id de quo certus est pro certo asserere*—in giving testimony a man must not assert as certain, as though knowing, what he is uncertain of; he must present the doubtful as doubtful and assert as certain what he is certain of.

A witness proceeding otherwise is guilty of very great imprudence, exposing himself to the danger of giving false witness, deceiving the judge and violating the justice owed his neighbor.[2]

Q. Is someone questioned obliged to testify?

A. St. Thomas, proposing this question, answers, first, that everyone must declare what he knows whenever judicially questioned by the competent judge possessing legitimate authority.

Secondly, even if the person wishing us to testify has no authority over us, and even when not questioned, we must testify when necessary to prevent notable harm to our neighbor. Thus Scripture says: *Eripite pauperem, et egenum de manu peccatoris liberate*—deliver the poor and needy; free them from the wicked man's hands. Elsewhere: *Erue eos, qui ducuntur ad mortem*—do not fail to help those in danger of death.

Nevertheless, some persons are exempt from testifying although a legitimate superior commands it.

First, a son is not obliged to testify against his father, nor a father against his son, a brother against his brother, a husband against his wife or a wife against her husband, except in certain extraordinary cases specified by the country's laws.

Secondly, a confessor is never obliged to declare what he knows through confession, because he knows it not as a man but as God's minister. No human precept can dispense him from secrecy in administering this sacrament.

Thirdly, neither must we declare what was entrusted under natural secrecy. If a sick person entrusted his last will to a physician or a litigant his rights to an advocate, neither may disclose the respective matter in court. *Quia servare fidem est de jure naturali*, the Angelic Doctor says, *nihil autem potest præcipi homini contra id, quod est de jure naturali*—keeping faith belongs to natural law, and nothing can be commanded a man against what belongs to natural law.

An exception must nevertheless be made when the secret would harm the public good or notably harm a particular person: then there is no obligation to keep it, despite the promise.[3]

Q. Is a defendant obliged to confess the crime about which the judge questions him?

A. The Doctors commonly affirm with St. Thomas that a defendant questioned by the competent judge proceeding lawfully is obliged to tell the truth and confess his crime, although it should cost his life. They judge that if he will not confess the truth or denies it, he sins mortally.

The reason is that everyone must obey his legitimate superior when commanded something that superior has authority to command. Since the competent judge is a legitimate superior possessing the right and even obligation to question the accused and draw the truth from his mouth, the defendant must disclose it and confess his crime. Consequently, if he does not, he commits a mortal sin, not only because of his oath to tell the truth but also because he disobeys his legitimate superior in a matter of great importance.

St. Thomas adds in question 70, article 1, that if a defendant is not questioned lawfully and with judicial formality, he is not obliged to answer and does not sin by resisting. He may appeal the judge's proceedings or employ other just and permitted means to free himself from his hands. But if the defendant answers, he may not lie; the confessor, Navarrus says, could not absolve him unless he were disposed to tell the truth.

The accused is likewise obliged to name his accomplices if the judge asks about them judicially. In certain crimes, such as heresy, treason against the sovereign, counterfeiting coin, conspiracy against prince or state, and highway robbery, the accused cannot in conscience refuse to disclose his accomplices, although he promised not to reveal them. *Revelare secreta in malum personæ est contra fidelitatem*, St. Thomas says; *non autem si revelentur propter bonum commune, quod semper præferendum est bono privato*—revealing secrets to a person's harm is against fidelity, but not if they are revealed for the common good, which must always be preferred to private good.

Q. May an innocent accused person falsely impute a crime to the one who calumniously accused him or to the false witness who testified against him?

A. No one may defend himself in this manner, although his accusers' calumnies expose him to losing his goods, reputation or life. To prove this doctrine, it suffices to recall Pope Innocent XI's condemnation in his decree of March 1679 of the following proposition: "It is probable that someone does not sin mortally who, to defend his innocence and honor, imputes a false crime to another." *Probabile est non peccare mortaliter qui imponit falsum crimen alicui, ut suam innocentiam et honorem defendat*.

Truly, nothing is more opposed to this Gospel maxim Jesus Christ proposes as our rule of conduct: "Love your enemies; do good to those hating you, and pray for those persecuting and calumniating you." St. Paul,

writing to the Romans, forbids the faithful to return evil for evil. Far from insulting those treating them unjustly, he commands them to bless their persecutors and do good to those doing them harm: *Benedicite persequentibus vos: benedicite, et nolite maledicere … nulli malum pro malo reddentes.*

From this it is easy to infer that an innocent accused person may not impute a false crime to the witness in order to destroy his testimony.[4]

Q. Is it lawful in some cases to fabricate false instruments and use them?

A. Certainly not, because the laws prohibit this under severe penalties. The crime of falsification can be committed in three ways.

First, by fabricating false instruments, public or private, through counterfeiting the signatures of notaries, witnesses or parties.

Secondly, by altering a true instrument, removing or adding lines or words, changing the date or something else.

Thirdly, by antedating or postdating true dates to a third party's harm, inserting false clauses, or telling the notary in a contract, for example, that a sum was paid in ready money when it was not paid or was paid in bills.

Those who use false instruments knowing them false commit an enormous sin and are no less guilty than those using a false witness to condemn their opponent. A favorable sentence thus obtained gives them no right in conscience and cannot be executed. They must restore to the party losing the lawsuit the principal, expenses, damages and interest.

This decision rests on the chapter *Super eo*, on the crime of falsification. Those fabricating these false instruments and those advising them are accomplices in the sin of their users and jointly obliged to restitution. If the forgers are officers of justice, they are still much more guilty: besides cooperating in the injured party's harm, they violate the fidelity owed the public in exercising their offices.

Q. If someone lost a receipt for a sum truly paid and now demanded again, or lost an acknowledgment of debt in his favor and the debtor denies it, may he at least in these cases substitute for the lost receipt or deed to recover his money or escape an unjust lawsuit?

A. This is in no way permitted. Although losing the receipt or deed causes him to lose his money, and although the amount for which he presents a false receipt was actually paid or the sum in the substituted deed truly owed, undoubtedly the receipt and deed would be false. They cannot therefore be permitted, because all laws forbid lies and falsehoods. The loss or harm one wishes to avoid is no legitimate or sufficient cause for committing falsification in the case supposed. The laws make no exception, since the prohibition against fabricating false instruments is absolute and general.

Nor can those presenting such instruments be excused under pretext that they harm no one. In its censure of February 3, 1665, of certain propositions by Amadeus Guimenius, the Paris Faculty of Theology condemned the contrary doctrine, rejecting this excuse. All that can be affirmed is that someone using such false instruments is not obliged to restitution.

Q. What is a lie? Is it always forbidden, and into how many kinds is it distinguished?

A. Theologians distinguish material and formal falsehood. Material falsehood consists in saying something false in itself but believed true. This is being mistaken, not properly lying or sin: *Quisquis autem hoc enuntiat, quod vel creditum animo, vel opinatum tenet, etiam si falsum sit non mentitur*, St. Augustine says—whoever states what he holds in his mind as believed or thought does not lie, even if it is false.

Formal lying consists in saying something against what one thinks: asserting a thing one way although knowing it happened otherwise. *Omnis qui mentitur contra id quod animo sentit loquitur*—everyone lying speaks against what he thinks in his mind.

Lying is always forbidden; it is never lawful to lie for any cause. *Noli velle mentiri omne mendacium*, Ecclesiasticus says—do not will to utter any lie. Every lie opposes God, immutable and eternal Truth. It displeases Him so much, the Wise Man says in Proverbs, that God abhors lying lips: *Abominatio est Domino labia mendacia*.

There are three classes of lie. The first is called jocose, told to amuse the mind. The second is called officious, intended to procure some good for a neighbor or prevent him some evil. The third is called pernicious, told with the intention of causing some harm.

St. Augustine, who combats lying more vigorously than all the Fathers, acknowledges that jocose and officious lies are by their nature only venial sins. Pernicious lies are commonly mortal sins, because opposed not only to truth but also to justice and charity. Sometimes, nevertheless, a pernicious lie can be only venial when the intended harm is slight and of little importance. St. Thomas judges thus.

Q. May one in some cases use equivocations or mental reservations, or at least conceal the truth?

A. To employ equivocation is to use an ambiguous word with two meanings to convey something different from what one thinks. To employ mental reservation is to retain in one's mind a sense not expressed, intending to deceive the person addressed. For example, you ask whether I have heard Mass and I answer yes: my intention is that I heard it yesterday, while you ask about today. I well understand that my answer will deceive you; this is what is called mental reservation.

A servant is asked whether his master is at home and answers that he has gone out, because he went out the day before. These evasions and ambiguities cannot be excused from lying, because everyone is obliged by honesty to manifest truth. *Ex honestate unus homo alteri debet veritatis manifestationem*, St. Thomas says—by honesty one man owes another the manifestation of truth.

The proof this saint adduces is that, since man is naturally social and society cannot subsist without truth, one is obliged to declare it. Therefore Innocent XI proscribed the contrary doctrine, condemning sixty-five moral propositions in his decree of March 2, 1679, among which numbers 26 and 27 supported liberty of equivocations.

Nevertheless, it is prudence to conceal truth in certain cases, as Pope St. Gregory observes in his Pastoral Rule. One can turn a questioner's attention to another object. If he happens through his own imprudence to be mistaken and forms a false idea of our words, we are not obliged to undeceive him.

This is St. Thomas's judgment: *Licet veritatem occultare prudenter sub aliqua dissimulatione, ut Augustinus dicit in libro de Mendacio*—one may prudently conceal truth under some dissimulation, as Augustine says in his book on lying. But one must never say something contrary to truth, according to St. Augustine's maxim: *Mentiri nunquam licet, ergo nec occultare mendacio*—lying is never lawful; therefore neither is concealing by a lie.[5]

Q. What advice can be given those inclined to lie, that they may correct this vice?

A. They must be shown, first, that they are animated by the devil's spirit and take as guide and model this father and first inventor of deceits and lies. This is what Jesus Christ reproached in the Pharisees, who were artful and deceitful. You say you are children of Abraham, that upright, simple and guileless man, but you deceive yourselves: *Vos ex patre diabolo estis*—you are children of the devil, because you imitate his actions, follow his examples and fulfill his desires: *Et desideria ejus vultis implere*.

He lied to our first parents and would like to banish truth from the world and make all people liars like himself. Lying is so much his characteristic that he finds it within himself: *Cum loquitur mendacium ex propriis loquitur*—when he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own. His character, nature and occupation are lying and inspiring deceit and falsehood in those listening: *Quia mendax est, et pater ejus*—because he is a liar and its father. Here, liars, is your father and the model you follow. You act like the devil, speak like the devil, are animated by his spirit and fulfill his desires: *Et desideria patris vestri vultis implere*.

Secondly, show them from Scripture the penalties with which God punishes liars. The Acts of the Apostles give us a double example in Ananias and Sapphira. Even if God spares them in this world \[*perdone*: spares temporal punishment\], they will be punished more rigorously in the next.

Thirdly, since all are members of one body, we must not deceive one another. St. Paul employs this reason to inspire horror of lying: *Deponentes mendacium loquimini veritatem unusquisque cum proximo suo, quoniam sumus invicem membra*—putting away lying, let everyone speak truth with his neighbor, because we are members one of another.

Let us flee lying, Christians, and declare ourselves entirely for truth. If we speak it, we honor Jesus Christ, the saints and His Gospel. We honor Jesus Christ, Who came into the world to bear witness to truth; the saints, who were truth's martyrs and defended it at peril of their lives; and the Gospel, which everywhere condemns deceit and lying.

Grant, O my God, that I may love truth and never abandon it: *Ne auferas de ore meo verbum veritatis usquequaque*—do not take the word of truth utterly from my mouth. Grant me all the horror of lying the holy man Job had, and let me form his resolve to utter none: *Donec superest halitus in me, et spiritus Dei in naribus meis, non loquentur labia mea iniquitatem, nec lingua mea meditabitur mendacium*—as long as breath remains in me and God's spirit in my nostrils, my lips shall speak no iniquity nor my tongue devise falsehood.

Yes, my God, as long as You keep me in this world, while I have a breath of life, my lips shall utter nothing unjust, nor my tongue speak a lie. At every time, in every place and on every occasion I shall give the testimony I owe truth, so that You, O my God, Who are Truth itself, may be my inheritance for all eternity. Amen.[6]

---

[1] Proverbs 19:28; Thomas on false witness, II–II, q.70.

[2] Thomas, II–II, q.70, a.2 as cited; Antoninus, *Summa*, II, title I, chapter 19, section 7.

[3] Psalm 82:4 (Vulgate 81); Proverbs 24:11; Thomas, II–II, q.70, a.1.

[4] Innocent XI, March 1679; Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:14, 17.

[5] Thomas, II–II, q.109, a.3; Gregory, *Pastoral Rule*, III, chapter 12 as cited; Augustine, *On Lying*, chapter 10; Innocent XI, March 2, 1679.

[6] John 8:44; Acts 5; Revelation 21:8; Ephesians 4:25; Psalm 119:43 (Vulgate 118); Job 27:3–4.

Decalogue: Twenty-first Conference: On the Ninth Commandment: Evil Thoughts and Evil Desires

Original preacher not named.

Non concupisces uxorem proximi tui. (Exodus 20.)

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

In explaining the sixth precept, we saw that when God forbids the crime of adultery, He also forbids every kind of impurity and, generally, everything leading to so dangerous a vice. I already told you that all this is contained in those two words, *Non mœchaberis*—you shall not commit adultery. But now we must show that

in the ninth commandment the Lord forbids not only the criminal act but also the desire and will to commit it: *Non concupisces*—you shall not covet.

Observe, brothers, that this precept was most necessary for the greater part of humanity, which commonly judges sins by their exterior, making little account of the interior or of sounding the heart's depths and considering the root of actions. The Jews seem to have been in this disposition regarding sins of the heart. Therefore the Son of God, wishing to instruct them on this point, says in His Gospel: "You have heard what was said to the ancients: you shall not commit adultery. But I tell you that whoever looks at a woman with evil desire has already committed adultery in his heart."

To observe the ninth commandment, therefore, we must watch most carefully over the custody of our heart, lest evil thoughts and desires corrupt it. This is the important warning the Wise Man gives: *Omni custodia serva cor tuum, quia ex ipso vita procedit*—guard your heart with every care, because life proceeds from it. This will also be the subject of this instruction.

Beware of forming evil desires in your heart, because God's law forbids them: *Non concupisces*. The will to commit the crime is accounted as though it had been committed. In Jesus Christ's school there is no difference between sin and the desire to commit it. Indeed, God wishes us chaste not only in body but also in heart: *Non concupisces*. This is what we shall now explain.[1]

Q. How can we observe this commandment, *Non concupisces*, since concupiscence inclining us to evil dwells in everyone?

A. Protestants affirm that we cannot keep this commandment because, they say, concupiscence and disordered movements are sin. But they are mistaken on this point as on many others.

It is true that we all have concupiscence, which is nothing other than a propensity and inclination toward evil, what Scripture calls the origin of evil desires. It is also certain that it remains in us even after Baptism and is a penalty of original sin. Although it proceeds from sin and inclines toward sin, nevertheless it is not sin when evil desires are not consented to. *Nam ipsa quidem concupiscentia jam non est peccatum in regeneratis*, St. Augustine says, *quando illi ad illicita opera non consentiunt*—concupiscence itself is no longer sin in the regenerate when they do not consent to it unto unlawful works.

This is what the Council of Trent expressly defined, in conformity with the Apostle's doctrine declaring that there is no condemnation in those regenerated in Jesus Christ through Baptism. Therefore the concupiscence remaining in them until death is not sin. Not only is it not sin, but the disordered movements it produces in us, of whatever nature, are not culpable when involuntary; they become so only when the will consents to them.

Now, we all know, and faith teaches us, that with grace's assistance we can refrain from consenting to concupiscence's disordered desires. Consequently we can keep the precept that only forbids us to consent. The Wise Man tells us not to follow concupiscence but to restrain it: *Post concupiscentias tuas non eas*. The Apostle admonishes us not to let sin reign in us or obey its disordered desires: *Non ergo regnet peccatum in vestro mortali corpore ut obediatis concupiscentiis ejus*—let not sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires.

We cannot prevent concupiscence's existence in us, but with grace's assistance we can prevent its reigning in us. This is all God commands in forbidding us to obey its disordered movements. To fulfill this commandment, then, we must apply ourselves throughout life to fighting this enemy within our household \[an enemy dwelling within us\], which attacks us so often and can be weakened but not entirely destroyed until death. *Reprimi potest et debet per gratiam Dei, ut non regnet in nobis, sed non ejicitur nisi in morte*, St. Bernard says—it can and must be restrained by God's grace so that it does not reign in us, but is not cast out except in death.

Q. Is there a difference between the thought and the desire of an evil action?

A. Certainly. Thought is the representation of the evil thing; desire is the will to accomplish it. Desire for evil is always sin because it contains the will's consent to the evil action, and in this sin consists. All faults arise from the heart's consent, according to Jesus Christ's words: *De corde enim exeunt cogitationes malæ, homicidia, adulteria, fornicationes, furta, falsa testimonia, blasphemiæ*—from the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies and blasphemies.

But the thought of evil is not sin when the will does not intervene. On the contrary, if evil thoughts, far from pleasing us, trouble us; if we do not culpably occasion them; and if we reject them without voluntarily dwelling on them, they are an occasion of merit for us, far from being sin.

This must console many souls afflicted by evil thoughts. Blessed, St. James says, is the man enduring temptation, because when his virtue has been proved he will receive the crown of eternal life God promises those loving Him. God permits, the Wise Man says, the greatest saints to be tempted and tried in every way to make them worthy of His glory: *Deus tentavit eos, et invenit illos dignos Se*—God tried them and found them worthy of Himself.

Hence we can easily conclude that thought of evil must be distinguished from desire for evil. The simple thought of evil is not sin, but desire for evil always is. Therefore St. Peter so earnestly exhorts us to abstain from evil desires: *Obsecro vos tamquam advenas et peregrinos abstinere vos a carnalibus desideriis, quæ militant adversus animam*—I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims to abstain from carnal desires warring against the soul.[2]

Q. When does sin enter into evil thoughts?

A. However evil a thought, it is never sin unless accompanied by the will, because according to St. Augustine's great principle there is no sin where there is no will: *Non nisi voluntate peccatur*—sin is committed only by the will.

But tacit willing, called lingering \[*morosidad*: voluntary complacency in the thought\], suffices to make it culpable in a greater or lesser degree, according to the object's nature and the greater or lesser perfection of consent. This being supposed, sin occurs in evil thoughts, first, when there is negligence in preventing or rejecting them; secondly, someone dwelling on them with pleasure without consenting sins still more gravely; thirdly, when consent is given, although there is no will to execute them, and then it is mortal sin.

But to know better whether consent to these thoughts has been given, Sylvius says we must distinguish three kinds of movements of concupiscence. The first is entirely involuntary because it precedes the will's consent. The second is not wholly voluntary, because the will resists and refuses consent but does not resist entirely, and the consent it gives is only imperfect. The third is entirely voluntary, because awareness is not lacking and, far from resisting it, one gives full consent.

The first movement, being involuntary, is not sin. The second is venial sin; the third mortal. *Primus nullum est peccatum*, this theologian says, *secundus veniale, tertius mortale*. It is therefore certain that although the evil action is not committed, consenting in the heart will be mortal sin. This seems evident from the Wise Man's words: *Perversæ enim cogitationes separant a Deo*—perverse thoughts separate from God; *Abominatio Domini cogitationes malæ*—evil thoughts are an abomination to the Lord. Nothing can separate us from God, nor does He abhor anything, except mortal sin.

To avoid consenting to evil thoughts, take great care not to dwell on them voluntarily: *Congrega cor tuum in sanctitate*—gather your heart in holiness.[3]

Q. For someone who sinned against the ninth precept, will it suffice to say in confession that he had evil thoughts?

A. Many content themselves with telling the confessor that they had evil thoughts, without further explanation. This does not suffice for confession's integrity. They must say whether they voluntarily dwelt on them and whether or not they consented.

Then there is an obligation to declare the kind of evil thought, just as there is an obligation to state the kind of impurity into which one fell. If the consented thought had any consequence—for example, indecent touching or the sin of self-abuse \[*molicie*, here masturbation\], of which St. Paul says those committing it will not enter the kingdom of heaven, *Neque molles … regnum Dei possidebunt*—it must be confessed.

Many fail in this under pretext of ignorance, but it is very difficult for ignorance to excuse them or for natural or supernatural light not to tell them what they do is evil. Besides, even if they had only some doubt, they are obliged to ask and confess. They will learn that voluntarily falling into self-abuse is a mortal sin against natural law, as St. Thomas teaches. Therefore we see in Scripture that God most severely punished Onan, who committed a like sin: *Idcirco percussit eum Dominus, quia rem detestabilem faceret*—therefore the Lord struck him because he did a detestable thing.[4]

Q. Is it lawful to desire one's neighbor's wife in order to marry her if she should become a widow?

A. Certainly not: this desire is sinful. Married persons cannot place their desire and affection elsewhere without contravening the ninth commandment. The reason is that by fostering such desires in their heart they expose themselves to adultery or another impurity, or at least to aversion and contempt for the person to whom God united them by marriage's bond.

It is most culpably imprudent for married persons to tell other men or women: "If I were a widower or widow, I would marry you." They must never speak in this manner, either jokingly or seriously.

I say also that when a young man or woman is pledged to marry, another may not solicit them for this purpose; nor can one, without offending God, dissuade them from marrying the person to whom they gave their word. This is the doctrine of the Catechism of the Council of Trent, which adds that it is not lawful to desire marriage with a person consecrated to God, one who entered religious life, or one known to have vowed not to marry.

Q. Does a chaste person often experiencing dreams against purity sin against this commandment?

A. Certainly the devil particularly attacks the good: *Hoc scitote quia diabolus non persequitur nisi bonos*, St. Augustine says—know that the devil persecutes only the good. He is the author of the greater part of the dreams befalling them at night. But it is no less certain that his malice and the evil effects he produces in our imagination or body can never of themselves harm us, provided we give no consent.

Thus these pure souls can be told what the Prophet Jeremiah told the Jews: *Ne attendatis ad somnia vestra, quæ vos somniatis*—pay no heed to the dreams you dream. This is also St. Thomas's judgment. He relates an example from Cassian's Conferences of a young solitary who had acquired chastity in a high degree through humility and vigilance, yet suffered impure dreams, especially when preparing for Communion.

Consulting his superiors, those wise elders recognized that these occurrences proceeded from the devil's malice and advised him to approach the holy table without fear. Doing so, he exposed the seducer of souls' malice, and these evil effects ceased through the holy Eucharist's power.

But someone who occupied himself during the day with things contrary to purity and did not sincerely repent before sleep will undoubtedly then be culpable: someone willing the cause is presumed also to will the effect it produces, as all theologians acknowledge.

Nevertheless, these evil dreams may proceed from an innocent though voluntary cause. For example, a physician or confessor who read books to be instructed in healing a neighbor's soul or body may dream about the things read during the day. Those dreams, or the bodily impurities that may then occur, must not be

imputed to sin, because their cause is not culpable.

They must nevertheless arm themselves through prayer against these nocturnal illusions, as the Church warns in the hymn of Compline:

Procul recedant somnia,\ Et noctium phantasmata,\ Hostemque nostrum comprime\ Ne polluantur corpora.

Let dreams and the phantoms of night depart far away; restrain our enemy, lest our bodies be defiled.

Q. What remedies can be proposed to virtuous souls complaining of continual torment by evil thoughts?

A. They must be advised, first, that this present life is continual temptation. Wherever we may be and however we live, we shall always be exposed to a thousand importunate thoughts arising from the ancient sin inherited from Adam. However carefully we drive them away, they always spring up again and succeed one another, proceeding from a rebellious and fertile concupiscence that produces them without ceasing.

Sometimes they are thoughts of impurity or gluttony, sometimes envy or vengeance, sometimes against God and religion. But do not be disturbed, brothers, by such temptations afflicting your mind and in which your heart has no part: *Non timebis a timore nocturno, a sagitta volante in die, a negotio perambulante in tenebris; ab incursu, et dæmonio meridiano*—you shall not fear the terror of night, the arrow flying by day, the business walking in darkness, the assault or the noonday demon. This is St. John Climacus's counsel.

Secondly, the surest means to reject these importunate temptations, ordinarily authored by the devil, is to despise them and mock this infernal dragon whom the Son of God bound and conquered. *Alligavit diabolum Christus spiritualibus vinculis*, St. Augustine says—Christ bound the devil with spiritual chains.

He is like a chained dog that can bark but cannot bite except those who approach and wish to be bitten: *Latrare potest, sollicitare potest, mordere omnino non potest, nisi volentem*—he can bark and entice, but cannot bite at all except someone willing it.

Thirdly, we must be faithful in practicing our obligations, placing our trust in God, Who will not allow us to be tempted beyond our strength and will make temptation profitable for us: *Fidelis autem Deus est, Qui non patietur vos tentari supra id, quod potestis, sed faciet etiam cum tentatione proventum, ut possitis sustinere*—God is faithful; He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear, but with temptation will also make a way through it, that you may endure.

To all these counsels must be added mortification of the senses, frequent prayer, continual work, remembrance of death and our last end, devotion to the Blessed Virgin and above all to Jesus Christ's Passion.

The Lives of the Desert Fathers relate of the holy abbess Sarah that, being severely tempted by the devil for thirteen years, she never asked God to deliver her from this trial, but to give her strength to endure it. One day when temptation was more violent and the common enemy presented all the world's allurements and vanities, she threw herself at a crucifix's feet and prayed so fervently that the devil exclaimed: "Sarah, you have conquered me." "I have not conquered you," the saint answered, "but Jesus Christ my Savior."[5]

Q. What does God command us in the ninth commandment?

A. He commands us to restrain concupiscence's ardor, resist its disordered movements and live chastely, each according to his state. There is the chastity of virgins, widows and married persons.

Virgins' chastity consists in perpetual continence without marriage. This is chastity's most perfect degree, making a person in a certain manner like the angels and putting him in a state to follow more closely the spotless Lamb, as St. John says. "O how beautiful is the chaste generation joined with virtue's brightness!" the Wise Man exclaims. "Its memory is immortal and honored before God and men."

Widows' chastity follows virgins' and consists in observing continence during widowhood. We see in Scripture that widows not intending a second marriage are praised by God and men. When chaste Judith cut off Holofernes' head and thereby delivered Bethulia from its oppression, the high priest Joakim is said to have come from Jerusalem to Bethulia with all his priests to see this holy widow, upon whom they bestowed a thousand blessings: "You are Jerusalem's glory and Israel's joy; you have performed a most glorious action, because you loved chastity by remaining a widow." *Eo quod castitatem amaveris, et post virum tuum alterum nescieris*—because you loved chastity and after your husband knew no other.

Finally, married persons' chastity consists in living holily in marriage, with pure intention and according to God, without letting concupiscence dominate and following the rules St. Paul prescribes: *Ut sciat unusquisque vestrum vas suum possidere in sanctificatione*—that each of you may know how to possess his vessel in sanctification.

Everyone must live in the chastity suitable to the state to which God called him. Do not deceive yourselves, brothers: those abandoning themselves to sins contrary to purity will not possess God's kingdom. Ask chastity fervently of Him, because, as the Wise Man says, no one can be chaste unless God grants the gift of continence. If you ask sincerely, He will not refuse it. Say to Him with St. Augustine: *Continentiam jubes; da quod jubes, et jube quod vis*—You command continence; grant what You command, and command what You will.[6]

---

[1] Matthew 5:27–28; Proverbs 4:23.

[2] Matthew 15:19; James 1:12; Wisdom 3:5; 1 Peter 2:11.

[3] Augustine, *Retractions*, I, chapter 13; Sylvius on I–II, q.74, a.8; Wisdom 1:3; Proverbs 15:26; Sirach 30:24 as cited.

[4] 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; Thomas, II–II, q.154, a.11; Genesis 38:10.

[5] Psalm 91:5–6 (Vulgate 90); John Climacus, *Ladder*, step 28 as cited; Augustine on Psalm 63; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Pelagius the Deacon, *Lives of the Fathers*.

[6] Revelation 14:4; Wisdom 4:1; Judith 15:11 in the Vulgate tradition; 1 Thessalonians 4:4; Wisdom 8:21; Augustine, *Confessions*, X, chapter 29.

Decalogue: Twenty-second Conference: On the Tenth Commandment: Lawsuits

Original preacher not named.

Non concupisces domum proximi tui … nec omnia quæ illius sunt. (Exodus 20.)

You shall not covet your neighbor's possessions or anything else belonging to him.

The seventh precept forbids taking or unjustly retaining our neighbor's goods; this one also forbids desiring them to his harm. We say "to his harm," because desiring another's goods in order to acquire them by legitimate means, without injuring him, is not forbidden. Contracts of sale and purchase rest on this lawful desire: someone deciding to buy a house or land does so because that house or land pleases him and he desires to possess it.

Only those who envy others' goods and unjustly desire them sin against this commandment: merchants wishing for a shortage or scarcity of provisions and merchandise to enrich themselves; officers and soldiers wishing for war to plunder with impunity; physicians wishing for illness to gain more; ungrateful children wishing for their parents' death to enjoy their goods; and officers of justice wishing for and fostering lawsuits. Of these we shall speak today, having sufficiently explained the rest belonging to the seventh commandment.

I wish there could be said of this parish what a great fifth-century bishop said of himself and his clergy. "During the twenty-five years I have been bishop," Theodoret said, "I have endeavored so to regulate my life

that I have had no lawsuit. My ecclesiastics have acted likewise, and I know none who frequented the forum or secular courts." Would to God we were all in the disposition of those first centuries! Christian families would be much further advanced spiritually and temporally.

But since lawsuits are so common today, let us examine in this conference whether litigation is lawful, the conduct to be observed by those obliged to engage in it, and the injustices committed in lawsuits.[1]

Q. What is a lawsuit? Is litigation ever lawful?

A. A lawsuit may be called a proceeding brought in court against one's neighbor to recover something or obtain compensation for harm believed suffered in goods or reputation. We say "a proceeding brought in court." To explain this would require knowing all judicial quibbles and tricks. Without explaining them, it suffices to say that this proceeding is often interminable, either through the parties' obstinacy in going from tribunal to tribunal or through the bad faith of officers of justice, who often prolong cases that could be concluded quickly.

Therefore a wise cardinal said a lawsuit was a labyrinth in which the clearest right is often lost amid the infinite windings of judicial forms. Someone beginning a lawsuit must imagine himself at a labyrinth's entrance, becoming more lost the further he advances, and finding fewer paths out the more he seeks them.

But against whom is this lawsuit, this dispute one wishes to conclude through judicial procedure? Against a neighbor whom one must love as oneself. Brother litigates against brother. Why? For purely temporal things. A Christian to whom God promises heaven's kingdom occupies himself in litigation over trifles and things of little importance. *Contendit christianus pro rebus terrenis cui promissum est regnum cælorum*, St. Augustine says—a Christian contends for earthly things, though the kingdom of heaven has been promised him.

But is litigation lawful? Although very difficult without offending God, one cannot say it is never lawful. If every kind of lawsuit were evil and never permitted, St. Thomas says, it would follow that judges should not have been established to settle differences, since that would give the faithful occasion to litigate.

Nor can this proposition be affirmed without condemning Moses, the first and wisest of all legislators. Did not this great Prophet establish judges in Israel's twelve tribes? Did he not prescribe rules for equitable sentences, adding that when they did not believe themselves sufficiently enlightened to end differences arising among individuals, they should come to him to learn what to do?

Finally, all lawsuits cannot be condemned indiscriminately without reproving the universal practice of all nations. Is anything better established than this polity which, as St. Thomas observes, aims to cut off injustices, punish evildoers' insolence, preserve and maintain a state's peace, good order and religion? We must therefore conclude that lawsuits are not evil in themselves, but only through abuses committed in them.[2]

Q. Jesus Christ says in the Gospel: if someone wishes to take your cloak, give him even your tunic. St. Paul reproaches the Corinthians for sinning by litigating against one another. Do these authorities not prove litigation absolutely forbidden to Christians?

A. The passages you cite do indeed prove litigation an odious thing, as St. John Chrysostom says, *Litigare est odiosum*. They do not prove every lawsuit evil.

When Jesus Christ said, "If someone wishes to litigate with you and take your cloak, give him your tunic also," according to the interpreters He prescribes a precept to be practiced in the heart's preparation, not always to the letter—just as there is no obligation literally to present the other cheek to someone striking us. It means we must live so detached from this world's goods that we are prepared to lose them rather than expose ourselves through litigation to violating charity, truth and justice.

St. Paul's words, *Jam quidem omnino delictum est in vobis, quod judicia habetis inter vos*—already there is altogether a fault among you, that you have lawsuits with one another—teach that people generally do wrong in litigating because lawsuits ordinarily spring from an evil principle. Therefore the Apostle adds: why not rather suffer wrong and the taking of your goods? Better to suffer all this than litigate, since litigation rarely lacks sin.

St. Augustine explains the passage thus: St. Paul condemns lawsuits and only tolerates them through the faithful's weakness, on condition that they not litigate before the gentiles.

All that must be concluded from these authorities is that litigation contains much danger. Therefore the Apostle expressly tells his disciple Timothy that God's servant must not litigate: *Servum Dei non oportet litigare*. But we must not conclude that every lawsuit is evil. There are even cases in which lawsuits can be meritorious when necessity or charity obliges one to pursue them.[3]

Q. What must someone obliged to litigate do, and how must he conduct himself?

A. We have said that some lawsuits are necessary. For example, someone wishes to take my goods and I must defend them against him in court. There are also lawsuits of charity: if someone wishes to take something from a widow, orphan, church or hospital, it is just to defend them and litigate, but under these conditions.

First, without animosity, so that every day you can say what Jesus Christ taught in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our offenses, as we forgive those who have offended us." If charity obliges us to begin the lawsuit, we must show that charity conducts us: *Cum a charitate nascuntur, charitatem probat*, St. Augustine says—when they arise from charity, charity is shown.

Secondly, without deceit. In justice there is only one road leading to life; however little one departs from it, the Wise Man says, one takes a road leading to death: *In semita justitiæ, vita: iter autem devium ducit ad mortem*—in justice's path is life, but a straying road leads to death.

Even when a cause is good, we may not improve it by the smallest trick, even a slight lie. In view of this, what shall we say of so many false testimonies, forged deeds, antedatings, fictitious facts, removal of documents and so many other wicked deeds committed in the forum?

"But the deceit has little consequence." That does not matter: in justice there is only one road. It is straight but narrow, and whoever departs even a little takes the road leading to death: *Iter autem devium ducit ad mortem*.

Thirdly, without cruelty toward opponents. Have no disputes, St. Augustine told certain religious persons living under his direction; or, if you have them, conclude them as quickly as possible: *Lites aut nullas habeatis, aut quam celerrime finiatis*.

Following this counsel will not be difficult if you close your ears to those professional litigants who will yield to no agreement, or who, having obtained a sentence favorable to their claim or money, persuade themselves they can in conscience execute it with full rigor and pursue their opponents inhumanly, granting no delay, seizing their goods and leaving them miserable, after the example of that barbarous servant in the Gospel who would have no compassion on his companion.[4]

Q. What ordinary causes produce lawsuits?

A. Many. The first is notaries' ignorance or malice. Their deeds are as many definitive sentences that no one dares reform, not even the judges themselves. This is the origin of endless lawsuits.

They omit an essential clause in a will, marriage contract or the like, or use equivocal words. They execute instruments for persons incapable of contracting: a half-drunk man, a dying man made to say whatever is

wished, a woman compelled by her husband's threats and fear. They do not explain to the parties before signing what they undertake. They issue copies of a contract not agreeing with its original, and so forth. All this occasions many lawsuits.

The second cause of the discords among Christians is the avarice and bad faith of officers of justice, who seek and foster lawsuits, take up every kind of cause and prolong them to enrich themselves at the parties' expense. These people shear litigants like sheep and pluck them like capons, St. Francis de Sales once said.

I know well there are good people among officers of justice. I condemn no particular person and speak only of those abusing their profession. They seem to me like that race of men the Wise Man describes whose teeth are cutting swords: *Generatio, quæ pro dentibus gladios habet*—a generation having swords for teeth. Greedy, self-interested men, they tear apart and devour the miserable approaching them: *et commandit molaribus suis, ut comedat inopes de terra, et pauperes ex hominibus*—with their grinders they devour the needy from the earth and the poor from among men.

As the next verse says, they are like the leech's two daughters always crying, "Give, give": *Sanguisugæ duæ sunt filiæ, dicentes: Affer, affer*. They can never be satisfied. Anyone wishing his business well dispatched must give them money and make presents to their wives; as though nothing had been done, they always say *affer, affer*—bring, bring. These leeches do not let go until filled with litigants' blood:

Non missura cutem nisi plena cruoris hirudo—the leech will not release the skin until full of blood.

The third cause is restless, entangling minds found in every town, taking their greatest pleasure in lawsuits and disturbances. Such are those taking commissions and buying others' papers and whatever claim they may have to something. These public plagues destroy and annihilate families. Beware of dealing with or consulting them, for they can entangle everything: *Homo perversus suscitat lites*—a perverse man stirs up lawsuits.

Finally, the parties themselves often cause their lawsuits. *Unde bella et lites in vobis?* St. James asked; *nonne hinc? ex concupiscentiis vestris, quæ militant in membris vestris?*—whence come wars and quarrels among you, if not from your disordered passions warring in your members?

The rich man wishes to seize the poor man's goods, like Ahab seizing Naboth's vineyards: *Pascua divitum sunt pauperes*—the poor are the rich person's pasture. Your obstinacy makes you listen to no one; your pride will not let you discuss agreement with your neighbor. "He will repent," someone says; "he will bear the whole burden and bite his fingers \[gnaw with vexation\], even if it costs me selling my shirt \[my last possession\]." See how far passion takes you.

To these causes negligence is sometimes added: failure to obtain a receipt for a paid debt, leaving papers in notaries' and solicitors' hands, a merchant's failure to keep his books in good order and his affairs current, and so forth. All this contributes not a little to stirring up lawsuits.[5]

Q. Do lawsuits not also commonly have evil results that should move us to avoid them?

A. Undoubtedly lawsuits' results are often most unfortunate, sacrificing both spiritual and temporal interests.

Regarding the temporal, first, you expose your reputation to being torn apart by advocates skilled in calumniating and declaiming against opposing parties. Therefore, if prudent, never pursue a lawsuit over insults: officers of justice will only laugh and mock you. *Omnis injuriæ proximi ne memineris, et nihil agas in operibus injuriæ*—remember no injury from your neighbor and do nothing in works of injury. This is Ecclesiasticus's counsel.

Secondly, time is lost that could be employed much more usefully. One must visit judges, importune friends and leave more urgent business to attend to the lawsuit. In a word, it is trouble occupying day and night and a continual distraction.

Thirdly, peace and health are sacrificed. A lawsuit is an alarm clock disturbing and preventing sleep. One thinks only whether one will lose or win. The solicitor asks for money: if there is none, what anxiety! If the suit is lost, what desolation in the family! Many have died of grief after losing a lawsuit.

Fourthly, the choicest goods are spent, and one bad lawsuit suffices to reduce a family to begging. Even when one wins, expenses commonly exceed what is cleared. Therefore the common proverb says that in lawsuits the winner loses: only officers of justice become rich. Witness that advocate who, having built a magnificent house, ordered this inscription:

The obstinate and empty-headed\ Are those who built these windows.

Regarding the spiritual, a lawsuit's consequences are still more dangerous. How many have been damned through faults originating in lawsuits! From them comes forgetfulness of God and salvation. A litigious person occupied in inventing intrigues thinks of nothing less than serving God. If he goes to hear Mass, his lawsuit immediately comes to mind. If he meets his opponent, he cannot bear to see or speak to him. Envy, discord, detraction and hatred alone reign between them.

As St. Francis de Sales said, in a pound of lawsuit not an ounce of charity is found. Abstain, then, from litigation and you will avoid many sins: *Abstine te a lite, et minues peccata*. Observe that Scripture does not say you will avoid sin but sins, because the sins originating in lawsuits are innumerable. Here is what must move you to abhor them.

Q. Do litigants sin who appeal a just and equitable sentence to evade it and suspend its execution? Do they also sin by refusing a settlement their opponents propose?

A. To the first question I answer that appealing a sentence is lawful when one believes it unjust. But if just, one cannot appeal to trouble the other party and prevent its execution. This is St. Bernard's decision: *Appellare inique*, the saint says, *iniquum est … iniqua omnis appellatio ad quam justitiæ non cogit inopia. Appellare non ut graves, sed si graveris licet*—to appeal unjustly is unjust; every appeal not compelled by a lack of justice is unjust; appeal is lawful not to burden another but when burdened yourself. St. Thomas teaches the same.

To the second question I say with St. Ambrose that a Christian must yield and lose something of his right rather than litigate. He proves it by many reasons. First, one often gains more by settlement than by winning the lawsuit, because litigation is very costly. Secondly, litigation without violating charity's rules is almost impossible.

These reasons moved the Councils of Carthage, Agde and Trieste to order in their canons that offerings presented to the Church by obstinate litigants refusing to negotiate agreement not be accepted. Hence a litigant despising a reasonable settlement proposed by his opponent is not secure in conscience or worthy of absolution.

We say a reasonable settlement: if it were harmful, he is not obliged to accept it and can continue the suit without offending charity. *Ex charitate vero, sua in judicio repetere licitum est*, St. Thomas says—out of charity it is lawful to claim one's own in court.[6]

Q. What qualities must judges, advocates and solicitors possess, and how must they conduct themselves in lawsuits?

A. Knowledge, integrity and disinterestedness are a judge's principal qualities. He must be instructed in laws, ordinances and regulations concerning his office's functions, since he must direct his decisions by them. *Bonus judex nihil ex arbitrio suo faciat*, St. Ambrose says, *sed juxta leges, et jura pronuntiat*—a good judge does nothing from his own caprice but pronounces according to laws and right.

He must be upright, loving justice and firmly sustaining the rightful claim without partiality: *Diligite justitiam, qui judicatis terram*—love justice, you who judge the earth. He must be disinterested, hearing the poor as the rich and accepting no gifts from those whose business depends on him: *Munera de sinu impius accipit, ut pervertat semitas judicii*—the wicked man receives gifts from the bosom to pervert judgment's paths.

Hence it is easy to conclude that a judge sins gravely and must make restitution when, through ignorance, hatred of his neighbor or partiality toward a party, he has sentenced against the laws, helped entangle lawsuits, favored some at others' expense or caused unjust harm in any manner. *Non facies quod iniquum est, nec injuste judicabis: non consideres personam pauperis, nec honores vultum potentis: juste judica proximo tuo*—do not do what is iniquitous or judge unjustly; do not regard the poor person's status or honor the powerful person's countenance; judge your neighbor justly.

I. Advocates' and solicitors' qualities and obligations are, with little difference, the same. They must be sufficiently instructed in law, versed in judicial practice and of known probity. *Infames non possunt esse procuratores, vel patroni causarum*, the law says—those of infamous reputation cannot be solicitors or advocates of causes.

This probity requires keeping the parties' secrets. If they have tacit or express dealings with the opposing party or his solicitor, they sin against natural law and through this infidelity must compensate all harm caused. For the same reason an advocate is forbidden to advise both parties: he violates equity's rules by giving each favorable opinions that consequently contradict one another.

II. They must not undertake every sort of cause indiscriminately, since through their ministry they must champion justice and truth alone. An advocate and solicitor sin gravely against justice if they undertake the defense of an unjust lawsuit or cause the party in the right to lose. St. Thomas says so, adding that if during the lawsuit they discover the party they defend has no right, they must tell him and advise withdrawal of the demand.

III. An advocate well instructed in the cause must defend it clearly, sincerely and prudently, without fraud or dissimulation, and without making the party spend on useless deeds or proceedings.

IV. Finally, advocates and solicitors must be disinterested, contenting themselves with their lawful fees: *Contenti estote stipendiis vestris*—be content with your wages. They are forbidden to stipulate as payment a share of the thing litigated, buy disputed rights or have a direct or indirect share in lawsuits in which they intervene by office.

Their disinterestedness must move them, St. Thomas says, willingly and even gratuitously to undertake the defense of the poor, widow and orphan. We shall say no more of their obligations, only begging them to fulfill these as they ought, zealously sustaining their profession's honor, which will be useful to the public whenever exercised in a Christian manner.

As for you, brothers, who have heard how dangerous lawsuits are, I admonish you to avoid them. *Ne litis horror insonet*—let not the horror of strife resound. This is the Church's prayer for all. She desires nothing so much as concord among her children and the extinction of lawsuits: *Extingue flammas litium*—extinguish the flames of strife.

Banish, O my God, lawsuits from this parish. If any remain, put them into the hands of wise and prudent arbitrators. Especially have recourse to your pastors, following the first faithful. Although they seem to you less skilled than officers of justice, I do not fear to affirm that they are better suited to end your differences. *Sæcularia igitur judicia si habueritis, contemptibiles, qui sunt in Ecclesia, hos constituite ad judicandum*—if you have secular judgments, appoint those held in little esteem in the Church to judge.

For your part, have a peaceable spirit. If your neighbor attacks you, answer as Abraham did his nephew Lot: we are relatives, neighbors and friends and must not quarrel over anything in this world. *Ne quæso sit jurgium inter me et te … fratres enim sumus*—let there not, I pray, be strife between me and you, for we are brothers.

Embrace these counsels, brothers. You will avoid the infinite evils accompanying lawsuits and have more leisure to work more carefully at the great business of your salvation.

---

[1] Theodoret, letter LXXXI,1 as cited.

[2] Augustine on Psalm 80; Thomas, II–II, q.60, a.2, and q.108, a.1; Deuteronomy 1.

[3] Matthew 5:40; 1 Corinthians 6:7; 2 Timothy 2:24; Chrysostom and Augustine as cited.

[4] Augustine, letter LXXVII as cited; Proverbs 12:28; Matthew 18.

[5] Proverbs 30:14–15; Horace, *Art of Poetry*; Proverbs 16:28; James 4:1; Sirach 13:23 as cited; compare Ahab and Naboth, 1 Kings 21.

[6] Bernard, *On Consideration*, IV, chapter 11; Thomas, II–II, q.69, a.3; Ambrose, *On Duties* as cited.

Index of the Fourth Volume: Index of the Homilies Contained in This Fourth Volume

Page numbers

First Homily. On the Creed, faith and our obligation to profess it publicly — 5.

Second Homily. On these words: I believe in God the Father almighty. On God, the Trinity of Persons in God and His infinite perfections — 17.

Third Homily. On these words: Creator of heaven and earth. On the creation of the world and the angels — 27.

Fourth Homily. On the creation of man — 37.

Fifth Homily. On Adam’s fall and original sin — 45.

Sixth Homily. On the necessity of a Redeemer — 53.

Seventh Homily. On the mystery of the Incarnation — 61.

Eighth Homily. On the birth of Jesus Christ — 68.

Ninth Homily. On the life of Jesus Christ — 75.

Tenth Homily. On the Passion of Jesus Christ — 83.

Eleventh Homily. On the death of Jesus Christ — 93.

Twelfth Homily. On the Resurrection of Jesus Christ — 100.

Thirteenth Homily. Jesus Christ’s Ascension into heaven, His second coming to earth and the final judgment — 108.

Fourteenth Homily. The Holy Spirit’s coming upon the Apostles; establishment of the Christian religion — 117.

Fifteenth Homily. On the Church, her privileges and the signs and characteristics distinguishing her from all sects falsely claiming the name of Church — 126.

Homilies on the Sacraments. First Homily: on the sacraments in general — 139.

Second Homily. On Baptism — 148.

Third Homily. On Confirmation — 162.

Fourth Homily. On the Eucharist: promise and institution of this sacrament, Real Presence and transubstantiation — 171.

Fifth Homily. On Communion — 182.

Sixth Homily. Adoration of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar — 192.

Seventh Homily. On the holy sacrifice of the Mass — 202.

Eighth Homily. On the sacrament of Penance: contrition — 214.

Ninth Homily. On confession and examination of conscience — 220.

Tenth Homily. On the penitent's satisfaction and the priest's absolution — 230.

Eleventh Homily. On indulgences — 241.

Twelfth Homily. On Extreme Unction — 250.

Thirteenth Homily. On the sacrament of Holy Orders — 258.

Fourteenth Homily. On Matrimony — 268.

First Conference. On the Decalogue and the commandments in general — 278.

Second Conference. On the first commandment — 286.

Third Conference. On the veneration the Church gives the saints, relics and images — 294.

Fourth Conference. On sins opposed to the first commandment, especially superstition and divination — 304.

Fifth Conference. On the second commandment: vows — 313.

Sixth Conference. The second commandment: oaths and blasphemy — 322.

Seventh Conference. On the third commandment — 331.

Eighth Conference. On the fourth commandment: duties of masters and servants — 341.

Ninth Conference. On the fifth commandment: homicide — 353.

Tenth Conference. On hatred and enmities — 363.

Eleventh Conference. On the sixth commandment: the vice of impurity — 372.

Twelfth Conference. On gluttony and drunkenness — 381.

Thirteenth Conference. On dances, plays and masks — 391.

Fourteenth Conference. On gaming — 400.

Fifteenth Conference. On the seventh commandment: theft — 409.

Sixteenth Conference. On commerce — 420.

Seventeenth Conference. On usury — 430.

Eighteenth Conference. On restitution — 439.

Nineteenth Conference. On almsgiving — 446.

Twentieth Conference. On the eighth commandment: false witness and lying — 456.

Twenty-first Conference. On the ninth commandment: evil thoughts and evil desires — 464.

Twenty-second Conference. On the tenth commandment: lawsuits — 472.

End of the Index of the Fourth Volume.