Denis the Carthusian

SERMONS FOR THE FEASTS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

From the Latin of the Montreuil edition of his works

English translation

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

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About this translation

Translated from the sermons for the feasts of the Blessed Virgin in *Doctoris ecstatici D. Dionysii Cartusiani Opera omnia* (Montreuil, Tournai and Parkminster), tome 31 (the Conception, the Purification and the Annunciation) and tome 32 (the Visitation, the Assumption and the Nativity): for each feast the enarrations on the lessons of the Mass and Denis's sermons, those he preached *ad religiosos*, to religious, among them. With them is his exposition of the Vespers hymn *Ave, maris stella* from tome 35, pp. 82–86.

The pages of those tomes are given in the text as (t. N, p. N). Tomes 31 and 32 can be read on the Internet Archive (tome 31, tome 32); the translator's page references were checked against them and moved where they had fallen a page out, and each marker stands at the sentence nearest the turn of the page. The first page of the third sermon for the Assumption (t. 32, p. 321) is wanting in the contributed translation; it has been translated for the library from the Latin, with the sermon's printed title.

On the Solemnity of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Conception — Enarratio on the Lesson in Place of the Epistle

(t. 31, p. 43)

“I, as a vine, have brought forth a pleasant odor,” etc. (Ecclus. 24:23–31).

This lesson is taken from the twenty-fourth chapter of Ecclesiasticus, and the words of this lesson are said there literally of the eternal and begotten Wisdom, which is the eternal Word and Only-begotten Son of the most high Father; but now they are expounded spiritually of the most blessed Virgin: for many other things also which are there written of the aforesaid Wisdom, the Church reads and sings of the Christ-bearing virgin Mary, and this according to a spiritual understanding. Therefore from the person of Saint Mary in this lesson it is said:

“I, as a vine, have brought forth a pleasant odor.” This can be understood in two ways. First, that by “pleasant odor” Christ is understood, who according to His deity is essentially sweet, and sweetness itself, the fountain and origin of spiritual odor, most sweetly refreshing the interior sense of smell, vehemently alluring and supremely delighting. Christ also according to His humanity can be called sweetness, because of the eminent magnitude of His created sweetness: just as of a man we love much we say that he is our love. Therefore, as a vine fructifies—that is, produces a savory and odoriferous fruit, namely grapes or wine—so the pre-elect Virgin fructified—that is, produced and bore God and man. Second, it can be expounded thus: “I, as a vine, have brought forth a pleasant odor,” that is a sweet odor, that is a good and virtuous fame: because so holy and irreprehensible was the life of the glorious Virgin, and so great grace and dignity were conferred on her, especially by this that she was made mother of the Son of God, that from her the best fame went forth to all believers; she also brings forth spiritual sweetness from the hearts of the devout, when they sincerely contemplate her. Again, she produced “a pleasant odor,” because through her the fame and knowledge of God were diffused in the whole world. For by this that God brought her to such dignity, grace, and beatitude, there was manifested to men the goodness, mercy, charity, and liberality of God, which He excellently showed in her; and so as it were materially the virgin Mary fructified “a pleasant odor.” Further, inasmuch as by words and miracles she opened to men the dignity and knowledge of herself and of her Creator and Son, she as it were efficiently produced this sweetness. According to this manner of speaking the Apostle says to the Corinthians: “Thanks be to God, who manifests the odor of His knowledge by us”; and again, “We are the good odor of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:14–15). So in the Canticles it is had: “We will run to the odor of your ointments” (Cant. 1:3).

“And my flowers are the fruit of honor and honesty.” The flowers of the Christ-bearing Virgin are the most beautiful contemplations of her mind and her most holy affections. *(t. 31, p. 44)* Whence in the Canticles it is said: “Stay me up with flowers.” These flowers are “fruit of honor,” that is most worthy of honor; “and of honesty,” that is acts of the virtues. For the honest is said as it were a state of honor; but honor is due to virtue: therefore honesty and virtue are taken for the same. But the aforesaid spiritual flowers of Mary are “fruit,” that is acts, of wisdom and charity: therefore they are acts of the virtues. For wisdom also is called an intellectual virtue, and properly is called a gift, which speaking extensively is also called a virtue. The flowers of Mary can also be said to be her most graceful manners, most exemplary operations, most wise words: all which proceeded from her interior virtues.

“I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope.” Fair love is spiritual love or charity, which is infused by God alone through creation; likewise holy hope, as it is a theological virtue; filial fear also is from God, and inasmuch as it is one of the seven gifts, it is a supernatural infused habit. How then is the most worthy Virgin called mother of these? Not indeed as effective and principal cause, but rather as secondary instrumental cause, because by her merits and prayers she obtains these goods for us from God,

since she is advocate of the human race, queen of piety, to whom God is said to have committed the kingdom of mercy. And so as a most pious mother she instrumentally and meritoriously brings forth in many these goods, namely: fair love, by which God and neighbor are sincerely and spiritually loved without reflection to one's own commodities; and filial fear, by which the offense of God is feared and sins are avoided, lest God be offended and leave the offender; and knowledge, that is contemplation of divine things; and holy hope, that is expectation of heavenly rewards. According to this sense it is said in the hymn: "Mary, mother of grace, mother of mercy."

And now is added: "In me is all grace of the way and of the truth": that is, I have power of obtaining from God for men the grace of spiritual and virtuous life, or also of glorious life; also the grace of truth and of heavenly illumination, or of the truth of doctrine and of justice. "In me is all," that is perfect, "hope of life" of grace and of glory, and of the virtue of living well and of prevailing over temptations. This hope is in the sacred Virgin not subjectively but objectively: because in her secondarily our hope consists, so that through her we trust to obtain these gifts.

"Come over to me, all you that desire me"—that is, who desire my help, and who wish to be with me, flee confidently to me, and approach me by consideration and love and invocation; "and be filled from my generations"—that is operations or gracious effects: for I do not cast away those who flee to me. "For my spirit is sweet above honey"—that is, my mind is wholly pious, sweet, benign in itself and in him who tastes my goodness. "And my inheritance"—that is eternal felicity, which is obtained by my help (or, "my inheritance," that is the abundance of grace conferred on me)—"is sweet above honey and the honeycomb," indeed above all corporeal goods.

"My memory shall be in the generation of ages"—that is through all progenies forever—"in heaven and on earth": for it does not depart from the hearts of the devout. Hence the glorious Virgin foretold: "All generations shall call me blessed" (Luke 1:48). Indeed even the Saracens say that the Blessed Mary is most elect and most holy before all women, and mother of Christ, and a virgin altogether most pure, as is clear in the Alcoran.

"They that eat me"—that is, who taste my goodness and experience my sweetness—"shall yet hunger"—that is, in this life will desire to savor and have me more fully; "and they that drink me"—that is, who are poured through and refreshed by my delight—"shall yet thirst"—that is, will desire me more fervently, that they may always be with me. *(t. 31, p. 45)* For, as Gregory says, spiritual delights the more they are tasted, the more they are desired. "He that hears me"—that is, who obeys my exhortations—"shall not be confounded," but shall obtain salvation, and shall be honored by Christ the judge; "and they that work by me"—that is according to the examples of the virtues which I have shown to all—"shall not sin," inasmuch as they imitate me; but by falling short of my examples they will be able to fall into fault. "They that explain me"—that is, who intimate to others my dignity and glory, and clearly honor me, and by following my examples show how holy and exemplary my conversation was—"shall have life everlasting" for a reward, provided they persevere in good things.

Conception — Sermon I

Of the pre-election of the most blessed virgin Mary; and of the honor to be paid her on account of the abundance of grace shining in her

(t. 31, p. 45)

"I am the mother of fair love" (Ecclus. 24:24).

Today in the Church the Conception of the most blessed virgin Mary is celebrated. But how this solemnity had its origin, Anselm writes in a certain epistle. Some immoderately occupy themselves with whether the

most sacred Virgin was conceived in original sin; but that occupation being omitted, something briefly is to be touched concerning the excellence, virtue, perfection, and glory of the Christ-bearing Virgin: for her dignity is ineffable.

First therefore she is praiseworthy by reason of her most pure virginity, by which she was altogether immune not only from every unclean act, but also from every carnal affection, from every impure thought. Therefore she is rightly called “mother of fair love,” because never was any foul or carnal affection in her, but every affection of hers was most spiritual: for she loved God above all things for His own and immense goodness, with inestimable ardor, and men not except in God. Great and brilliant is the virtue of virginity itself, by which a man follows angelic purity and begins a heavenly life in this world. Therefore let us follow the most blessed Virgin, casting away every carnal and foul love, and having only fair spiritual and meritorious love. In the book of Numbers it is written that the sons of Aaron the priest were burned with heavenly fire, because they put strange fire in their censers (Lev. 10:1–2). By the censer is understood the human heart, in which the fire of divine love ought to burn; but by fire is understood love, and by strange fire carnal and base love. Whoever therefore shall have put such love in his heart deserves to be tormented with the fire of infernal burning; and unless repentant he come to his senses, he shall be afflicted with that fire forever.

Second, the Christ-bearing Virgin is to be praised from her incomparable fecundity. For she is co-parental with God the Father, because she bore the same Son with Him, and she bore Him from whom the Holy Spirit truly proceeds. She bore the Savior of all, the fountain of all causality, the creator of the world-machine. Behold how great this dignity is. For the philosophers say that causal fecundity is the principal perfection in creatures. How inestimable therefore is the dignity of her who bore offspring of such infinite dignity? Certainly not unreasonably certain great theologians assert that by reason of this maternal fecundity, or maternity of God, the most blessed virgin Mary is of dignity somehow infinite. *(t. 31, p. 46)* With all reverence therefore she is to be honored, named, and thought of by us, and after God most fervently loved: and if we truly love her, let us heartily congratulate so incomparable a dignity and beatitude of hers.

Third, she is to be praised and admired because she was at once mother and virgin, and conceived of the Holy Spirit: which was granted to her alone, nor will it ever be granted to another. Yet that she has God as Son is the highest and most worthy of all. Hence blessed Bernard says: In Mary if I shall have praised virginity, many virgins after her are offered to God; if I shall have preached humility in her, some are found who have been made meek and humble of heart; if I shall have wished to magnify the multitude of her mercy, there are also women and men of mercy: there is one thing in which she seems to have neither a first like her nor a following—namely the fecundity of a mother with the honor of virginity. Mary plainly chose for herself the best part, because conjugal fecundity is indeed good, virginal chastity better, but virgin fecundity altogether best. O if you add also of whom she is mother, does not the virginal fecundity of God seem to you more than best?

Fourth, she is to be commended, loved, and honored by us from her common and greatest usefulness. Much did the first woman, that our mother Eve, harm the whole human race, who by drawing her husband to the transgression of the divine precept exposed her whole posterity to death and damnation, deprived them of great felicity and the amenity of paradise, and subjected them to diverse miseries, which we each experience. Yet Mary benefited the whole world more than Eve harmed it. For she bore to men God as brother, advocate, and Savior, who conferred more and greater gifts of grace on men than Adam had taken from them.

Fifth, she is to be commended to us because she has been given to us as advocate and mother in every tribulation, and a refuge in necessity. And although she after God is most pure, most holy, and most excellent, yet she despises no sinner, however most foul, most vicious, and most vile, who flees to her; she leaves none who stably invoke her: she deigns to show herself easy to be entreated to all with maternal and most sweet piety. Deservedly therefore she is called Queen of mercy.

There are also innumerable other things from which the incomparable Virgin, unique and most beloved of God, is rendered praiseworthy to us. Of which, God granting, it will be said in other sermons concerning her.

Hence of the praise of Mary holy Augustine speaks: What shall we so little, what so small in action, what shall we report in her praises, when even if all our members were turned into tongues, none would suffice to praise her enough—indeed not all together? O happy Mary, O most worthy of all praise, O glorious mother and sublime childbearer, to whose chaste womb the author of heaven and earth is committed, what shall I say of you, poor in genius, when whatever I shall have said of you is lesser praise than your dignity deserves? You are the honor and glory of women, the gem and honorificence of virgins, the star of confessors, the joy of martyrs, the lady of the Apostles, the daughter and verifier of the Prophets, the queen of angels, the delight of heaven, the mother of God most high.

Now therefore let us try to imitate our most blessed Lady, let us follow her virginity by integrity of mind in God, which consists in faith, hope, and charity, by which the soul becomes the spouse of God and clings wholly to Him. Let us follow the fecundity of Mary by virtuous exercises, continually insisting on the works of the virtues, because Christ also protests in the Gospel: “Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother” (Matt. 12:50). Finally let us follow the usefulness of Mary, that each one may strive to edify his neighbors and draw them to better things; and let us pray for one another, that we may be saved together (James 5:16). Hence also Christ commanded: “So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

(t. 31, p. 47)

The Apostle also speaks: “Let us keep the things that are of edification one toward another” (Rom. 14:19). For as it is written in Ecclesiasticus, God has commanded each one concerning his neighbor, namely that he edify him. Whence as Augustine asserts, we owe to God a pure conscience, and to neighbors a good fame.

But, alas! because as Micah the prophet says, “A man hunts his brother unto death”: because instead of one drawing another to salvation, he draws him to fault, and through fault to eternal damnation. O how much God will be indignant at him who induces others to sin! Finally the wretched do these things because they do not fear God. For as Solomon testifies, “He that fears God neglects nothing” (Eccles. 7:19). Which is to be understood of filial and perfect fear. For by this fear a man flees sin from love of God, lest he dishonor, offend, lose Him. Hence a probable sign that someone truly loves God is if he diligently avoids every sin, lest he offend Him. If therefore you wish to know whether you love God, weigh how much and for what reason you avoid sins. Certainly many say they love God, and yet neither cease nor fear to offend Him: therefore they lie, and the unhappy deceive themselves. But let us attend that God almighty, most just judge, continually beholds and weighs the minds, words, and works of us all, and in a short time will judge us. Woe to those who do not attend to His presence, nor fear His sight.

Finally, Anselm the archbishop relates three beautiful examples by which God showed that the feast of the Conception of the blessed Virgin is to be solemnly celebrated. The first is that when William duke of the Normans, a God-fearing man, had subjected England to himself and reformed the state of the Church, he perceived in it that the Danes were preparing themselves for war against him. He therefore sent a certain devout abbot into Denmark, to inquire the truth about this. And when that abbot was returning by sea, so vehement a tempest arose on the sea that he and the others despaired of being able to escape death. And when they were commending their souls to God, and most devoutly invoking the glorious Virgin, there appeared to them a venerable man, clothed in pontifical habit, approaching them over the sea, who near the ship called the abbot: “Do you wish,” he said, “to escape this danger?” Who when he had answered tearfully that he desired this with his whole heart, that one said: “Know that I have been sent by the Mother of God, and if you will obey my words, you will escape this danger.” And the abbot promised that he would obey. Then that one commanded: “You shall solemnly celebrate the day of the Conception of the glorious Virgin, and preach that

it is to be celebrated." And when the abbot inquired on what day he should do this, and with what chant or office the Church should use, that man answered: "On the sixth of the Ides of December you shall celebrate this feast, and every office that is said on her Nativity shall be said on her Conception, the name of Nativity being changed into the name of Conception." These things said, that one disappeared, and presently the tempest ceased, and the abbot with the others escaping safe fulfilled what he promised, notifying all these things to all to whom he could. The other two examples will be recited in the sermons to be written around the Gospel.

Conception — Enarratio on the Gospel

(t. 31, p. 48)

"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ," etc. (Matt. 1:1–16).

The blessed evangelist Matthew, in today's Gospel, teaches that Christ the Son of God was truly incarnate, and begotten of the seed of David: and because this was done immediately from the virgin Mary, therefore on her solemnity this Gospel is read, when another Gospel more apt does not occur. The Evangelist therefore says: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ"—that is, this evangelical book described by Matthew is entitled from the generation of Christ. For the Hebrews were accustomed to name books edited by them from that of which treatment is made at the beginning of the book: just as the first book of Moses is called Genesis, because it takes its beginning from the creation of the world. Therefore this is "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ"—that is, describing His human and temporal generation, of whose deity and divine and eternal generation John wrote more fully. "Son of David, son of Abraham"—that is, which Christ according to His humanity is son of David the king and of Abraham the patriarch, because He was born of their seed, yet not immediately from them, but from the Virgin mother. If it be asked why the Evangelist named Christ specially son of these two, Jerome answers that to these two alone a divine promise concerning Christ was made. For to David it was said: "Of the fruit of your womb I will set upon your throne" (Ps. 131:11). But to Abraham: "In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22:18). But it seems to oppose that this same promise is read as made to Isaac, and afterward in the same book also to his son Jacob. Moreover, Jacob the patriarch is clearly read to have foretold to his son Judah that from his seed Christ was to be born: "The scepter shall not be taken away from Judah," he saying (Gen. 49:10). I think therefore that Christ was especially called son of David and of Abraham because these two were eminent in many things before the others, and principal and very holy: for David was an excellent prophet and king, and Abraham the greatest patriarch.

"Abraham begot Isaac" supernaturally, of his principal and first wife Sara, when she was ninety years old, so that she then had a double impediment of fecundity: for she was naturally sterile, and then by reason of old age was unfit for childbearing, but by divine power was made fruitful. "But Isaac begot Jacob," who was a plain man and dwelling in tents: who frequently saw holy angels, sometimes in a nocturnal vision, sometimes in full waking, and by a holy angel was named Israel: all which things are clear in Genesis. Further, how most brilliant a prophet he was, and how most holy an end of life he had, the book of Genesis sufficiently proves. "But Jacob begot Judah and his brethren," eleven Patriarchs. And although Judah was the fourth son of Jacob (for before him were born Reuben, Simeon, Levi), yet he is preferred and expressly named, because from his seed Christ came forth. Whence also God in the Old Testament in many things honored the tribe of Judah: because kings also sprang from Judah, and the worship of God remained more in the kingdom of Judah than in the kingdom of the ten tribes. Judah also among his brethren was most strong, as is had in the first of Chronicles; but also how prudent and eloquent he was is clear in Genesis.

(t. 31, p. 49)

“But Judah begot Phares and Zara of Thamar” his daughter-in-law, to whom when Judah would not give his son as husband, that he might raise seed to his brothers, husbands of Thamar who had died without offspring, she desiring to have offspring, having changed her habit, sat in the way by which she knew Judah would come: who esteeming her to be a harlot, lay with her, and at one lying she conceived the twins already aforesaid.

“But Phares begot Esron; and Esron begot Aram; and Aram begot Aminadab; and Aminadab begot Naasson.” This Phares with his father Judah entered Egypt, in which he begot Esron; Esron also in Egypt begot Aram, and he Aminadab. But Aminadab also in Egypt begot Naasson, both of whom went out of Egypt with Moses. The Hebrews also say that when the Red Sea was divided and Moses had entered it, when the other tribes feared to follow him, Aminadab with the tribe of Judah, in which he was more principal, first followed Moses: which seen, the other tribes followed. And by this they say the tribe of Judah merited the kingdom and principality. Yet rather it is to be held that this tribe without its own merit was chosen and promoted to the kingdom because of reverence for Christ, who chose to be incarnate and born of it. “But Naasson begot Salmon.” This Naasson was prince of the tribe of Judah, and his sister Elizabeth was wife of Aaron the priest. “But Salmon begot Booz of Rahab.” This Salmon entered the land of promise with Joshua. But this Rahab is she who received, hid, and by the window of her house dismissed the messengers of Joshua: therefore with her parents and kinsfolk she was preserved from slaughter by the children of Israel. Having also left gentility, with her own she was converted to Judaism, and lived virtuously: whence because of her virtues she was taken as wife by Salmon, a noble and Hebrew man.

“But Booz begot Obed of Ruth.” This is Ruth the Moabitess, whose history is described in the book titled with her name: and because she was converted to Judaism and bore herself virtuously, it was not illicit for her to be taken as wife by a Jewish man. Booz also was a pious, just, and wealthy man: why he took poor Ruth as spouse is clear in the book of Ruth. “But Obed begot Jesse,” who (as is had in the first of Kings) in the days of Saul was an aged man, and great among the children of Israel. And he was three-named: for he was called Jesse, and Isai, and also Naas. “But Jesse begot David the king,” who was the younger among the eight sons of Jesse: and David was the first king of the tribe of Judah. Further, the wisdom, sanctity, fortitude, prosperity, excellence of most blessed David are described in the first and second books of Kings: indeed also in the first of Chronicles many things are added thence, especially how fervent he was in divine worship. “But David the king begot Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias”—that is of Bathsheba, who was wife of Urias the Hethite, a just man. But David took her as spouse before he begot Solomon of her. Further, the wisdom and devotion of Solomon, and how afterward his heart was depraved through women, are written in the third of Kings. Solomon also left after himself a foolish son, of whom it is added: “But Solomon begot Roboam,” because of whose foolish answer ten tribes withdrew from his empire and that of his posterity. “But Roboam begot Abias,” who had one great victory against Jeroboam, king of the ten tribes, as is written in the second of Chronicles. “But Abias begot Asa; and Asa begot Josaphat.” These two kings, namely Asa and Josaphat, were glorious and renowned, virtuous and great: to whom God granted greatest victories and riches, as is fully described in the second of Chronicles. “But Josaphat begot Joram,” a most wicked man, who killed all his brothers, nor was corrected by the rebukes of Elijah, and perished by a most wretched death.

“But Joram begot Ozias.” In the fourth of Kings it is had that Joram begot Ochozias, but Ochozias begot Joas, of whom was born Amasias, who begot Ozias (who by another name was called Azarias), under whom most blessed Isaiah began to prophesy. *(t. 31, p. 50)* Three kings therefore are omitted in this place, namely Ochozias, Joas, and Amasias. Of which one reason is, according to Jerome, Hilary, and Chrysostom, because Joram took as wife the daughter of Jezabel, a gentile and most wicked woman: therefore his sons born of iniquitous and cursed seed are taken away unto the fourth generation, lest they be placed in the order of the holy nativity. Jerome puts another reason. For it was the purpose of the evangelist Matthew to arrange three

quaternaries of generations—that is thrice fourteen generations—in the genealogy of Christ, and this in a diverse state of times, so that from David unto the transmigration of Babylon there should be one quaternary. Since therefore there were seventeen generations between David and that transmigration, these three kings more fittingly than others, for the aforesaid cause, were to be omitted. Joram begot immediately Ochozias, but mediately Ozias: which Ozias when he had usurped to himself the office of the priests by offering incense in the temple, was struck by God with leprosy, and remained a leper unto death; whom it is clear was just, and to have repented of his presumption, and patiently to have borne also the stroke of the paternal correction of God.

"But Ozias begot Joathan," who, his father dwelling apart because of leprosy, ruled the palace. And he was a just man: indeed Jerome on Isaiah asserts that he was most just. "But Joathan begot Achaz," whose idolatry, perversity, misfortunes are described in the fourth of Kings and the second of Chronicles. "But Achaz begot Ezechias," who was of such perfection and glory that in the fourth of Kings it is said of him that neither before him nor after him among those kings was anyone like him. Whose sanctity, magnificence, and the wonders which God wrought because of him are had described in the fourth of Kings. "But Ezechias begot Manasses," whose most heavy crimes are written in the fourth of Kings and the second of Chronicles. But afterward captured by the king of the Assyrians, imprisoned and chained, he did penance greatly. "But Manasses begot Amon," who following the deeds of his father neglected to follow his penance. "But Amon begot Josias," a most holy man, who in his childhood, when he was eight years old, began to seek the Lord: under whom Jeremiah began to prophesy. Of whose praises of Josias it is written in Ecclesiasticus: "The memory of Josias is like the composition of a sweet smell made by the art of a perfumer; in every mouth he shall be sweet as honey, and as music at a banquet of wine" (Ecclus. 49:1–2).

"But Josias begot Jechonias and his brethren in the transmigration of Babylon"—that is, the captivity impending, the leading or translation of the Jews into Chaldea, of which Babylon was the metropolis. "And after the transmigration of Babylon"—that is, the Jews having been led over into Babylon—"Jechonias begot Salathiel." This Jechonias, according to Jerome, was son of the prior Jechonias, son of Josias; and both were wicked. But Salathiel, according to Chrysostom, was a virtuous man. "But Salathiel begot Zorobabel," who was a holy man, as is hinted in Ecclesiasticus and in Aggeus; of whom also many things are narrated in the apocrypha of Esdras. "But Zorobabel begot Abiud." In the first of Chronicles it is read that Zorobabel begot Mosollam and certain others, among whom Abiud is not placed. To which it is answered that one of them was called by another name Abiud, or not all his sons are placed there. Of the remaining generations which follow, unto Joseph, nothing is had in the canonical Scripture of the Old Testament. Yet some Jews diligently wrote the genealogies of their fathers, especially from the seed of David, of whom they knew Christ was to be born: therefore they more carefully wrote the posterity of holy David.

"But Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." But Joseph was truly the husband of Mary, because between them there was a true marriage, although it was not consummated by carnal union. Jesus therefore according to His humanity was born of Mary, because from her most pure bloods His body was formed by the operation of the Holy Spirit: who is called and is Christ—that is God and man in one person and a double nature. *(t. 31, p. 51)* The text of this Gospel upon Matthew I have expounded much more diffusely and fully elsewhere, and have resolved the doubts concerning it.

Conception — Sermon II

That the Patriarchs or Prophets or any of the Saints obtained no virtue with which the most beautiful virgin Mary had not been decorated

(t. 31, p. 51)

“In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 22:18).

Just as around the beginning of the world, in the sin of the first-formed man, the human race perished, according to that word to the Romans, “By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death” (Rom. 5:12); so from the beginning of the world it was necessary for salvation to have somehow faith in Christ to come, the Savior of the whole human race. Finally the first age of the world lasted from Adam unto Noah and the flood: and in that age there was no idolatry, but faith and worship of the one true and most high God, because of recent memory of the creation of the world and of the works of God, from which the unity of the Godhead became known. Nonetheless in that age or time certain most heavy sins flourished, because of which God brought in a general flood (Gen. 6 and following). But long after the flood, namely in the time of Nimrod and of Ninus, kings of Nineveh, idolatry began: which also very quickly was multiplied, so that few remained worshippers of the true God.

And when idolatry grew on every side, God, wishing at the time preordained by Himself to be incarnate and to aid wretched men, chose one nation from all, from whose seed He would be made man. And first He applied to Himself, chose, and graciously called the father of that nation, Abraham the patriarch, whom by faith, life, and place or habitation He separated from his own idolatrous nation; and He commanded him to enter and inhabit the land of promise, because in it Christ was to be born, to converse with men, and to redeem the human race.

Now the nation which God so chose was the posterity of Abraham, the people of the Jews, to whom Moses speaks: “The Lord has chosen you to be to Him a peculiar people of all peoples that are upon the earth, because the Lord has loved you” (Deut. 7:6–7). And again: “Behold heaven is the Lord’s your God, and the heaven of heavens, the earth and all things that are therein; and yet the Lord has been closely joined to your fathers, and loved them, and chose their seed after them” (Deut. 10:14–15).

Moreover, with how gracious, great, and many benefits God honored the people of the Jews in the Old Testament is shown from the five books of Moses, and the books of Joshua, Judges, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra and the Prophets, and other writings. Whence the Prophet glorying says in the Psalm: “How great things have we heard and known, and our fathers have told us” (Ps. 77:3); and again, “He has not done in like manner to every nation” (Ps. 147:20). For there were in that people Patriarchs, Prophets, and other Saints. He also led them out of Egypt by signs, prodigies, and greatest miracles. He fed them in the desert with manna, and on Mount Sinai gave them the law through Moses in evidence and great glory. Thereafter He led them into the Holy Land, which He frequently promised to their fathers, to be given not to them but to their posterity. He also wrought glorious prodigies in the time of Joshua, in the division of the Jordan, and the standing of the sun and moon in heaven for twenty-four hours, and in many others. *(t. 31, p. 52)* Likewise He granted them many miraculous victories in the time of the Judges and of holy David and of certain other kings, and in the time of the Maccabees. But also through certain holy Prophets He wrought brilliant miracles, especially through Elijah and Elisha. He also then gave to the people of the Jews kings, pontiffs, a temple, and their own land. Hence Moses speaks: “Neither is there any other nation so great, that has gods so nigh them as our God is present to all our petitions.” And again: “For what other nation is there so renowned, that has ceremonies and just judgments, and the whole law which I set before you?” (Deut. 4:7–8). Whence also in the second book of Kings David says: “What other nation is there upon earth as your people Israel, O Lord God?” (2 Kings 7:23). Hence to the Israelite people Moses said: “Who is like to you, O people that are saved by the Lord?” (Deut. 33:29).

Moreover it is to be noted most carefully that after the coming of Christ all these things were taken away from the people of the Jews, and through the glorious and most blessed Apostles transferred to the Christian people—indeed conferred on them by God far more abundantly and more sublimely than formerly on the Israelite people. And meanwhile the unhappy Jews were left by God, captives, deprived of their own land, kingdom, pontificate, order of priests, miracles, Prophets, and every assembly of the saints. Which is a most

certain sign and most clear argument that the King Messiah, Christ, has come, and that the faith of Christians is true: especially since meanwhile the Jews have not worshipped idols, but day and night pray for their liberation from the present captivity, and yet are not heard. Nor can they assign another reasonable cause, save that they killed Christ, and will not believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. Whence also from this consideration many most learned masters of the Jews have become Christians.

Furthermore it is to be contemplated that our Lord Jesus Christ, God and man, adorned those holy Patriarchs from whom He decreed to be incarnate—namely Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and many of their posterity—with manifold grace, excellent virtue, and admirable sanctity, as is proved from Genesis and other books. For of how great obedience, how great faith, how great humility, meekness, piety, and charity Abraham was, the sacred Scripture of Genesis teaches. The same is taught there of Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and many others. Likewise to the kings of Judah who are placed in the order of the genealogy of the Savior in today's Gospel, God conferred abundant sanctity, grace, and virtue: among whom David, Hezekiah, and Josiah seem to shine forth; then Jehoshaphat, Asa, Jotham, Uzziah. But Solomon is believed to have repented: indeed Jerome evidently protests this. Yet Christ did not so deal with all those kings: rather certain of them were most wicked and idolaters, as Ahaz, Joash, Joram, Amon; Manasseh also for a time, who nevertheless repented greatly. In this also the wonderful and incomprehensible judgments of God are to be considered, that among the aforesaid kings certain of the best were born of the worst, and conversely. For that most vicious Joram was born of holy Jehoshaphat, and the worst Ahaz of most just Jotham. The sons also of most holy Josiah were all iniquitous. Likewise of most impious Ahaz was born most devout Hezekiah, and of most wicked Amon was born that best Josiah. Let no one therefore presume virtues because of his parents, nor let anyone despair because of the malice of parents: because as God speaks through the prophet Ezekiel: "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, and the father shall not bear the iniquity of the son; the justice of the just shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:20).

Moreover, because the Son of God, Christ the Lord, willed to be born supernaturally of the holy Virgin, it was most fitting that to certain of the aforesaid Patriarchs He granted offspring supernaturally. For Isaac was born of a mother naturally sterile. Rebecca also, the wife of Isaac, was sterile; and Isaac prayed to God, who gave fertility to Rebecca, so much that she bore two sons at once, namely Jacob and Esau. All which things are known to be written in Genesis.

(t. 31, p. 53)

Finally in those Saints of the Old Testament we can consider how good it is to serve God, and how lovable a man becomes to God most high by living perfectly and holily: which is clear in the many victories which God miraculously granted to David and Asa and Jehoshaphat. But specially this is weighed in most virtuous Hezekiah: for at his instance God through an angel killed the enemies besieging Hezekiah, one hundred eighty-five thousand men in the army of the Assyrians (4 Kings 19). At last at Hezekiah's petition the sun returned backward by ten lines by which it had descended on the dial of Ahaz, so that that day was prolonged by twenty hours. Whence divine Dionysius in the epistle to Saint Polycarp asserts that that day was as it were tripled: which is to be understood of the space of the artificial day. Likewise, when God through Isaiah the prophet had announced to Hezekiah that he would die forthwith, and Hezekiah for this wept most abundantly and besought the Lord—not from fear of death, nor desire of the present life, but because he did not yet have a son, and therefore feared that Christ would not be born of his seed—immediately before Isaiah went out of the court of Hezekiah's palace, God commanded him to return to Hezekiah and say to him that God would grant him yet life for the space of fifteen years.

Furthermore, the virtues of all the aforesaid holy Patriarchs and kings were gathered together and excellently in the virgin Mary. For she was strongest in faith, immovable and most certain, because she knew that she had conceived of the Holy Spirit, and had brought forth without pain and sadness: whence in the three days

of Christ's death she remained most constant in faith, when the others fell from the faith. She also was most obedient to God, and so in all virtues after Christ was supremely perfect. Nor did she exalt herself because she saw herself chosen as Mother of God: rather the more excellent she was, the more deeply she humbled herself in all things. Of how great patience she was is proved from this, that in the time of the passion of her most dear Son, although she most vehemently compassionated with the suffering Son, yet she was not moved or impatient against those who inflicted so most bitter a death on her Son. It is also read in the Revelations of the holy widow Bridget that although the virgin Mary was very eloquent, yet she spoke rarely and most sparingly, but was continually intent on silence and holy meditations, and prayed assiduously for the salvation of the whole human race. Nonetheless she insisted on the labor of hands, not eating the bread of idleness (Prov. 31). To the poor also she liberally succumred as she could, fulfilling what Solomon says of her in the last of Proverbs: "She has opened her hand to the needy, and stretched out her hands to the poor" (Prov. 31:20).

In the aforesaid virtues therefore let us imitate the holy Patriarchs, and most of all the supreme Virgin, that we may be firm in faith, and by holy obedience ready for every good work, humble in prosperity, patient in adversities, and giving thanks to God in all things. Indeed, if anyone seem to have obtained some eminence in any goods—whether in goods of nature, as in beauty, eloquence, subtlety of genius, sweetness of manners; or in goods of fortune, as in wealth, power, nobility; or in gifts of grace and of the virtues—the greater he has been in these or in any of them, so much the more let him be humbler, and more grateful and subject to God, knowing that he has nothing of good from himself, but that he ought to be so much the more grateful and obedient to God, the more goods he has received from Him; and likewise attending that to whom more is given, more will be required of him (Luke 12:48); and so let him dread the strict and fearful judgment of God.

Finally, according to the example by which the most blessed Virgin made known that this feast of her Conception is to be solemnly celebrated, Anselm relates in these words: In the time of Charles king of France, there was a clerk, a kinsman of the same king, loving the Blessed Mary with his whole heart, and reading her Hours devoutly every day: who by the counsel of his parents wishing to marry a beautiful and noble girl, having received the nuptial blessing from the priest, when Mass was finished, remembering that on that day he had not read the Hours of Our Lady, made all go out of the church, and sending the spouse home, read the Hours of Our Lady beside the altar. *(t. 31, p. 54)* And when he was saying this antiphon, "You are beautiful and comely, O daughter of Jerusalem," suddenly the Christ-bearing Virgin appeared to him between two angels, saying: "If I am so beautiful and comely, why do you dismiss me and take another spouse? Am I not more beautiful than she? Have you seen one so beautiful?" Who answered: "O my Lady, your clarity excels every beauty of the world; you are elevated above the choirs of angels. What therefore do you will that I do?" And she answered: "If for love of me you dismiss a carnal spouse, you shall have me as spouse in the heavenly kingdom; and if you shall solemnly celebrate the feast of my Conception every year on the sixth of the Ides of December, and shall preach that it is to be celebrated, you shall be crowned with me in the kingdom of my Son." Which things said, the most blessed Mother of Christ disappeared. But the clerk, refusing to return home, entered a monastery outside his fatherland and became a monk; and after a brief time by the merits of the pre-elect Virgin he was made patriarch of Aquileia, and diligently celebrated the feast of her Conception every year, and ordained that it be celebrated. Therefore let us devoutly celebrate this feast.

Conception — Sermon III

Of the eminent fortitude of the virgin Mary, and how by her example we ought to be strong to resist all vices

(t. 31, p. 54)

"Who shall find a valiant woman?" (Prov. 31:10).

If we rightly consider how ineffably many and great goods have flowed to the world through the glorious Virgin, we will deservedly celebrate her Conception solemnly. For she is that most sacred and most desired woman through whom eternal salvation has been recovered for the whole human race. Through her and in her and from her our God has been made our brother, and our Judge has been made our advocate, and our Creator has been made our Savior. She is that victorious, pre-elect, most strong woman of whom at the beginning of the world God said to the serpent—indeed to the devil in the serpent: "I will put enmities between you and the woman, and your seed and her seed; she shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for her heel" (Gen. 3:15).

But now it is to be said in order why this woman, the blessed Virgin, is called a valiant woman; and likewise in what this spiritual fortitude consists; and also how we ought to follow her fortitude.

Therefore for many causes the God-bearing Virgin is called a valiant woman.

First, because she was never overcome by any sin—indeed she overcame every battle-line of vices. Hence the heavenly Bridegroom says to her in the Canticles: "You are all fair, my love, and there is not a spot in you" (Cant. 4:7). O how ineffable a fortitude it is, in mortal flesh, in a fragile sex, in a woman dwelling among sinners, to cast down every battle-line of vices, and never to incur even a venial fault!

Second, because she vanquished all the aerial powers, the invisible enemies of the human race, with most noble triumph, overcoming all their temptations most swiftly, and going about with such equipment of spiritual arms that they especially feared to draw near her. Hence it is written in the Canticles: "You are terrible as an army set in array" (Cant. 6:3). She crushed the head of the serpent, that is of the devil. And by "head" can be understood a wicked suggestion, or the capital vice of pride, which she most specially despised,

(t. 31, p. 55)

extirpated and conquered, and by this most eminently fitted herself for every infusion of grace. Therefore she said: "Because He has regarded the humility of His handmaid" (Luke 1:48).

Third, because she was adorned with every perfection of the virtues. But virtue is the strength of the soul, its armor and comfort in God. Hence of her it is said in the Canticles: "Who is she that comes forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, elect as the sun?" (Cant. 6:9). For the blessed Virgin is compared to the dawn. First, because as the dawn precedes the day, so she preceded Christ, who is the most brilliant day of the elect. Second, because the dawn incessantly grows in the light of the sun unto the perfect day; so the most worthy Virgin unceasingly grew in grace, advanced in every virtue, until she came to the day of eternity. Whence in Proverbs it is asserted: "The path of the just, as a shining light, goes forwards and increases even to perfect day" (Prov. 4:18).

Moreover the holy Virgin is said to be fair as the moon. First, because as the moon receives its light from the sun, so she obtained all her grace from Christ, God most high. Second, because the light of the moon is imperfect in comparison with the light of the sun; so the virtue and grace of the Blessed Mary in comparison with the perfection and grace of Christ. But since in the moon a certain darkness or spot appears, why is the most pure and most holy Virgin said to be fair as the moon? And it is to be answered that this was said of her interior beauty, which although it had no admixture of fault, yet there was in her a certain lessening of perfection and distance from the same. Whence daily she advanced in this beauty, until she was brought to that beauty which consists in the beatific vision of God.

Further, the sacred Virgin is called elect as the sun, because as the sun shines before all the luminaries of heaven and pours light into the others, so the most blessed Virgin before every pure creature was and is wonderfully altogether brilliant, illuminating not only the whole Church militant but also the highest angelic spirits, even of the supreme orders, as Saint Dionysius confesses, and gladdening and adorning the whole

Church triumphant.

Fourth, she is called a valiant woman because she was most ardent in the charity of God and of neighbors. For if certain of the Saints—not only Apostles and Prophets, but also many others, as Dionysius, Ignatius, Anthony—loved God so fervently: how much more the most sacred Virgin, who saw herself so pre-elect by God, and with whom the Only-begotten of God Himself, born of her, conversed so many years in the world? But no virtue is so strong as love, which conquers all things, to which nothing seems difficult, and which before every form works promptly and delightfully. For which reason it is said in the Canticles: “Love is strong as death; many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it” (Cant. 8:6–7). Nor is it wonderful if the most sacred Virgin was so kindled in charity for the human race, who saw herself for its salvation so incomparably exalted, as having been made Mother of God; who also was constituted mediatrix, advocate, and mother of all the faithful.

Fifth, she was called a valiant woman because she clung so inconvertibly to God, and was so continually intent upon Him, and as it were always vacant in act for the Most High. For the soul of Christ in the present life was unceasingly in act intent upon God by contemplation and love, even in the time of sleep. But other Saints commonly, although in this life they were very frequently and ardently intent upon God, yet often their contemplation suffered interruption; but the brilliant Virgin held a middle mode between Christ and the other Saints. Indeed unless she had been so frequently and fixedly and fervently united to God, how would she have avoided every venial fault? Therefore, as Ambrose excellently said: The Incomprehensible worked incomprehensibly in the Mother; and the Sun of justice Himself, the Sun of everlasting wisdom, shone most clearly in the mind of His Mother, warmed, and wrought most graciously and as it were continually.

(t. 31, p. 56)

Now consequently it is to be touched in what spiritual fortitude consists. Wherefore weigh that fortitude, according to one acceptation of it, is a special virtue, and one of the four cardinal virtues: and so it is the virtue by which a man bears himself strenuously around the dangers of death, not fearing them, but attacking them for the sake of justice; and so fortitude is a moral virtue restraining the passion of fear. In another way fortitude is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which Isaiah enumerates when he says, “the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude” (Isa. 11:2): and so it is a supernatural infused habit, rendering the soul promptly movable by the Holy Spirit in attacking and sustaining adversities for the truth of the faith and for equity. In a third way fortitude is taken more extensively, for a virtuous habit comforting the mind against sin and the demon: and so every virtue is the fortitude of the mind; and so of fortitude the sermon is now concerned. Whence the spiritual fortitude of a man consists in the connection and perfection of the virtues: for the virtues are chained together, and help and strengthen one another, just as in an army one becomes a protection to another. But most of all this fortitude consists in charity, which is the mover, form, empress, and life of the other virtues. Whence the greater charity is, the more frequently the other virtues are excited and the more promptly they proceed into act. Therefore, as much as each one resists and prevails over temptations and sins, passions and demons, so much is he spiritually strong; and inasmuch as he is overcome by them and consents to vices, so much is he spiritually weak, vile, wretched, foul, wounded, corrupted. Hence not only the virgin Mary, but every faithful of Christ adorned with the connection of virtues, and packed with their mutual corroboration, stands terrible to the invisible enemies: as an army set in array is terrible to the adversaries of the inhabitants of the camps. For camps orderly disposed delight the lover more, and terrify the adversary more. Therefore this fortitude consists

in the expugnation of vices, in the victory of the passions, in the execution of the virtues, that we may stand in the midst of reason, and stably follow not disordered affection but right reason. Hence Gregory says: The fortitude of the just is to conquer the flesh, to go contrary to one’s own wills, to extinguish the delights of the present life, to love the harsh and adverse things of this world for the sake of acquiring eternal rewards, to despise the blandishments of prosperity, to cast away the fear of adversity. But the fortitude of the impious

and reprobate is to love transitory things without cessation, to endure insensibly in vices against the scourges of the Creator, to obey vain glory, to aspire to temporal honors, to seek increases of malice, to attack the life of the good in words and deeds, to add evils to evils without true penance.

Finally it is to be weighed how we ought to follow the spiritual fortitude of this most strong woman. And to this the answer is clear from what has been already brought forward. For since the Savior says, “The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away” (Matt. 11:12)—namely those who healthfully conquer themselves, that is their own passions, pravity, and faults (whence in Ecclesiasticus it is written, “Go not after your own lusts, and turn away from your own will,” Ecclus. 18:30)—it becomes known that to imitate this fortitude is to battle continually against sins, to avoid illicit words, to guard the interior and exterior senses, to tame the motions and goads of the passions, to keep the mind immune from unclean and unjust thoughts and appetites; to keep moderation in food, drink, sleep, and clothing, also to insist strenuously on the works of the virtues, and frequently to lift the mind to God, especially in the time of prayer to keep it from wanderings; to observe all the precepts of God and of the Church. *(t. 31, p. 57)* To persevere in these unto the end, and to grow in them daily, is the true and spiritual fortitude of a man. In these therefore let us manfully imitate the most glorious Virgin, because this is most of all to venerate her—so to imitate her in the virtues.

Conception — Sermon IV ad religiosos

Of the most profound humility of the Virgin and Mother of God, and by what chief way we acquire this virtue for ourselves

(t. 31, p. 57)

“Her have I loved, and have sought her out from my youth” (Wis. 8:2).

The most excellent virgin Mary, whose solemnity is now kept, is lovable to us all: first, because of the goodness conferred on her by the Almighty; second, because of her supernatural and admirable dignity, by which she excels every pure creature; third, because of the manifold usefulness that comes to us from her. And for the same causes we ought always to seek her out, that we may please her without ceasing, and may have her continually favorable to us, maternally assisting, a faithful protectress.

First, then, she is lovable to us because of her goodness. And as she is better than every pure creature, so also is she more lovable. Therefore after God we ought to love her with a singular love. Moreover her goodness is manifold: indeed her goodnesses are as many as her virtues; nor is it doubtful that she shone forth in every virtue.

(t. 31, p. 58)

But now some of her virtues are to be touched upon; and first humility, of which she herself especially gloried in the Lord, saying: “He has regarded the humility of His handmaid” (Luke 1:48). It is to be believed, therefore, that after Christ, according as He is man, there never was a man—indeed not even an angel—of so great humility as the most sacred and most sweet virgin Mary: indeed, as in the other virtues, so in humility she was incomparably more perfect than all the saints, and ineffably humbler than all. This becomes known from diverse considerations.

First, because humility is the foundation of the virtues. Therefore, as the Holy Spirit decreed to build an most excellent structure of virtues in the most blessed Virgin, so in her He placed a most perfect, most profound, and most strong foundation of humility: just as we see that a wise architect, the higher, more illustrious, and more lasting an edifice he wishes to make, the firmer and deeper a foundation he sets beneath it.

Second, because humility disposes the mind to the progress of all the virtues and to the increase of grace. Therefore, as the Holy Spirit decreed to fill the most glorious Virgin before all the saints with every charism

of grace and with the perfections of the virtues, so He enriched her with a supreme and incomparable humility.

Third, because since exaltation in glory corresponds to humility in the way—according to that saying, “He that humbles himself shall be exalted” (Luke 14:11; 18:14)—therefore, as much as she is exalted in the heavens before the other saints, so much the humbler was she on earth before them.

Fourth, because as God conducted Himself most worthily toward her, especially by assuming human nature from her, and thereby making her His mother, so it was fitting that she should meet so great a condescension of God with the highest humiliation of herself.

Fifth, because the nearer anything is to another as to a first, the more like it is to that other. Therefore, as the most worthy Virgin was nearest to Christ before all, so she was most like Him in humility and in the other virtues. Other considerations of this kind could also be introduced.

Moreover the interior elicited act of humility is to make little of oneself, to cast oneself down and to subject oneself to God from the contemplation of the divine majesty and from the consideration of one’s own littleness, and to rebound back into one’s own nothingness and defectibility. Whence the more clearly anyone contemplates the sublimity, incomprehensibility, and infinity of God, and the more subtly he looks upon his own defectibility, littleness, and nothingness, the more deeply and sincerely, other things being equal, he humbles himself. Nor is it doubtful that as the incomparable and most elect virgin Mary was more perfect than the other saints in faith, hope, and charity, so also in the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially in the gift of wisdom and the gift of understanding, she was more sublime than all; likewise more complete in the salutary knowledge of herself: for which reason she was truly incomparably most humble. But from the interior humiliation proceeds humility in speaking, in walking, and in every exterior appearance, dress, and gesture.

If therefore this Virgin, so most excellent and most sublime, humbled herself so vehemently: how much more ought we, filled with every defectibility, who have sinned so gravely and so often, and still sin daily, and are exposed to so many dangers, and are also uncertain whether we are in charity and whether we are predestined—ought we to humble, despise, and subject ourselves; and also to bear equably if we are humbled, despised, and cast down by others, not to be indignant, troubled, or sorrowful, nor to avenge ourselves nor to complain on that account? just as the most sacred virgin Mary, who while still living in mortal flesh, although she was held by all the faithful in the greatest admiration and veneration, yet by the faithless Pharisees, Scribes, and the other unbelieving Jews was despised in a strange and wicked manner, was in no wise indignant at this; nor from the consideration of her excellence did she anywhere swell within, nor did she despise them. This is the humility of heart which merits the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the increase of all grace.

(t. 31, p. 59)

But a sign of this interior humility is the sincere acknowledgment of one’s own fault and defectibility in an accusation or correction brought by a superior or from elsewhere: as a sign of pride is the excusing of one’s own fault and infirmity. Therefore when you are accused, proclaimed, corrected, or amended, show yourself humble, patient, tractable, penitent, and amending, since it is written in Ecclesiasticus: “How good it is, when you are rebuked, to show repentance!”—for so shall a man flee voluntary sin. And again it says: “A wise man will not murmur when he is corrected; but he that is a scorner or a fool hears not when he is rebuked” (cf. Ecclus. 20; Prov. 13). Therefore let humility shine in our words, yea and in silence, in every act, gait, and showing of manners; nor let there be found in any of us what is read in Ecclesiasticus: “There is one that humbles himself wickedly, and his interior is full of deceit” (Ecclus. 19:23): for feigned humility is not humility, but a doubled iniquity.

Moreover, with the most blessed Virgin let us learn and grow accustomed to acknowledge, contemplate, and marvel at the infinite excellence of the Lord our God: how He alone is true God, eternal being, independent, uncircumscribed, being by essence absolutely perfect, infinitely blessed, and separated being itself, most pure above all, unmixable with things, comprehending most simply every nobility, fullness, and perfection of being with interminable eminence; goodness itself superessential and immense, everlasting truth, unity most simple above all, mind most holy above all, almighty power, unlimited majesty, uncreated and interminable wisdom, provident of all, highest piety, justice incomprehensibly full. Contemplating these and like things by illuminated faith and the gift of wisdom concerning the Lord our God sincerely, humbly, affectionately, without dangerous scrutiny, let us in comparison of His so infinite excellence and so most splendid purity humble, prostrate, cast down, and make little of ourselves from our whole hearts before Him unto infinity, and let us reckon our justices (if by chance we have any) as nothing other than a menstruous cloth (Isa. 64:6). Let us not justify ourselves before God; let us not be great, wise, or just in our own eyes, since the Apostle says: “Be not high-minded”—that is, do not exalt yourself, or think great things of yourself—“but fear” (Rom. 11:20): and deservedly, since you know not whether you are worthy of love or of hatred (Eccles. 9:1). Therefore we who are imperfect and defective, with the perfect and holy man let us say: “Enter not into judgment with Your servant, O Lord” (Ps. 142:2).

Furthermore, let us wisely and sharply, assiduously and devoutly weigh our miserable and lamentable properties—namely: that, made from nothing, we are prone to every evil, having from ourselves nothing but to fail, to go astray, to sin, and unless we are preserved by divine piety and grace we slip daily into enormous and innumerable sins; likewise, that we have so often and so gravely offended God that the earth would deservedly have swallowed us up long ago; that the goods which we do are so imperfect and mixed with so many evils; that we fall so vehemently short of the conversation of our fathers, of the sincere observance of our Order; that in body and soul we are filled with so many foulnesses, so many miseries and defectibilities. Looking upon these and things like them assiduously, let us humble ourselves under the almighty power of the supreme Judge (1 Pet. 5:6), and let us follow as we can the humility of the most blessed Virgin; and on this sacred day, yea daily, let us most devoutly invoke her, that she may deign to obtain for us the grace of so acting, that according to the exigency of our vocation we may walk before the Lord (Eph. 4), continually God-fearing in every custody of the heart (Acts 4:8?), provident in all the observances of the Order, discreet in words, strict in the keeping of silence, cheerful in divine things, taking care everywhere against dissolutions in conversation, and so continually serving the Son of the most high Virgin by adoring Him, in holiness and justice.

On the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Purification — Enarratio on the Prophetic Lesson in Place of the Epistle

(t. 31, p. 315)

“Behold I send My angel, and he shall prepare the way before My face,” etc. (Mal. 3:1–4).

This prophetic lesson is fittingly read today in place of the epistle, because what is read in it as prophesied concerning Christ’s presentation in the temple is today fulfilled. Therefore in Malachi it is written:

“Behold I will send My angel, and he shall prepare the way before My face.” That this was foretold of John the Baptist, Christ testifies: “This is he of whom it is written, Behold I send My angel before your face, who shall prepare your way before you.” Whence according to the form of words by which Christ alleges this Scripture, these words are said from the person of God the Father, so that the sense is: “Behold I send My angel”—that is John the Baptist, of whom John the evangelist: “There was a man sent from God” (John 1:6). But John the Baptist is called an angel by reason of office, because he was precursor, herald, and messenger of Christ, and because he was of angelic life. “Before your face,” O Christ—that is before your manifest preaching and being made known. “Who shall prepare your way before you”—that is, by his preaching he will dispose the hearts of the Jews for your reception. But our translation returns to the same; yet according to it these things are said in the person of Christ, so that the sense is: “Behold I will send My angel,” namely John, “and he shall prepare the way before My face”—that is, by his preaching and his baptism he will fit the Jews for the reception of My doctrine and of My baptism, that through him they may believe in Me. Hence of him it is related: “This man came for a witness, to give testimony of the light, that all men might believe through him” (John 1:7). Then Christ, speaking of Himself as of another, adds: And immediately after the nativity of John, “the Lord whom you seek shall come to His temple”—that is Christ the King of kings and Lord of all; whose coming all devout and illuminated men from the beginning of the world have desired, as Christ says in the Gospel to the Apostles: “Many kings and prophets have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them” (Luke 10:24). “And the angel of the testament, whom you desire”—that is Christ the Angel of great counsel (Isa. 9:6), who is the institutor or founder of the New Testament, and the giver of the evangelical law. Further by “temple” can be understood that material temple which was in Jerusalem, in which today Christ by His virgin Mother was presented and offered to God the Father; in which also Christ after His thirtieth year often preached and wrought miracles, and when He was twelve years old was found by His Mother in the midst of the doctors (Luke 2:46). *(t. 31, p. 316)* By “temple” can also be understood the congregation of the Jews who believed in Christ.

But what follows, some expound of the second coming of Christ. Yet they seem more fittingly to be expounded of His first coming, as will become clear from the tenor and order of the text itself. For it is added:

“Behold He comes”—Christ through the mystery of the Incarnation and assumed humanity—“says the Lord of hosts,” that is of the angelic hosts. “And who shall be able to think of the day of His coming?”—that is, who is sufficient to grasp how He will come, how magnificently, wonderfully, and humbly, and of what kind and how great He Himself is? For the Incarnation of the Savior, and His divine majesty, cannot be comprehended by us. “And who shall stand to see Him?”—that is, no one will be able to comprehend or gaze upon the excellence of Christ. Or this is said because, comparatively speaking, few of the Jews believed in Christ; nor did they look upon Him with equanimity: to whom also He was grievous to behold, as a certain wise man asserts (Wis. 2:14–15). Hence it is added:

“For He is like a refining fire”—that is, sharply and rigorously addressing, teaching, and rebuking sinners, especially priests, Scribes, and Pharisees. Conformably it is written of Elijah: “Elias the prophet stood up as a

fire; and his word burnt like a torch" (Ecclus. 48:1). "And like the fuller's herb": for as fullers by such an herb cleanse and make cloths splendid, so Christ by His preaching, exemplary life, and grace purged the hearts of many. Whence He says to the Apostles: "Now you are clean by reason of the word which I have spoken to you" (John 15:3). By His Baptism also He cleansed many.

"And He shall sit refining"—that is, consuming sins, and inflaming the hearts of hearers (for which reason in the Gospel He said: "I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I, but that it be kindled?" Luke 12:49), "and cleansing" the souls of those believing in Him, "as silver" which is purged by fire; "and He shall purify the sons of Levi"—that is priests and ministers of the temple: of whom some, although few, were amended by Christ's preaching and signs before His passion; but after the passion and the sending of the Holy Spirit, a great multitude of priests obeyed the faith of Christ (Acts 6:7). "And He shall refine them as gold, and as silver"—that is, as silver and gold in the furnace are purged from the mixture of what is unclean; so Christ through tribulations will cleanse His elect from the uncleanness of fault: to whom He foretold, "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). For through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:21). Hence it is written: "As gold in the furnace He has proved the elect, and as a victim of a holocaust He has received them" (Wis. 3:6). "And they shall offer sacrifices to the Lord in justice." These sacrifices can be understood as devout prayers, the observance of precepts, and other things which those converted to Christ offer to God—especially the Sacrament of the altar, which because of the plurality of sacramental species is called pluraliter "sacraments," when we say: May the sacraments which we have received purify us, we beseech. These are offered to God "in justice"—that is in just conversation, in charity and grace.

"And the sacrifice of Judah and of Jerusalem shall please the Lord"—that is the offering of the sacrament of the Eucharist made by Jews believing in Christ: which is known to have been first instituted by Christ in the city of Jerusalem, and continued there by His disciples after the sending of the Holy Spirit; "as in the days of old, and as in the ancient years"—that is, as formerly the sacrifices of the patriarchs Melchisedech, Abraham, and of holy priests and just men in the law of nature, as Abel, and in the written law, as Aaron, pleased God. Indeed, as much as truth precedes figure and shadow, this sacrifice of the evangelical law stands more excellent and more acceptable to God than all those sacrifices. For the sacrifice of the Eucharist is in itself holy and acceptable to God; but the legal sacrifices were not pleasing to God except from the devotion of those offering them.

Purification — Sermon I

How Christ glorified Solomon's temple; of the properties of fire, and why Christ is called fire

(t. 31, p. 317)

"Great shall be the glory of this last house more than of the first, says the Lord" (Agg. 2:10).

According to the doctrine of the Apostle, our Lord Jesus Christ is the end of the law and of the Prophets (Rom. 10:4): therefore the principal intention of the Prophets was to prophesy of Christ and His mysteries. Whence, just as in the lesson already expounded Malachi the prophet prophesied of Christ's coming and of His offering in the temple, so in the theme now assumed Aggeus the prophet prophesied of the same things.

For the understanding of which it is needful to know that the Jews in the Old Testament built two temples for the Lord. For one and the first temple king Solomon built: in the building of which temple there were seventy thousand who carried burdens, and eighty thousand hewers of stone, besides the overseers who were over each of the works, to the number of three thousand three hundred, as is read in the third of Kings. The second and last temple Zorobabel and other Jews helping him built, in the time of the prophets Aggeus and Zacharias.

Aggeus therefore prophesied that the glory—that is the honor and excellence—of this second temple ought to be greater than was the glory of the temple built by Solomon. Which can in no way be verified except by this, that Christ Himself the King Messiah, promised in the law and the Prophets, by His own personal presence honored that second temple: namely when He was offered in it, as is written in today's Gospel, and afterward every year with His virgin Mother and Joseph He went up to Jerusalem, and entered the temple on the paschal solemnity according to the law, as Luke says. Afterward also He frequently preached in the temple, and wrought many miracles in it. Nor was that temple glorified only by this personal presence of Christ, but also by the presence of His most worthy Mother and of the holy Apostles and of the primitive Church—namely of those true Israelites who through the preaching of the Apostles believed in Christ, and daily with one accord continued in the temple (Acts 2:46).

Further, that this authority of Aggeus the prophet cannot otherwise be verified than in the manner aforesaid is easy to prove from the Scriptures of the Old Testament. For as is clear in the books of Kings and in the books of Chronicles, Solomon's temple was most beautiful and most precious, and indeed as it were incomparably more precious and more beautiful than the second temple. But also the worship of God according to the precepts of the law of Moses flourished much more in the first temple than in the second, especially in the time of Solomon, and of Asa, and of Josaphat and Ezechias the kings. More excellent also and holier men, kings, pontiffs, and prophets were in the first temple, unless it be granted that Christ, and His Mother and disciples, were in the second temple. All which things are clear from the canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament. From these therefore we prove the perfidy of the Jews, and the truth of our faith—namely that Christ has come—especially because immediately before the aforesaid words of the alleged theme it is premised: "The Desired of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord" (Agg. 2:8). And presently there is added: "Great shall be the glory of this last house" (Agg. 2:10).

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Whence it is most clear that those words are to be understood of the excellence of the glory of the second temple for the time of Christ, who by all doctors is understood by the Desired of all nations. Therefore while that temple lasted Christ was born. But that temple is known to have been destroyed by Titus and the Romans.

Moreover, as is said in the prophetic lesson expounded, Christ is "as a refining fire": with which agrees what the Apostle says, "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). By which is given to be understood the strictness of the divine judgment and the rigor of the justice of God. Therefore with all solicitude, fear, and reverence we ought to serve God. Whence before these words, "Our God is a consuming fire," the Apostle premised: "Let us serve God with fear and reverence." And he adds the cause, saying: "For our God is a consuming fire." Hence also Moses says: "Beware lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God, for the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God" (Deut. 4:23–24).

Moreover, there are many properties in fire, because of which Christ is fittingly called fire, as He is called Lion, Rock, and Lamb. The first is that fire among all the elements is simpler, higher, more formal, and more active. So Christ among all the Saints is more spiritual, more sublime, more divine, and more powerful. For He ascended above all the heavens, and all power was given Him in heaven and on earth, and He received the grace of the Holy Spirit not by measure. The second property of fire is its splendor, by which wisdom is fittingly designated. But the wisdom of Christ is greater than the wisdom of all the Saints: because as God He is infinite Wisdom, and according to the assumed nature His soul is filled with such wisdom that a pure creature is not capable of greater wisdom. Hence the Apostle says that in Christ are hid all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God (Col. 2:3). And Christ Himself confesses: "No one knows the Father but the Son" (Matt. 11:27). The third is heat: by which, as has been touched above, in one way is expressed the rigor of divine justice, punishing the impious. Whence the Apostle says: "It is a fearful expectation of judgment, and the rage of a fire which shall consume the adversaries" (Heb. 10:27). Second, by the heat of fire is

understood the fervor of spiritual love, which was greatest in Christ. To whom He speaks: “Greater love than this no man has, that a man lay down his life for his friends”; and again, “As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you” (John 15:9, 13). And so Christ is called fire.

Further, fire has diverse operations, by which the actions of Christ are signified. For fire naturally always ascends when it is in a lower place. So Christ by the charity which He infuses into His faithful makes them every hour ascend—that is, to raise themselves to God by contemplation and love, that they may have their hearts on high, as Jeremiah the prophet exhorts: “Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to God” (Lam. 3:41). Whence the Apostle says: “I will therefore that men pray in every place, lifting up pure hands, without anger and contention” (1 Tim. 2:8). Christ also makes His faithful ascend by aspiration to heavenly felicity and the fatherland of the Blessed. For which reason Paul exhorts: “Seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God; mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth” (Col. 3:1–2). Again, fire liquefies certain hard and frozen things; it also joins and hardens some dissolved and soft things. So Christ by His grace softens stony hearts hardened in vices, and resolves them into the weeping of compunction and devotion, according to that: “I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh, and I will put a new spirit in the midst of you” (Ezek. 36:26). Conformably, hearts dissolved by loquacity, laughter, jest, and lightness of manners, and damnably soft through concupiscences and vices of the flesh, Christ by the infusion of virtues consolidates, by maturity and constancy well packs and dries, that they may be fixed and strong in God, and fulfill that of the Apostle: “We ought to attend more abundantly to the things which we have heard” (namely the precepts of God), “lest perhaps we let them slip” (Heb. 2:1).

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Therefore, since Christ is called fire, deservedly on this feast the faithful carry lighted candles in their hands in His honor. Therefore let us most devoutly beseech the Lord Jesus that in the present life He may clemently purge us, consume our sins, kindle us with His love, and lift us upward in the contemplation of divine things: that, as we carry shining and burning candles in our hands, so within in the soul by saving wisdom and sincere love we may shine and burn, and be established in every virtue by the merits and prayers of the glorious Virgin.

It is read that John Damascene, an excellent doctor, highest philosopher and brilliant theologian, from infancy lived most chastely, and was very devout to the glorious Virgin, singularly loving her. The emperor of the Greeks also greatly loved the aforesaid John. But a certain man knowing how to write and dictate altogether conformably as John, from envy wrote a letter containing the betrayal of the emperor and the empire, which he caused to be thrown furtively in the emperor’s palace. Which seen and read, the emperor thought John Damascene had written those letters, and caused his right hand to be cut off, with which he had committed so great a crime. Which done, John invoking the glorious Virgin with complaining prayers, piously contended with her, saying: “Why, O Lady, have you permitted me to be so treated? Why have you permitted the hand of your servant, with which I was accustomed to write your praises and to offer the body and blood of your Son, to be cut off?” Then the pre-elect Virgin appeared to him, saying: “What are you doing, most faithful child?” Who said: “Where were you, O Lady, when I suffered this? Behold to my shame—indeed also to yours—publicly hung is the hand cut off from me.” And she: “Be comforted,” she said, “my son, in the Lord.” Then the most pious Virgin brought the hand, and restored it to its former place. Which done, John showed the healed hand to the religious brethren over whom he was set, and sang Mass of Our Lady with a loud voice. Which things heard, the emperor coming kissed the hands and feet of John, and asked pardon.

Purification — Enarratio on the Gospel

(t. 31, p. 319)

“After the days of the purification of Mary were fulfilled,” etc. (Luke 2:22–32).

In today’s Gospel Saint Luke briefly describes the history of the present feast—namely how the virgin Mary on this day offered her Son the Lord Jesus in the temple to God. It is said therefore in the second of Luke: “After the days of the purification of Mary according to the law of Moses were fulfilled”—that is, forty days from the nativity of Christ being completed: on the last of which the infant was offered in the temple; within which days the mother of the infant, according to the Mosaic law, abstained from entering the temple, and on the fortieth day entering the temple was purified. For that law commanded that a woman who having received seed had borne a male should be unclean seven days, both from the company of men and from entering the temple; and on the eighth day the infant should be circumcised, and she also then be made clean as to the company of men; moreover after the seven aforesaid days the woman should still remain thirty-three days in the blood of her purification, abstaining from entering the temple; and so on the fortieth day she should offer the infant in the temple, offering at the same time gifts according to the precept of the law for herself and for the boy. But if she bore a daughter, the aforesaid days were doubled, both as to entering the temple and as to the company of men.

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But because the most blessed Virgin conceived and bore not by seed received, she was not bound by the law brought forward; she also needed no purification, who neither conceived in sin nor ever sinned. Therefore these days are called “days of the purification of Mary,” not according to the existence of the thing, but according to the estimation of men: just as Joseph was called the father of Christ.

They “brought Jesus”—Mary and Joseph successively, or one of them alone, and yet they are said in the plural to have brought Him, because it is the custom that a company be said to have done what one of it does—“to Jerusalem”—for until that day the Virgin remained in the stable in which she bore Christ—“to present Him to the Lord”—that is, to present and offer Him to the eternal Father in the temple of Jerusalem; “as it is written in the law of the Lord,” that is in Exodus and Numbers: “Because every male opening the womb”—that is every firstborn, which bursting from the womb first opens the womb of the parent—“shall be called holy to the Lord”—that is, shall be offered and consecrated to God, as specially pertaining to Him. For frequently the Lord through Moses said: From the time I struck every firstborn of Egypt, both in men and in beasts, I sanctified to Myself all that first opens the womb in Israel, both in men and in cattle. Whence that sanctification was nothing but a deputing of the firstborn to something divine—namely to this, that in them was represented and recalled the slaughter of the firstborn of Egypt, and consequently the omnipotence and justice of God.

But the firstborn were consecrated to God in diverse ways. For if they were of the tribe of Levi, and had no blemish, they continually ministered to God in the temple when they were of fitting age according to the law. But if they were of the other tribes of Israel, they were redeemed with five shekels. But if they were firstborn of cattle, and clean animals, they were offered to God and not redeemed, and came into the use of the priests. But if they were unclean, they were redeemed, or exchanged for something else, as the firstborn of an ass for the firstborn of a sheep; or they were killed, as the firstborn of a dog. Since therefore Christ was of the tribe of Judah, He was redeemed with five shekels.

“And to offer a sacrifice”—that is, they also brought Jesus to the temple for this, that they might offer for Him and His Mother a victim according as it is said in the law of the Lord, that is in Leviticus—“a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” And one turtledove was offered to God as a holocaust (and a holocaust is called a sacrifice which for the honor of the divine majesty is wholly burned), the other for sin, which went to the use of the priest praying for the woman who was so purified. This also was the offering of the poor: for the rich offered a lamb. Yet the Evangelist does not determinately express which of these Mary and Joseph offered—whether namely a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons—because it returns to the same

whichever of these they are said to have offered, since by either of these their poverty is designated.

Consequently is described how in the aforesaid presentation and offering Christ had testimony from most trustworthy witnesses. “And behold there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon,” who among the priests of the temple was famous, and aged; and he was worthy to be called “a man,” because he lived rationally (that is wisely and virtuously), as is added: “and this man was just and God-fearing.” For he was “just” as justice is a special virtue, rendering to each what is his. He was also “just” with the justice which is a common virtue, as adorned with every virtue, especially charitable, because he desired the common salvation of all, not private and proper commodities. He was also “God-fearing” with chaste and filial fear, which dreads and flees the offense of God. And although he was strong in all virtues, yet with these two he singularly shone: therefore of them he is praised by name. “Waiting for the consolation of Israel”—that is

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the coming of Christ, and the liberation of the Israelite people through Him—namely redemption from the servitude of sin, from the yoke of the devil, from the pain of hell. “And the Holy Spirit was in him” by eminent grace, by ardent charity, and also by prophetic illumination, as will be said below. “And he had received an answer from the Holy Spirit, that he should not see”—that is should not suffer—“death, before he had seen” with corporal and mental eyes “the Christ of the Lord”—that is Jesus Christ, who according to His human nature was anointed by God the Father—indeed by the whole most superblessed Trinity—with a spiritual unction, namely the fullness of grace and of the virtues, according to that, “God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness,” etc.; or, “Christ the Lord,” because He Himself is Lord of all, as true God, who also according to His humanity is preferred to every creature. Further this Simeon, as also the other Patriarchs and Prophets, vehemently desired the coming of Christ, and instantly and most devoutly prayed for Christ’s coming. Therefore he received an answer and revelation from the Holy Spirit, that before he should die, Christ would be born and would be seen by him.

“And he came by the Spirit”—that is from the instinct of the Holy Spirit—“into the temple.” For by the revelation of the Holy Spirit he knew that the hour was at hand in which he would see Christ, as had been promised him. “And when His parents brought in the child Jesus” into the temple—namely Mary His true mother, who then carried the child, and Joseph the putative father—“to do for Him according to the custom of the law,” namely by offering a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, and redeeming the boy with five shekels, as has been said; “he also”—Simeon—“took Him” with greatest devotion, exultation, and reverence “into his arms”—that is between his arms, although he reckoned himself unworthy of the contact of so holy a child; but vehement love prevailed, and drove him to union and embrace. “And he blessed God”—that is, he praised, gave thanks, and sang the following canticle for the fulfillment of the divine promise, and for the other benefits of God, and because he had already received more than had been promised him: for it had been promised him that he should see Christ; but now he not only saw, but also clasped with his arms, carried, handled, and as I think also kissed the most sweet infant.

“And he said: Now”—when You have fulfilled what You promised me concerning Christ—“dismiss”—that is, You will presently dismiss, and I beseech that You dismiss—“Your servant, O Lord”—not in the servitude of servile fear (of which the Savior says, “The servant abides not in the house forever,” John 8:35), but a servant in the servitude of filial fear: to which sort of servant the Savior says, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matt. 25:21, 23)—“Lord,” God the Father or the Trinity God, “according to Your word, in peace”—that is to be taken away from the unrest, tribulation, miseries, and sins of the present life and age, to rest and cease through death, according as You said to me that I should not experience death unless Christ were seen: by which You hinted that Him seen, I should presently fall asleep in the Lord, and rest with the holy fathers in the bosom of Abraham, until after Christ’s passion with the other Saints I should be led out of the limbo of the fathers by Christ, and transferred to glory. “Because my eyes”—exterior and interior—“have seen Your salvation”—that is Christ the Savior: who is called “Your

salvation," because through Him You have decreed to save the world. Of whom Jacob the patriarch spoke: "I will look for Your salvation, O Lord" (Gen. 49:18). To which Salvation also the Father speaks: "I have given You to be the light of the Gentiles, that You may be My salvation even to the farthest part of the earth" (Isa. 49:6).

"Which You have prepared"—that is, through the Incarnation or assumption of human nature You have made apt to be seen and known, and have decreed to manifest and exhibit—"before the face of all peoples"—that is in the sight of all men, or clearly to all men, not to Jews alone: yet so that the distribution be for the kinds of individuals, not for the individuals of kinds, according to which sense it is read: "All peoples, tribes, and tongues shall serve Him" (Dan. 7:14).

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Therefore God the Father made His Only-begotten, coequal and incomprehensible to Himself, manifest, visible, and cohabiting to men by this, that He united Him to human nature in the unity of person. Which was so foretold: "The Lord has prepared His holy arm in the sight of all the Gentiles" (Isa. 52:10). For the Son of God is called the arm of the Father, because through Him the Father works all things: just as the Holy Spirit is called the finger of God, because through Him divine secrets are revealed or indicated. Therefore God the Father prepared this Salvation before the face of all peoples, because through the Apostles and their helpers Christ was preached to all men, according to that in the Psalm: "Their sound has gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Ps. 18:5). Whence again the Psalmist says: "The Lord has made known His salvation; He has revealed His justice in the sight of the Gentiles" (Ps. 97:2).

Moreover, although Christ was so prepared and exhibited before the face of all peoples, yet otherwise as to the Jews, and otherwise as to the Gentiles. Hence it is added: "A light to the revelation of the Gentiles"—that is, You have so prepared Christ that He be specially the light of the Gentiles, or a light illuminating those who, lacking the knowledge of the true God, worshipped the portents of idols; but Christ through the preaching of His disciples, and through His interior illumination, brought them back to the knowledge, love, and worship of the true God. But also God the Trinity, by the merit of Christ, bestowed so great grace on the Gentiles, as He protests: "Behold I have given Him for a witness to the people, for a leader and a master to the Gentiles" (Isa. 55:4). Moreover also, O Lord, You have prepared this Salvation "the glory of Your people Israel"—that is, to this end that He be the glory of the Israelite people: which was specially the people of God, because it worshipped one true God. For this was to that people, as to those who believed from it, a principal prerogative, exaltation, honor, and glory, that the Only-begotten of God chose to be incarnate from it, and personally to visit it, and to converse in its midst. For which reason He said: "I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). Christ was also for the glory of His people Israel, because He led the saints of the Old Testament out of limbo, and poured and filled them with the joy of the beatific vision. Nonetheless to both Jews and Gentiles Christ was light and glory: because through Him all the elect have been illuminated; and to all men, at least gratis, it is a great glory that the Only-begotten of God assumed their nature. But by appropriation Christ is called the light of the Gentiles, and the glory of the Jews. For which reason He says: "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22).

It can be asked how Simeon, having entered the temple, knew the child Jesus, whom he had not seen before. To which it is easily answered that by the same Spirit he knew Him present by which he had foreknown Him future. And perhaps some sensible sign was divinely hinted to him by which he might know the child: as to John the Baptist God foretold, "Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining upon Him, He it is that baptizes," etc. (John 1:33). For perhaps he saw a divine splendor in the countenance of the adorable child.

Many things around this Gospel could be brought in, which seeking brevity I pass over, and partly will be brought in in the sermons. How also each of the faithful can utter this canticle in his own person…

Purification — Sermon II

Of the most perfect humility of Christ and Mary; of the love of poverty; and of the conditions of turtledoves to be imitated

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“We have received Your mercy, O God, in the midst of Your temple” (Ps. 47:10).

What the Evangelists write to have been fulfilled in Christ and through Christ, the holy Prophets foretold and wrote to be fulfilled in Him and through Him. Whence what the holy evangelist Luke in today’s Gospel recites as done, holy king David seeing in the spirit as future sang with grateful and joyful mind, saying: “We have received Your mercy, O God, in the midst of Your temple.” In which words by the “mercy” of God can be understood the Only-begotten Son of the eternal Father. Which Son so mercifully dealt with us, so many things for our salvation He did and endured, so many benefits He conferred on us, and so great beatitude He promised, prepared, and is ready to give us, that He is to be called not only merciful and compassionate, but also the mercy of God bestowed on us, our mercy also dealing with us too mercifully. To whom again the Prophet says: “My helper, I will sing to You, for You are God my protector; my God, my mercy” (Ps. 58:18).

Moreover in all things which Christ assumed, did, and suffered for us, He exercised most deep and altogether ineffable humility. Which first is clear in the Incarnation. For it was an incomprehensible emptying and supreme condescension that the Only-begotten Son of God, equal to God the Father, Creator, King, Judge, and Lord of all, assumed human nature, and was made the son of one maiden, who was eternally begotten of the most high Father. Second this is clear in the circumcision of Christ, in which as a sinner He deigned to be circumcised, who came to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Third the same becomes known in the purification, in which He was redeemed with five shekels as a servant, and with His Mother was expiated as a sinner. Therefore in His nativity Christ showed Himself a true and poor man, in circumcision as it were a sinful man, but in the purification as a sinner and a servant. Deservedly therefore from the consideration of these Cyril exclaims: O the depth of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! He offers victims by whom through each victim He is honored with the Father. The Truth keeps the figures of the law: for He who as God is the founder of the law keeps the law as man. What shall we say to these things? By what pact do we call ourselves Christians, who are so contrary to Christ? He was not a sinner, but truly most just and the Holy of Holies; nonetheless He did not disdain to seem and be reputed a sinner. We on the contrary do not fear continually to offend God, and yet we disdain to be reputed such as we are. Finally Christ the Lord, who was not subject to the precepts of the Mosaic law, on this day from supreme humility according to the precepts of the law willed to be led to the temple, and there to be offered to God the Father, and to be expiated by legal sacrifices, and to be redeemed for a modest price. But we most vile sinners, who for many causes are bound to obey the divine precepts—namely because created by God, and because hitherto conserved and brought up by Him in being, and likewise because redeemed by Christ—do not care to obey the divine commands, nor walk in continual fear of God, but are altogether ungrateful and very unjust.

(t. 31, p. 324)

Moreover the most holy Virgin, who was not bound by the precept of the law concerning purification, because she did not conceive by seed received nor bear, nor from birth sustain the common flux of any bodily uncleanness with other mothers; yet obeyed the precept of the law, by abstaining from the company of men and from entering the temple, then by offering a sacrifice for her expiation. And first she did this lest others be scandalized in her, if they saw her alien from the common observance. Second, that she might furnish an example of perfect humility. Third, that she might give a form and document of obeying. Fourth, that by her example we may strive to be purified, and if we have committed a grave fault, may reckon ourselves unworthy of the society of men and of entering the temple or church. For a sinner is unworthy of the bread he eats, of the earth he treads, of the air he breathes, and of every service of the creature.

Further, we ought to consider why the most sacred virgin Mary offered a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, and what by these animals is spiritually designated, and how also we ought spiritually to offer them. And indeed, as has been said, turtledoves and young pigeons were the offerings of the poor. Why therefore did that virgin Mary offer them, who received a sufficient inheritance from her parents; whose Son also a few days before the three Magi are believed to have offered abundant gold? For it is not to be thought that such and so great men offered a little gold to the child, whom they believed to be the highest king of the Jews and the Son of God: indeed each of them offered Him a notable quantity of gold. To this it is faithfully answered that the most perfect Virgin, the spirit of her Son inspiring her, bestowed on the needy all things superfluous to the thinnest necessity (that is to most sparing food and clothing), by herself or by the hands of Joseph or of others: and so she is thought presently to have conferred on them also the gold offered to her. Nor do I think that she reserved anything notable for her pilgrimage into Egypt with Jesus and Joseph, or had so great care of tomorrow: because she had most perfect hope in God, and knew that she had with her as Son Christ the power and wisdom of God, an almighty provider (1 Cor. 1:24). From these therefore becomes known the greatest liberality of the sacred Virgin toward the poor, and her voluntary poverty, and also her evangelical perfection. Therefore by her example let us cast away every avarice and superfluous and worldly solicitude.

Moreover, as Cyril says, among birds the turtledove is most loquacious, but the dove is a gentle animal; and so by both Christ is expressed, who was of most perfect meekness, and by His words converted the world. Whence to prefigure His passion, the dove and turtledove offered were killed. Again, by the dove simplicity and meekness, by the turtledove chastity is designated. For the turtledove, its mate lost, does not seek another. Therefore God commanded two to be offered to Him, because man existing of body and soul, He exacts from us a double chastity and mildness, namely of soul and of body, that the soul within may be meek, nor without in the body may signs of anger or impatience appear. Hence also the Evangelist did not say, A pair of doves; but said, A pair of turtledoves. For the turtledove at every time of its life is a chaste animal; but the dove in its perfect age is very luxurious: therefore God willed two young pigeons to be offered to Him, to hint that lasciviousness displeases Him.

Moreover there are many praiseworthy properties of the dove, which we ought to imitate. First, that the dove is a simple animal. So also we ought to lack every simulation and cunning, every duplicity, fraud, and falsity. For simulators and the cunning provoke the wrath of God. And Ecclesiasticus asserts: “Woe to the double of heart, and to wicked lips”; and again, “Come not to God with a double heart, and be not a hypocrite in the sight of men” (Ecclus. 2:14; 1:36). Hence it is had in the book of Wisdom: “Seek the Lord in simplicity of heart”; likewise elsewhere, “A double minded man is inconstant in all his ways” (Wis. 1:1; James 1:8). Whence in the Gospel Christ: “Be wise as serpents, and simple as doves” (Matt. 10:16).

Second, the property of the dove is lack of gall. *(t. 31, p. 325)* So also let us lack every gall of sin—that is bitterness of heart, anger and impatience and envy—because in Ecclesiasticus it is written: “There is no sense where bitterness abounds” (Ecclus. 21:15). Solomon also says: “Who can abide a spirit ready to anger?” (Prov. 18:14). Hence the Apostle exhorts: “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see God; looking diligently, lest any root of bitterness springing up do hinder, and by it many be defiled” (Heb. 12:14–15). This is what Moses says: “Let there not be among you a root that brings forth gall and bitterness” (Deut. 29:18). Therefore let us have a sweet affection toward God and neighbors, and rejoice in the Lord always (Phil. 4:4).

Third, the property is that it does not hurt with the beak. So also let us harm no one, nor avenge our own injuries, especially since the Savior says: “If one strike you on the one cheek, present to him also the other” (Matt. 5:39). Whence Moses commands: “Seek not revenge, nor be mindful of the injury of your citizens” (Lev. 19:18). Fourth, that it nests in the clefts of the rocks. So let us fix our hearts in the wounds of Christ, continually meditating His passion. Fifth, that it nourishes others’ young. So also let us do good to neighbors, and communicate the gifts of God to the needy; of the children of the devil also—that is the iniquitous—let

us strive to make children of God, endeavoring by word, prayer, example for the conversion of such: this is to nourish others' young. Sixth, that it sits upon waters. So let us dwell near the streams of the Scriptures and of grace. Seventh, that it mourns instead of singing. So let us weep for our sins rather than rejoice in worldly vanities. Eighth, that it flies in flocks. So let us love the communion of the Church and of the faithful. Ninth, that under the shadow of the wings it is protected. So under the shadow of the wings of God—that is under the protection and hope of divine piety—let us defend ourselves from the adversaries of our salvation.

Tenth, that it recovers sight. So let us seek the illumination of our mind from God, saying with the Prophet: "Enlighten my eyes that I never sleep in death; lest at any time my enemy say: I have prevailed against him"; and again, "My God, enlighten my darkness" (Ps. 12:4–5; 17:29). Therefore let us pray God that He may deign to illuminate our hearts: that we may weigh our own faults, hardships, defectuosities, and also gaze on the dangers to which we are exposed, and healthfully discern between good and evil, between true and false. Eleventh, that it avoids carcasses. So also let us flee the foulnesses of carnal vices and the turpitudes of all sins, as it is written in Ecclesiasticus: "Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent" (Ecclus. 21:2). Twelfth, that in its manner it laments. So let us bewail our own and our neighbors' sins; from compassion also of the passion of Christ and desire of the felicity of the heavenly kingdom let us weep. Thirteenth, that it kisses its mate. So also let us spiritually love our neighbors, and if cause require, do what the Apostle says, "Salute one another with a holy kiss" (Rom. 16:16)—which namely proceeds from spiritual and holy love. Yet under the cloak of this kiss let by no means a carnal and lustful kiss be admitted. — Of the properties of the turtledove it will be said in the following sermon.

If therefore we follow the aforesaid properties of the dove, then by offering ourselves to God—that is by faithfully obeying Him—we offer Him spiritually the young of the dove. Which by the merits and prayers of the glorious Virgin may almighty God deign to grant us.

Purification — Sermon III

Why a corporal procession is made, and to what it instructs; and again of the conditions of turtledoves

(t. 31, p. 326)

"Let them sing in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord" (Ps. 137:5).

In today's Gospel a manifold document is given us, as in the preceding sermon has partly been declared. But before more is introduced, first it is to be said why today a solemn procession is made, the faithful themselves carrying lighted candles in their hands. Of which a manifold reason is assigned.

The first is, because (as is had in the canticle of Simeon written in this Gospel) Christ, who today was offered in the temple to God the Father, is called the light of the Gentiles (Luke 2:32). Of whom Isaiah foretold: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isa. 9:2). Of whom also it is asserted: "That was the true light, which enlightens every man that comes into this world" (John 1:9). Whence to hint this, we carry shining lighted candles. The second is, because today in the offering of Christ in the temple there was made a procession altogether most devout and most holy, by the glorious Virgin and Joseph, Simeon and Anna. Therefore to commemorate and represent—indeed also to honor—that procession, we make a procession with the praises of God and spiritual canticles, with burning and shining candles also. The third cause is, that by work we may demonstrate that the sacred Virgin needed no purification; but was filled with the light of grace, the splendor of wisdom, the ardor of charity: indeed by conceiving and bearing Christ she was not only not violated or stained, but also ineffably made holier and more gracious.

The fourth is our instruction—namely that we may consider that we ought to shine before God and neighbors: before God, by faith, wisdom, and praiseworthy life; before neighbors, by good fame and exemplariness. For to God we are bound to a good conscience and virtuous conversation; but to neighbors a

good example. Whence he who does not care to have a good fame for the honor of God and the edification of others is cruel: because as much as in him lies, he spiritually kills others, by scandalizing them. Therefore Christ says: “So let your light” (that is virtuous conversation) “shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Let every Christian therefore pay to God homage and honor, to neighbors help and edification.

Finally by the corporal procession which is made on feast days is designated that we ought daily to proceed spiritually—that is to grow in the virtues, and by this to draw near the heavenly kingdom, as of the elect and good men the Prophet says: “They shall go from virtue to virtue” (Ps. 83:8). In processions also there is a return to the same place from which the procession began. By which is signified that as from God we flowed forth by creation, so to Him by faith, charity, and virtuous acts we ought to return. For He Himself is the principle of our creation, He Himself is the highest object of our beatitude, and the end of our whole life. Likewise, in processions priests and clerics commonly go paired, to designate that by the observance of the two principal precepts we ought to set out to the kingdom of heaven. The first is that we love God with the whole heart: which no one does unless he fulfills the divine precepts. *(t. 31, p. 327)* The second is that we love our neighbors and every pilgrim man or living in this world as ourselves. Therefore also they go paired, because Christ before His passion sent His disciples paired to preach (Luke 10:1). And likewise for the commendation of social and charitable life, because men need mutual help. For which reason the Psalmist says: “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Ps. 132:1). In processions also the clerics sing, as is touched in the theme: they sing, I say, “in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord.” By song indeed is designated the joy of the heavenly fatherland, to which the procession—indeed every good action—is finally ordered.

Moreover from today’s Gospel we are taught that none but the virtuous and just make a procession pleasing to God. For in that procession celebrated in the temple of Jerusalem, when the child Jesus was offered in it, as this Gospel testifies, there were none but the virtuous and just—namely the virgin Mary, Joseph, Simeon, Anna.

Further from this Gospel we are warned to follow the virtues of that holy Simeon. Therefore let us be just in all things, showing to God due service and reverence, fulfilling the precepts of the Church, and rendering to each what we are bound to him. For justice is a virtue rendering to each what is his. Therefore it is needful to avoid every fraud, every lie, every harm of others. This however we owe to God first of all, that as all that we have and are we have received from Him, so we order all this to His worship and reverence. Moreover let us be God-fearing with Simeon, fearing God not with servile but with filial fear—namely loving and guarded lest we offend God the Creator and most pious Father in anything, lest we be ungrateful for His benefits, lest we give consent to wicked thoughts and affections; but before the Most High let us always bear ourselves fruitfully and virtuously. For filial fear of God makes a man diligent and solicitous before God. Hence Solomon speaks: “He that fears God neglects nothing”; and again, “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to decline from the ruin of death”—that is, that it make a man withdraw from the fall of sin (Eccles. 7:19; Prov. 14:27). This fear is the guardian of all the virtues. Therefore it is said: “Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long”; and elsewhere also, “If you hold not yourself constantly in the fear of the Lord, your house shall quickly be overthrown”—that is your mind, in which God dwells by grace (Prov. 23:17; Ecclus. 27:4). Therefore holy Job said: “I always feared God as waves swelling over me” (Job 31:23). David also the prophet: “Fear the Lord, all you His Saints, for there is no want to them that fear Him” (Ps. 33:10). Behold how great is the spiritual abundance of those who fear God. Moreover this Simeon was especially holy and praiseworthy because he desired the common salvation of the Israelite people, fervently desiring and expecting the coming of Christ, and for this faithfully and indefatigably praying. So therefore let us also desire not only our own but also the salvation of all neighbors, and for it faithfully labor by praying, exhorting, correcting, and living exemplarily: this is to desire the reformation and common good of the

Church, to offer prayers to God for the living and the dead, to hunger and thirst for justice; which most of all pleases God.

Further, now the properties of the turtledove are to be touched, that we also may spiritually immolate to God a pair of turtledoves. The first of its properties is that it seeks and desires a high place. So also we ought with whole hearts to desire the heavenly kingdom, and continually to ask it, saying with the Prophet: “As the hart pants after the fountains of water, so my soul pants after You, O God”; and likewise, “I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Your house, and the place where Your glory dwells” (Ps. 41:2; 25:8). The opposite of this the avaricious do, who with whole desire seek earthly things; and the luxurious, who seek carnal delights; and the proud, who in this world desire to be exalted, honored, praised. *(t. 31, p. 328)* The second property of the turtledove is that instead of song it has a groan. So also we ought to avoid vain joy, and to sigh to God, both from desire of beatitude and because of the miseries and dangers of the present life with which we are surrounded. The third is that it is a chaste bird. So also let us purge ourselves from every pollution of flesh and soul, that with clean heart and chaste body we may minister and please the Most High. The fourth is that it dwells alone. So also every Christian ought sometimes to withdraw himself from others, and in a quiet place pour out his heart before God, discuss himself, bewail his own sins, ask indulgence, grace, and virtues from the Lord, that with the Prophet he may be able to say: “I am become like a pelican of the wilderness” (Ps. 101:7). The fifth is that it fosters its young in the night. So each one ought piously to foster those committed and subject to him in adversities and tribulations, to console and strengthen them in God. The sixth, that it flees carrion. So also each one ought to avoid the companies of the wicked, lest with the perverse he be perverted and perish. If therefore we do these things, then by offering our body and soul to God we shall offer Him a pair of turtledoves.

Finally, any truly devout person can say the canticle of Simeon in his own person to this sense: “Now”—namely in the time of this grace—“You dismiss Your servant in peace”—that is in tranquillity of mind—“according to Your word”—that is, as You have promised to those hoping in You and invoking You. “Because my interior eyes” (of which the Psalmist says, “My eyes are always toward the Lord,” Ps. 24:15) “have seen Your salvation”—namely Christ, through faith and Your interior illumination. The sense of the other words remains the same which was touched in the exposition of the Gospel.

But the Church fittingly ordered that this canticle be said at Compline, because then with interior peace especially we ought to be vacant for God, to go to bed and fall asleep, and as it were to bury Christ in our breast, that in peace in the selfsame we may sleep and rest (Ps. 4:9). Then therefore let us most devoutly utter this canticle, and piously weigh and joyfully remember how holy Simeon embraced the child Jesus. Unto praise and glory, etc.

Purification — Sermon IV ad religiosos

Of how Christ is to be offered to the Father, according to the spiritual understanding of each of the things that were in the temple

(t. 31, p. 328)

“And presently the Lord, whom you seek, shall come to His temple” (Mal. 3:1).

Today the most worthy Virgin and her minister Joseph offered the boy Jesus in the material temple. And behold that Christ-bearing Virgin, that incomparable and most pure Virgin, conducted herself after the manner of other women needing purification. We on the contrary love those things with which we are daily stained—talkativenesses, voracities, dissolutions, negligences, sloths, transgressions, wanderings—so that that of Proverbs may fitly be said to us: “How long will fools desire those things which are hurtful to themselves?” Yet we do not wish to be reckoned unclean; and those things by which we could be purged we more foolishly abhor—namely: condign works of penance, thinness of food and clothing, fasts, disciplines,

watches, accusations, reproaches and contempts, fraternal corrections, just and pious paternal corrections. *(t. 31, p. 329)* What is this madness, to love the wounds of souls and to detest their remedies? And if we are dead to ourselves and to the world, as our religion pretends and our profession requires, why do we still wish to be reckoned or to appear in the world? Why do we desire to regain what we left for God, and grow weary too quickly in the way of the religion we have taken up? Let us therefore embrace first true and profound humility, the foundation of all the virtues, and let us be vile, fragile, defective, contemptible in our own eyes; and what we ourselves feel of ourselves, let us not refuse, as much as in us lies, to be felt and said of us by others—saving of course the care to be had of a good name, lest anyone be scandalized in us.

Moreover, as the childbearing Virgin today presented her Son to God the Father in that material temple; so also let us in the spiritual temple, which is our heart, every hour offer and present Christ to the eternal Father, and so spiritually celebrate frequently every day. What then is it so to offer, set, present Christ to the Father? It is devoutly to recall before God those things which the Only-begotten of God assumed, did, and endured for our salvation, and to give thanks to the Father for them; and to set all these before Him to be looked upon for our reconciliation, for grace and glory to be obtained, and humbly to beseech Him that by the virtue and merits of these things He forgive us, bestow the desired grace, and confer everlasting salvation. Hence the Apostle exhorts the Hebrews: “Let us go with confidence to the throne of His grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid”; and again, “By Him let us offer the sacrifice of praise always to God” (Heb. 4:16; 13:15).

Furthermore, as in the exterior temple the image of the Crucified hangs continually and is set before all to be looked upon, so let the image of Christ crucified for us be incessantly impressed upon our heart; and let Christ Himself by faith and charity inhabit our souls, so that we may frequently be lovingly intent upon the contemplation of His deity; and also assiduously and heartily fixed upon the meditation of His humanity and of His mysteries, especially of the Passion. Again, as in the bodily temple there is a bodily altar, so also in the temple of our soul let there be a spiritual altar, which is faith or charity. For all things ought to be done in faith, and through it and in it offered to God, the Apostle saying: “The just man lives by faith”; and, “All that is not of faith is sin.” Likewise without charity nothing is acceptable to God. And as upon the altar of holocausts there was a perpetual fire, wholly consuming the holocausts unto the honor of the divine majesty; so in our soul let there be the fervent ardor and actual heat of divine love, by which all our acts may be inflamed and informed: so that we do all things most promptly and ardently unto the honor of the supreme majesty, and in them ascribe nothing to ourselves, but every good to God with intimate and most grateful affection. Again, as that fire of the altar of holocausts consumed not only the flesh of the animals offered, but also the hairs and intestines and uncleannesses; so let there be in us so great an ardor of divine love that it not only render our acts meritorious and spiritually warm, but also wholly consume and blot out whatever unclean things are joined—that is, the venials mixed with them: since all our justices are as it were a menstruous cloth; but those mixed stains are consumed by the fervor of charity. Therefore let us pray, psalm, and discharge the Hours so devoutly, purely, intently, fervently, that in each word, verse, or clause our heart be inflamed and transferred into God; and let a spiritual flame break forth from the interior mouth of the heart, by which the mental word is uttered, ascend, and reach into heaven. For so those two holy and most elect young Brethren used to psalm, of whom in the Lives of the Fathers the most blessed abbot Macarius relates.

(t. 31, p. 330)

Furthermore, Mary is interpreted bitter sea, or illuminatrix; but Joseph, increase or addition. Therefore as the most glorious virgin Mary and Joseph carried Jesus into the temple, so let there be in us bitter compunction, cordial contrition, an inundation of tears, and also increase or addition of virtuous works, or continuation and accumulation of those things through which Christ may be brought into our hearts, that He may deign always to enter them by increases of heavenly graces, by secret visitations, sweetest unctions, and to be offered in

them to the Father. For there ought to be in us bitter compunction because of the joys of beatitude which by sinning we have lost, because of the calamities into which we have fallen for sins, because of the snares of enemies with which we are surrounded, because of the difficulties of recovering the lost happiness, with which we are filled. Likewise because of our daily and past sins there ought to be in us cordial and penitential contrition; nor let us little esteem them as little, but greatly weigh them as many and grave. For how can we reckon any sin of ours little, who shall be required to render an account of every idle word? And although venials are called little comparatively, as in respect of mortals, yet absolutely let them be reckoned great by us, most diligently beware of, strictly punished, and heartily bewailed daily—especially those for whose avoidance we have not applied great diligence. Moreover if some venials are to be called little, they will be especially those for whose prevention great diligence is applied, and which nevertheless happen from human fragility or instability; as if someone strive intently to pray or to psalm, and yet incur wandering; or while he is occupied about avoiding one venial, suddenly and unforeseen he falls into another. But he who remissly and without preparation of mind prays or psalms, and so distracted either casts his sight hither and thither while praying or psalming, or does or handles something else with his hands, or lingers in distractions without resistance, or is dissolved in laughter or cachinnations, or continues talkativeness, or conducting himself without the fear of God exceeds in food and drink, or without sufficient and reasonable cause omits to celebrate, or when the sign for rising is heard does not at once rise—such venials are not to be reckoned small or light: therefore in them let each one strongly amend himself, and with the regard and fear of God and solicitude do all things that he does.

Finally, rightly weighing the aforesaid causes of compunction and contrition, let us abound in tears, not in laughter; let us always be intent upon prayers; avoiding talkativeness, let us not spend the time of penance in levities; let us keep ourselves from the invisible adversaries by whom we are everywhere and always surrounded, continually invoking God’s help, fervently clinging to good acts, consigning ourselves by assiduous remembrance of the Lord’s Passion, continually attending to the presence of the Almighty, and honoring it according to our strength. Let us also give our neighbors good examples in all things, lest by our fault there be for them an occasion of dishonoring God and of their own hurt: yea from our words and deeds and manners let them be provoked to better things, and so mutually in every charity and concord let us walk and grow together. And on so great solemnities let us be most devout, poured out with holy joyfulness in the Lord, spending so celebrated a day with great alacrity, with just Simeon and most happy Anna spiritually embracing, praising the boy Jesus, and giving thanks to God the Father for all the benefits which through His Only-begotten He has conferred upon us, with whom and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns eternally one God almighty to be adored.

On the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Annunciation — Enarratio on the prophetic lesson in place of the epistle

(t. 31, p. 390)

“The Lord spoke to Achaz,” etc. (Isa. 7:10–15).

Rightly is this prophetic lesson read today in the office of the Mass, because what the evangelist Luke in today’s Gospel relates as done, in this prophetical lesson the prophet Isaias announced as to come. Therefore Isaias says:

The Lord spoke through Isaias to Achaz king of Juda, saying: “Ask you”—that is for your information and certification—“a sign”—that is some miraculous effect—“of the Lord your God, unto the depth of hell”—that is about the lower parts of the earth or of hell, as that the earth in some part of itself be split, and by a great chasm the underworld lie open, or a dead man rise—“or unto the height above”—that is in heaven, as that the wonted course of the sun and moon be changed or rest for a time, as was done in the time of Josue (Jos. 10:12–13). It is to be noted that this Achaz was a most wicked idolater, and unbelieving toward the true God and Isaias His minister. Whence when God through Isaias had foretold to this Achaz that the kingdoms of Syria and Samaria were soon to be ended, and Achaz had not believed, again God commanded the same Achaz to ask for himself a sign however great, that through it he might be certified of the omnipotence of God, and of the truth of His foretelling concerning the aforesaid ending of those kingdoms.

And Achaz said to Isaias: “I will not ask, and I will not tempt the Lord.” This that cunning Achaz added, lest from disobedience he seem to have said “I will not ask.” As if he should say: If I sought a sign, I would tempt God: which is forbidden in Deuteronomy (Deut. 6:16). Yet Achaz is not excused. For therefore he did not ask a sign, lest the true God be glorified in His miraculous effect. For since Achaz was an idolater, he desired not the glorification of the true God but of his idols. Yet the true God is called the Lord God of Achaz himself by reason of creation and universal empire, for which He alone is said to be God and Lord of all things.

And Isaias said, seeing king Achaz and his favorers to be obstinate and faithless: “Hear you therefore, O house of David”—that is you, Achaz, and your household and unbelieving kinsmen, who have sprung from the seed of David—“Is it a small thing for you to be grievous to men?”—that is, assuredly you reckon it little that you are grievous to me and to the other Prophets and just, speaking to you at God’s command and rebuking your sins, because you persecute us. Nor is it wonderful, “because you are grievous also to my God”—that is, so great is your perversity that you even molest God most high, that is, by sinning so gravely you have offended, that as it were after the manner of one molested He holds Himself by detesting your crimes. *(t. 31, p. 391)* Therefore, as wrath, fury, and like passions befit God not as to the affection of passion, but as to the likeness of effect (because by punishing He holds Himself after the manner of one angry): so also molestation is ascribed to God, although assuredly none of these has place in the most simple, invariable and super-blessed God.

“Therefore”—this is referred to what is said at the beginning of this lesson, “The Lord spoke to Achaz,” etc., not to the words immediately preceding, because not therefore is the following sign given them because they were grievous to men and to God—“the Lord Himself shall give you a sign,” commemorative of the past, not prognostic of the future. “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel,” that is God with us. This according to the doctrine of the most blessed evangelists Matthew and Luke was fulfilled when the most sacred virgin Mary, Gabriel the archangel announcing, conceived and bore the Only-begotten of God. Who is rightly called by all Christians Emmanuel, because He in the unity of person is God and man, and was seen among men, and conversed with them. In the Sacrament also and in

other ways He deigns incessantly to be with us.

“He shall eat butter and honey”—that is, He shall truly be man and a little infant, feeding on the wonted foods of children, namely butter and honey—“that He may know to refuse the evil”—that is to detest vices, and to condemn the errors of heretics saying that He assumed not true but fantastic flesh—“and to choose the good”—that is to prefer virtues to sins, and to approve the truth of the Catholic faith—because by eating butter and honey He showed that He had assumed true humanity. For this also He used food and drink, that coming to perfect age He might publicly preach, reproving errors and vices, teaching virtues and saving knowledge. Yet what He says “that” is taken concomitantly, not causally, because Christ from the beginning of His Incarnation had the knowledge of discerning between good and evil: therefore it is clear that He did not therefore eat butter and honey that He might know to refuse the evil and choose the good; but that refusal and election followed upon that eating.

Annunciation — Sermon I

How it became the Mother of God to be a virgin, and a pious, varied and manifold institution

(t. 31, p. 391)

“Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son” (Isa. 7:14).

It was most becoming that our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, be born of a virgin. First, that His human generation might be conformed to His divine generation, as far as possible. It therefore behooved that as Christ the Son of God had a Father without a mother in the heavens, so He should have a mother without a father on earth. Second, because this was the infinite condescension of the Son of God, that He assumed human nature to His personality, joining it to Himself immediately in the unity of person. Therefore it most highly became that nature assumed by the Son of God to be adorned and beautified on every side. To which it pertained that it be formed from the most pure bloods of the sacred Virgin. Third, since the Son of God came into the world to reform and restore the corrupt and vitiated: therefore it became Him to be born of an inviolate and most entire Virgin, that the integrity of His Mother might in no wise be corrupted from His nativity from her.

(t. 31, p. 392)

Fourth, inasmuch as Christ is true Son of God and true God, and for this of utterly infinite dignity, it by no means became His most worthy Mother to incur any loss or lessening of her dignity and purity from His Incarnation and nativity from her, but rather that through the Incarnation and nativity of the Only-begotten Son of God from her she obtain an ineffable increase of dignity and purity. Therefore it was becoming that a virgin conceive, a virgin bear, a virgin remain after birth—indeed in birth and after birth that she be ineffably purer than before.

O how inestimable is the dignity of this most elect Virgin, who has the same Son with God the eternal Father, who truly bore Him from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally! Certainly the more the Son of God emptied His immense majesty, making Himself the son of this Virgin, so much the more He dignified her thereby. Hence this most holy Virgin is of a dignity in a manner infinite, inasmuch as she is true Mother of the true God. Therefore this Virgin blessed above all women we ought after God and our Lord Jesus Christ to love, venerate and invoke before all creatures. But he most sincerely venerates her who follows her humility, piety, meekness, charity and other virtues, and continually begs her that she deign to obtain these virtues for him from Christ.

Moreover from this prophetic lesson we can draw a manifold salutary document. First, that the mercy of God toward men is very ineffable. For king Achaz was wholly vicious, unbelieving and ungrateful to God: and yet the Lord God almighty from His immense piety admonished Achaz himself to ask a sign from Him,

whether in heaven or in the underworld, that he who did not believe the bare words of God might at least believe miraculous effects.

Second is that great is the impiety of the ungrateful. Of whom some are so perverse and cunning that they adorn, palliate and hide their pravity under a certain appearance of virtues. For so some call their dissolution hilarity, their sloth discretion, their cruelty justice, their avarice and immoderate solicitude prudence. Conformably this Achaz said his disobedience was zeal of justice and observance of the divine Law, saying: "I will not ask, and I will not tempt the Lord." For by the very fact that God commanded him to ask a sign, he ought to have obeyed. Let us therefore avoid that fox-like cunning and all hypocrisy, which Christ in the Gospel very specially reproves and condemns (nor of any vice does He so much rebuke the Pharisees and Scribes as of hypocrisy: for most often He says, "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites"); and let us walk in sincerity and truth before the Most High. Therefore in the book of Wisdom it is commanded: "Seek Him in simplicity of heart" (Wis. 1:1). And in the first of Paralipomenon holy David utters: "I know, my God, that You prove hearts, and love simplicity" (1 Par. 29:17). All which are to be understood of dove-like simplicity, not asinine—that is of the simplicity which is said by exclusion of feigned doubleness and deceit, not of the simplicity which is said by exclusion of the circumspection of prudence. Moreover let us not excuse our sins, but humbly confess and aggravate them, exposing ourselves to amendment, and offering ourselves to satisfaction and correction, saying with the Psalmist: "I know my iniquity, and my sin is always against me" (Ps. 50:5); and again, "For I am ready for scourges" (Ps. 37:18).

Third document is that God just, holy and wise incomprehensibly hates sin, namely so much the more as He Himself is holier, juster and wiser. For as was clear from the text of this prophetic lesson, God so detests sin that He asserts Himself to be molested, saddened, afflicted, to labor and to fail from the sins of men: although yet He Himself the immutable and most tranquil God remains in Himself eternally equally quiet, equally glorious and delightful. *(t. 31, p. 393)* Hence also in Genesis it is read: "God seeing that the wickedness of men was great on the earth… it repented Him that He had made man… and being touched inwardly with sorrow of heart, said: I will destroy man whom I have created" (Gen. 6:5–7). Through Isaias also God speaks to the hardened people: "You have made Me to serve with your sins" (Isa. 43:24); and through Malachias He says: "You have wearied the Lord with your words" (Mal. 2:17).

Therefore let us flee sin, love purity, and most devoutly celebrate this feast of the Annunciation, by which the Virgin conceived the Son of God. It is read that Saint Leo the Pope, while still a deacon, was tempted in the flesh; and when he had cast himself before the image of the blessed Virgin and begged her help with tears, she appeared to him and said that she had received him under her protection, and that henceforth he would be chaste, and would be advanced to the summit of the supreme pontificate. Which all was so fulfilled. And when that blessed man was supreme Pontiff and celebrated, and a certain woman kissed his hand, a vehement temptation of the flesh invaded him. Which when he could not cast off, he secretly cut off his own hand, and lay down in bed. And when he was asked by the Romans to celebrate, and could no longer hide the work he had done, he turned to the most merciful Virgin, and begged her tearfully and most affectionately that she not delay to succor him. Then the most pious queen of benignity appeared to Saint Leo, and restoring the cut-off hand to its former place, perfectly cured him.

Annunciation — Enarratio on the Gospel

(t. 31, p. 393)

"The angel Gabriel was sent from God," etc. (Luke 1:26–38).

The glorious evangelist Luke in today's Gospel briefly describes the history of the present solemnity—how namely the announcement of the Incarnation of the Son of God was made to the pre-elect Virgin. Therefore Luke speaks thus:

“The angel Gabriel was sent.” Whose name is celebrated in the New and Old Testament: because in Daniel mention is made of him (Dan. 8–9); likewise Luke describes how he appeared to the priest Zachary and foretold the nativity, grace and office of John (Luke 1:11–20). *(t. 31, p. 394)* “From God” immediately, not from a superior angel, as frequently inferiors are said to be sent by superiors: which when it is done, they are sent by God mediately, by superior angels immediately. “Into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth,” which was a small city…

…of the tribe: of which tribe fornicating girls were stoned, as adulteresses of other tribes, as is clear in Leviticus. Finally Joseph the spouse of this Virgin, a just man, was of the house (that is the seed and family) of king David: of whose tribe also was the blessed Virgin. For of the same tribe commonly was either of the spouses in the Old Testament; and especially girls succeeding in the inheritance of parents were forbidden to marry except men of their own tribe, lest the distribution of lots be mixed and confused, going from tribe to tribe. Further the virgin Mary was only child to her father: wherefore she succeeded him in the inheritance.

Moreover this was of greatest condescension and emptying, that the Only-begotten of God was content to be announced by the same angel by whom John’s nativity was denounced, and likewise that He sent only one angel to announce the mystery of His Incarnation. For to this the Son of God came into this world, that in all things He might teach humility by word and work, and that through it we ought to return to eternal salvation: therefore He was content with one and a customary messenger. “And the angel being come in unto her”: assuredly (as is believed) into a secret and closed place, in which with the door shut upon her she prayed the heavenly Father in secret, and was free for contemplation (Matt. 6:6); and it is probable that the pre-eminent Virgin prayed in that hour for the salvation of the whole world and the coming of Christ. He said, with great reverence and humble bearing saluting the most sacred Virgin soon to be Mother of his God, indeed also admiring her dignity: “Hail, full of grace”—that is, without woe be you, O Mary, who are full in your soul of grace making acceptable, and of infused virtues, and of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, as an excellently heroic person. Yet she was not so full that she was not presently to be more filled; and unto the end of her life in this age she daily wonderfully grew in grace, in every perfection of virtues and gifts. “The Lord”—God one and three—“is with you” so much the more singularly the more graciously. For the fuller the Virgin’s grace stood, so much the more singular and illustrious was the consistency of God with her and in her. “Blessed are you among women”—that is more elect and blessed by God before all women: because with greater gifts both of grace making acceptable and of grace freely given she was filled or to be filled by God, and she was preordained to a greater beatitude. For she was of a dignity in a manner infinite, as was shown in the foregoing sermon. *(t. 31, p. 395)* Therefore, since the blessing of God is the conferring of His gifts and their multiplication, so much the more blessed is Mary, the more eminent and singular gifts of grace she has obtained from God. She also was so magnificently saluted by the angel not only for what she then was, but also for what she was soon to be, and what she was in the divine predestination.

“Who having heard”—that is, when the blessed Virgin had heard the aforesaid words of her excellence—“was troubled at his saying”—that is, in so excellent, unexpected and before nowhere heard angelic salutation made to her, she vehemently admired and was moved. This troubling was neither of imperfection nor of fault, but of great admiration and virginal modesty, and a certain especial change of the affective power. For since the most happy Virgin in her own eyes was least and most humble, and praiseworthily modest, she wondered at so great a proclamation of herself, the more the less she felt such a thing of herself. It is also to be considered that the holy Virgin is said troubled in the words of the angel, not in the vision of him, because (as is said) she was wont to behold angels. Yet some probably say that Gabriel the archangel appeared to her this time with much more abundant light, and more elegant apparatus and habit, as the greatness and dignity of the cause of his embassy required: therefore also in his vision she was then somewhat troubled. “And she thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be.” She did not doubt that it was true and uttered by an angelic mouth, because the gracious and wise Virgin was not

without the grace of discernment of spirits. Yet she thought of what sort this salutation was, what it pretended, whither it tended. And this was of prudence, that she did not at once answer, but thought of what sort this so most solemn salutation was, of which she reckoned herself unworthy, considering herself according to what she was in herself and of herself. After which manner Paul had said: “I am not worthy to be called an apostle” (1 Cor. 15:9). And the angel said to her: “Fear not, Mary.” He expressly names the sacred Virgin, and blandly and familiarly addresses and consoles her, as it were compassionating her tenderness and virginal modesty and troubling. And although the troubling, admiration, fear and modesty of Saint Mary were not culpable; yet the angel exhorted that they be cast off, that more divine and perfect acts might succeed—namely contemplation of divine things, thanksgiving, and also most tranquil serenity of mind in God. Why however she ought not to fear is added: “For you have found grace with God”—that is, you are accepted to God, you have obtained the piety and grace which you sought, indeed even much more. For, “Behold” a new and greatest thing, “you shall conceive in your womb,” the seal of virginity remaining safe, of the Holy Spirit, “and shall bring forth a son,” remaining entire—that is the Only-begotten of God, who shall be also your only-begotten—“and you shall call His name Jesus,” which is interpreted savior. Whence the angel said to Joseph in Matthew the first: “You shall call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21).

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High. And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father: and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. And of His kingdom there shall be no end. Not a temporal kingdom of this world—for He said to Pilate: “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). *(t. 31, p. 396)* And when the Jews would have made Him king, He fled (John 6:15). Finally, according to the doctrine of the Saints, by the very fact that Christ’s humanity is joined by hypostatic union to the eternal Word, it is preferred to every created being. Whence Christ Himself says: “The Father loves the Son: and He has given all things into His hand” (John 3:35). “And He shall reign in the house of Jacob”—that is in the hearts of the true and elect Israelites, not only of those descending corporally from the patriarch Jacob, but also of all the faithful following His virtues—“for ever”: namely now in the Church militant by faith, thereafter without end in the Church triumphant by glory. “And of His kingdom there shall be no end”—that is, of Christ’s government and presidency there shall never be a term. Or, “of His kingdom”—that is of the Church or faithful people—“there shall be no end,” because it shall endure unto the end of the world, thereafter be transferred to the heavenly fatherland, nor obtain a term. Hence in Isaias it was foretold: “He shall sit upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to establish it” (Isa. 9:7); and in Daniel: power and honor and kingdom… His power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away, and His kingdom that shall not be corrupted (Dan. 7:14).

But Mary said to the angel: “How shall this be done,” that I conceive the Son of God, “because I know not man”—that is, I have decreed and vowed not to know? For already, according to the doctors, she had promised virginity; yet, as Augustine speaks, under a most honest condition—namely unless God should otherwise dispose of her. But she asks of the manner, not of the fact according to itself, because she did not doubt of the fact, but careful of the observance of virginity she inquired the manner of the work. Yet according to Ambrose, Mary read that in Isaias, “Behold a virgin shall conceive” (Isa. 7:14); but the manner she did not read. From which it is proved that she was learned in the Law and the Prophets. For Origen also testifies that she had knowledge of the Law. Nor is it wonderful, because from her infancy unto marriageable years she had dwelt in the temple. And the angel answering said to her: “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you”—that is, shall supernaturally work in you, making you fruitful, and forming the body of Christ from your most pure bloods; “and the power of the most High”—that is the omnipotence of the supreme Father—“shall overshadow you”—that is, shall temper His immense power to your capacity, that you may be able to bear His influence and efficiency. And so immediately by Himself He shall exercise in you what He does in others through second and natural causes, namely through the mingling of male and female. Whence to intimate that Christ was born of a Mother not fecundated by a man, but by divine power acting in her, it is

written in Isaias: “And He shall grow up as a tender plant before Him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground” (Isa. 53:2). For a tender plant arises without casting of seed into the earth; likewise a root from dry earth. “And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of you”—that is Christ according to His Godhead essentially holy, to be born of you, who according to human nature is holier than all the predestined—“shall be called the Son of God” only, natural, eternal, for whom alone this so admirable conception was reserved.

Moreover, because in these words the super-blessed Trinity is distinctly expressed, it is clear that the highest Virgin before this angelic address had explicit faith and distinct knowledge of the most blessed Trinity: otherwise what the angel intimated by these words she would not have understood, but might have said what in the Acts certain ones are read to have answered the Apostle asking, “Have you received the Holy Spirit, believing?” *(t. 31, p. 397)* “But we have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Spirit” (Acts 19:2).

Thereafter, that the sacred Virgin might be more gladdened, and her devotion more inflamed, and so with most joyful and devout mind consent and conceive the Son of God, the angel proposes to her a supernatural example, that the wonderful conception to come be approved by a wonderful conception past. “And behold your cousin Elizabeth, she also has conceived a son in her old age,” notwithstanding the double natural impediment she had—namely of old age, and of natural barrenness. “And this is the sixth month” (namely March, in which I speak these things to you) “with her that is called barren”: because so long she was called, since through so many years she had been infertile; “because no word shall be impossible with God”—that is, whatever can be expressed by speech can be done by God, provided the reason of being can befit it, that is if it imply not a contradiction. For the power of God is utterly infinite, to which all things are equally easy, and which cannot do so many and so great things that it cannot do infinitely more and greater.

These things heard, the pious and teachable Virgin quickly consented. But Mary said: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord” I am; therefore to all things pleasing to Him I offer myself ready. “Be it done to me according to your word”—that is, I shall conceive the Son of God, the Holy Spirit working, as you have promised. Which said, in an instant she conceived the Son of God, so that in the same instant the body of Christ was formed, and His soul created and infused into the body, and both united to the eternal Word. Finally in this response of the sacrosanct Virgin her most deep humility is to be considered, because so sublimely saluted, so incomparably preferred to all women, so wonderfully commended, and hearing herself pre-elect as mother of the Son of God, she by no means gloried vainly, or was exalted foolishly; but so much the more she humbled herself, the more she was commended by the angel and sublimated by God, calling herself nothing other than His handmaid. So also after Christ’s Ascension she called herself His handmaid, as is clear in her letters to Saint Ignatius. For as vain men foolishly swell from their praises, so the virtuous from their praises humble themselves the more, certain that they have no good except from God, to whom each is bound to be so much the more grateful and subject, the more and better goods he has obtained from Him.

Annunciation — Sermon II

How celebrated and to be venerated by us the Lord’s Annunciation ought to be

(t. 31, p. 397)

“This is a day of good tidings: if we hold our peace, we shall be charged with crime” (4 Kings 7:9).

It is read in the fourth of Kings that the children of Israel besieged by the Syrians in the city of Samaria came to such dearth that women for the greatness of hunger killed and ate their own children. At length four leprous men remaining in that city, compelled by the greatness of hunger, went out by night into the field, that they might flee to the Syrians and be refreshed by them. And when they had come into the field, they found that the Syrians had fled, and their tents full of victuals; and thence when they had eaten, they said: “This is a day of good tidings: let us go and tell in the king’s court.” Which when they had done, the king of Israel and his people going forth found abundance of victuals, garments, arms, and other wealth. *(t. 31, p.*

398) If therefore that day was a day of "good tidings," or of a good announcement, in which was announced that escape of the children of Israel from their Syrian enemies, and a copious obtaining of temporal things: how much more is this day a day of good tidings, in which Gabriel the archangel sent from God announced to the glorious Virgin the Incarnation and birth of the Son of God from her? Through which Incarnation the whole human race was freed from invisible enemies, and filled with spiritual riches—that is with various charisms of the Holy Spirit. Therefore today holy mother Church celebrates that announcement by which God almighty through the angel Gabriel announced to the holy Virgin Christ's Incarnation or conception.

Finally this Annunciation is celebrated for us, and most worthy of every veneration. First, on the part of the principal announcer. For the whole most glorious Trinity was the principal announcer. And it is certain that God the Trinity is Lord of all, of whose majesty and excellence there is no end. We see in this age that men hold it for great when excellent persons announce something good to them by themselves or by their ministers (as if a king or duke announce something to his soldier). Do they not give thanks for the condescension and favor of their prince toward them, and serve him as they can? How much more ought we to reckon it great that God most high, Lord of all, prince of incomparable excellence, has announced to us through His minister so most desirable a good—namely Christ's Incarnation for our salvation? Of so ineffable therefore a condescension and piety of God toward us let us glory in Him, and offer Him most hearty thanksgivings, and as we can repay Him a return, by loving Him ardently, fearing Him filially, and serving Him perseveringly and reverently. For it does not suffice to thank with the mouth, but it behooves to venerate the Most High through the observance of all the precepts, because He Himself through Isaias complains of certain ones: "This people honors Me with their lips: but their heart is far from Me" (Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:8). Christ also in the Gospel rebukes such, saying: "Why do you call Me, Lord, Lord; and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Nor does it suffice to observe one or a few precepts, but all, since James the apostle protests in his epistle: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all" (James 2:10). This is against many who in their youth serve luxury and other vanities of youth, but in old age avarice.

Second, this Annunciation is celebrated and to be venerated by us on the part of what is announced, or of the thing announced—namely the Incarnation of the Only-begotten Son of God, and His other mysteries and mighty works which are touched in today's Gospel, when it is said: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father," etc. (Luke 1:32). For this blessed Incarnation of the Son of God is to be recalled and most venerable to us. First, because in itself it is utterly holy and glorious. Second, because it was done for us. Therefore the more the Only-begotten of God in this Incarnation emptied Himself for us, so much the more lovable and honorable He made Himself to us, and so much the more are we bound worthily to thank and serve Him. Third, because it is most fruitful and most salutary for us. For Christ's Incarnation is our deification, and the admirable dignification and gracious exaltation of our nature. For He was made man that we may be made gods—that is divine. He was made son of the Virgin that we may be made sons of God the Father. He inclined Himself unto the lowest, served, and deigned to die, that we may be sublimated unto the highest, and made equal to the angels in glory, and reign eternally, and be immortal and impassible in the heavenly fatherland. Behold how much we are bound to thank Christ, and how devoutly we ought to celebrate the Annunciation of His Incarnation. *(t. 31, p. 399)* But since His Incarnation will profit us nothing—indeed will be occasion of greater damnation—unless we study to live spiritually, following Christ's footsteps: therefore let us make little of temporal and carnal things, bridling the concupiscences of sensuality, conquering avarice and acedia. Let therefore our principal and highest affection be to spiritual goods, to the love of God, to progressing in every virtue and grace of the Holy Spirit, and finally to obtaining everlasting beatitude. For we have not here a lasting city (Heb. 13:14). And as James the apostle says, What is this our life, but a vapor appearing for a little (James 4:15)? Wherefore holy Job said: "Spare me, O Lord, for my days are nothing" (Job 7:16).

Third, this Annunciation stands celebrated and to be venerated for us on the part of her to whom it was made—namely the glorious Virgin, who is our queen, mother and advocate. Who as she is most specially to be loved and honored by us, so to her sublimation and grace we ought especially to congratulate. Therefore let us most affectionately and most often salute our most blessed Lady, imitate her humility, meekness, chastity, flee to her, and continually beg her help. It is read that a certain knight entered the Cistercian order, and that knight was altogether illiterate, so that he did not even know the Angelic Salutation. There was therefore assigned to him one of the monks to instruct him. But he could learn nothing except "Ave Maria." And those words he uttered so much the more frequently and fervently, the less he knew how to read anything else. And when he had died and been buried, a tree grew upon his sepulcher, on each of whose leaves was written in golden letters: Ave Maria. To which miracle many running together, at length opened his sepulcher. Which done, they saw that tree to have grown by the root from the mouth of the deceased. From which it becomes known how grateful and pleasing to God and to the blessed Virgin it is to read this Angelic Salutation devoutly and frequently.

Annunciation — Sermon III

Why enmities are between Mary and the devil, and with what arms the power of the devil is to be fought

(t. 31, p. 399)

The Lord said to the serpent: "I will put enmities between you and the woman; she shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for her heel" (Gen. 3:14–15).

(t. 31, p. 400)

The sacred history of the book of Genesis teaches how the devil through the serpent deceived our first parents, Adam and Eve: yet so that he first deceived Eve, and then through her deceived the man also. Hence God most just, under the name of the serpent cursing the devil, among other things says: "I will put enmities between you and the woman." This woman is the most holy Virgin, to whom also Christ hanging on the cross said: "Woman, behold your son" (John 19:26). Therefore between this woman incomparably blessed above all women, and the devil, God put enmities. Which enmities on the part of the devil are unjust and most evil; but on the part of the holy Virgin are just and most good.

Further for many causes enmities are said to be put between this woman and the devil. First, because this woman and the devil are mutually most unlike in themselves, and contrary: but unlikeness begets aversion, contrariety and displeasure. Indeed this woman among all pure creatures stands most humble, most meek, most merciful, most full of charity and the other virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit; but the devil stands most proud, most hostile, most cruel, most envious and most vicious. Therefore they hate each other most greatly: yet so that the blessed Virgin hates the devil with a just hatred—not as to his nature in itself, but as to his fault. Of which virtuous hatred the Prophet says: "I have hated them with a perfect hatred"; and again, "I have hated the unjust" (Ps. 138:22; 118:113). Further the devil hates the sacred Virgin with a most evil hatred as to her person or nature: whose beatitude he ineffably envies, and whom he desires utterly not to be or to be damned, or would desire if it were possible. So assuredly, the more virtuous any Christian has been, so much the more the devil hates him, and so much the more desires his ruin, and more strongly strives (as far as he is permitted) that by his temptations he overcome him. Therefore every devout Christ-faithful, desiring to please God, to persevere, to progress, ought always to be before God solicitous, guarded, and against the devil forearmed, armed and ready to fight. Wherefore the prince of the Apostles in his first epistle: "Be sober," he says, "and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Ecclesiasticus also says: "Son, when you come to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare your soul for temptation" (Ecclus. 2:1). But Paul the apostle also more fully informs us, saying: "Be strengthened in the Lord; put on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand

against the deceits of the devil; having on the breastplate of justice… in all things taking the shield of faith" (Eph. 6:10–16).

Therefore let us arm ourselves with humility against the spirit and sin of pride, with meekness against wrath, with chastity against the temptation of incontinence, with liberality and mercy against avarice and ferocity, with charity against envy, with the fervor of devotion against acedia, with the fear of God against dissolution.

Second, enmities are said to be put between the glorious Virgin and the devil because of the contrariety of their effect. For the most pious Virgin does not cease to pray for men, to succor sinners, to acquire salvation for many, to defend the Church, to confute, confound and cast down demons. *(t. 31, p. 401)* But the devil does not cease to oppose men, to tempt them, to draw many to condemnation, to molest the Church, and as far as he can to resist the blessed Virgin. But she everywhere prevails over him, and crushes his head; and is terrible to all demons, as in the Canticles it is read: "Who is she that comes forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, elect as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?" (Cant. 6:9). So also every Christian ought for his strength to resist the devil, and to work all works contrary to him, first progressing himself in grace, then cooperating with others unto salvation, praying for them, exhorting them and when they sin correcting them, and showing himself exemplary in all things.

Third, enmities are asserted to be put between the Christ-bearing Virgin and the devil, because as from the devil began the perdition of the human race (according to that of the Wise Man, "By the envy of the devil, death came into the world," Wis. 2:24), so from the glorious Virgin began salvation. For she consenting, the Son of God was incarnate, and she conceived and bore the true and perfect Savior. This therefore is that most strong woman, most full of every virtue, of whom Solomon speaks: "Who shall find a valiant woman?… She has girded her loins with strength… She has put out her hand to strong things… Strength and beauty are her clothing" (Prov. 31:10, 17, 19, 25).

Moreover, because God most high and eternal, of whose wisdom there is no end, chose this woman from eternity that He might put enmities between her and the devil; therefore when the fullness of time arrived in which was to be fulfilled what was preordained by God in His eternal wisdom (Gal. 4:4), He sent the angel Gabriel to salute and address this Virgin, saying to her the things which are read in today's Gospel. Entering therefore unto her the angel said: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28). For it was most becoming that she be filled with every grace who was to conceive the fountain of all grace, the God of glory the Son of God. Indeed, as holy Anselm says, it became her to shine with such purity than which under God a greater cannot be understood. For what would the almighty and most liberal Only-begotten of God (who gives to all abundantly, and upbraids not, James 1:5; who opens His hand, and fills every living creature with blessing, Ps. 144:16) not give to her whom He pre-elected for Himself as mother?

Moreover, when she had already conceived the Son of God and carried Him in the womb, who can think or utter with how many supernatural charisms of graces she was daily filled, how delicately and copiously—indeed also deliciously—she was spiritually nourished in mind by Him whom she corporally nourished in her womb? Truly, as blessed Ambrose says, the incomprehensible incomprehensibly worked in the mother. He filled her soul with splendors of saving wisdom, ardors of divine charity, sweetnesses of divine contemplations. For she had the best foundation of all virtues in herself—namely most deep and unshakable humility, through which she was capable of admirable grace. She was also filled with chaste modesty, most highly well-mannered, and very taciturn, indeed most sparing in words, although yet, as Saint Bridget protests, she was beyond measure eloquent.

In the aforesaid virtues therefore let us try to follow her. For if that incomparable and most holy one so most deeply humbled herself in all things—who was made Mother of God, lady of the world, queen of heaven, and empress of the angels, who never sinned—how much ought we most vile sinners, stained with innumerable vices, who also daily so frequently offend the Lord our God, to humble, cast down, despise and

reckon ourselves for nothing—indeed to judge ourselves worse and viler than every brute? Because most certainly whoever is in mortal fault is worse and viler than every beast. Which if it is so, how great is the vileness and impiety of those who have committed innumerable sins, and daily add vices to vices? One dog loves his master, from whom daily he receives the sustenance of life, a morsel of bread; and is faithful to his nourisher, and guards his house, barks against his adversaries: and wretched man is ungrateful and unfaithful to his Creator, from whom he has received so many goods, by whom he is incessantly conserved in being and living, and provided with the necessaries of life. *(t. 31, p. 402)* Therefore let us weigh these things, and before God blush and groan for our uncleannesses, vices, ingratitudes, perversities, nor delay to amend ourselves; let us ask pardon, and be composed in manners, moderate in words, and God-fearing in all things. But also let us continually beg the most benign Virgin that she deign to obtain all this grace for us from her Son the true God.

It is read that a certain rich householder and his wife, holding the most blessed Virgin in great veneration, were wont on all solemnities of the same Virgin to call together neighboring priests and parish priests, that with their own parish priest in their parish to the praise of God and of His Mother they might devoutly celebrate the divine Offices and the solemnities of Masses. Which completed, they very delicately refreshed them. And when on a certain feast the priests were performing the solemnities of Masses, it happened from the negligence of the cooks that a boiling cauldron fell, and so burned the beloved son of that householder that he presently expired, his parents being in the church and utterly ignorant of it. Wherefore the household grieving, a maidservant entered the church, and told the matter to her mistress secretly. But the mother modestly and reverently going out as if to arrange something at home, seeing her son dead, grieved greatly, and with tears placed him upon the accustomed bed, commanding all the household that before the departure of the guests they reveal to no one the deed done, lest the solemnity be turned into mourning. Then returning to the church, she heard through the solemnities of Masses. Which performed, her husband and she cheerfully received the priests, and treated them most sumptuously. And when in the midst of the feast they were joyful, the husband demanded the presence of his son, because by his good risibility and affability he was wont to provoke them to laughter and gladness. But the mother excused the absence of the son as much as she could. But the father insistently requiring that the son be brought, the mother going as if for the sake of calling him burst into weeping. And coming to the bed, she found her son altogether unhurt, and with great joy brought him wholly sound, having no sign of burning, and under the testimony of the household recited the event of the matter to all. Which known, all admired, devoutly giving thanks to Christ and His Mother.

Annunciation — Sermon IV ad religiosos

Of how full of grace and virtues Mary was; and how we ought to imitate her in faith, hope, and charity

(t. 31, p. 402)

“He shall grow up as a tender plant before God, and as a root out of a thirsty ground” (Isa. 53:2).

These words were literally predicted of Christ—namely of His conception and most pure nativity. *(t. 31, p. 403)* For as a tender plant rises and grows or ascends from earth not sown, nor prepared or fecundated by human artifice or labor; and as a root sprouts from dry earth: so the Only-begotten of God was conceived by the Virgin, and born from her, she having been made fecund by no man, nor touched by the seed of a man. It was fitting that this supernatural conception be announced by an angel, who said to the holy Virgin: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women” (Luke 1:28). For if from the beginning of the world God filled many of either sex with grace: how much more her whom He chose for Himself as mother, in whom and with whom He decreed to dwell on earth? She was therefore full of grace, because she was copiously filled with virtues and gifts, fruits and beatitudes: and as she was the highest of all, so also the humblest.

She was therefore first full of faith, because in herself she experienced what belongs to faith: indeed what she could not comprehend by reason, she felt done in herself. For she knew most certainly that she was a virgin and nevertheless had conceived the Son of God, yet she could not penetrate the Incarnation of God itself. From heavenly revelation also she knew that she was in grace, and in so illustrious a grace: which she knew could not be without the truth of faith. She also knew the other mysteries of her Son, all of which she kept and conferred in her heart (Luke 2:19). Moreover she could not waver in hope, who knew that she had brought forth the fountain of all beatitude: whence also she prophesied that she would be beatified by all generations (Luke 1:48). Nor was she ignorant that she would be exalted above all the orders of the superior spirits. Nor is it doubtful that she was most ardent in charity, since she knew herself so supremely pre-elected by God, and that so incomparable benefits had been conferred upon her by Him, and so sublimely contemplated the very goodness of God, and so supremely experienced His sweetness. Moreover, since between God and us nothing separates, nor does anything impede the infusion of His gifts from us, except our sins: who can suffice to think how full of grace she was, with how high excellences of virtues the most worthy Virgin was adorned, in whom no fault at all, no negligence ever had place? Hence it is known that she grew inestimably every day in every gift of the Holy Spirit, in every grace and virtue, in the beatitudes and fruits of the Spirit. And in her is supremely fulfilled what the Savior says: “To him that has, it shall be given, and he shall abound” (Matt. 25:29). For the more perfect and fervent anyone has been, the more and more easily he can advance every day, and unless he has been negligent, he advances more and more easily; but some from their negligence are gradually emptied.

Let us therefore imitate at least somehow the faith of the most glorious Virgin, and so most certainly believe the gospel of Christ, as if we had bodily seen, as much as could be done, all things written in it presentially. Let there also correspond in us to the height of faith the height of devout conversation, that by work we truly show that we have most certain faith, and await from God so great and ineffable goods. For if according to the teaching of the Saints he is not truly a Christian from whose conversation the truth of the Christian faith does not shine forth, so that whoever looks upon his life is compelled to confess that the law which institutes such a life is holy; he who does not fulfill what the chief Apostle exhorts, “This is the will of God, that by doing well you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men”; who among the wicked does not shine as a luminary of life (whence also Paul admonishes us, “Sound speech, irreprehensible, that he who is on the contrary part may be afraid, having no evil to say of us”): how much more is such a one unworthy to be called religious or monk?

Finally, since faith without works is asserted to be dead (James 2:26), the faith of each has only so much of liveliness as it has of correspondence and efficacy of virtuous works. That therefore we may show ourselves to have living faith through all things, let us adorn it everywhere with holy acts. *(t. 31, p. 404)* And is not that negligence to be pitied, that although we undoubtingly believe that no good remains unremunerated by God, and no vice unpunished, and that we can every hour lay up so great a reward in heaven, and that the most high God continually looks upon our whole life, and that the business of our salvation is so arduous that for us the Only-begotten of God the Father was incarnate, conversed in this world and was crucified, so that after this most brief life we must either be saved forever or perpetually condemned; and of this faith we already have more testimonies, and more altogether fit witnesses, than we ourselves who believe consist of; that, all these things notwithstanding, we are still negligent and idle—especially when we see with the eye that those who according to Christ’s law and faith have served God perfectly have been so glorified and exalted by the Almighty, who has demonstrated to us their invisible beatitude by so many and so great visible and infallible signs?

Let us therefore come to our senses, and abound every hour in holy works, and begin them promptly and fervently. For which reason in the second book of Chronicles it is said: “Take courage, and let not your hands be weakened: for there shall be a reward for your work.”

Furthermore let us be constant and firm in hope, because on God's part there will be no defect of our salvation. Therefore by good works let us make our vocation sure (2 Pet. 1:10). And since the actions and sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the future glory and reward (Rom. 8:18), let us act manfully and let our heart be strengthened (Ps. 30:25), and most patiently endure whatever adversity occurs. For that which at present is light and momentary of our tribulation works an eternal weight of glory in us (2 Cor. 4:17), and of good labors the fruit is glorious and eternal. For for this little service which we render to God we hope to be happy, happily to reign, clearly to see the essence of the supreme Deity, and fully to enjoy His sweetness—not indeed for a hundred or a thousand years, or ten thousand years only, but truly and most securely forever. But alas, how great is our ingratitude and slowness! Because even seculars and the poor of this world labor and endure more fervently, more strongly, and more patiently for transitory gain than we for God and the everlasting reward. Let us therefore repent, and look upon how most fervently and instantly our predecessors the holy Fathers labored, and every day with fresh fervor let us follow them.

Moreover let us be ardent and robust, growing and pure in charity; let us so ardently and sincerely love that highest and incomparable good by which we were created and are conserved in being, whose benefits we incessantly use, which is of incomparable lovableness, that we may be wounded and languish with its love, and be worthy to say with the Spouse of the eternal King: "Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples: because I languish with love" (Cant. 2:5). Let us see and be ashamed, because the children of this world, unclean lovers, love their vain and vile, carnal and impure objects more than we love the Lord our God, a good omnifariously and perfectionally infinite, whose most splendid essence is supersubstantially good, pure, and interminate. Do not many in the world so affect one another with sensual love that they can scarcely rest or sleep or eat, and at nocturnal hours run about that at least for a little they may converse; and whatever they do or suffer, are mindful of their object? And how are we so weak and cold in the love of the highest good, that even at the time of divine things, at the time of prayers and psalmody and celebration, we are distracted on every side, and are not fixed in Him; and so beastlike fill ourselves with food and drink that we are rendered somnolent, lazy, and garrulous, and are greatly hindered from divine worship? Let therefore our heart groan, and raise itself upward; let it contemplate the incomparable goodness, lovableness, beauty, holiness, wisdom, piety, sweetness, beatitude of God; by contemplating be kindled; by kindling be delighted; by delighting cultivate and with all its strength always honor the Lord God most high and adorable; so that whatever it undertakes or works, it be mindful of Him, and rest in Him its last end, the most excellent good.

(t. 31, p. 405)

Finally, since God, the Only-begotten of God, who deigned to be the son of the most blessed Virgin, made that most glorious Virgin, His most pure Mother, before all pure creatures unspeakably honorable and lovable: therefore after God let us most singularly love her, and with the cult of hyperdulia most affectionately venerate, praise, invoke, follow her—both because in herself she consists so preeminently lovable, so preeminently fair, perfect, divine, and excellent, and especially because she is mother of the true God; both because through her God has shown us so many goods, so many benefits, so great mercy; both because she herself also has been and is so beneficent, so most merciful and most faithful to us, and because she herself is our mother, advocate, protectress, and in all things our helper, and after God our singular hope, as the secondary and chief object of our hope after God. To whose inestimable beatitude let us congratulate with our whole hearts. Let us also follow her modesty, humility, patience, and pudor in all things.

On the Solemnity of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Visitation — Enarratio on the Gospel

(For the enarratio of the lesson in place of the epistle, “I as a vine have brought forth a pleasant odor,” etc., with its sermon, see above on the solemnity of the Conception of the most glorious ever-virgin Mary.)

(t. 32, p. 230)

“And Mary rising up, went into the hill country,” etc. (Luke 1:39–47).

In this Gospel the holy evangelist Luke most sententiously writes how the most worthy Virgin, the Only-begotten of God having been conceived, set out to visit her kinswoman holy Elizabeth, whom she knew to have conceived the precursor of Christ. Therefore Luke says:

“Mary rising” from the place in which the archangel Gabriel had announced to her the conception of Christ. For when Mary had said to the angel, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord,” etc. (Luke 1:38), the angel presently departed from her, and then she rising from that place, and from the quiet of her prayer and contemplation, “went into the hill country”—that is through mountainous and rough places (through which the going is difficult in ascending) with which Judea is full—“with haste.” From which it is clear that from the recent conception she was not weighed down nor afflicted, as is the custom of other women, but rather lightened, made more agile and more joyful. Nor is it wonderful, because she carried Him who carried her—namely Christ, who as the Apostle testifies to the Hebrews is the brightness of glory, upholding all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3). She therefore went “with haste,” because according to Ambrose she was not gladly long in public, and to be frequently seen by many displeased her. And because she was already full of spiritual joy and of the fervor of holy devotion and the ardor of love, she was moved swiftly; and likewise from special love of her holy kinswoman, to whom she wished to rejoice with and to serve, and desired both her and her offspring from the presence of Christ her Son to be poured through with ampler gifts of grace, as also was done. “Into a city of Juda”—that is a city pertaining to the kingdom and tribe of Judah. And by this city some understand the city of Jerusalem, which was the metropolis in Judea: through which city they say holy Mary passed toward the city in which Elizabeth dwelt, which they say was about four or five miles beyond Jerusalem, coming from Nazareth, from which the virgin Mary came. Yet by the city of Juda can be understood the city in which the parents of Saint John dwelt. “And she entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth”: according to that of Ecclesiasticus, “Be not ashamed to salute a friend” (Ecclus. 22:31). And (as Ambrose says) she first saluted her kinswoman. For she was most humble: because it befits that every virgin be so much the humbler, the more chaste she is, lest by the demerit of her elation she deserve to be tempted, and to be left by God and to fall.

(t. 32, p. 231)

“And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant”—namely John—“leaped in her womb.” Of which leaping many things have been said a little before, in the sermons on most blessed John the Baptist. It is indeed to be held that miraculously he knew the Incarnation and presence of the Son of God, and from the apprehension of so great a good he rejoiced truly and vehemently—indeed so strongly that the joy of the mind overflowed into the body, and by the motion of the body he showed his gladness and honored the presence of Christ. Hence Ambrose says that as Elizabeth sensed the coming of Mary, so John that of Christ.

“And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit”—that is endowed with greater grace and joy when the Mother of Christ came to her carrying the Savior in her womb, than she had been before, especially because she had sensed her little infant in her womb leaping from the presence of the holy Virgin and of Christ. Nonetheless before this hour holy Elizabeth was full of the Holy Spirit according to some degree of this

fullness. Indeed she was a perfect and holy woman before this hour, since Luke says that both, namely Zachary and she, were just before God, walking in all the justifications of Him—that is the observances of the commandments—without blame (Luke 1:6). But it is the custom of Scripture to say a man is filled with the Holy Spirit when he is filled with notably more exuberant grace. Whence also in the Acts it is asserted: "When they had prayed, the place was moved wherein they were assembled, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:31)—which is said of those first faithful who on the day of Pentecost had been filled with the Holy Spirit.

Therefore holy Elizabeth cried out with a loud voice and said: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." *(t. 32, p. 232)* And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold as soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed are you that have believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to you by the Lord.

And Mary said: "My soul does magnify the Lord." And she magnified Him with most hearty affection, as also the Ecclesiasticus man says: "My soul shall praise the Lord even to death" (Ecclus. 51:15). And in the Psalm: "Bless the Lord, O my soul" (Ps. 102:1–2). "And my spirit has rejoiced"—that is my mind or soul, or my soul inasmuch as rational—"in God my Savior"—that is the object and cause of my salvation. Further soul and spirit are really the same, but differ by reason: for soul is said inasmuch as it animates, informs, vivifies the body; but spirit is called because of the subtlety of its nature, and because it contemplates heavenly things. Finally, the spiritual joy of which Saint Mary now speaks proceeds from the knowledge and love of the true and the good—namely of God and of His benefits and promises. Therefore the more sublime the most glorious Virgin was in the contemplation of God, and the more fervent in His love, and also the more brilliant the benefits she knew to have been conferred on her by the Lord, and the greater the beatitude prepared, so much the more vehemently she gloried in God as in cause, object, and end.

Visitation — Sermon I

How great honor is to be shown to the Mother of God, with imitation of her virtues

(t. 32, p. 233)

"Blessed are you among women" (Luke 1:42).

Just as the glorious Virgin is holier than the other holy and blessed women, and fuller of every grace, so it is just and fitting that a more solemn and more frequent festivity concerning her be kept in the Church of God. Hence the Roman pontiff Urban VI, in the eleventh year of his pontificate, instituted that concerning the Visitation of the sacred Virgin, by which she visited her kinswoman Elizabeth, a solemnity be observed in the Church, and thence through the octaves a memorial be had, and also on the vigil a fast be kept by the faithful. And that the faithful might celebrate this feast with readier and more fervent heart, he conferred the same indulgences on those observing the solemnity—especially on the truly penitent and confessed—both on its vigil and on the feast and through its octaves, which Pope Urban IV conferred on those observing the solemnity of the institution of the sacrament of the Eucharist, namely: a hundred days of indulgences to those present at First Vespers, and as many to those present at Matins of the feast itself, and also as many to those present at the office of Mass, and as many to those present at Second Vespers. But to those present at Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Compline, for each of those Hours he conferred forty days. But to those present at the office of Matins, Mass, Vespers and the other aforesaid Hours through the octaves, for each day he granted indulgences of a hundred days. And when the aforesaid Urban VI, before the execution of the aforesaid institution of the present feast, had entered the way of all flesh, his successor Pope Boniface commanded that institution to be put into execution. Let us therefore most devoutly celebrate so great a solemnity, that we also may deserve to be spiritually visited by the most benign Virgin, the Mother of Christ, and in the hour of

death to be defended and received by her.

Finally in the book of Esther it is read that king Assuerus, knowing that Mardochaeus the Jew had shown him a certain special fidelity, wishing therefore to honor that Mardochaeus magnificently, said to Aman, whom he had set over all the princes of his empire: “What ought to be done to the man whom the king desires to honor?” He answered: “The man whom the king wishes to honor ought to be clothed with the king’s apparel, and to be set upon the horse that is of the king’s saddle, and to receive the royal diadem upon his head, and the first of the king’s princes hold his horse, and going through the streets of the city cry and say: Thus shall he be honored whomsoever the king will honor” (Esther 6). If therefore Mardochaeus deserved so great honor for the fidelity which he showed to king Assuerus, who can conceive, or who will be able to express, of how great veneration the most sacred virgin Mary is worthy, whom the King of ages, immortal, invisible, God, the Only-begotten Son of God (1 Tim. 1:17), chose and assumed to Himself as mother, who also from the beginning of His nativity from her unto His passion and death on the cross continually stood by Him with inestimable charity and supreme fidelity? She therefore was worthy to be clothed with royal garments—that is with most excellent adornments of grace and of the virtues, as in the Psalm it is said of her to God: “The queen stood on your right hand in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety” (Ps. 44:10). She was also worthy to receive a royal diadem on her head, as is related in the Apocalypse: “A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (Apoc. 12:1). *(t. 32, p. 234)* Which is spiritually explained of the glorious Virgin.

Moreover this most holy Virgin ought to be set upon the horse that is of the king’s saddle: by which horse is fittingly understood the choir or order of preachers and prelates, whose it is to carry the name of God about everywhere and to announce it to others. Therefore the whole of these ought spiritually to carry the Christ-bearing Virgin to their subjects, by intimating to them the excellence and sanctity of the blessed Virgin. The first also of the king’s princes—that is the Roman Pontiff, who is the highest vicar of Christ, and the father, prelate, and hierarch of all prelates and princes of this age—ought to hold this horse, that is to direct preachers and prelates, and through their mouths to cry and say: Of this honor the pre-elect Virgin, mother of life, is worthy, whom the King of heaven Christ her Son wills to honor and to be honored by all.

Moreover, honor is due especially to dignity and sanctity, but also to an original principle and liberal beneficence. First therefore the most blessed virgin Mary is to be honored by us by reason of her dignity: which dignity is the maternity of God, by which she is co-parental with the eternal Father—that is parent of the same Son of whom He also is father. By this wonderful dignity she is more excellent than every pure creature, and preferred to all created things, as lady of the angels, queen of the heavens, empress, mother and advocate of all men. Therefore the more worthy she is, so much also the more honorable, nor can we sufficiently praise and venerate her. Whence, as after God she stands most worthy, so after God we ought most of all to honor, love, and praise her. Hence among religious there is a praiseworthy custom that as often as they hear her named or name her by her name which is Mary, they reverently incline with their head. Second she is to be honored by us by reason of her most excellent sanctity, which is of such kind and so great that the sanctity of no pure creature can be compared to it. Indeed, as devout Anselm says, she shone with such purity that under God a greater cannot be understood. If therefore every Saint, every angelic spirit is to be honored by us for his sanctity, how incomparably more ought we to venerate most holy Mary, shining with the highest purity and sanctity under God? Third she is to be honored by us by reason of her principal property—namely because she is the spiritual mother of us all: because through her we have been reformed and repaired, as through Eve we were lost and damned (Gen. 3:6). For she bore us the Savior and Redeemer, whose most holy body was taken from her most pure bloods. Fourth, by reason of her most liberal beneficence. She indeed is our most generous, unfailing, and most pious, most faithful and most loving benefactress, from whom we have received so many goods, from so many dangers we have been snatched and preserved, who continually prays for us, and obtains for us various charisms of graces. For also the God

of glory, naturally and infinitely good, has committed to her the kingdom of mercy, and she is inestimably filled with all piety and mercy.

But how ought we to venerate her? Assuredly by fasting in her honor, by assiduously saluting her with the Angelic salutation, by praising and invoking her, by inclining in her reverence, bending the knees, and humbly prostrating the whole body on the earth, by reading her Hours, and by frequenting the divine Offices on her solemnities. Yet neither do these suffice, unless we also imitate the virtues of the most sacred Virgin—humility, patience, charity, the affection of devotion, and her other holy works—lest she also say of us: "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:8); indeed by works they offend and dishonor Me, while they transgress the precepts of Christ My Son. Therefore let us consider, embrace, follow her virtues and holy works; let us weigh how much she by her most deep humility pleased God, who looking upon the humility of His handmaid advanced her into His own mother, and having become her Son subjected Himself to her (Luke 1:48, 51). *(t. 32, p. 235)* Let us consider the bowels of mercy of the sacred Virgin: that she despises, casts off, abandons no one fleeing to her—however vicious, foul, vile, ungrateful, and impious—provided he beg her help from the heart and fixedly, and try to amend himself. Therefore let us also be merciful and placable, however much we may have been offended or dishonored; let us also faithfully look upon the charity, meekness, purity of our lady and queen, and perseveringly follow them to the praise of the Most High.

When Julian the most wicked emperor was going with his army to fight against the Persians, and had come to the city of Caesarea, in which Saint Basil was then bishop, he threatened that same Basil, a most holy man, that on his return he would utterly destroy his city. And when he had gone away, the holy bishop Basil called together all his people, commanding them that for three days insisting on fasts and prayers they should ask the help of God against the most impious emperor. While they were still so doing, blessed Basil saw in a vision the glorious Virgin standing in the midst of the heavenly host and saying: "Call Mercury to Me, that he go and kill Julian." Now that Mercury was a soldier and martyr whose body with his arms had been laid in the church of Saint Basil. Waking therefore, happy Basil entered the church, and not finding the body of Saint Mercury the martyr, believed the vision, and went to his people and told them the vision. Who rejoiced greatly, and returned devout thanks to God. A little after, Basil returning to the church found the body of Saint Mercury and his lance wet with blood, and gave immense thanks to God. And when Saint Basil with the people was keeping festival for four days, one of Julian's ministers came and said to all: When Julian was beside the river Euphrates, a certain unknown soldier coming with his arms pierced him with his lance with a strong and terrible thrust, and at once disappeared. But that most wretched Julian, sending forth a dire and horrible cry, expired with a blasphemous shout; for he said: "You have conquered, Galilean, you have conquered."

Visitation — Sermon II

Of the humility and discretion of blessed Mary, and how she is to be imitated

(t. 32, p. 235)

"He has regarded the humility of His handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" (Luke 1:48).

These are the words of Mary the Christ-bearer, thanking God, the Son of God, with most devout heart for all His benefits, especially for this—that He deigned to be incarnate from her and to become her Son. Wherefore the most holy Virgin, filled with prophetic spirit, foretold that she would be beatified, praised, and most greatly honored by all the nations of the world, as the true parent of the true God. For she foresaw in spirit that the Gospel of Christ her Son was to be preached through the whole world, and that the world was to believe in Christ (Mark 16:15).

Moreover, from today's Gospel many most salutary documents are drawn. First is the greatest humility of the glorious Virgin, who when she had been made Mother of God nonetheless hastened to her kinswoman, visited her and ministered to her (Luke 1:39–40). Therefore let not prelates and other superiors disdain to go to inferiors, to minister to them, succor them, stand by them, especially when they are sick. *(t. 32, p. 236)* Hence in Ecclesiasticus it is written: "Be not slow to visit the sick: for by these things you shall be confirmed in love" (Ecclus. 7:39). Whence Christ on the day of judgment is to say to the reprobate: "I was sick, and you did not visit Me" (Matt. 25:43). Where by Himself sick He understands His members—namely the faithful and poor sick. And again in Ecclesiasticus it is said: "The greater you are, humble yourself in all things" (Ecclus. 3:20).

Second is the great discretion of the most holy virgin Mary: who although she was given and clinging to the acts of the contemplative life, and in her secret most gladly free for such things, nonetheless went out into public, and by so long a journey visited her kinswoman already with child. By which we are taught that when fraternal charity and the necessity of neighbors demand, devout persons and lovers of the contemplative life should interrupt their contemplative exercises for a time, and take up the good works of the active life, by succoring neighbors, or doing other things which are enjoined on them or reasonably asked of them. The third document is that women should show themselves serviceable to their pregnant kinswomen after the example of the sacred Virgin.

Moreover, by this that our most blessed Lady went with haste (Luke 1:39), girls and women are taught not to remain long outside the house if they can avoid it, and a reasonable cause does not require otherwise, nor to chatter in public. For to the feminine sex belong modesty, fear, custody, silence, and being at home. Wherefore in Ecclesiasticus it is had: "Grace upon grace is a holy and shamefaced woman" (Ecclus. 26:19). Against which of the evil woman Solomon says: "A wandering and a garrulous woman, impatient of quiet, and not able to abide still at home, now abroad, now in the streets, now lying in wait near the corners" (Prov. 7:10–12). Of such also the Apostle says to Timothy: "They learn to go about from house to house, and are not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not" (1 Tim. 5:13). They are therefore to be restrained from spectacles and dances, from talkativeness, boldnesses, and runnings about.

Finally from this that the blessed Virgin first saluted Elizabeth, let the faithful learn also that juniors and lesser persons ought to show reverence to seniors and greater, and first to salute them. Ambrose also notes that Mary first saluted, because she was humbler. Fourth, from this that at the voice of Mary's salutation John leaped in the womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, we are taught how salutary and fruitful is the presence and conversation of the holy and devout. For as the presence of the wicked infects, so the presence of the good edifies and inflames. Fifth, Elizabeth cried with a loud voice, blessing Mary and the fruit of her womb, acknowledging her the Mother of her Lord, and proclaiming her blessed because she believed: from which we learn to congratulate the gifts of God in others, not to envy them, and to confess with mouth what we hold by faith.

Moreover Elizabeth, hearing Mary's salutation, did not envy her dignity but with a loud voice beatified her and confessed her the Mother of her Lord. *(t. 32, p. 237)* From which the humble learn not to prefer themselves rashly to others. For if others have done something evil, one will think that perhaps they have repented: therefore he will not hasten to judge them rashly. But, alas! many are blinded, doing the opposite of this, and if there be any eminence in them, they look upon this and weigh it more than it is; so they glory and are lifted up as if they had it from themselves, not weighing what the most wise Apostle says: "What have you that you have not received? And if you have received, why do you glory as if you had not received it?" (1 Cor. 4:7). Further they consider others as to those things in which perhaps they are inferior to them, although according to truth, and speaking simply, those others are much better, more perfect, and more honorable: as if one perhaps be richer or nobler in flesh, or more ingenious, more eloquent or more beautiful (which are goods of fortune or of nature, by which a man does not please God, nor are of any reputation in

respect of the gifts of grace and of the virtues), such a one prefers himself to another because he is poorer, ignobler, duller, less eloquent or more deformed, although that other be much humbler, more God-fearing, more devout, and greater in the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, understanding and counsel. Therefore he unjustly and foolishly prefers himself, judges fatuously, swells damnably. Finally we know not the hidden goods of others, and of what sort they are in the predestination of God we are utterly ignorant. Why then do we prefer ourselves to them, when we know not whether we are in charity and grace, and in divine predestination or reprobation? Let each therefore be always God-fearing and humble; indeed let him judge himself unworthy of the company of others.

Lastly, weighing the infinite goodness, perfection and beatitude of God, and pondering all His mercy and beneficence toward us, let us magnify the Lord with the Christ-bearing Virgin, and glory in Him: so that in holiness and justice we may continually serve Him (Luke 1:74–75), and by deeds more than by words protest and demonstrate how truly and most highly the Lord our almighty God is to be feared, honored and loved; and thereby edify others and lead them to the fear, love and reverence of God. For therefore the Savior says: “So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). But they who do not so, but live impiously, and do not fear to scandalize others, as much as in them lies despise God, make little of Him and stain Him. For as much as in them lies, by their works they show that God is not to be feared, loved and venerated; they also incite others to the dishonor and contempt of God. Whence through Ezechiel the prophet He frequently upbraids the criminal Jews that they have polluted His name among the nations (Ezech. 36:20–23). O how ungrateful are such to their own Creator! But let us imitate the highest Virgin, magnifying God with whole hearts; nor yet let us think that we do anything worthy, because He is infinitely worthier of reverence and love than anyone can show Him. Hence in Ecclesiasticus it is written: “The Lord is terrible, and exceeding great, and His power is wonderful. Glorify the Lord as much as ever you can, for He will yet far exceed. Blessing the Lord, exalt Him as much as you can: for He is above all praise” (Ecclus. 43:31–33).

(t. 32, p. 238)

It is read that a certain Jewish boy, induced by Christian boys his age-mates to this—that entering the church with them he should receive with them the Body of Christ from the priest—and returning home told it to his father: who for that, indignant and raging, cast his own son into a burning furnace. Which being known, the boy’s mother running to the furnace desired to draw the boy out: which when she could not, she wailed miserably, so that Christian neighbors running up, and seeing what the cause was, the fire having been drawn back, found the boy as it were reclining upon most soft feathers. And when they had drawn the boy out and blessed the Lord, they cast the boy’s father into the furnace. Who was at once consumed by the fire, so much that scarcely anything of his bones seemed to have remained. And they asked the boy how he remained unhurt in the fire. He answered: That venerable Lady sitting with a little Child placed in her lap, in a chair, in the basilica where from the table I received bread, covered me with her mantle and defended me from the fire. Then the boy with his mother was made a Christian. Many Jews also in that city were converted by this miracle. To the praise of the Most High.

Visitation — Sermon III ad religiosos

Of the joyful and useful Visitation of blessed Mary; likewise of the commendation of solitude, silence, and the desire of heavenly things

(t. 32, p. 238)

“And Mary rising up, went into the hill country with haste” (Luke 1:39).

Having conceived within herself the Only-begotten of God, the most pure Virgin, not yet burdened in body but exhilarated in mind, went with haste into the hill country to visit holy Elizabeth. For as she rejoiced in the

Lord over her own most supernatural fecundation, and rendered Him most heartfelt thanks, as she testified in her canticle, saying, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46–47), so she rejoiced with Elizabeth her kinswoman over Elizabeth’s supernatural fecundation in God. Although the impregnation of Elizabeth was supernatural and miraculous—since she had a twofold cause of infecundity, namely an innate cause of sterility and old age—nevertheless the fecundation of most sweet Mary was far more supernatural and incomprehensible. First, because she knew not man. Second, because she conceived a person already preexisting. Third, because she conceived not just any such person, but the true God: which is more wonderful than every wonder. Finally Mary gloried in her so most supernatural fecundation, not only insofar as that fecundation was an admirable and most illustrious exaltation of her person, but especially and greatly insofar as it was the beginning of the salvation of the whole human race.

She went therefore with a most joyful mind, with most devout alacrity, into the hill country. But whence did she go? Surely from the place in which she sat, diligently given to contemplation and prayer, in which also the Lord’s Annunciation was made to her. Although therefore she was most modest, and most gladly would lie hid in her secret (for in it she felt inestimable divine consolations in abundance), and was in an unspeakable manner most fitted for the exercises of the contemplative life; nevertheless charity impelling her, piety moving her, reason dictating, rising from the secret of her dwelling and quiet and contemplation, she took the journey to her kinswoman, that she might congratulate her, serve her, and spiritually profit her. *(t. 32, p. 239)* For how much the presence of Mary and of Christ conceived in her, and her remaining three months, conferred upon aged Elizabeth and upon the little infant latent in her, is clear from this: that from the first entrance of blessed Mary to holy Elizabeth the holy infant John was at once illuminated, prevented by reason, and rejoiced in a wonderful manner, and his mother Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and touched with the grace of prophetic revelation. O how much old Elizabeth was daily edified in the most sacred young woman Mary the Christ-bearer! How much the daily prayer and hospitality of the most excellent Virgin profited Elizabeth and her little infant and her husband! How great an increase of grace Elizabeth merited every day by treating so lovingly and reverently and so most humbly the most holy Virgin, especially because of Christ’s presence in her, and because she knew that she had conceived the Only-begotten of God!

Now therefore let us draw all these things to our own information; and that we may be able healthfully to rise and go out, and fruitfully to approach others, let us first learn with the most wise and most devout Virgin to sit well and virtuously, and gladly and cheerfully to rest in the secret of the cell, and there to draw from the fountain of graces and gather within what in fitting place and time we may pour out and communicate to our neighbors—not only by speaking, but also by the beauty of manners, the gravity of silence, the irreprehensibility of works, showing ourselves exemplary and fruitful to them, according as the prince of the Apostles admonishes: “As every man has received grace, ministering the same one to another”; and again, “From your good works considering you, let them glorify God” (1 Pet. 4:10; 2:12). And so according to Solomon’s teaching, “Let our fountains be conveyed abroad” (Prov. 5:16). And as the Savior commands: “Let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify the Father” (Matt. 5:16). Is not the honesty of manners a beautiful light, the seemliness of gestures, the beauty of the composition of the members and of the whole body, the maturity of gait, and also the alacrity of good acts? This is the exterior moral beauty which delights those who look upon it and edifies those who behold it. Let therefore nothing of levity, nothing of insolence, nor unrest of bodily motions appear in us.

Moreover, how we ought to sit virtuously and reside delightfully in the cell, holy Jeremiah teaches, saying: “He shall sit solitary, and hold his peace: because he has taken it up upon himself” (Lam. 3:28). It belongs therefore to solitaries, yea and to all religious, to sit, to be silent, and to lift themselves above themselves. To sit (I say)—that is, to rest wholly from the tumults of this world and from worldly works, and also corporally to remain gladly in one’s little dwelling as much as can conveniently be done, and to avoid running about and

going out: because in one's secret one can be intent upon God much more quietly, purely, stably, and devoutly. But when one has gone outside, occasions of wanderings and unrests quickly meet him. Hence a certain devout man discoursed: The fountain and origin of all goods is that a monk sit continually in his cell. For as holy Anthony protests, as deadly as it is for fishes to remain out of the water, so dangerous is it for a monk to linger outside the cell. Experience also teaches that the more diligently anyone avoids occasions of going out of the cell, the more gladly and delightfully in a short time he remains in it. But if he makes a habit of going out easily, he quickly begins to abhor it. Finally even in the cell itself we ought not to move hither and thither without reasonable cause, or be superfluously occupied in exterior things, nor do anything empty or curious, but rather sit, stand, or rest for meditating, praying, writing, reading, psalming, and contemplating—unless some other manual work is enjoined upon someone, or is necessary, or presses upon him.

(t. 32, p. 240)

Moreover we ought to be silent, because the holy Fathers ranked the observance of silence among the regular observances as one of the chief, and sanctioned that its violation be soon punished heavily enough by the proclamation of one's own fault and the public reception of the discipline in chapter: whereas men of mature age are not wont to be stripped of the back and beaten with rods except for very enormous excesses. It is therefore most wicked in a religious easily to break silence, or frequently to use even few words without necessity and leave. From which detestable custom a man is so blinded that although he frequently truly breaks his silence by few words (since every speech having of itself an intelligible sense, spoken without leave, is to be reckoned a breaking of silence), yet he does not attend to this, nor confesses his fault thence, nor receives the discipline. Let him who is such see how that can be excused from mortal sin. But some, because they have often broken silence, proclaim their fault only once, saying in general, "I have broken silence"; whereas they ought to express the times, places, and persons. These do not keep their souls from straits and contaminations, because they do not refrain their mouth nor moderate their lips, and often are to others an occasion of like fault, distraction, unrest, indevotion, and scandalize many. Let these transgressors therefore return to the heart, and keep their tongues, and restrain themselves in sight and every sense. Furthermore, as before men we are silent with the mouth from words, so with the mind before God let us be silent from vain, unfruitful, fantastic, and perverse thoughts, and from every affection that is not good, from the tumult of wicked desires, from the remembrance of injuries, from the relapse of interior faults.

Furthermore, since man alone is either a god or a beast, lest we remain beastlike in the cell, let us in it lift ourselves above ourselves—not by elation lifting ourselves up, nor by presuming upon our merits, or thinking magnificently of ourselves, but by aspiring to God, contemplating eternal things, tasting how sweet the Lord is, considering how supremely and infinitely good, lovable, beautiful, powerful, wise, pious, just, perfect, and happy is the Lord God our Maker, and by loving Him with all our strength, and embracing Him within us with the arms of charity, and by panting most fervently for His clear intuition, happy fruition, everlasting and most secure possession, that we may desire to be dissolved and to be with God (Phil. 1:23); and every hour, as we continually draw near to the natural death of the body, so incessantly and fervently let us draw near to the beatific life of the soul: and this by continual exercises of the aforesaid acts.

Furthermore, when we have thus sat in secret with the most blessed virgin Mary, and have lingered in the acts of the contemplative life, let us rise when cause requires, obedience demands, reason asks, to the works of the active life, to counsel, help, and serve our neighbors; nor let us remain with them longer than is fitting and expedient, but let us hasten to return to our secret, where in the hidden place of God's face we may be free for God.

Finally, let us go into the hill country, to the summits of the virtues, to spiritual progresses, to heavenly theories, that every day we may strive with all diligence to advance in every humility, patience, meekness, devotion, love, constancy, purity, justice, piety: and let each one stand continually upon the custody of his

heart (Hab. 2:1), and frequently and vigilantly examine his conscience, which also let him not delay to purge, adorn, and cultivate. Yet let us not be so affected to the aforesaid exercises of the cell and of contemplation that we prefer them to the debt of charity or of obedience. Therefore, when the superior has commanded, or a needy brother has asked, with the glorious Virgin let us rise at once, going to the works that are commanded and asked: since neither the leisure of contemplation, nor the tear of compunction, nor the fervor of prayer please God outside obedience, or are grateful and acceptable to Him against the debt of fraternal charity.

(t. 32, p. 241)

Therefore let us pour out affectionate prayers to the most glorious Virgin, that she herself may deign to visit us also, most piously obtaining for us grace and virtues to fulfill all things now said. To the praise and glory of the Almighty.

On the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Assumption — Enarratio on the Lesson in Place of the Epistle

(t. 32, p. 311)

“In all things I sought rest,” etc. (Ecclus. 24:11–13, 15–20).

The words of the lesson which today is read in place of the epistle are expounded literally of the uncreated and begotten Wisdom, which is the eternal Word, the Only-begotten of God the Father. But spiritually they are understood of the glorious Virgin. Therefore Ecclesiasticus in her person asserts:

“In all things I sought rest”—that is, in all men I desired to remain by love. For the most blessed Virgin desires the salvation of all, and shows herself ready to all that she may rest in their hearts by charity, and graciously assist them. Or thus: “In all things I sought rest”—that is, in all my acts I sought with the mind to rest in God: according to that, “Turn, O my soul, into your rest” (Ps. 114:7). “And I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord”—that is, in the Church or Christian people I shall remain by gracious assistance. For the faithful people is called the inheritance of God. Whence Samuel says to Saul in the first of Kings: “Behold the Lord has anointed you over His inheritance to be prince” (1 Kings 10:1). And through Isaiah God speaks: “Israel is My inheritance” (Isa. 19:25). For God by grace possesses the faithful people as properly pertaining to Himself. But the unfaithful and impious are alien from God. Finally, God also is the inheritance of the faithful and of His elect, as He frequently said through Moses of the priests and Levites of the Old Testament: “I am their inheritance” (Num. 18:20). And the Prophet: “The Lord is the portion of my inheritance” (Ps. 15:5). For God is the highest good, which the faithful and just supremely desire, and by charity and fruition possess. Or: “And I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord”—that is, in the riches of the glory of God, which the Saints enjoy in the fatherland, now by hope, and after the present life by the thing I shall remain eternally. Of which the Apostle says: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9).

“Then”—namely when I sought rest in all—“the Creator of all things,” namely God, “commanded and said to me.” But what He commanded is added a little after, namely: “Dwell in Jacob.” “And He that created me”—namely the eternal Word, through whom all things were made (John 1:3)—“rested in my tabernacle” (that is in my womb), by the Incarnation made man from me, according to what is written: “He has set His tabernacle in the sun” (Ps. 18:6). Spiritually also “He rested in my tabernacle”—that is in the dwelling of my heart. Whence according to Augustine, the most blessed Virgin was happier conceiving Christ in mind than in womb.

Therefore He commanded and said to me: “Dwell in Jacob”—that is in the Christian people that supplants vices: who by imitating the faith of Jacob the patriarch are called his sons, as the Apostle said, that they who are of faith are sons of Abraham (Gal. 3:7). *(t. 32, p. 312)* Which similarly can be said of Jacob. But Jacob is interpreted “supplanting”: and so by Jacob the faithful people that supplants sins is taken. “And take inheritance in Israel.” Israel is interpreted “a man seeing God.” Therefore by Israel is designated the faithful people, contemplating God and heavenly things, such as especially good religious are, and all the perfect, and those leading the contemplative life: in whom the virgin Mary takes inheritance, because she possesses them as it were as her hereditary people, their queen and mother and advocate. “And cast your roots in My elect”—that is, acquire for them by your merits and prayers the foundations of the virtues, and likewise by showing them examples of the virtues through your most holy and exemplary conversation, or by instructing them through yourself and your ministers, namely angels and prelates. Moreover by Jacob and Israel can be understood those who from Judaism believed in Christ, in whom and among whom the most sacred and

incomparable virgin Mary was and dwelt: in whom she cast roots of wisdom and of the virtues, edifying them in many ways, and instructing many of them in many things. But "roots" are fittingly understood as the habits of the virtues themselves, from which acts arise, as branches sprout from roots.

"And so was I established in Sion." Sion is interpreted "speculation." Therefore by Sion can be understood the people of God, now gazing on heavenly things by faith: in whom the blessed Virgin is established, because she firmly rests in them as protectress always assisting them. "And in the sanctified city"—namely the Church militant. Of which the Psalmist says: "Glorious things are said of you, O city of God" (Ps. 86:3). Of which to the Hebrews it is read: "You are come to mount Sion and to the city of the living God" (Heb. 12:22). For a city is said as it were a unity of citizens. Since therefore in the Church there is a union of Catholics by faith and charity, the Church is rightly called a city. Likewise "I rested" by pious and incessant assistance. "And in Jerusalem was my power." Jerusalem is interpreted "vision of peace," by which both the militant and the triumphant Church can be understood: and in both the Christ-bearing Virgin has principal power, as lady of the angels and queen of all the faithful, to whom the almighty Son denies nothing. These things can also specially be explained of the primitive Church, which remained in Jerusalem and on mount Sion, on which the temple of Jerusalem was, and the blessed Virgin was in the midst of it.

"And I took root"—that is, I fixed roots of the virtues—"in an honorable people"—that is in the Christian people, to whom God before all men conferred greater and more charisms of graces: for which reason the time of the evangelical law is called the time of grace. "And in the portions of my God"—that is in the heavenly mansions—"is His inheritance"—that is the blessed possession and everlasting abundance of the aforesaid honorable people, because in the heavens it seeks to inherit eternally, as it is written: "I believe to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps. 26:13). Of these portions Christ says: "In My Father's house there are many mansions" (John 14:2); and elsewhere, "Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity; that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings" (Luke 16:9). Hence Baruch said: "O Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast is the place of His possession; great and having no end, high and immense" (Bar. 3:24–25). "And in the fullness"—that is in the full or universal congregation—"of the saints"—that is of the perfect both in the militant and in the triumphant Church—"is my abode"—that is my stable dwelling.

"I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus"—that is, as a cedar grows on high in the place or mount of Libanus, so I was exalted in the faithful people, whose lady, mother, queen, and advocate I have been constituted. I was also exalted in it by sublimely helping the faithful themselves. For so a cause is said to be exalted in its effect, in which the power and excellence of the cause shine. *(t. 32, p. 313)* "And as a cypress tree on mount Sion"—that is, as a cypress by its property is eminent, so I am eminent in the Church. Further, the cedar is a tree of good odor; the cypress is incorruptible wood. Therefore the virgin Mary is compared to the cedar by reason of the excellence of her best fame, by which everywhere is the best odor of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15). She is also compared to the cypress, because her mind was never corrupted nor infected by any sin. Whence the Wise Man says: "Incorruption makes to be near to God" (Wis. 6:20). Where by incorruption is understood integrity of mind from the wound of sin.

"I was exalted like a palm tree in Cades"—that is, as a palm is exalted in the place which is called Cades, and was in the lot of Judah, as is related in the book of Joshua (Josh. 15:23); so I was exalted among the elect. For the palm lives in summer and winter. Therefore the most holy Virgin is compared to the palm, because in every event, in every adversity and prosperity she remained in the vigor of the virtues, nor ever incurred discoloration of mind through fault. "And as a rose plant in Jericho"—that is, as a rose planted in Jericho is sublimated by its beauty, since the rose is the most beautiful of flowers; so among all the flowers of the heavenly paradise and of the Church, namely the Saints, I shine forth by the beauty of wisdom and of the virtues. "As a fair olive tree in the plains"—that is, as an olive is sublimated and eminent by its fruit in the fields where it is planted, for it is productive of oil; so I am eminent by piety and by every fruit of the virtues.

For by the olive mercy is designated. “And as a plane tree by the water in the streets”—that is, as that so-called tree is exalted by its strength beside streams running through the streets; so I am sublimated in the people of God, for whom I obtain the water of saving wisdom and the streams of grace and of doctrine.

“As cinnamon and balsam smelling sweet, I gave a sweet smell”—that is, as these spices or aromatic herbs produce a very good odor, so I pour spiritual sweetness into the minds of the faithful, and scatter the odor of the virtues, and everywhere diffuse the fragrance of good fame. Therefore it is added: “As the best myrrh,” that is very good, “I gave a sweet smell” of spiritual odor and of praiseworthy fame. For as strongest myrrh placed in fire presently pours a good odor, so the most high Virgin, conceived or apprehended in a devout heart kindled by the fervor of love, brings forth interior sweetness, because she greatly delights the mind and makes it glad. For which reason Saint Bernard says that she never enters the gates of pious memory without a sprinkling of the sweetness implanted in her. And as she is proved incomparably holier and worthier than all, so before all Saints she brings forth a sweeter odor, and diffuses a more excellent fame of the virtues and name of goodness.

Assumption — Sermon I

Of the manifold beauty by which Mary is more excellent than all; also of her mercy, piety, and usefulness

(t. 32, p. 313)

“She is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of the stars; being compared with the light, she is found before it” (Wis. 7:29).

Just as in purely corporeal things and in the heavenly bodies nothing is more splendid than the sun—indeed nothing comparable to the sun in clarity and beauty, from which all other corporeal things receive the influence of light—so among the elect and Saints of God none is more lucid, none holier or more beautiful than the most blessed Virgin; nor is anyone comparable to her in light, sanctity, and beauty.

(t. 32, p. 314)

Finally, since beauty is manifold—namely corporeal and spiritual and moral, natural also and supernatural—corporeal beauty consists in three things: first, in the due proportion of the members to one another; second, in a fitting and elegant stature or quantity (for which reason, according to Aristotle, men of small stature cannot properly be called beautiful, but rather comely); third, in the overlay of a fitting and lively color. But moral beauty consists in this, that a man outwardly comport himself decently and gracefully in the gestures of the body and in gait, in look and every motion and apparel, so that he be not light, forward, dissolute, unstable, or running about, but mature and modest in all things. Further, spiritual and natural beauty consists in the higher powers of the soul, in which the image of God is placed in the soul, and in their acquired habits—that is, in the natural virtues and sciences and their acts. But spiritual supernatural beauty, which is properly called spiritual beauty, consists in the infused virtues and sciences and the acts of the same, especially in faith, hope, charity, and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the other moral and cardinal virtues conferred by God through infusion, whence they are called infused.

Finally, just as concerning corporeal beauty it was said above that it consists in three things, so this spiritual beauty seems to consist in three. First, in the fitting proportion of the virtues to one another: that the more chaste or wiser anyone is, so much the more humble he stand, because chastity and wisdom are often incentives of elation; likewise the more gifts anyone has received from God, so much the greater be gratitude in him; and the more fervent charity, so much also the greater discretion, lest through fervor of love he immoderately afflict himself in corporal exercises and acts of penance. For which reason the Apostle says: “Your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1). Second, this beauty consists in the fitting quantity of the virtues—that is, in perfection—that a man have the virtues according to their perfect degree, or at least

according to the degree fitting his state, so that he walk worthily of God according to the requirement of his vocation, as the Apostle exhorts, saying: “I beseech you in the Lord, that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called, with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity, careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1–3). Third, it consists in the decent overlay of spiritual color—that is, in the informing of charity and the direction of discretion. For charity is the life, form, queen, and adornment of the virtues, without which nothing is acceptable to God, nothing meritorious (1 Cor. 13). Therefore every meritorious act ought to be informed and commanded by charity. Discretion also is the charioteer of the virtues, which sets a measure to every virtue, observes time and place, and makes what is done be done in order.

Moreover all these beauties were greatly in the blessed Virgin. First indeed she was very beautiful in body, as being of the best complexion, and brilliant in every natural gift. Second she was most beautiful in the grace of manners—most modest, delightful, and exemplary in speaking, going, standing, sitting, working, seeing, eating. Third she was much excellent in spiritual and interior natural beauty, as being especially ingenious and of the best disposition, having a most strong synderesis and a greatest inclination to the acts of all the virtues. Fourth, in spiritual supernatural beauty—namely in the adornment of grace and of the virtues, in the splendor of wisdom, in the light of discretion, and in every interior perfection—she was ineffably supreme and eminent; nor can it be expressed how much she daily advanced in the aforesaid in this world. O how most certain and most illuminated she was in faith, how firm in hope, how most ardent in charity, how sublime in the contemplation of wisdom, how supreme in every moral and intellectual virtue!

(t. 32, p. 315)

For what would God almighty, most liberal and most rich, not give to His own Mother, with whom He so long, so secretly and sweetly conversed on earth, by whom He Himself was so viscerally nourished, so most affectionately handled, so most ardently loved, so motherly embraced, and by whom He was ministered to with such supreme diligence and reverence so greatly loving? He therefore filled her and daily overfilled her with ampler grace, more fervent love, greater perfection.

Finally this is beautifully hinted in the lesson which today is read in place of the epistle. First it is clear from this lesson how great her mercy is, when she herself says, “In all things I sought rest” (Ecclus. 24), according to the exposition already given. For as holy Bernard says, Just as the sun pours its light indifferently upon the good and the bad, so the most sacred virgin Mary does not discuss merits, but shows herself to all most easy to be entreated and most clement. For by her most abundant charity and piety she opens the bosom of her mercy to all, that from her fullness all may receive: the captive redemption, the sick healing, the sad consolation, the sinner pardon, the just grace, the angel joy, and finally the whole Trinity glory, the Son of God the substance of human flesh. Moreover, the more the most benign Virgin loves her Son, the more she desires His passion and blood to bear fruit in men. Therefore she vehemently desires the salvation of men, most ready to aid all, to pray for all, to hear all who cry to her. Again, just as she before all Saints obtained inestimable piety and grace from God, so much that she was made Mother of God; so before all Saints she is most ready to impart piety and grace to all who cry to her. Again, because the fountain of all piety and mercy, the Only-begotten of God, rested nine months in her most chaste womb, it is altogether certain that from this she contracted inestimable piety and mercy, so that she wholly overflows with the bowels of mercy, superabounds and ineffably abounds. Let us therefore invoke her with all confidence fervently, prepare for her the hospitality of our heart, that she may find rest in us, and deign always to protect and save us.

Second, from this lesson we are taught how infinite is the mercy, charity, and providence of God over the human race, who has provided and conferred on us so most merciful an advocate and mediatrix—indeed also a mother. For God commanded her to dwell in Jacob, etc., according to the sense expounded (Ecclus. 24). Hence Bernard says: You, mother of mercy, will ask your Son for the wretched, because God the Father, who placed His Son as mediator between God and men, has also placed you as mediatrix between the guilty and

Christ the judge. And just as you never find the Judge difficult, so the guilty never finds you inexorable. In your hands are all the treasures of the mercies of God. Therefore let us give thanks to God that He has conferred on us such a helper.

Moreover, how ineffable is the dignity of the blessed Virgin is clear from this lesson, when from the person of Mary it is here said, “He who created me rested in my tabernacle” (Ecclus. 24:12): namely, because the true God, the Only-begotten of God, from her and in her was made man, and rested nine months in her womb, as her true Son. Therefore let us venerate her womb as the most sacred temple of God. Whence also the holy doctors Augustine and Bernard confess: There was not on earth a place more excellent than the temple of the virginal womb, in which holy Mary received the Son of God; nor in heaven a place more excellent than the royal throne where her Son exalted and placed Mary.

Third, this lesson teaches how wonderfully great is the fruitfulness and fructification of Mary, because she sends roots in the elect of God (Ecclus. 24:13): indeed as Bernard says, whatever of piety and grace is conferred on us by God is given to us through her. She is the excellent Virgin through whom sin is deleted, death destroyed, the devil confounded, the blessed life which had been lost recovered, paradise opened, salvation offered to all. *(t. 32, p. 316)* Let us therefore be grateful to the most glorious Virgin, Mother of Christ, and follow her humility, mercy, charity, and purity as we can, faithfully, manfully, and constantly.

Assumption — Enarratio on the Gospel

(t. 32, p. 316)

“Jesus entered into a certain town,” etc. (Luke 10:38–42).

The present Gospel is read on the solemnity of the Assumption of the most blessed Virgin, because that solemnity has no other special Gospel, and because the mystical exposition of this Gospel especially suits the glorious Virgin. Therefore Luke says:

“Jesus entered into a certain town”—namely into the dwelling of Martha, which was in Bethania. Therefore it is added: “And a certain woman named Martha,” very notable and illustrious: who is here called a woman by reason of sex, not of matrimonial contract, because (as has been narrated above in a sermon concerning her) she is not read to have had a husband; “received Him into her house,” with fervent charity and great reverence. For she was a pre-elect and special hostess of Christ. “And she had a sister called Mary”—namely Magdalene, most loving, most faithful, and most familiar disciple of the Savior: of whom many things have been said above. *(t. 32, p. 317)* “Who also sitting at the Lord’s feet”—that is humbly on the earth beside the feet of Christ her most dear Master, in whose words she was greatly delighted—“heard His word” (that is His sermon), with most eager and most intent mind.

So also the faithful ought humbly and devoutly to hear the words of those who preach and of the vicars of Christ, without sleepiness and weariness. Again, just as Christ, hospitated by Martha, immediately before the meal taught those present in the house; so preachers and spiritual and learned men, hospitated by others, ought by wholesome words to edify and instruct those who hospitate them and those present in the house. Therefore the more humbly Mary sat, and the more diligently she attended to the words of Christ, the more spiritual progress she drew, and took streams of doctrine from the fountain of wisdom—that is from Christ, of whom it is written in Ecclesiasticus: “The word of God on high is the fountain of wisdom” (Ecclus. 1:5). Moreover, from this that Martha so charitably and reverently received Christ and His disciples with hospitality, and so fittingly treated them, example is given to the faithful that they willingly hospitate spiritual persons and the poor, and fittingly treat them for God’s sake and love, because by doing this they receive and provide for Christ in His servants and members.

“But Martha was busy”—that is, was sufficiently occupied—“about much serving. Who stood and said: Lord, have You no care that my sister has left me alone to serve? Speak to her therefore, that she help me.” She indeed diligently helped in preparing the meal; but she asserted that she alone was ministering, by exclusion of her sister, to whom that ministry equally pertained, according to Martha’s opinion.

And answering, the Lord Jesus Christ said to her—true God, who to answer wisely needed no deliberation or study, because inasmuch as God He was infinite, eternal, and uncreated Wisdom itself (1 Cor. 1:24), and as man was full of all wisdom, indeed according to both His natures He foreknew all things—“Martha, Martha.” Twice He named her, that she might hear more carefully, and that He might show His love toward her. “You are careful, and are troubled about many things”—that is about bodily things to be prepared and disposed: which occupation, although it was good, and an act of mercy and liberality proceeding from charity, yet frequently interrupts and impedes the rest of the mind in God, because the human mind is so much more strongly intent on one thing, the more it is drawn away from many. Whence it is commonly said: United virtue is stronger than dispersed; and again, The sense intent on many things is less for each. Further, “one thing is necessary”—namely to cling to God, to please Him, to be united to Him, or beatifically to enjoy Him, or God Himself, the object, giver, and cause of felicity. “Mary has chosen the best part”—namely the one thing necessary already aforesaid. “Which shall not be taken away from her”: because to be vacant for God and to be united to Him by contemplation and fervent love, or finally to enjoy Him, begins in this life and is imperfectly had; but in the age to come it is continued, perfected, fully and eternally possessed.

This is the literal and brief exposition of this Gospel, around which many most beautiful things could be said: of which something will be touched below.

Assumption — Sermon II

How the most blessed virgin Mary is, and how also each of the elect ought to be, a spiritual castle

(t. 32, p. 318)

“This gate shall be shut, and it shall not be opened, because the Lord the God of Israel has entered in by it” (Ezek. 44:2).

By the gate which the prophet Ezekiel saw in the spirit, in that most difficult vision which at the end of his book he describes in many chapters, is spiritually designated the most pure virgin Mary, who before birth, in birth, and after birth was inviolate and most entire, whom it by no means was fitting to be opened to any man, because the Lord the God of Israel, the Only-begotten of the Father, entered her, assuming from her human nature, and shutting Himself in her womb, as the Church sings: “Virgin Mother of God, He whom the whole world cannot contain enclosed Himself in your womb, made man.” She therefore the most excellent Virgin is the gate by which the Son of God entered this world, appearing visibly in it. Conformably she spiritually is the castle which Jesus entered, descending from the bosom of the Father into the womb of the Virgin, not by changing place, but by assuming the substance of flesh in her and from her, according to that in the Psalm: “His going out is from the end of heaven” (Ps. 18:7); and likewise, “He has set His tabernacle in the sun” (Ps. 18:6). Whence elsewhere He protests: “I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world” (John 16:28).

Thereafter, for diverse causes the most blessed Mother of God is called a castle. First, because a castle ought to be situated in a high and eminent place, that from it one may look around this way and that. So the virgin Mary is placed in the highest state and degree of dignity in God, as on the summit of the maternity of God, by which she is co-parental with God the Father, having a unique and the same Son with Him: which is a dignity somehow infinite, from which then it befits her to be empress of the angels, queen of heaven, lady of the world, advocate of the Church, the honor and glory of every creature. Therefore Saint Jerome says: What is nobler than the Mother of the Lord, what more splendid than her whom the Brightness of the Father’s glory

chose? But because the aforesaid dignity of the maternity of God is a gift of grace given gratis, it is to be said that the virgin Mary was also constituted by God on the summit of the perfection of grace that makes grateful and of the virtues, in which she is not doubted to have been most excellent.

Second, because a castle ought to be surrounded and shut with a wall. So the most pure Virgin was fortified by the cardinal virtue which is called fortitude, and also by the gift which is called fortitude. By the wall also chastity can be designated. Whence the Savior says: “Let your loins be girt” (Luke 12:35)—that is adorned with the girdle of chastity. For truly by chastity a man is protected from the darts of many vices, from the temptations of demons, from the arrows of concupiscences. With this chastity our Lady was supremely and inviolably fortified and decorated, so that never was there an inordinate or unseemly motion of the flesh in her.

Third, because a castle ought to have a deep ditch round about. So the most high Virgin was walled with most deep humility. Whence she herself confesses: “Because He has regarded the humility of His handmaid” (Luke 1:48). Hence holy Augustine speaks: O wonderful and deep humility of Mary! Behold the angel addresses Mary, saying: “Hail, full of grace” (Luke 1:28). To Mary the gracious coming of the Holy Spirit is promised, Mary is assumed as Mother of God, Mary is preferred to all creatures, Mary is made lady of heaven and earth; and yet

(t. 32, p. 319)

for all these things she is lifted by no pride—indeed in all these she depresses herself with wonderful humility, saying: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord” (Luke 1:38). She did not say, Behold the lady of the world, but, Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Hence Bernard also speaks: O Mary, you thoroughly crushed the spirit of elation by the virtue of humility, which the Lord so regarded in you that by its merit He thought it worthy to sublimate you above all the choirs of the angels. For never would you have ascended sublimated above all the choirs of the angels, unless first you had descended humbled below all men. And rightly humility is compared to a ditch, since it is a certain deepening of the mind by which it subjects and depresses itself: and as waters are gathered in a ditch, so in a humble heart the charisms of graces are gathered. Again, as a ditch filled with waters prohibits adversaries from approach to the castle and from its destruction, so truly humility protects the humble from the assault and casting down of demons, because the humble leans not on his own powers but on the gracious help of God.

Fourth, because a castle is elevated with a tower. So the best virgin Mary was sublime and elevated by the fervor of charity, by excess of contemplations, by the apex of sanctity. Whence she herself also says in the Canticles: “I am a wall” / “I am a tower” (Cant. 8:10). Fifth, because as a castle ought to be corroborated with arms, so the virgin Mary was firmed by the vigor of all the virtues as of spiritual arms, and made to be feared by demons and impregnable. Therefore in the Canticles she is called terrible as an army set in array (Cant. 6:3). Sixth, because as a castle ought to be provided with the necessaries of life, namely foods, so the most benign Virgin was full of spiritual aliments, namely the bread of life and understanding, and the water of saving wisdom (Ecclus. 15:3), the grace of divine comfort, the food of good operation, the oil of heavenly consolation, the wine of excessive devotion, but also the bread of tears and of compassion. Hence she says in the Canticles: “The king brought me into the cellar of wine” (Cant. 2:4).

Thereafter, by Martha is signified the active life, whose operations are to refresh the poor, to clothe the naked, to hospitate pilgrims and the poor, to bury the dead, to visit the sick, to redeem captives; likewise to lead back those who err, to instruct the ignorant, to console the sad, to give counsel, to correct delinquents, to relieve the oppressed. Around these the good active are occupied. But by Mary, Martha’s sister, the contemplative life is designated, whose actions are to gaze on God, to love, to meditate, to pray, to praise; to taste how sweet God is, to be rapt into the riches of His glory (1 Pet. 2:3), to hear what the Lord God speaks in Himself (Ps. 84:9). Further the most blessed Virgin was perfect in the acts of both these lives—indeed she

showed the acts of both lives around her Son, namely the works of the active life around His humanity. For so she nourished her Son, clothed Him, and in many bodily things offered Him sacred and most ready service. Nor is it doubtful that to the poor also, according to what she could, she was most merciful and most liberal. She also exercised the spiritual works of mercy. But around the divinity of Christ her Son she most eminently exercised the acts of the contemplative life, contemplating it most sincerely, loving it most ardently, tasting it most sweetly, insisting most devoutly on prayer, meditation, and the praises of God. Nor is it doubtful that she sat much more humbly at the feet of her Son preaching, and also heard His words much more affectionately and diligently, than Mary Magdalene. Whence also the virgin Mary most perfectly pre-elected and held the best part.

Moreover each of the faithful ought spiritually to be a castle, into which Christ may enter by grace, and in which He may dwell by charity. First, that he be situated on high—that is constituted in the Church militant, placed in Christ as in the head, erected in God, intending, seeking, and looking to Him in all things, according to that of the Psalmist: “My eyes are always toward the Lord” (Ps. 24:15). So let us be located on high, not depressed in carnal and earthly things after the manner of swine. Whence Jeremiah the prophet exhorts: “Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to God in the heavens” (Lam. 3:41).

(t. 32, p. 320)

Isaiah also the prophet: “Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things” (Isa. 40:26). Whence also the Apostle warns: “Seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God; mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth” (Col. 3:1–2). Second, that he be shut with a wall—that is walled with chastity, whether conjugal, or widowed, or virginal. So let each one keep his body uncontaminated. For as the Apostle testifies, he that commits fornication sins against his own body (1 Cor. 6:18), polluting it, disordering it, indeed even establishing it as a habitation of the devil. Third, that he stand surrounded with humility as with a ditch, humbling himself in all things. So therefore let us consider our own vile things, defectuosities, faults, foulnesses, and ingratitudes, and let us be very humble stably and deeply in heart, in words and deeds, in clothing, gait, and every apparel. Fourth, that he be sublimated by the fervor of the charity of God and of neighbors. For charity is the highest virtue, and the tower of the virtues: in which the more we grow, so much before God we are better, greater, and higher. Fifth, that he be armed with virtues against all sins and temptations, lest he be overcome by them. So we ought to arm ourselves, and manfully resist the adversaries of our salvation, because God crowns none unless he has contended lawfully (2 Tim. 2:5). Sixth, that he be provided with spiritual aliments and drinks, namely sacramental bread, heavenly bread, the bread of tears, the streams of wisdom and flowing grace. With all these let us refresh and comfort ourselves. For the best breads of the soul are virtuous acts, since the Savior says: “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me” (John 4:34). For by praying, meditating, praising God, contemplating, loving, and doing other good works, our souls are comforted in God, refreshed, spiritually grow, and attain to the true felicity which consists in God.

There were two companions loving one another greatly. Of whom one around the feast of All Saints died. But the other, afflicting himself with continual weepings, prayed nothing for the deceased. To whom after the feast of the Nativity of Christ the deceased appeared, saying: “You have profited me nothing by only weeping.” And as it were reproaching him for weeping: “Behold,” he said, “the most blessed virgin Mary every year on the feast of the Nativity of Christ descends to the places of purgatory with a multitude of angels, and thence snatches many souls, because on the night of that solemnity she bore Christ the King of glory. And when on the next solemnity of the Nativity of Christ she descended and snatched many souls, I hoped that by your prayers she would have led me also out, but she did not. But because on the next night of the Lord’s Resurrection she is accustomed to descend to purgatory for the leading out of souls, because on that night Christ led the saints out of limbo, I ask that you cease not to pray for me with tears, that on that night she may deign to snatch me. And in this you will know that you have been heard, if I appear to you no

more." And because that deceased did not return to the living, he is believed to have been snatched by the glorious Virgin on that night. From this example also the faithful are taught to pray more for their deceased friends than to weep, unless they weep praying for their liberation.

Assumption — Sermon III

With how great honor blessed Mary was assumed into heaven in body and soul

[The first page of this sermon, p. 321, is wanting in the contributed translation; it has been translated for the library from the Latin.]

(t. 32, p. 321)

"And a throne was set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand" (3 Kings 2:19).

As Saint Augustine asserts, nothing is found in the canonical Scriptures concerning the most blessed Virgin after Christ from the cross commended her to his beloved disciple Saint John (John 19:26–27), except what the evangelist Luke recounts, saying: "All these"—namely the Apostles—"were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:14). Now therefore we must say of her assumption what agrees with the truth of sacred Scripture and has been set forth by the holy Fathers and the Catholic doctors. And first this is certain, and is confirmed by the authority of the universal Church (which is ruled infallibly by the Holy Spirit): that on this day the most excellent Virgin departed from the body, and was assumed into heaven with all veneration and joy by her only Son, true God and man, our Lord Jesus Christ; and it is of this that the present solemnity is celebrated.

Moreover, in what manner, that is, how gloriously, she was assumed, Saint Jerome declares in the sermon on the present feast which is read today throughout the Church, in which among other things he says: "We read how often angels have come to the funerals and burials of the Saints, and have rendered their services at their obsequies, and have borne the souls of the elect to heaven with hymns and praises; where choirs of both sexes are recorded to have been often heard, and to have sung praises, and to have shone with much light; and moreover those who were present, still living in the flesh, are recorded to have perceived there the fragrance of a wonderful odor. If then, to refresh the hope and strengthen the faith of the faithful, the Savior, to show forth more fully the merits of his Saints, has deigned to do things so great and such as these about the dead, how much more is it to be believed that today the army of heaven with its hosts came to meet the Mother of God, and shone round about her with immense light, and led her with praises and canticles to the throne prepared for her before the foundation of the world? No one doubts that all that heavenly Jerusalem then exulted with unspeakable gladness, since this festival, which returns to us yearly, was made continual for them all. And not without reason. For it is believed that the Savior himself, all festive, came to meet her, and with inestimable joy set her with himself upon the throne: otherwise how is he believed to have fulfilled what he commanded in the Law, saying, 'Honor thy father and thy mother' (Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16)?"

With what has been brought forward agrees also what Saint Bernard says: "The glorious Virgin, ascending today into heaven, heaped up the joys of the citizens above with abundant increase. For if John the Baptist, while still shut up in his mother's womb, rejoiced when Mary spoke (Luke 1:41), how great was the exultation of the heavenly citizens when they began both to hear the voice of Mary, and to see her face, and to enjoy her blessed presence? Who could suffice to think how gloriously the Queen of the world went forth today to heaven, and with what affection of devotion the whole multitude of the heavenly legions came down to meet her, with what canticles she was led to the throne of glory, with how serene and placid a countenance, with what divine embraces she was received by her Son and exalted above every creature, with the honor and glory with which it befitted such and so great a Mother to be raised on high by such and so great a Son?" Moreover, as the most devout Bernard touches: *(t. 32, p. 322)* Saving in all things the reverence of Christ, she was met from heaven with greater solemnity than Christ in His Ascension, and with ampler

reverence was she herself led into heaven. For to Christ ascending only the angels ran to meet Him; but to Mary not angels alone, but also all the Saints whom Christ in His Ascension led with Himself into heaven: indeed the Lord Christ Himself ran to meet her, and with highest honor set her with Himself in glory. Moreover blessed Jerome writes in his sermon: Her sepulcher is shown in the midst of the valley of Josaphat, which valley is placed between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, where in her honor a church has been built paved with marvelous stone; in which sepulcher she was buried, but now this sepulcher is shown empty.

Further, concerning the order of the thing done in the Assumption of the most blessed Virgin, Saint Cosmas testifies: When Christ wished to assume to Himself the Mother of life, He foretold the day to her through the accustomed angel, and through the angel said to her: “It is time that I assume you to Myself, My Mother. For as you have filled the earth with joy, so make the heavenly things rejoice, and render the heavenly mansions glad. But I will bring the Apostles to you, by whose hands, as it were by Mine, you shall be buried.” That the Apostles were brought thither by divine power, Saint Germanus bishop of Constantinople protests. That great theologian also, Damascene, affirms the same, saying: The Apostles, dispersed throughout the world and preaching, a divine command brought from the ends of the earth to Jerusalem. Indeed to prove this it is customary to bring forward what divine Dionysius says in the third chapter of On the Divine Names, speaking to Timothy: “We, as you know, and many of our brethren, came together to the vision of the body of the Prince of life and of her who received God. And there were present James the brother of the Lord, and Peter the highest summit of the theologians.” Yet these words of divine Dionysius have also another understanding. When therefore the glorious Apostles had come together to the glorious Virgin, and sat beside her in the chamber where she had placed herself to fall asleep in the Lord, Christ, coming from heaven with a multitude of innumerable angels, received with greatest joy the soul of His most beloved Mother going out of the body, and also committed the burial of her most sacred body to the Apostles.

Moreover, although holy mother Church does not determine nor absolutely affirm that the most blessed Virgin was glorified with her body, yet many Saints indubitably confess this—namely that on the third day from her dormition Christ brought back her soul to her most holy body, and so, glorified in soul and body, established her above the orders of all the angels. And of this many things are read in the Revelations of Saint Bridget the widow. But Saint Augustine also brings very reasonable motives to the same. Therefore it is not to be doubted concerning this. For it was altogether most fitting that Christ God almighty should honor His most worthy Mother with highest honor, not only in her soul but also in her body. First, because from her most pure body He formed the body which He assumed to His uncreated and hypostatic divine being. As therefore by this He ineffably honored and exalted the body of the sacred Virgin in this world, so it was most fitting that immediately after the departure of her soul from the body He should honor and exalt the same body, especially by glorifying it together with her soul. Second, because the most holy Virgin through her body before all Saints honored Christ most specially, and ministered to Him most singularly. For she bore the Only-begotten of God nine months in the midst of her womb. *(t. 32, p. 323)* Then, born from her, she lifted Him with her own hands, handled Him, wrapped Him, offered Him her breasts, embraced Him with her arms, kissed Him with her face, so that the most holy body of the most elect Virgin was wonderfully deified from the inhabitation, handling, kissing, nursing, and administration of the Son of God, and made most excellent.

Therefore it was by no means fitting that a body so sacred remain on earth, and much less fitting that it be dissolved and worms and ashes be produced from it; but it was most just that, reunited to her most pure soul, it be at once glorified and honored with Christ in the heavens. Third, because Christ honors many other Saints on earth as to their sacred bodies, which far and wide are visited by the faithful: it was not therefore fitting that the body of His most beloved Mother remain on earth hidden and unhonored. Since therefore it can nowhere be found on earth, it is certain that it dwells in the heavenly places. Fourth, because a Mother of such incomparable sanctity, so heavenly—indeed supercelestial and most deified dignity—a most pious

Mother, ought to be perfectly honored, fully beatified, and decorated with a singular privilege by the best and most liberal Son: which would not have been done unless He had glorified her in body and in soul.

Lastly, how long the incomparable Virgin lived in this world after Christ's resurrection will be said in the following sermon. Now therefore let us heartily congratulate our most blessed advocate and mother and lady, and venerate her in words and manners, and implore her suffrage, and aspire to her company and sight. O how delightful and sweet it is to see her clearly, to remain continually with her, and to enjoy her in God at will! O how much all the citizens above, all the holy angels, and all elect men already beatified love and honor her, through whom they have obtained so many goods, whom they see incomprehensibly honored by God—indeed whom God in the presence of all the Blessed names Mother! O of what kind and how great is that honor, to be and to be called Mother of the Creator of all!

Assumption — Sermon IV

Of how great dignity it is to be Mother of God, and of how great merit to offer oneself wholly to God, of how great a reward to serve and compassion with Christ

(t. 32, p. 323)

"He loved her more than all women" (Esther 2:17).

These words are literally written of queen Esther, whom king Assuerus loved before all women, because she was very beautiful, and with incredible beauty seemed gracious and lovable to the eyes of all. Which words are spiritually understood most excellently of the most blessed Virgin, whom the Lord, the almighty King, loved before all women. For to love is to will good to someone, and love itself effects union. Therefore the greater and more singular goods God conferred on Mary, and the more nearly and specially He joined Himself to her, so much the more He loved her than the rest.

Now therefore let us weigh what God conferred on Mary in this life. Certainly He conferred Himself on her as true and natural Son, and as most special Spouse. This gift of God is of dignity somehow infinite. If it is great to be a servant of God, and greater to be a friend of God, assuredly it is greatest to be Mother of God. Yet because the maternity of God is a certain dignity and a gift of grace given gratis, it would not suffice for the glorious Virgin to be Mother of God, unless she also had the gifts of grace that makes grateful. And since all things were most ordered in her, as in the mother of highest and everlasting wisdom, from whom every ordination flowed; therefore according to the excellence of the aforesaid dignity,

(t. 32, p. 324)

namely of the maternity of God, there was in the blessed Virgin excellence of grace that makes grateful, and of infused virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Whence as much as the most blessed Virgin by the maternity of God was worthier than every creature, so much by the excellence of her grace and virtues she was holier than all.

Moreover let us weigh how much and in what manner God in the present life joined Himself to the supremely worthy Virgin. Certainly after the hypostatic or personal union by which He joined Himself to human nature, in Christ there does not seem to have been possible a nearer union than that by which He joined Himself to the most holy Virgin, whose Son He made Himself: by which He united something of hers to His divinity, by assuming flesh from her. For it is said in the Creed, of the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of the Virgin: He is God, begotten of the substance of the Father before the ages; and He is man, born of the substance of the Mother in the age. And holy Bernard says: O truly rich Mary, whose small portion assumed suffices to relax the sins of the whole world. Finally He so coupled Himself to the most sacred Virgin that He entered her womb, and deigned to rest in the same nine months; then He willed to be born of her, to be brought up, to be handled, to be embraced, and for so many years to converse with her. Was not this union

most near, most familiar, and truly most sweet? Therefore the Lord, the almighty King, loved this Virgin more than all women.

From these things it is easy to weigh how ineffable and excellent is the beatitude and glory of this Virgin in the fatherland. For as before the other Saints she ineffably loved Christ God and man more, as she was more sublime in grace and every virtue, so in felicity and glory she is more excellent and full. Therefore Saint Bernard truly and subtly said that as much as is possible without personal union, she is immersed in the inaccessible light. For it has been said that God so nearly and intimately joined Himself to the sacred Virgin as could be done short of the hypostatic union; and likewise that in the holy Virgin, according to the excellence of grace given gratis, there was excellence of grace that makes grateful and of most ardent charity.

Moreover, the more perfectly anyone in the present life spends himself for God, the more totally he offers himself to Him, the more affectionately he serves Him, so much in the heavenly paradise God repays Himself to him more abundantly, offers more liberally, and renders more fully. Therefore of religious and of the perfect who offer themselves to God as a holocaust, totally dedicating themselves to divine services, and thoroughly denying themselves for God's sake, the beatitude and glory is ineffably great. But it is certain that the most blessed Virgin most perfectly spent herself for God, most entirely offered herself, and most affectionately served Him. For with whole soul and body and all her powers, with a most affectionately surpassing mind, she ministered to God incarnate and born of her, and stood intent and clinging. For the more worthily, lovingly, mercifully she saw God to have dealt and to deal, converse and walk with her, so much also she herself, as much as was possible to her, with a more grateful, more loving, and humbler heart served Him, lived with Him, stood intent and immersed. Inestimably therefore, most fully, most liberally and lovingly God repaid Himself to her for a reward, most clearly showing her His infinite beauty to be gazed on, most abundantly offering her His immense sweetness to be enjoyed, and unspeakably filling her with every joy. Further, since all the Saints in the fatherland after God chiefly glory in the humanity of Christ, how most specially and most vehemently does the most benign Virgin glory in it, from whose most sacred womb the flesh of that humanity itself was formed and taken, and which she brought up, handled, and led unto fitting increases?

Moreover, who can estimate, since God is a most liberal and most rich Rewarder, what of reward and glory He has repaid to her from whose most pure bloods He assumed, formed, and put on a body, with whose maternal milk He was nourished, by whose diligence and service He so frequently and long was used?

(t. 32, p. 325)

Again, since the Apostle says, "If we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him" (Rom. 8:17), it is clear that as the most blessed Virgin compassionated with her Son Jesus Christ before all supremely and ineffably—not only in the time of the passion, but also very often before (because she most certainly foreknew the passion of Christ), and after the Ascension also, by visiting the sacred places in which Christ sustained many things for us—so she herself with Christ has been glorified most excellently, and congratulates Him most fully. Further, who can suffice to think how great a felicity it is, how great an honor, how great a sublimity, to be sublimated above all the orders of the angels—indeed to be queen of the whole heavenly palace, to be empress and lady of all the elect and Saints, both of angels and of men? O how reverently and joyfully all the Blessed look upon her, through whom they have obtained so great beatitude—indeed who in herself stands so beautiful, so good, so most excellent, most lovable, and most sweet, that after God to see her is the highest delight!

If therefore we truly love our most blessed Lady, let us congratulate so inestimable a felicity and glory of hers, and let us ask to be heard and saved by her prayers and merits. For as holy Bernard says: Our queen has gone before us, and has been so gloriously received that we little servants may confidently follow the Lady, crying, "Draw me after you" (Cant. 1:3). Our pilgrimage has sent ahead an advocate, who as Mother of the

Judge and mother of mercy will suppliantly and efficaciously treat the affairs of our salvation, because neither power nor will is lacking to her; she is queen of heaven, she is merciful. Let us therefore invoke her with all confidence, and through her ask to be received by God.

In Constantinople a certain rich and just merchant came to such want that he asked a certain Jew to lend him money, saying: “I will give you as surety Saint Mary and her image, that on the appointed day I will pay you.” The Jew agreed, knowing that Saint Mary is after God the first hope of Christians. The merchant therefore went with the money to Alexandria, and within a year acquired there very many moneys. And when with the appointed day impending he could not return, he put the money to be paid in a receptacle fit for this; he also affixed a writing sealed with his ring of this sort: “Receive, Abraham, the money which you lent me.” And on the night of the day on which the money was to be paid, he put that receptacle upon the sea, asking the pious Virgin that she would direct that receptacle to Constantinople and into the hands of the aforesaid Jew. O great faith of the man, but greater the grace of the sacred Virgin! For with her directing, that receptacle through so great spaces of the sea in one night came unto the Constantinopolitan shore. Further the Jew, solicitous for his money, went out in the morning to the shore, if by chance he might see some ship coming from Alexandria. And behold he saw that receptacle applied to the shore. Taking it and reading the title, he suddenly received the money. And because no one was present, he hid it; and when the merchant named Theodoric returned, the Jew asked that the debt be paid him. The merchant answered that he had sent it to him. But the Jew denied that he had received it. The cause being brought to the judge, the judge dictated that the Jew before the surety, namely the image of the holy Virgin, should swear that he had not received that money. Which when the Jew swore before all, a word came forth from the image, saying: “You lie, because you received the receptacle with the money and hid it.” Then the Jew, confused, opened the whole truth of the matter, and asked to be made a Christian. Which things known, many Jews were made Christians.

Assumption — Sermon V ad religiosos

Of how the most blessed virgin Mary rested her Son in the little bed through the nights; what Scripture signifies in various ways by the little bed, and also by the nights

(t. 32, p. 326)

“In my bed by night I sought Him whom my soul loves” (Cant. 3:1).

Sacred Scripture speaks of a manifold little bed—namely of the material bed, according to that of Job: “God rebukes a man by pain in his bed, and makes all his bones to wither.” In a bed of this kind the Sunamitess woman laid the dead son of Eliseus. Likewise of the spiritual bed. And this little bed is sometimes taken in a good sense, according to that in the Canticles, “Our bed is flourishing”; sometimes in a bad sense, namely for carnal quiet and the sloth of torpor, in which, Solomon testifying, the sluggard turns as a door turns on its hinges. Moreover the praiseworthy spiritual little bed is the fixed tranquillity of a serene conscience, the peace of the breast, and the rest of contemplation.

Moreover Scripture treats of a manifold night—namely of the exterior and temporal night, over which in Genesis the moon is said to preside. Whence in the Psalm it is said: “You have appointed darkness, and it is night”; and again, “The moon and the stars to rule the night.” Second, by night is understood the time of the Old Testament, or the obscurity of the law and the Prophets, of which the Apostle testifies: “The night is passed, and the day is at hand.” Third, the darkness of vices or the obscuring of reason, or any mortal sin, especially ignorance of the law and lack of true wisdom. Whence according to the Apostle: “They that are drunk, are drunk in the night”; and again, “We are not” (he says) “of the night, nor of darkness.” Fourth, by night is designated adversity, as it is written: “Prolong not the night.” Fifth, the knowledge of the present life, which however clear it be, yet in comparison with the beatific vision is called night. For which reason it was said: “We see now through a glass in a dark manner.” Nevertheless he who said this discoursed in another

place: “But we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face.”

The proposed word, therefore, can aptly and in manifold ways be expounded of the most glorious Virgin. For she in her material little bed frequently sought, found, kissed, and embraced her Beloved, the Only-begotten of God incarnate, true God made truly man from her, the infant Jesus, whom she herself alone most blessed was chosen and worthy to handle and bring up maternaly. Who, however ingenious, can understand, penetrate, or sufficiently marvel how great was that happiness, that prerogative, glory, and excellence so immense—to have so united to herself that most sweet and most excellent little Child? If blessed were the eyes and ears of the Apostles who saw Christ in the flesh and heard His wisdom: were not ineffably more blessed the breasts, hands, bosom, and all the members and powers of the blessed Virgin, her whole body and soul, who conceived, brought forth, nourished, handled, saw, heard the only Son of God, and so often embraced Him with maternal authority?

What like thing was ever conferred upon any pure creature? *(t. 32, p. 327)* Yet to this beatitude, prerogative, and glory of the supreme Virgin there was in turn mixed a great sadness, because she most certainly knew that her most dear Son, whom she handled so most affectionately, was to be most cruelly handled and killed by the impious. Premeditating this abundantly, she was affected with too vehement mourning; and mourning of this kind was unspeakably meritorious for her.

Moreover the most excellent Virgin in her little bed, even the material one, spiritually sought her Beloved according to His divinity, especially after His Ascension: because resting in her little bed she assiduously and most devoutly thought of Christ, and contemplated His divinity, was kindled with His love, and most fervently aspired to Him—indeed even while sleeping she did not wholly cease from these so holy acts. By the example therefore of so great a Virgin let us also learn and grow accustomed, according to our measure, to seek that Beloved heavenly Bridegroom, our Savior and Creator, in our little bed, to recall His benefits and promises, to weigh what, how great, and of what sort He suffered for us, sincerely to contemplate His divinity and most fervently to love it. In the memory of these things, in peace in the selfsame let us sleep and take our rest, that in due time we may rise cheerfully, and quickly return to the splendor and fervor of former devotion. Let us admit no foul imagination, receive no vain and fantastic apprehension; nor let childish and foolish fear move anyone, but with the Prophet let us sing: “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?” Let us have in the presence, defense, and assistance of the divine majesty a safe, full, unshaken, and filial confidence. Of angelic custody also let us be secure, since He has given His angels charge over us. Let us not dishonor God and the holy angels by so foolishly fearing, as though God and the glorious angels were not as well with us in the night as in the day. This rather let us fear and beware of—lest by living negligently and reprehensibly we deserve by our demerits to be so left, and to become so pusillanimous and fearful at any time.

Furthermore in her spiritual little bed the sacrosanct Virgin sought Him whom her soul loved. For she was of a most innocent and most serene conscience (for she never sinned), and continually enjoyed the peace of the breast, and shone with most tranquil contemplation; and in all these she sought her Beloved, because it did not suffice her to behold Him by faith and the gift of wisdom through created likenesses, but she most ardently longed to look upon Him face to face, to know Him fully, to contemplate Him by species, happily to enjoy Him. Nor did she desire only clearly to look upon the divinity of her Beloved, but also maternaly and wonderfully wished to behold facially His humanity that proceeded from herself—having that only Son, of whose bodily presence she had long been destitute, whom she knew to be in highest and infinite glory. Nor could the patriarch Jacob be so affected toward seeing his son Joseph joyful and ruling in Egypt as the most pious Mother and Virgin was affected toward beholding her only Son Jesus most glorious and reigning in heaven. For the more intensely, more ardently, and more incomparably she loved her Only-begotten according to both His natures, the more heartily she panted for His facial intuition, for eternal presence, for immediate and intimate union, for the beatific vision, for fruition most fully contenting; especially because

she had already graciously and most frequently experienced His sweetness: by which she was more strongly kindled to the full taste, according as uncreated Wisdom speaks: “They that eat Me shall yet hunger.” *(t. 32, p. 328)* Hence what she so long and so most intensely longed for she obtained on this day, assumed into heaven by the Son, and placed upon a most brilliant throne beside the Son’s throne, above the height of all the angelic orders.

Finally, as has been said, she sought her Beloved in the nights of this life. First, because at nocturnal times, beyond human powers, she was long and stably intent upon holy prayers, most lucid contemplations, and divine affections. Then she was rapt into God, and transformed into the Beloved, and conversed in the heavens, most devoutly and most sweetly free for the praises of God and for psalms. Second, because even before the Incarnation of the eternal Word from her, during the state of the old law, she herself was most devout; she also most greatly longed that the oracles of the Prophets foretold of the coming of the Messiah be fulfilled, and the human race be saved; and she promised always to serve the heavenly Bridegroom in virginal purity, continually seeking, intending, and venerating Him. Third, in every adversity of the present life she aspired to her Beloved. For both by recalling the Passion of her Son, and by perceiving and looking upon how much the faithful endured for the faith of her Son, she had intimate and very great compassions, in which she sought the Beloved, both for herself and for the faithful set in tribulations; and weighing the inestimable greatness of the glory prepared for herself and for them, she received consolation. Fourth, in the obscurity of the knowledge of this life she was supremely affected toward the clarity of the heavenly vision.

Finally we also, by the example of the most worthy glorious Virgin, let us seek in the little bed of our interior quiet and of a good conscience and of mental peace the Beloved in the night of present imperfection and of temporal tribulation and temptation, most affectionately aspiring to the happy sight and fruitive embrace of our Creator and Savior; and meanwhile let us seek Him by holy desires, by virtuous works, by indefatigable labors, by intent prayers, salutary meditations, sincere contemplations—that is, let us strive happily to obtain Him—that that of the Psalmist may be fulfilled in us: “Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord; seek the Lord, and be strengthened: seek His face evermore.” Therefore, although we are saddened at the absence of the Beloved, yet let us rejoice in seeking, since to seek well is somehow to have Him; and the very hope of finding confers joy, and in every virtuous act there is spiritual gladness. Finally, by contemplating and loving let us seek, that through imperfect contemplation and incomplete love we may happily be led to most clear contemplation and most full love. For the Beloved sought is also somehow found and possessed in this life—that is, known and loved; that thus found He may be more sought, and at length perfectly found, and thus found securely and eternally possessed.

Assumption — Sermon VI ad religiosos

Of the memory of the divine condescension and of His benefits toward us, of the gratitude of blessed Mary, and whence we ought to humble ourselves

(t. 32, p. 328)

“I will be mindful, and my soul shall languish within me” (Lam. 3:20).

The holy Psalmist, attending to the infinite height of the divine excellence, and considering also the defectibility and wickedness of men, surveying with his mind how piously, graciously, and liberally God has dealt with men, vehemently admired the mercy, condescension, and munificence of God toward men, saying: “O Lord, what is man that You are mindful of him? or the son of man that You visit him?” *(t. 32, p. 329)* (Ps. 8:5). And again: “Lord, what is man, that You have made Yourself known to him?” (Ps. 143:3). By a like consideration holy Job said: “What is a man that You should magnify him? or why do You set Your heart upon him?” And again: “Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries; and do You think it meet to open Your eyes upon such an one?” And surely holy men deservedly said these things.

For we see in this world that the kings of the earth and great archbishops scarcely deign to look upon the poor or simple subjects. And since the God of glory is infinitely worthier than all the prelates and princes of the Church, is it not to be marvelled that He has dealt so magnificently, so most piously with men?

Finally if it is great and marvellous that He has made Himself known to men, and has deigned to look upon them, and has care of them: how much more is it supremely to be marvelled and extolled that God, the Son of God, for men was made man, conversed in the world, was hung upon the wood, and left and conferred upon us His body and blood in the Sacrament? Indeed, although these things are greatest and ineffably to be marvelled at, yet this is proved to be most singularly great and most marvellous: that He eternally born of God the Father, consubstantial, equal, and coeternal with the most high Begetter, chose and took to Himself as mother a most humble virgin and pure maiden, assuming from her the substance of human flesh, the suckling and upbringing customary to other children. Therefore the more singular the benefits of God conferred upon Mary, the greater they are; and the greater they are, the more diligently were they to be recalled by the blessed Virgin, the more frequently weighed, and recognized with a more grateful mind, since inattention and forgetfulness are a chief part of ingratitude.

The word introduced, therefore, is most aptly explained in the person of the sacred Virgin. For she was mindful with memory—that is, most intently and assiduously she remembered all things which the Most High had wrought in her and through her: how in her and from her He had been incarnate, conceived, and carried so many months in her womb, then born from her remaining most entire, nourished, and brought to the growth of adult age. Moreover every day after the Passion, Resurrection, Ascension of her Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit she was mindful what, how great, and of what sort her Son did for the salvation of the world—by teaching apart, preaching in public, running about everywhere, working miracles, conversing most holily—and what He endured from the Jews by mocking and blasphemous words, by contempts, detractions, reproaches, by attempts at casting down and stoning, and at length by all things which they inflicted on Him in the night and day of His crucifixion; then how gloriously He rose on the third day, how joyfully and piously He appeared to her and to others, how powerfully He ascended into heaven, how deifically He sent the Holy Spirit, how admirable a grace He gave to men, especially to the holy Apostles and to the primitive Church, how many He converted through them. Moreover, that she might every day more affectionately and distinctly remember all these things, after her Son’s Ascension she dwelt in such a place that from it she could easily approach the sacred places in which the mysteries of her Son had been accomplished; and visiting places of this kind, she revolved with inestimable affection what had been done, and burned most eagerly toward her Only-begotten, until after the appointed times He assumed her and translated her to the longed-for glory.

Let us therefore also think of all these things every day, and so by assiduous and devout remembrances of them let our mind be formed, adorned, filled, and occupied, that useless fantasies, noxious thoughts, hateful distractions may be excluded from it, especially in divine things; and let us seek the better charisms and those nearer to salvation, the others being driven out; let us apprehend and work those things (namely by reading, studying, acting) by which our heart may be more inflamed to devotion, to custody of self, to spiritual progress.

(t. 32, p. 330)

Furthermore let us be mindful, and congratulatorily contemplate, how most gloriously the incomparable Virgin was assumed today to the throne of glory foreseen for her from eternity, prepared from the beginning of the world. Surely the humbler she was in this world, the more sublime she has been made in heaven. The more ardently and perfectly she loved God, the more deeply, clearly, and happily she now looks upon Him. The more who have been saved through her, the more the beatitude and glory of the many redounds upon her. The more and more eminent the goods that were wrought in her, from her, and through her, the more illustrious gifts of glory she now possesses. The more nearly and singularly God joined Himself to her in this

life, the more closely and gloriously He has united her to Himself in the heavens. And briefly, as much and in such wise as it became such a Mother to be assumed, exalted, and glorified by such a Son, so much and in such wise on this day He assumed, sublimated, and beatified her. Therefore as much as a created mind could be united, immersed, profundated to the uncircumscribed, incomprehensible, and immense light without personal union of itself with God, so much is she today beatifically united to the abyss of the Divinity, to the everlasting light, to the one and triune God, fruitively immersed, inconvertibly profundated.

O how inestimably she now gives thanks to the whole most high Trinity, which pre-elected her to all these things, which so honored her that she is of equal parentage with God the Father, Mother of the Only-begotten of God, temple of the Holy Spirit, and Mother of Him from whom the Spirit truly eternally flows; through whom He decreed to save the human race, to whom He committed the kingdom of mercy, through whom under the evangelical law He has deigned to save so many desperate and most grave sinners; whom He made also advocate of the Church, queen and lady of every creature, mother of piety and grace; to whose command He subjected the troop of all malignant spirits, by whose prayers and merits He raised so many dead, yea and brought back many who had died in mortal faults to life and grace and salvation! O how unthinkably she delights now in her only-born, according to both His natures! And although she delights incomparably more in Him according to His divinity, nevertheless she rejoices very singularly and intensely in His humanity. For if all the Blessed vehemently rejoice and are refreshed by looking upon Christ's humanity, insofar as through it they have been saved, or recovered to their reintegration: how much more she, from whose most pure bloods the Lord's flesh was formed, and from whose unstained bowels that humanity itself came forth, with whose virginal milk it was nourished? O how much the whole triumphant Church, the whole phalanx of the heavenly fatherland, the universe of angels and of blessed souls, incessantly venerates this only Virgin as the most excellent Mother of God and of their Creator! How most honorably they met her today ascending, how most joyfully they received her, and led her even to the throne of glory prepared for her! Let us therefore congratulate her, and with all our strength honor her perennially, and after God love her most heartily and praise her together.

Finally, that after this most uncertain life we may be able happily to be exalted with her, let us first follow her humility, who although she was most worthy of all and very most worthy, did not delay to show herself the humblest of all. Let therefore our eyes see and deplore our imperfection. From the remembrance of the multitude and greatness of our faults, let us reckon ourselves the vilest of all, and inferior and viler than the brutes. From the consideration of our whole proneness to every evil, and of our whole infirmity toward every good, let us be God-fearing, guarded, solicitous, and most humble. From our defectibilities, foulnesses, and needs in body and soul, let us little esteem and humble ourselves infinitely. *(t. 32, p. 331)* From the contemplation of the infinite excellence of our God, and from the speculation of our immense deficiency and littleness, yea and nothingness, let each of us humble himself under Him, little esteem and cast himself down immensely; and since he has so often and so dreadfully offended and dishonored the King of majesty, let him reckon himself worthy of every confusion, persecution, chastisement, adversity. And so from this humility let there arise in us a fixed humility and unshaken patience: fortified with which virtues let us strive continually to grow and be strengthened in holy love, and with ampler purity of heart daily to minister indefatigably to the Most High, never giving place to sloth.

Assumption — Sermon VII ad religiosos

Of the perfect observance of the monastic life, and how much a monk sins who transgresses his rule or statutes; how necessary is custody of self; and how great a supply of spiritual riches there is for those who advance in religion

(t. 32, p. 331)

"Jesus entered into a certain town" (Luke 10:38).

The town mystically is holy religion, or the monastic order, or the monastery: for the congregation of the devout itself is terrible to adverse powers as an army set in array (Cant. 6:3). Therefore, as in a town or castle there are hard stones strongly joined to one another with lime or like glue, so in religion there are various rigorous ordinances, prudently instituted, mutually connected with great discretion. This is one reason why religion is designated by a town. But as in a town we see that if some stones are shaken out and fall, and a little opening is made, a great danger hangs over, and access lies open to enemies, unless the opening be repaired and stopped, or custody be applied in it: so certainly it is in religion. For unless one diligently observes all things that belong to the Order and are contained in the rule, soon danger is shown to impend and entrance to lie open to enemies. For which reason it is written: “He that neglects little things, falls by little and little” (Ecclus. 19:1). Venial sins indeed dispose to mortal sins; yea even the unbridled use of venials is not excused from mortal, since it includes contempt.

Moreover in religion or the rule, some things are contained by way of precept, among which the three substantial ones obtain the primacy. After which many others are enjoined by way of precept: as in the Carthusian Order, enclosure or not going out of the bounds of the monastery, also abstinence from flesh, wearing the hairshirt, discharging the Hours (which yet is common to religious). But other things are handed down by way of counsel or exhortation, and are to be diligently kept, nor are they violated without at least venial fault: indeed to neglect them without care and habitually to violate them is reckoned mortal.

(t. 32, p. 332)

Therefore if any of the religious violates anything of those things which in his rule or statutes are handed down by way of precept, it is not doubtful that he sins mortally; and when that falls under the vow, he sins very enormously, as acting against the vow, which binds more strongly than an oath, especially a solemn vow, such as is the vow of religious. Whoever therefore has so sinned, let him know that there is verified in him what the holy apostle James says: “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all” (James 2:10). Such a transgression therefore is as it were a great breach in the castle, through which enemies enter without difficulty, and capture, spoil, or kill those who are within. But he who offends in something that does not fall under precept makes as it were a small lesion in the castle; and unless he meet it, and recover that lesion and amend himself, enemies through that little opening gradually enter his heart, and spoil it of the gifts of grace and of the virtues, drawing him to a great ruin, namely mortal fault. For which reason Scripture says: “If you hold not yourself instantly in the fear of the Lord, your house shall quickly be overthrown”; and again, “With fear and trembling work out your salvation” (Phil. 2:12).

It is necessary therefore that a religious be guarded on every side, and eyed like the Cherubim, that he be continually circumspect, and coerce every exterior and interior sense, and also refrain every appetite both sensitive and intellective and subject it to the observances of religion, and frequently every day discuss his conscience, lest any fault be found in it through which the most cunning enemy may attempt and obtain entrance. And since it is truly written, “As a city that lies open and without circuit of walls, so is a man that cannot refrain his spirit in speaking” (Prov. 25:28), the refraining of the tongue and the observance of silence are very necessary—not only as to this, that none of the Brethren speak without leave, but also that he not abuse leave given, falling into idle, superfluous, or otherwise illicit words: in which the speaker is not excused from fault by leave granted, since by divine law they are known to be culpable. But leave to speak is neither given nor can be given except for speaking what is lawful, expedient, or necessary. Again, since thinness of food and clothing is indispensably of the essence of religion, as inseparably connected with and depending upon the vow of poverty, we ought greatly to avoid being daily immoderate in food and drink, and especially not notably to exceed in them, nor in garments. Therefore with the fear of God and devotion and moral discipline let us refresh our bodies; nor like a famished dog let us pour ourselves upon foods and cups, nor seek delicacies, nor ourselves excite concupiscence in ourselves, and irritate sensuality by thrusting provocative objects upon it: which (alas!) elsewhere enough, and more than enough, breaks forth, rages, is

kindled. Nor let anyone eat or drink without discipline, nor cast his eyes about, but intently attend to what is read. Let the reader of the refectory also read intelligibly and distinctly, taking good care lest by his fault others be hindered from the understanding of the sense of the words and from devotion, and lest thence they be wearied, troubled, and sin: otherwise their fault and the omission of their understanding and devotion will certainly redound upon the reader, for whom it were better not to read than to incur so many faults. Who also while reading ought conveniently to pause, because by doing this he himself reads more easily and intelligibly, and others also more easily understand him. Let the superior therefore cause these things to be observed, lest he also be involved in all the aforesaid evils.

Second, religion or the monastic order is compared to a castle, because as men fearing adversaries flee to castles as to safer places, and that they may dwell there more quietly, and conserve their riches there; so they enter religion, lest by wicked associations of the world, by the vanities of the age, by carnal objects they be drawn to vices, and that in ampler peace of breast they may serve the Lord in the cloister, and there more abound in spiritual riches, and live more safely, and more quickly attain the port of salvation. Yet unless they be solicitous there, and avoid dangerous security, and with instant effort sweat at spiritual progress, they are in peril: yea sometimes they fall and perish more gravely than worldlings, since by the testimony of the holy Fathers it is known that as none are found better than those who have advanced in cloisters, so neither worse than those who conduct themselves negligently there; especially because cloistered persons are frequently so much more fiercely assaulted by invisible enemies, and more cunningly tempted, the more diligently they have striven to escape the snares of enemies, and the more prudently they insist on the progress of the virtues. For those dwelling in camps, and sailing in quieter waters, unless they watch themselves, are often involved in dangers and perish. *(t. 32, p. 333)* Therefore let us so glory that we have left the world and escaped many snares, that nevertheless we be continually diligent, lest we be deceived in any way, or cast down under the appearance of good, and lest we become remiss: yea let us avoid little things as great, because (according to Augustine) a neglected bilge does what an onrushing wave does, and a pirate concealing himself harms as much as an army openly meeting; and let us always remember that many more perfect than we have fallen and perished. Let us persevere in custody of the heart and holy fear even to the end, because dangers, temptations, difficulties, snares impend even to the end, and in the very end, at the term of this life, in the article of death, they often impend more impetuously and more dangerously. Let it not suffice us to have passed part of a most slippery bridge, since the same danger of falling remains until the full crossing of the bridge, since the Apostle also confesses: “I do not count myself to have apprehended” (Phil. 3:13).

Third, religion is compared to a castle, because as a castle is the dwelling of the rich, and in it more than in common habitations all necessary and useful things abound; so the monastery is the mansion of the spiritually wealthy virtuous, and in religion the most apt means of advancing in every virtue are more ready to hand, and also spiritual arms for resisting every hostile assault of demons, of the flesh, and of the world. And there is there a supply of interior refreshments, an exuberance of internal delights, provision of things necessary to salvation, the beauty of the virtues, the wall of patience, profound humility as a lake, the fortification of continence, the tower of fortitude, highest charity, the water of salutary wisdom, the wine of heavenly consolation. Let therefore all these things be in us; let us be truly religious—that is, let there be in our hearts before the Most High what our exteriors designate, namely contempt of the world, despising of earthly things, dove-like simplicity of heart, sincerity of intention, fervor and diligence of mind, and full and most salutary mortification of self.

Finally, in these ways the most blessed virgin Mary was a most strong castle, into which the heavenly King entered by the mystery of His Incarnation from her; and He dwelt in her through the space of nine months, and filled all her bowels with affluences of graces, excellences of all the virtues, and perfections of gifts, beatitudes also and fruits, especially with every charity and piety, then with every purity and humility: whom also on this day He translated to His supercelestial palace.

Let us therefore study so to strengthen and adorn our souls, so to clothe and fill them with the aforesaid virtues, gifts of the Holy Spirit and fruits, that they also may be castles of God, in which the whole most blessed and adorable Trinity may always deign to dwell by charity and grace, by the most benign affluence of divine charisms and by daily and incessant increases. To the praise and glory of His piety and infinite excellence. Amen.

On the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Nativity — Sermon I

Of the blessings of blessed Mary, of the fullness of her graces, and how much we ought to love and honor her

(t. 32, p. 375)

"The Lord has blessed you by His power, because by you He has brought our enemies to nothing" (Judith 13:22).

As blessed Gregory says, the blessing of God is the conferring of His gifts, and the multiplication of the same. Rightly therefore it is asserted of the most glorious virgin Mary that God blessed her "by His power"—that is very copiously in His omnipotence. Indeed He blessed her before her nativity, in her nativity, and after her nativity.

First therefore He blessed her before her nativity—that is, when she was still closed in the womb of her mother, namely of holy Anne. Now this blessing was her preservation from sin. And although sacred Scripture does not evidently say this, yet from those things which are contained in the Scriptures this is reasonably and certainly proved. Finally, Christ excepted, it is not read in the divine Scriptures that anyone was sanctified in the womb except the holy prophet Jeremias and most holy John the Baptist. Of himself indeed Jeremias testifies that God said to him: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you: and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you" (Jer. 1:5). But of most sacred John the Baptist the evangelist Luke writes this, who says that the angel Gabriel said of John to Zachary: "He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb"—that is in the womb (Luke 1:15). From these it is easy to prove that the most glorious Virgin was sanctified in her mother's womb. First, because whatever of grace and of the virtues, whatever of interior beauty and perfection has been conferred by God on His servants, much more has been granted to that incomparable and most worthy Virgin whom God Himself chose for Himself as mother, namely Mary. Second, because she before all the Saints was nearer and more like to Christ, and first and highest after Him in the order and universality of the Saints: therefore she was nearer to the sanctification and sanctity of Christ the man, as sanctified before others in her mother's womb. Third, because the beauty and honorableness of parents overflows upon their offspring, likewise dishonorableness. *(t. 32, p. 376)* Wherefore it is written in Ecclesiasticus: "The glory of a man is from the honor of his father, and a father without honor is the disgrace of the son" (Ecclus. 3:13). In Proverbs also: "The glory of children are their fathers" (Prov. 17:6). As therefore it would pertain to the irreverence of Christ if He had not sanctified His Mother before the other Saints in her mother's womb, so it pertains to the glory and honor of the Savior that He excellently sanctified His own Mother in the womb of her parent.

From these therefore it is clear that not only was the glorious Virgin sanctified in her mother's womb, but even very excellently sanctified there: as also John the Baptist was more excellently sanctified in the womb than Jeremias, because of John the angel related, "He shall be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). Yet the sanctification of the sacred Virgin far exceeds the sanctification of blessed John the Baptist, as the Baptist's sanctification exceeds that of the prophet Jeremias. For it behooved the Mother of the true God to shine greatly in all things. When therefore Saint John was filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb, most wonderfully was the Mother of Christ the almighty God sanctified in the womb of her parent: to which pertains that in the Psalm, "The most High has sanctified His own tabernacle" (Ps. 45:5). Finally, so copious a virtue and grace was infused into the highest Virgin in her mother's womb that she never sinned, neither mortally nor venially: so that never in her arose any inordinate motion of sensuality or of the fomes, never an illicit thought, never an evil affection; never did she speak an inordinate word, nor did any negligence steal upon her. This sanctification was her blessing in the womb.

Second, God blessed her in her nativity, in which she was most devoutly offered to God by her parents, and in which truly a great and new light rose upon the world: and then (as is believed) God increased His grace in her. Indeed in the Old Testament males were purged from original sin by circumcision, and received grace making acceptable and the virtues by infusion or creation from God: for without charity and grace they could not please God, be in the state of salvation, and obtain salvation. But females were saved by the faith of their parents, by whose faith they were purged from original, not without the infusion (as has been touched) of charity and grace. And it is certain that the sacred Virgin was not born in original—indeed nor John the Baptist, whom yet it is clear was circumcised: in whose circumcision (as is believed) the grace of God in him was not moderately increased (Luke 1:59). Whence also in the nativity of the glorious Virgin, while her parents offered her to God so most devoutly, it is believed that God placed a great increase of His grace in her.

Third, He most copiously blessed her after her nativity. For as soon as the most sacred Virgin began to use reason, the Holy Spirit (whose actual motion we need in every meritorious action) directed and most graciously moved her to every good, especially to the knowledge or contemplation of God, and His actual and fervent love: and then she began to grow spiritually, and daily to profit vehemently in every virtue. But she dwelt in the temple, in which she had been offered to God, where she was wonderful to all and most gracious exceedingly, continually intent on God, praying, meditating, contemplating most sweetly, loving most fervently. Further at the Lord's Annunciation, when she conceived Christ, the Only-begotten of God, a most exuberant increase of grace and of the virtues was conferred on her: because then she was made true Mother of God, and from then the incomprehensible God began incomprehensibly to work in His own Mother. Therefore from that moment in which God was incarnate in her, the grace of God resting in her womb overflowed greatly upon her, and indeed so copiously as it became that from such a Son to such a mother a redundancy and communication of the goods existing in Him should be made. *(t. 32, p. 377)* Hence Jerome says: To others grace is granted by parts; but into Mary the fullness of grace poured itself wholly. For as the divine Dionysius says in many places, the more something approaches some first in any order, so much the more it participates its power and perfection. Therefore Mary, most near to Christ the fountain of all grace, received a fullness of grace beyond all pure creatures.

Wherefore we ought after Christ God and man to love, venerate, and invoke her most highly—so affectionate a mother, so most faithful an advocate, so most merciful a mediatrix, so most powerful and most liberal a helper, who continually prays for sinners, so that if there is any grace or virtue in us, through her God has conferred it on us, who has committed to her the kingdom of mercy. Her therefore after Christ God and man we ought most highly to love and venerate and invoke, and to follow her humility, meekness, piety, chastity, charity and other virtues, that our devotion and veneration may please her; nor otherwise shall we be able to obtain salvation. Therefore most devout Bernard says: Look more deeply, O brethren, with how great an affection of devotion God has willed the most blessed Mary to be honored by us, who has placed in her the fullness of all good, that accordingly if there is any hope in us, if any grace or salvation, we may know it to overflow from her. With all the marrow of our hearts therefore and with all our vows let us venerate Mary, because such is the will of God, who has willed us to have all through her.

A certain holy man leading the contemplative life heard every year on the sixth of the Ides of September the sweetest melody of angels. And when he most devoutly begged God that He would deign to reveal to him why specially on that day he heard the angelic concerts, it was revealed to him that therefore, because on that day the most sacred Virgin was born in the world; and God commanded him that he reveal this very thing to holy mother Church, that she also on this day might celebrate the solemnity of the nativity of the virgin Mary. When therefore he had intimated these things to the supreme Pontiff, he, having investigated and found the truth, commanded this feast to be universally celebrated on the sixth of the Ides of September. Now the Church celebrates the nativity of Christ, and of the glorious Virgin, and also of John the Baptist, because

these three were born without original sin.

Nativity — Sermon II

That blessed Mary crushed the head of the serpent, that she is our mediatrix, and testimonies of her sanctity from the letters of Ignatius the martyr

(t. 32, p. 378)

“Blessed are you by the Lord the most high God above all women upon the earth” (Judith 13:23).

These words were said to the letter of that virtuous and most chaste widow Judith, who when (God helping) she had killed most impious Holofernes, and thereby had freed her people, the children of Israel, from greatest straits and from most cruel death, and beyond this had helped them to a most copious abundance of spoils, the princes of her people and all concordantly blessed her, and Ozias the prince said the aforesaid words to her. By this widow Judith the most worthy virgin Mary was prefigured, and by Holofernes is designated the devil, whom the most holy Virgin cast down and conquered, especially in this—that she bore Christ, who is the savior of the world, the spoiler of hell, the victor of the devil. For of her at the beginning of the ages God foretold to the ancient enemy: “I will put enmities between you and the woman; she shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for her heel” (Gen. 3:15). Finally, as the devil through one man, the first-formed man, conquered, infected and destroyed the human race by means of a woman—namely Eve exhorting the man to sin (Gen. 3:1–6)—so the Father of mercies and God of all consolation, through one man, the Lord Jesus Christ, by means of a woman, namely the glorious Virgin, ministering to the Son of God the substance of flesh from her most pure bloods, freed the human race from the yoke of the devil, from the foulness and servitude of sin, from the damnation of hell, and beyond all these reduced it to abundant grace in the present and everlasting glory in the future. Hence the Wise Man says: “By the envy of the devil, death came into the world” (Wis. 2:24). And to the Romans the Apostle says: “By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death” (Rom. 5:12).

Therefore we ought most highly to thank God, because He has not only provided us with an almighty savior, and a fit mediator and reconciler between Himself and us, but moreover has granted us the most benign mediatrix Mary, who is wholly most pious, most full of all charity, mercy, sweetness, liberality. For to this mediator the Lord Jesus Christ we need this mediatrix: because that mediator is not only a pious man, but also a just and dread God; nor is He only savior and advocate, but also a terrible judge, having power to cast both body and soul into hell (Matt. 10:28), who leaves no sin unpunished, and for one mortal crime avenges the injury of God the Father with eternal torment (Job 14:16). We therefore need a mediatrix to so just and dread a mediator, who may pacify us to Him, mitigate His wrath, and obtain for us grace and salvation. And certainly thanks be to God, who has given us such a one, who stands wholly ineffably most merciful and very powerful. For she is so dear to this mediator, and so singularly to be honored, that she cannot suffer a refusal from Him.

(t. 32, p. 379)

Further, how virtuous the holy Virgin was is shown also from those things which are narrated of her parents and childhood in a certain history which by some is reckoned among the apocrypha; yet some of those things which are related there and seem credible enough I will now briefly report. Therefore, as is said there, Joachim sprung from the city of Nazareth took to wife Anne born from the city of Bethlehem. And they were just and living irreprehensibly, and dividing their substance into three parts: of which one they gave to the temple and its ministers, another to pilgrims and the poor, the third they reserved for themselves and their household. And when for twenty years or thereabout they could acquire no offspring, they promised the Lord that if He granted them offspring, they would dedicate it to the divine service. And when on a certain solemnity of the Law Joachim with others wished to offer his offering in the temple, the priest with

indignation thrust him back, because being infertile he was unworthy to appear among the fertile and to offer a victim in the temple. Who not daring for confusion to return home, went away to his shepherds, and for some days remained with them. And there an angel of God appeared to him, foretelling that from his wife he would beget a daughter, saying: Anne your wife shall bear you a daughter, whom you shall call Mary. She, as you have vowed, shall be consecrated to the Lord from her infancy, and from her mother's womb full of the Holy Spirit; nor shall she dwell outwardly among the people, but in the temple of God, lest anyone suspect anything sinister of her. And as she shall be born of a barren mother, so from her the Son of the Most High shall be wonderfully generated, who shall be called Jesus, through whom there shall be salvation to all nations. These things said, the angel departed from him, and appeared to his wife lamenting the absence of her husband, relating the same things to her. Then Joachim and his wife most vehemently glorying in the Lord came together, and begetting a daughter called her Mary. After these things, the third year completed, they led the weaned daughter to the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem with offerings fitting according to the Law, and offered her there to the Lord, and left her with the other virgins. Now there were fifteen steps by which one ascended into the temple, which was situated on a mountain. Therefore the virgin Mary, three years old, ascended all those steps by herself so readily as if she had been of perfect age. But established in the temple, she daily progressed in all sanctity, and was assiduously visited by a holy angel. Finally the things aforesaid are very credible. For since Christ willed His precursor to be born of holy parents, and foretold his nativity to his father, it is not to be doubted that He willed His own Mother to be born of holy parents; and it is credible that He foretold her nativity by an angel to her parents; and the other things already narrated of the sacred Virgin are asserted by many and great holy doctors.

Moreover, how virtuous the holy Virgin was is shown from the letter which the glorious martyr Ignatius sent to his master most blessed John the apostle. In which among other things he writes: There are here many of our women desiring to see Mary of Jesus, that they may touch her, and handle her breasts which suckled the Lord Jesus, and also that they may inquire of certain more secret things of hers. For Salome herself, whom you love, the daughter of Anne, dwelling five months with her at Jerusalem, and others, relate certain things—that Mary is fertile with the abundance of all graces and with every virtue. And (as they say) in tribulations and afflictions she is cheerful, in want and necessities not querulous, to those injuring her grateful and not troublesome; she shows herself joyful to the pious, and compassionates the afflicted as co-afflicted and does not delay to help. Against the vicious and pestiferous she shines in the battle of the faith. She is mistress of our new religion and of penance, and among the faithful minister of all works of piety; she is devoted to the humble, and more devotedly humbles herself. And in a wonderful manner she is magnified by all, while she is detracted by the Scribes and Pharisees: and as it is related to us by those worthy of faith, in Mary of Jesus the excellence of human nature is associated with angelic sanctity. And these such things have excited my desires and compel me greatly to desire the sight of this (if it be lawful so to speak) prodigy and most holy marvel.

(t. 32, p. 380)

Again the same blessed martyr and bishop Ignatius writes in another letter to John the apostle that he wishes to ascend to the parts of Jerusalem and to see the Saints who are there, especially Mary of Jesus. From these letters it is proved how fervently persons of either sex converted from gentility to Christ desired to see and speak with the most sacred virgin Mary, still living in mortal flesh, and how far and widely they flocked to her. Whence also it is read that the divine Dionysius, who was so ardent in the Christian religion, came to the places of Jerusalem to see the most blessed Virgin. And she was shown to him in such clarity and glory that failing for admiration he said: Unless I had known from elsewhere that there is another Deity, I would have thought no other Deity than the blessed Virgin.

Lastly, since none is a worthy praiser or venerator of this Virgin except who has been her devout and stable imitator, let us study to follow her in the aforesaid virtues for which the great and very elect Ignatius praises

her. Therefore by her example let us be joyful in tribulations and afflictions, to those injuring us not troublesome nor indignant but returning thanks, because they offer us occasion of greatest merit, and through them we are purged and crowned by God. Let us not be easily querulous; indeed let us tolerate poverty and hunger, thirst and nakedness with equanimity (if need be), compassionating the afflicted and needy and not delaying to succor. And if holy men in this life came from places so remote that they might see and speak with her still mortal, for a little time, how much more ought we to burn and hasten to her most joyful sight in the heavens, inseparable and eternal, because without doubt to see her inestimably surpasses and transcends all the joys of the world?

Further, of the generation of the glorious Virgin some things have been said above, in those which have been written of the solemnity of her Conception: where the epistle and gospel of the present feast stand exposed. And the sermons annexed to them there can serve here: therefore that prolixity may be avoided, I write no more here.

Nativity — Sermon III ad religiosos

Of how great things Christ has done for His Mother, and of her humility to be imitated

(t. 32, p. 380)

“All generations shall call me blessed” (Luke 1:48).

The nearer the most sacred Virgin was to Christ, the more like she was to Him. But she was nearest to Christ, as being His true Mother, and she bore Him in her womb and clothed Him with the substance of her flesh. Finally a rational creature is so much nearer to the uncircumscribable God, the more it approaches Him, and the more fully it is united to Him. *(t. 32, p. 381)* But it approaches God not by the step of the body, but by the affection of the mind; not by local gait, but by spiritual progress; not by walking materially, but by loving spiritually. And the more fervently it loves, the more affectionately it aspires to the highest good, the more swiftly it runs, the more it advances, and the more nearly it is united. Moreover Christ according as He is God is essentially and interminably blessed; but according to the assumed humanity He was from the beginning of the Incarnation, as to the superior part of His soul, blessed, or seeing God by species and beatifically enjoying Him. It is to be believed therefore that never did any rational creature in this life draw so near to the beatitude of Christ’s soul as His most excellent Mother, the most sacred Virgin. And as in the womb she was more excellently sanctified than glorious John the Baptist and Jeremiah the prophet, so in this life (as I believe) she saw God more clearly than Moses the lawgiver or Paul the apostle, although each of them saw God by species in this life. For she was more fervent than all in charity, more illustrious in purity, more sublime in the gift of wisdom, in mystical theology, in every perfection of the virtues, and dearer to God than all, more secret and familiar to the Holy Spirit. And God incarnate more clearly demonstrated Himself, more liberally communicated Himself, and more eminently joined Himself to His own Mother than to any others whatsoever. Hence she, foreknowing in spirit that Christ her Son was to be adored by all the nations of the world, prophesied that she also would be beatified by all who would believe in her Son; and this for this reason: “Because He has regarded” (she says) “the humility of His handmaid”—that is, He kindly looked upon me His humble, little, and poor handmaid, and approved my humility so much that He ineffably emptied Himself concerning me and in me, making Himself, the Creator of all, my son, assuming from me and in me human nature. Hence the most holy Virgin added: “Because He that is mighty has done great things to me, and holy is His name” (Luke 1:49).

What are these great things which the Only-begotten of God did for His Mother? The first and highest is that He made her His Mother. By which He made her of equal parentage with God the Father, so that she has and has begotten the same Son with the eternal Father, and brought forth Him from whom the Holy Spirit truly proceeds: which is a dignity in a manner infinite. The second is that He made her mother and virgin: which

never happened, nor will happen again in this world. For the Most High supernaturally fecundated her, and from her most pure blood formed the body of Christ, as the holy angel Gabriel announced to her: “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you” (Luke 1:35). And in this she has a great likeness with the eternal Father, because as He alone is Father without a mother of the Son existing with Him of the same nature, so she alone is mother without a father of the Son existing with her of the same nature. The third is that He made her co-worker of the reparation of the salvation of all. For as through the first and deceived mother we were all lost and liable to damnation and children of wrath (Eph. 2:3), so through this virginal Mother, deceiver of the demons, the salvation of all has been repaired, and through her all things have been reformed. For she by her most profound humility, most pure virginity, most ardent love, most perfect conversation, is said to have merited that the Son of God should be incarnate from her, and that the Savior was born from her: not that she merited it altogether of condignity, but rather of congruity, and as much as could be merited, and because before others she was as it were incomparably of greater merit. She also conceived the Savior Himself, brought Him forth, brought Him up, and most singularly prayed for the common salvation and redemption. Deservedly therefore is she called blessed by all generations, as she through whom the beatitude of all has been recovered.

The fourth is that He preferred her to every pure creature, so that by the very fact that she was made Mother of the true God, she was constituted lady of the whole world, empress of the angels, queen of the heavens, princess of all men, and crusher of the demons.

(t. 32, p. 382)

The fifth is that He made her advocate of the human race, guardian and protectress of the whole Church, and mother of all the faithful. Therefore the Church humbly prostrates herself to her, and rolls herself at the feet of her piety. The sixth is that He committed to her the kingdom of mercy, making her queen of mercy, mother of piety and grace, mediatrix of the wicked, so that innumerable miserable and wicked persons, yea the desperate and most impious, are saved through her; and whatever of piety and mercy, whatever of grace and salvation God almighty and eternal bestows upon us, He has disposed to grant us through her. Therefore He wills that she be after Himself most singularly honored by us, most devoutly invoked, and uniquely preferred in love as the most benign procuratrix through whom whatever of grace and salvation shall exist in us we obtain from the fountain of all good, and receive from above.

The seventh is that He conferred and infused upon her so great an exuberance of divine charisms, so great an eminence in gratia gratum faciens and in every infused virtue and gift of the Holy Spirit, as it became Him to give to His own Mother—that is, ineffably copious before all the elect. For it was most fitting that her whom He chose, foresaw, and took to Himself as mother, He should before others, who are servants and handmaids, fill and overfill with every munificence and opulence of His grace. This also was fitting, since He constituted her queen of the kingdom of mercy, mother of piety and grace, mediatrix of sinners, advocate of the Church and mother of Christians, that she should be so full and opulent, so most gracious and most liberal, that from her fullness she could succor, communicate, and flow into all. The eighth is that in the Church triumphant, in the heavenly kingdom, in the fatherland of the Blessed, He exalted her wonderfully and illustriously above all the heavenly citizens, above all the choirs of angelic spirits: and as much as she was here more excellent in grace, deeper in humility, more ardent in charity, more perfect in every virtue, so much greater has she been made there in glory, more sublime in her exaltation, more perspicacious in the beatific vision, more filled in glorious fruition, more diffuse in every happiness. Behold how great, how wonderfully and inestimably great, illustrious and maximal things He that is almighty and alone essentially holy has done for the blessed Virgin. Therefore let us wisely contemplate this whole excellence of the most sacred virgin Mary already touched, frequently look upon it; and let us most sincerely regard, most affectionately love, most sweetly venerate this God-bearing and incomparable Lady, and most heartily congratulate her in all her happiness and eminence. Let us also continually invoke her with all confidence and fervor, and as much as

we can consider how the whole heavenly court loves, praises, and honors her.

Finally let us follow her virtues with all our strength. Behold how ready she is to forgive, to pity, to succor every one however guilty against her and against her Son: yea how most benignly she prevents many. Therefore by her example, let each of us be forgiving, compassionate, and at a fitting time succoring—at least by praying, and by communicating his good works to him, if he cannot in another way—toward everyone sinning against himself or his own and however injurious. Again, let us not cease to humble, reprehend, accuse, vilify, judge, and chastise ourselves. Let each one cast up to himself in his conscience all his sins, and exaggerate them: and so from the assiduous habit of most vehemently humbling, vilifying, rebuking, correcting ourselves, we shall attain to habitual, profound, complete humility: which when acquired, there will be in us neither anger nor sadness because of injuries or adversities; yea in such things will be our glorying, because we shall reckon ourselves most worthy of every confusion, adversity, derision, and tribulation. *(t. 32, p. 383)* And then God will be truly and most graciously always with us, so that with great alacrity, with stable attention, with fervor of heart and jubilee of mind, we shall discharge the psalmody, the Hours, prayers, celebrations, and whatever of divine service there is, and shall advance daily in every charism of the Holy Spirit.

Exposition of the Hymn Ave, maris stella

Exposition of the Hymn Ave, maris stella (“Hail, Star of the Sea”)

On the Most Blessed Virgin Mary — Hymn at Vespers

(t. 35, p. 82)

The hymn

1. Hail, star of the sea,
kindly Mother of God
and ever Virgin,
happy gate of heaven.

2. Taking that “Ave”
from the mouth of Gabriel,
establish us in peace,
changing the name of Eve.

3. Loose the chains of the guilty,
bring forth light to the blind;
drive away our evils,
ask for all good things.

4. Show yourself to be a Mother:
may He take our prayer through you
who, born for us,
consented to be yours.

5. O singular Virgin,
gentle above all,
make us, freed from our sins,
gentle and chaste.

6. Grant a pure life,
prepare a safe way,
that seeing Jesus
we may rejoice forever.

7. Praise be to God the Father,
glory to Christ the Highest,
to the Holy Spirit;
to the Three one honor. Amen.

Exposition of the hymn

Argument. In this hymn the most holy Virgin Mary is praised because, saluted by an angel sent from heaven, she was made the Mother of God; and finally she is asked that, showing us a mother’s bowels, she restore her Son to us appeased and kindly.

The author is uncertain. The poem is in trochaic trimeters, and is not polished.

This hymn is sung on the solemnities of the most sacred Virgin. In it we first salute and praise our most excellent Lady herself, to win her good will—or rather, to honor her in the Lord—because after the true God she is to be supremely and uniquely loved and honored, as being the true Mother of Him; by which she has

been constituted in a dignity and excellence in a manner infinite, made of equal parentage with the eternal Father, and true Mother of the only-begotten Son of the supreme Father, the most familiar and most loving sanctuary, temple, and tabernacle of the Holy Spirit; and finally so great and of such a kind in all excellence of grace and of virtues, in the various charisms of the adorable Paraclete, as it became the Mother of God, the Queen of angels, and the Empress of all the Saints to be. Of her that holy and fervent Ignatius wrote to his teacher, the apostle John: "Whom would it not delight to see her who, remaining a virgin, bore for us the God of gods—if indeed he

(t. 35, p. 83)

be a friend of our religion?"

Let us therefore say and sing with devout and joyful mind:

Stanza 1. "Ave, maris stella." This is a salutation of congratulation, because so it is, rather than of petition that so it may be. For this unique and incomparable Virgin is now truly without every woe, without all misery of fault and of punishment; and, as her most devoted lover holy Bernard testifies, she is immersed so most profoundly in the inaccessible, superdelicious, and superbeautiful light of the Deity as far as the condition of a creature allows without personal union. To her a certain versifier brought forth in a compendious salutation:

Hail, happy Mother,
through whom the world is loosed from woe,
who make the woe of mother Eve brief.

Therefore the more we love you, O most serene Lady, with the greater congratulation and complacency do we address you and salute you, saying, "Hail, star of the sea," who by a very fitting metaphor are called the star of the sea. For first you are deservedly called "star"—the most radiant star, indeed, of the empyrean heaven, who ineffably adorn, beautify, illumine, and gladden that whole supermundane sphere, the supreme paradise, the triumphant Church. Nor is there there any star more beautiful than you, except your Only-begotten, who in the Apocalypse says: "I am the root and stock of David, the bright and morning star" (Apoc. 22:16). Then you are rightly named "star of the sea": for as that star of the firmament which is called the arctic pole stands as if fixed and immovable, directing those who sail, at the sight of which sailors in dangers are consoled and contemplate whither they ought to turn; so wretched wayfarers in this wicked world, as though tossed and imperilled upon a most stormy and most restless ocean, direct toward you, O most merciful advocate, O sweetest Mother, O safe and most faithful refuge, in every danger the desolate gaze of the mind, and from the beholding of you are consoled, breathe again, take confidence, and are most clemently regarded by you, helped, and guided, and so reach the harbor of everlasting salvation.

"Dei Mater alma"—kindly Mother of God—that is, holy Genitrix of the Only-begotten of God the Father, who, since He is essentially holy and infinite holiness in the nature of His Deity, willed to have none but a most holy mother, as much holier than the other Saints as it befitted the Genitrix of the Holy of Holies to be holier than the servants and handmaids of that same Holy One—yea, than the servants of that same most holy Mother herself. For all the Saints, who certainly are servants or handmaids of the Holy of Holies, are also servants or handmaids of that Mother, that is, of the Genitrix of God and of their Creator, who by the privilege, right, and authority of her maternity, whereby she is Mother of the true God and of equal parentage with the eternal Father, presides over and can command every creature in heaven and on earth. "And ever virgin"—wholly most pure above all, in whom never was any inordinate affection, thought, or motion; virgin before the birth, in the birth, and after the birth.

"Felix coeli porta"—happy gate of heaven—not so eminently as the Savior of the world, your Son, but dispositively and cooperatively, because through you and from you was born for us the opener of heaven,

and you by your most copious merits and most efficacious prayers merit grace and the secure entrance of the kingdom. Again, through the most illustrious Virgin, as the Church sings, we merited to receive the author of life; she also is our mediatrix and most pious reconciler: and so she is rightly called "gate of heaven," that is, the way and means of entering into the kingdom. Further, as through Eve the gate of earthly paradise was closed—which yet was closed directly and consummately through the transgression of Adam—so through the glorious Virgin the gate of heaven is said to be opened, which through Christ is said completely and properly to have been unlocked, as was said above.

Stanza 2. "Sumens illud Ave." "Taking that Ave"—that is, the angelic salutation never before heard—"Gabrielis ore," from the mouth of Gabriel, who in an assumed body appeared to you visibly and spoke in full

(t. 35, p. 84)

vigil (Luke 1:28), as also to Daniel and to Zacharias (Dan. 8–9; Luke 1:11), yet saluted none so solemnly as you,

"funda"—that is, firmly place and preserve us—"in pace," in peace of heart, which is the tranquillity of mind in God, of which it is read: "Much peace have they that love Your law" (Ps. 118:165). In peace of time also, which is rest from the assault of visible enemies or disturbances, hold us. Whence the Apostle said: "Have peace with all men" (Rom. 12:18); and the Savior: "Have peace among you" (Mark 9:49). But whatever adversity, persecution, reproof, or trial may befall us, let us in no wise be drawn back from peace of heart: yea, glorying in adversities as in all riches, let us by no means place the peace of our mind in the power of others in such wise that they, when they will, can disturb us. "Mutans nomen Evae"—changing the name of Eve—who is called mother of perdition and sorrow, but you mother of salvation and joy. Finally, the letters of this name "Eva," transposed, put together this word "Ave."

Stanza 3. "Solve vincla reis." This and what follows the most pious and most powerful Lady works, not as principally effective cause, but instrumentally and by procuration and mediatorially cooperative, yet more excellently than other Saints, male and female: for the kingdom of mercy is attested to have been committed to her. For which reason she is called Queen of mercy, mother of grace and salvation, since by the prerogative and right of the maternity of God she is believed to have obtained a certain subauthority in these things, as Christ according to the assumed nature has in the effects of the sacraments, according to the doctors on the fourth book of the *Sentences*. Therefore, O Mary, "solve," that is, dissolve, relax, take away, the "chains" of vices "of the guilty"—that is, free sinners from the chains of their iniquities by your merits and prayers, obtaining remission and the infusion of grace. For God wills that we have nothing that does not pass through the hands of Mary. Therefore whatever good is in us, let us acknowledge that we have received it through her, and give thanks to her for it in God, as to a mediatrix.

"Profer lumen caecis"—bring forth light to the blind: that is, for men blinded by sins produce and obtain the illumination of God's grace, that they may recognize their own sins, grieve, bewail, confess, and shun them, and take heed of their perils; that they may be mindful of the uncertainty of life, the brevity of time, the rigor of the divine judgment, and the rest; and foresee the last things, and so fulfill that of Ecclesiasticus: "Remember your last things, and cease to be at enmity; be not angry with your neighbor, and abstain from strife" (Ecclus. 28:6–8; 7:40). "Mala nostra pelle"—drive away our evils—that is, pluck from us the evils of fault, and mercifully moderate also the punishments we deserve for them, that God may not deal with us according to our sins, nor requite us according to our iniquities (Ps. 102:10). "Bona cuncta posce"—ask for all good things—that is, demand that there be given us all things necessary to salvation, the goods of grace in the present and the gifts of glory in the future, progress in every virtue and gift of the Holy Spirit, as the Apostle prays: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope and in the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13); and so that to the Corinthians may truly be said of

us: “In all things you are made rich in Him, in all utterance and in all knowledge, so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace” (1 Cor. 1:5, 7).

Stanza 4. “Monstra te esse Matrem.” That is: by acting so magnificently and powerfully, so graciously and maternally with us, show by these effects that you are the Mother of the Son of God, who, by working so many and so great things for your sake, makes plain that He honors and hears you as His most worthy and most dear Mother; so also, by succoring us most piously, show that you are our mother, by cherishing us so maternally. “Sumat per te precem”—that is, through you may He hear our prayers—“qui pro nobis natus tulit esse tuus”—namely the Only-begotten of God, who for our salvation “tulit,” that is, deigned and consented “to be born (that is, to be the son) of you,” as this was expounded above in the first hymns. And since, O most blessed Virgin, you were for our sake and on our account and for our salvation so incomprehensibly sublimated and made the true Mother of the true God, it is most fitting that

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you be most merciful to us, and by the debt of seemliness and morality, by right and congruity, you seem as it were bound to this.

Stanza 5. “Virgo singularis.” O singular Virgin—that is, highest and unique in virginity, as also in the other virtues altogether most excellent before all pure men, as has just been expressed. Whence is added: “inter omnes mitis”—gentle among all—that is, ineffably most meek beyond all, never led to any motion of anger, nor stirred by any impatience against those from whom you saw your only, most beloved, and most innocent Son endure so many and so great things, and at last sustain a most bitter death. “Nos culpis solutos”—us freed from our sins—that is, by the merit of your Son’s Passion delivered from vices, as far as on His part it is, and through you having obtained pardon, “mites fac et castos”—make gentle and chaste—that is, obtain for us these virtues, chastity and gentleness, or progress in them, perseverance and final consummation in them. For these are great virtues, since it is written in Ecclesiasticus: “My son, do your works in meekness, and you shall be beloved above the glory of men” (Ecclus. 3:19); and again: “No price is worthy of a continent soul” (Ecclus. 26:20).

Stanza 6. “Vitam praesta puram.” Grant a pure life—that is, a conversation acceptable to God, immune from sins, especially mortal ones, that our conversation may be in heaven (Phil. 3:20), seeking and savoring the things that are above (Col. 3:2), not carnal and earthly things; “iter para tutum”—prepare a safe way—that is, dispose for us a secure access to your Son, so that we may so converse that without resistance we be led to His presence, nor be separated from Him, “ut videntes Jesum”—that seeing Jesus by the beatific vision, as to His deity and as to the assumed nature, and as to the chief perception of the accidental reward, as was more clearly expounded above, “semper collaetemur”—we may always rejoice together, that is, be perpetually gladdened in Him and with Him in the fatherland, as the chief of the Apostles says in his first Canonical Epistle: “In Christ, whom now you see not, you believe; and believing shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified, receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet. 1:8–9).

Stanza 7. “Sit laus Deo Patri.” Praise be to God the Father; to Christ the Highest, “decus,” that is, becoming veneration—namely the worship of latria. Christ is called Highest, not because He is greater than the Father or the Holy Spirit, but lest by reason of the assumed nature He be thought simply lesser, although according to that He is lesser (as He Himself says: “The Father is greater than I,” John 14:28); and again, because the Father and Christ and the Holy Spirit are one Highest, not three Highests, as they are one Immense, not three Immenses. “To the Holy Spirit,” supply, “be praise and glory” as to the Father and the Son; “to the Three”—understand, Persons—“honor unus,” one honor—that is, the same and undivided, or the same adoration, as they are one God and one Creator. Nevertheless, as there are three Persons, so each of them can be adored and honored singly. For in the office of the Mass the prayers are specially directed to God the Father. And in hymns and sequences we specially invoke the Holy Spirit, saying:

Come, Holy Spirit,
and send forth from heaven
the ray of your light.

Likewise: “May the grace of the Holy Spirit be present to us”; and in the hymn also: “Come, Creator Spirit.”

Moreover, let us sing this hymn to our most sacred and sweetest Queen and Lady with devotion, fervor, and alacrity, so much the greater as that unique and incomparable Lady is more sublime than the other Saints and more lovable to us. For since each thing has as much of lovableness as of goodness, as much of honorableness as of authority, dignity, and majesty, and as much of sweetness as of fittingness, it is clear that as much as this most blessed Virgin is more perfect, holier, greater, and more worthy than all the other Saints, so much is she more lovable, more honorable, and sweeter than they. If therefore we so vehemently love the most illustrious Catherine, the royal and most

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beautiful Ursula and all her most happy company, yea and the most affectionate and most contemplative Mary Magdalene: how most ardently and especially ought we to love this unique and most loving Mother of God, whose holiness and excellence are so inestimable beyond all those!

Surely, as the philosophers also confess, the nearer anything is to the first cause, the more like it is to it in all things. Now that this unique Mary is ineffably nearer to the most high God than the other Saints, not only men but even all holy angels, cannot be doubted, nor denied except by one who does not believe that she is the truest Genitrix of the supreme God: which whoever does not believe, let him either be converted and believe, or perish forever. Her therefore, after the true God, before every creature subsisting in created being (which I say on account of Christ’s humanity), let us love supremely, praise most joyfully and salute, venerate most reverently. After God let her be our chief hope, greatest consolation, singular refuge. To her, as to the star of the sea, in every tribulation, temptation, necessity, perplexity, and tossing let us look; let us invoke her with immense confidence; let us continually follow with all our strength her humility, meekness, mercy, chastity, charity. Finally let us greatly fear to dishonor her, lest, she being offended, we be destitute of the helps of so great an advocate and so most benign a Mother. For although she is not easily offended, nor prone to avenge, yet her Son, the supreme Judge, being greatly zealous for His Mother, strictly avenges her injuries, dishonorings, and slightings, and so much the more strictly as she herself is the more gracious and benign.