Cardinal Louis-Édouard Pie

PRIESTLY WORKS: SERMONS AND INSTRUCTIONS, 1839–1849

Œuvres sacerdotales

From the French of the Oudin edition (Paris and Poitiers, 1890)

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 *Œuvres sacerdotales de S. Ém. le cardinal Pie, évêque de Poitiers: choix de sermons et instructions, 1839–1849*, two tomes (Paris and Poitiers: H. Oudin, 1890), with the editor's preface. The discourses keep the editor's numbering. Pie's own notes and the editor's are given as footnotes; the translator's notes follow each discourse under their own heading. The translation gives no page references to the French edition.

Tome I

Editor's Preface (Avertissement)

[Prefatory note by the editor of the Œuvres sacerdotales *(signed "Mercier, S.J."), summarizing the young priest's early formation and preaching career. Footnotes are the editor's.]*

For a long time the many admirers of Cardinal Pie have not ceased to call for the publication of his Works in full. "It is," they say with good reason, "a treasure of doctrine which belongs to the Church, and of which neither the faith nor Catholic piety can be deprived."

Such was also the opinion of the universal legatee of the great Bishop of Poitiers, who regarded himself as the mere trustee of the manuscripts entrusted to his keeping; but circumstances beyond his control had up to now stood in the way of his plans. Monsignor Baunard, the eminent historian of Cardinal Pie, had at first hoped to complete his work by gathering into one volume the documents that seemed to him most interesting; but, absorbed by an important charge and by weighty occupations, he soon had to give up a labor which was nevertheless very sweet to his mind and heart. It was then that Canon Héline, formerly secretary to Bishop Pie, was good enough to remember the author of *The Blessed Virgin Mary* [*La Vierge Marie*] — a tribute of gratitude to the memory of the Bishop of Poitiers — and to hand over to him the manuscripts, preserved with an altogether filial solicitude.

After attentively reading these precious documents, not all of which have the same value, we recognized that it would be possible to make three volumes of them: one would continue the series of the *Episcopal Works* [*Œuvres épiscopales*]; the other two would become a kind of introduction to them, under the title of *Priestly Works* [*Œuvres sacerdotales*].[1] We do not think it useful to publish what might be called the *Works of his youth*, which comprise the essays in literary, philosophical or religious composition, whether at Saint-Chéron, at Issy, or at Saint-Sulpice. We shall therefore say only a word of them in this preface, borrowed almost entirely, in summary, from the first chapters of the so complete *History of Cardinal Pie*.

I. Works of his youth. — Scarcely out of rhetoric class, Édouard Pie, whose delicate health did not then permit him to undertake the philosophical studies, was appointed professor of a seventh-form class [the lowest grade of the classical course] at the minor seminary of Saint-Chéron. Gifted with a lively imagination and a happy memory, the young man of letters, enamored of the ideal, knew Virgil by heart; it was from the poet of Mantua, we believe, that he stole that harmonious grace of an ever limpid style which characterizes his Latin compositions. Besides his verses of every sort in honor of Mary, one should mention, as animated by a powerful breath, an ode on the First Communion of the Duke of Bordeaux, in 1832. "It is," observes Monsignor Baunard, "the cry of France calling back to her home the son of France, and asking God for the return of him whom He has just visited."

To rest from the fatigues of teaching, the young professor also tried his hand at composing French verse, for which he felt great facility. At the instigation of the Bishop of Chartres, Mgr de Montals, who loved him as a son and encouraged his youthful labors, he began a didactic poem on the seminary of Saint-Chéron, which he dedicated to the Most Blessed Virgin, Queen of that house.

> *I sing these lovely places, where sweet innocence Led my childhood along a path of flowers, Where piety's kindly and tender hand Welcomed me, still young, and took me to her breast. Inspire me, Mary, O sweet Sovereign: When I sing these places, I sing your domain.*

Bishop Pie might have become a poet if not of lofty flight, at least more than ordinary: one feels it on running through his essays, in which he sings of the flowering countryside, the laughing valleys, the somber forests, the starry nights, the graceful meadows with their balsamic exhalations, the charms of a gentle friendship, the happiness of a modest and Christian life, the perfume of the virtues of Mary, Queen of heaven and earth, and,

above all, the Heart of Jesus and His love. All these poems were but the impulse of a religious soul, using creatures as so many steps by which to rise to God. Let no one be surprised, we shall say with Monsignor Baunard,[2] to see the intellectual life of one who was to be so great a bishop begin with this poetic period. All the Fathers of the Church knew these innocent recreations. Poetry is the season of the youth of souls, as of the youth of nations. Necessary as the spring, it is profitable as the spring is, provided the season of flowers knows how to give place to the season of fruits.

In 1835 the abbé Pie, who for two years had received the tonsure from the hands of his bishop, betook himself, after the vacation, to the house at Issy, at the gates of Paris, where Bishop de Montals sent the flower of his seminarians under the skilful direction of the Sulpicians. Among his retreat resolutions, at the beginning of October, we find that of reciting the rosary daily for special intentions; one decade was offered to unite his sufferings with the sufferings of the Heart of Mary. This compassion for the sorrowful Heart of Mary became the particular form of his devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin. From that moment there is not a single writing of his that does not bear at the head, on the left, the letters *A. et c. c. d. M.*, which must be translated by this invocation: *Love and compassion for the sorrowful Heart of Mary* [*Amour et compassion au Cœur douloureux de Marie*]; and, on the right, the initials of the blessed names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph: *J. M. J.*

With a serious intelligence, naturally drawn toward lofty things, the abbé Pie showed from the first day a great interest in philosophical studies and in the mathematical and natural sciences. “If my health permitted,” he said, “I would give myself to all these sciences with fury… The beautiful book of nature is open to everyone… It is consoling for a Christian mind to see the source of the objections against Christianity changed into a treasure of demonstrations.”

Among the labors of this period of his life, which was like an initiation to his polemic against modern errors, one may point out several French dissertations on important subjects: spirituality, immortality, the freedom of the soul, and the rights and duties of society. His compositions, Monsignor Baunard observes, “begin to reveal new faculties in a mind hitherto almost confined to the purely literary; one feels that henceforth behind the humanist there is the philosopher, in the true sense of that word.” When the moment came later to combat materialism in all its forms and to defend the social reign of Jesus Christ, “the Bishop of Poitiers would have only to recall the teaching of Issy and complete it.”[3]

The following year the abbé Pie left the seminary of Issy for that of Saint-Sulpice in Paris, where he was to complete his ecclesiastical formation by the study of theology and the practice of priestly virtues. On entering that holy house, nursery of so many bishops, the honor of the French clergy, he first set before himself the noble goal he proposed to reach. “*Ad quid venisti?* [For what purpose have you come?]” he asked himself with Saint Bernard. “Why am I in this world? Why am I in this seminary?… You sent me into this world, O my God, to know You, love You and serve You, and into this seminary to make You one day known, loved and served.” He then renewed the promise already made to the sorrowful Heart of Mary, to preach zealously compassion for her sufferings as soon as he should be called to direct souls.

The study of theology, that science of the sciences, exercised on the abbé Pie an irresistible attraction. In this new field opened to the activity of his mind, he kept the superiority which until then had distinguished him everywhere, and which he strove to hide under the most modest exterior. The study of the holy Fathers, living interpreters of tradition, also became one of his principal occupations; but above all that of Holy Scripture won a sovereign ascendancy over his mind. The reading of the Bible, the Book par excellence, set him before beauties of a higher order which he had never suspected; and it was in assiduous intercourse with the great Doctors of the Church that he learned that marvelous art of applying the sacred text to the circumstances of the time, with a felicity of assimilation for which Pius IX was one day to congratulate him.[4]

“From that moment,” remarks Mgr Duquesnay, “he revealed two master qualities: soundness of judgment and variety of knowledge, and then the incomparable grace of his speech. No one answered his masters’ questions as he did, no one argued with such logic, no one had, as he had, a memory so richly stocked with texts of Scripture and of the Fathers. As to the elegance and charm of his speech, it was in a gathering of young men of the parish of Saint-Sulpice that these rare qualities were revealed, which grew greater every day.”

The new catechist had begun the exercise of his functions on Sunday, 16 April 1837. “I have just been charged with a work,” he wrote to his mother, “which occupies me a little more than usual: I have consented to be one of the catechism of perseverance for the young men of the parish of Saint-Sulpice. This requires of me, besides the small current services, two sermons a month. However sure of myself you know me to be, I nevertheless need, at the beginning, to prepare my affair carefully before mounting the pulpit. There are there a great number of educated young men, and many of their parents, some of whom are very respectable persons. Pray for me and for my dear children. It is indeed the most important and most honorable portion of our catechisms…”

This humble ministry among the children was to be the beginning of his brilliant apostolate. The abbé Pie, whose health had improved, did not spare himself in the work; one saw him carry on abreast, with equal ardor, the austere meditations of theology and the engaging exercises of the catechism. Nevertheless, we shall observe with Monsignor Baunard, in considering “the immense collection of compositions of every kind which for two years he devoted to this work, one hesitates to believe that such an overload could be imposed on young minds without prejudice to the strength of professional studies.”[5] However that may be, his talent developed daily, and his speech took on the most varied hues. “Didactic and compact in the instructions, spiritual and nimble in the reports, it brought to the homily that superiority which was to make the Bishop of Poitiers the master of the genre in our century.”[6]

The young catechist of Saint-Sulpice had taken for his models not only the learned catechists of Alexandria, but also the pious catechist of Annecy, whom he was later to help get proclaimed a Doctor of the Church. Following the example of the holy Bishop of Geneva, he henceforth ended all his writings with these three words: *Dieu soit béni!* [God be blessed!] “Thus,” he said, “does Saint Francis de Sales crown everything he writes.”

The apostle of devotion to Mary would not have been himself had he not placed his catechism under the patronage of the Most Blessed Virgin. He chose for this solemn act the beautiful month consecrated to the Queen of heaven, and wished to draw up an authentic record of it. “Posterity will therefore know,” he wrote, “that on the first Sunday of May 1838, in the chapel of the perseverants of Saint-Sulpice, Mary was honored for the first time under the name of Our Lady of Perseverance, with this motto inscribed on her banner: *Erant perseverantes cum Maria* [They were continuing with Mary].”

II. Priestly Works. — At the moment when the series of discourses that we publish today begins, the abbé Pie, aged twenty-three, was finishing at the seminary of Saint-Sulpice the course of his ecclesiastical studies. Appointed, according to custom, on the Saturday before the second Sunday of Lent, to give before the evening prayer a few words of edification on the next day’s Gospel, the young deacon, wholly penetrated with the spirit of the Scriptures, made a commentary on the mystery of the Transfiguration full of novelty and grandeur. At the sight of his divine Master, transfigured in a light brighter than the sun, the apostle Saint Peter, beside himself, cried out: “Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us make here three tabernacles” [tents]: *Domine, bonum est nos hic esse*. But the evangelists remark that he “knew not what he said”: *nesciens autem quid diceret.*

“Oh! it seemed to me I understood one of the senses of that last word. No, he did not know what he said, since he was more dazzled by an instant of outward glory than by the perpetual miracle of the mercy and

gentleness of Jesus. — Except for the wonder of that day, which Jesus Christ worked apart and about which He forbade anyone to speak, all His miracles were miracles of love, and He did not wish to work miracles of power; or rather He used His power only to second His goodness; His arm was at the orders of His heart. See Him going through Judea, where ‘He went about doing good,’ consoling all the miseries of the body and all the sorrows of the heart! What His historians teach me of the most habitual sentiment of His soul is that He was ‘touched with compassion, moved with mercy’: *Jesus autem misericordia motus super eum… Jesus autem misertus super eum*; that at the sight of ‘suffering and pain, He was seized with a tightening of the heart, softened with sorrow,’ *infremuit in spiritu* [He groaned in the spirit]… a sorrow sometimes revealed ‘by tears,’ *et lacrymatus est Jesus* [and Jesus wept]… Oh! no, Lord, Lord, do not transfigure Yourself if You would manifest Your glory to me. In this habitual sentiment of compassion and gentleness You appear to me greater, more glorious and more divine than amid the most dazzling lights. O Jesus, do not transfigure Yourself, for ‘in these bowels of mercy wherewith You visit us’ I have recognized ‘the Orient from on high,’ and in Your goodness ‘I have seen Your glory,’ Your true glory, ‘the glory as it were of the only-begotten of the Father,’ whom the holy Books represent to us as ‘merciful, and then merciful again, patient, long-suffering, gentle, sweet, and plenteous in mercy,’ whose ‘mercies are above all His works,’ and who is ‘most great’ only because He is before all ‘most good’: *Deo optimo, maximo* [to God, the best, the greatest]. Yes, my Jesus, I love You the more, and I better recognize Your divine origin in Your works of love than amid the splendor of Tabor; and, if You permit me to pitch a tent for You somewhere, I shall place it rather beside Jacob’s well or the sepulcher of Bethany, which were the great theaters of Your compassion and Your gentleness.

“Yet, O my God, how often have I sought for myself that transfiguration and that outward glory! How often, ‘not knowing what I did,’ *nesciens autem quid diceret*, from wishing ‘to manifest myself to the world,’ have I sacrificed those virtues of charity and gentleness, toward which, however, Your holy attractions and salutary remorse never ceased to call my soul! For I have experienced it: goodness and gentleness are never alone in a soul. I have loved ‘God whom I did not see’ the more, every time I was ‘gentle and affable to my brother whom I saw’; and my piety has been the more practical when my charity has been the more tender. ‘My spirit was not exalted, and’ my imagination ‘did not wander in great and wonderful things concerning myself’ on the days when my heart was full of gentleness; ‘and I was more humble when I was gentle.’ I have understood how Saint Francis de Sales, by exercising himself for twenty years to acquire the virtue of gentleness, had acquired so many other virtues. My God, I might wage war a long time with myself, and perhaps in vain, to correct so many defects and obtain so many difficult virtues; I would find all that in gentleness. Jesus Christ told us that He was ‘meek and humble of heart’: yes, meek first, and then humble because He was meek; humility is the consequence of gentleness. — But if this lovable virtue is so useful to me for myself, how much more to make me useful to others! — How Saint Paul touches me when he tells me that ‘the priest is appointed… to have compassion’: *omnis Pontifex constituitur… qui possit condolere*. And that is why Jesus Christ, in order to be our Pontiff, needed ‘to be subjected to our weaknesses and our trials,’ because without that (shall I dare say it after the Apostle?) ‘He would not have been merciful enough,’ *ut misericors fieret*; ‘and we needed no Pontiff who could not have compassion on our infirmities.’ My God! soon I shall be a priest… Woe to me if, in becoming a priest, I do not become ‘a man of mercy’! — And with whom shall I have to deal as a priest? With sad, tried souls, with afflicted hearts that will need consolation. ‘To uphold what is weak, to mend what is broken, to pour oil on wounds’ — that is the ordinary object of the priestly ministry. Oh! may I never forget these words: ‘the priest is appointed… to have compassion’: *omnis Pontifex constituitur… qui possit condolere*. My God, do not transfigure me in glory and light; no brilliant qualities, dangerous for that very reason; no occasions of display in which we are never useful to others without harming ourselves. No, no outward transfiguration. But transfigure my soul in charity and gentleness, soften my heart with compassion, and ‘clothe my bowels with the mercy and tenderness of Our Lord Jesus Christ.’

“Ah! I hope it will not be in vain that I have come to draw from this pure source, from this school whose founder, still very young, received with the last blessing of a dying Pontiff the precious deposit of his ravishing and ineffable gentleness: ‘the perfume of sweetness which ran down upon his head,’ as formerly ‘upon that of Aaron, to overflow afterwards’ upon the whole priestly tribe of which he was to be the father; bond of love which unites us to this lovable saint, ‘who was the gentlest of men and whose memory has remained in the Church sweet as the honeycomb.’ — It will not be in vain that at my ordination my hands will be anointed with oil, that is, with mercy, and that the Church will clothe me ‘with the priestly garment, which signifies charity’: *vestem sacerdotalem per quem charitas intelligitur*. And above all it will not be in vain that You entrust souls to me, O my God; then You will work in me that labor which turns everything to gentleness, as nature does in those to whom she gives children (as the divine Augustine and the great Bossuet have so well expressed); sentiments of fatherhood which at last put an end to all the frivolities and levities of youth, all those *juvenilia desideria* [youthful desires] of which Saint Paul spoke to the young bishop Timothy, in order to make a holy and universal charity dominate. Once more, O my God, this is the transformation I ask of You.

“Mary, O you whom the Church cannot find terms enough to express your gentleness! ‘O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary,’ *o clemens, o pia, o dulcis*; ‘Virgin singularly meek above all,’ *Virgo singularis, inter omnes mitis*, give me this lovable virtue of gentleness. — O Mary, you are ‘my sweetness and my hope,’ *dulcedo et spes nostra*. In this future that opens before me, if anything reassures me, it is the prospect of laboring under your very particular auspices in this famous church from which you have loved for so many centuries to pour out your sweetest favors; in this venerated sanctuary, near which it pleased you to place my cradle that I might be ‘brought up at your feet.’ ‘Oh! how good it is to be here!’ and how sweet ‘to pitch one’s tent here’! Holy Virgin (shall I say it to my brothers?), yes, I have found you more tender still since to the title of your child I joined that of child of Saint-Sulpice; and you seemed doubly my mother to me on the days when I prayed to you among my brothers who had come to visit you; a hereditary devotion which they hold from their holy founder, who would have wished to attach the future of his work to this city of Mary. May this practice at least, which is a compensation to us, be perpetuated forever! Every time I see my brothers of Saint-Sulpice again, they will remind me of this pious refuge. A remembrance, alas! that will reproach me with many negligences, but that will also recall to me so many touching examples that I found there, and the tenderness and the condescension shown there toward my weakness. And if their presence brings me a renewal of fervor, they will always carry away that impression of piety which seems attached to this august sanctuary, and that devotion to Mary, filial, simple and naive as in the olden days, and above all those particular graces which Our Lady of Chartres holds in reserve for the children of Monsieur Olier.[7] May this pious exchange last forever! Amen!”

That was almost a farewell discourse, for the abbé Pie was recalled to his diocese shortly afterward by Bishop Clausel de Montals, who wished to confer the priestly character himself on this son of predilection.

On 12 May 1839 the brilliant catechist of Saint-Sulpice crowned his two years of teaching with an eloquent panegyric of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, model of Christian youth; and the next day, after embracing his friends of the seminary, he took the road to Chartres. “When he had to leave us,” Mgr Duquesnay relates, “we accompanied him with our regrets and our enthusiastic hopes, repeating to one another: *Quis putas puer iste erit?* [What, think you, shall this child be?]”

Immediately after his ordination, the abbé Pie was appointed curate at Notre-Dame de Chartres; and, scarcely installed, he set to the work of study and composition he had prescribed for himself by his rule of life. Liturgy, ecclesiastical history, the works of Saint Ivo, Saint Fulbert, Peter of Celle and others were to vary the occupations of this mind open to every ray of sacred science. “I shall read again,” he added, “the whole of Holy Scripture, with the simple commentary of Menochius, and then take up some more considerable commentator. In the composition of my instructions, much simplicity and ease, avoiding, during the first

years, giving to the care of composition a time that will be more usefully employed in acquiring a fund of solid knowledge. In the order of theology, I shall begin with dogmatics. I shall try to go deeply into each matter, first by reading one theologian, then by reading the Fathers and Doctors on the same subject. I shall choose by preference Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas, Saint Francis de Sales and Bossuet. I shall write down in French my ideas on these treatises, to make them later the groundwork of my sermons." We have in these few lines the whole method of composition followed by the abbé Pie in most of the discourses contained in these volumes; but the instructions of the first years were almost all revised and corrected, as to style, for subsequent preachings.[8]

A letter addressed later to a friend shows us how this indefatigable researcher knew how to discover in the ancient writers the answers suited to the needs of our time. "I am," he writes, "well along in my studies. I have completely reviewed my second and third centuries. I am approaching the Fathers of the fourth. I would like three years of near-rest to devote to this study, without which one is not a theologian. There is not a new question in our century: all the difficulties of the age are found again between the bishops and the prefects and emperors of the Lower Empire… With Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Ambrose and Saint Augustine, one knows by heart the philosophers and politicians of today, and has wherewith to crush them." We know, from his life of combats and triumphs against the mighty of the day, the whole truth of this assertion, which traces for apologists their line of conduct in the face of force and error, in all times.

It was therefore above all in the presence of contemporary things that the abbé Pie studied ancient tradition. From this point of view, modern society, with its so-called liberal aspirations, appeared to him in a state of revolt against God, against Christ, against the Church; and it was to denounce this social apostasy that he resolutely devoted his life, taking good care to avoid the illusion of those naive people who imagine they serve truth by sparing error.

Two eminent men, with different talents, then shared the kingship of the pulpit at Chartres: Mgr de Montals, bishop of the diocese, and Monsieur Lecomte, archpriest of the cathedral; the latter a moralist, putting into his speech the soul of a theologian and a poet; the former a polemicist, deploying against the enemies of the Church the rugged energies of evangelical freedom. Trained in their school, the abbé Pie soon walked as the equal of his masters, handling the homily like the one and dialectic like the other.

His first word, on mounting the pulpit of Notre-Dame de Chartres, on 14 July 1839, was a cry of the heart in honor of Mary. This homily, not having been preserved to us in its entirety, is not part of our first volume. Here at least is the exordium, which reveals the orator's tender devotion toward the Mother of Christ.

Maria, he cried, *de qua natus est Jesus, qui vocatur Christus*: "Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ."

"The first word a child learns to stammer is the name of his mother. Was not the first word that was to escape my lips from the height of this evangelical pulpit, my brethren, the name of Mary, the name of my mother? Sacred name with which this church is filled, and which is engraved on every stone of this edifice; cherished name that I find on the gates of our city, and, in letters yet more indelible, in the hearts of all its inhabitants. Yes, Mary, your name was the first that was to come from my mouth: *Maria, de qua natus est Jesus, qui vocatur Christus.*

"Besides, my dearly beloved brethren, it is only justice on our part to consecrate to the praises of Mary the first-fruits of a ministry which cannot be exercised fruitfully without her help; and the truth I am about to try to develop will be the justification of the choice of this first subject. All graces come to us through Mary: that is the proposition I shall seek to establish. Therefore it is necessary to invoke Mary: that is the rigorous conclusion I shall draw from this proposition. Lord Jesus, who take such interest in the glory of Your Mother, sustain me while I set forth this truth, which is the most solid foundation of our devotion to Mary; and make acceptable to this Queen of heaven the feeble homage offered to her at this moment by a minister

whom she has deigned to receive among her own."

In a conversation with the abbé de Geslin, one of his friends from Saint-Sulpice, he had declared to him his design of ending his first homily with these words from the account of the wedding at Cana: *Et erat mater Jesu ibi* [And the mother of Jesus was there]. And it is in fact the development of these words that forms the peroration of the discourse whose exordium we have already quoted.

"I end, my brethren, with this thought, and it is a very consoling one: that if Mary is the dispenser of graces, then we have the treasure of graces in our midst: *Et erat mater Jesu ibi*.

"It is a long time, my brethren, since Mary took possession of this city. Mary as yet existed only in the thought of God and in the universal expectation of the nations who were the depositaries of the divine promise, and already she had an altar in this temple: *Et erat mater Jesu ibi*; and since that time she has revealed several times, says a very ancient Christian poet, and has above all proved by effects, that she had truly chosen this city for her own, and regarded herself as its Queen and Lady: *Quæ verbo se vocat et re Carnoti Dominam* [who by word and deed calls herself the Lady of Chartres].

"And why does the very name of this city inspire a holy thought? Why do the people who have kept the ancient ways, from as far off as they perceive those two towers springing toward the heavens, feel stirred with joy? Ah! it is because Mary is there: *Et erat mater Jesu ibi*. Why, in the midst of this corruption which overflows from the capital, like the lava of a volcano, over all the neighboring regions, does Chartres, holy and religious city, appear like an island of verdure in the desert? Ah! it is because Mary is there: *Et erat mater Jesu ibi*. Mary, who loves, says Scripture, to be surrounded with flowers — that is, who forms all around her those chosen souls whose virtue she shelters under her virginal mantle: *Et erat mater Jesu ibi*. Why, finally, has history remarked the splendor of our church, which has always passed for one of the most illustrious in France? Ah! it is because Mary is there: *Et erat mater Jesu ibi*. — Mary forming and choosing for herself her pontiffs and her priests, the pastors of her flock and the fathers of her children; Mary above all preparing and choosing for herself the ministers of her sanctuary. My brethren, it is not for sons to praise their fathers; but permit me, O holy Virgin, to bless your maternal hand, which has placed the cradle of my priesthood in the shadow of your sanctuary, under the eyes of that beloved father whose tenderness toward me is your work, among those colleagues who have already grown old in the priesthood and yet welcomed me as a brother. Happy, O Mary, happy those who watch night and day at your gates, happy those who are called to serve you and to contemplate your face; happy your ministers, happy the people whose guardian you are; happy all of us, my brethren, to be on earth such privileged children of Mary, since Mary is the distributress of graces, and consequently the gate of heaven, which I wish you," etc.

This first homily on *Devotion to Mary* was followed by several others on the same subject.[9] Thus, in a letter of 10 October to a friend at Saint-Sulpice, the young curate of Notre-Dame announced to him with joy that for three months he had preached only the Blessed Virgin at the cathedral of Chartres. These pious addresses have real value and presage an oratorical talent of the first rank; yet they were only the prelude to a broader and more varied preaching.

Catholics had just undertaken a general crusade in favor of freedom of education. The abbé Pie, arrived only the day before on the field of battle, did not think it rash to take his place in the line at once. The new champion therefore took as the subject of his homilies, until the end of 1839, *The education of children*, considered successively in the family, in the school or college, and in the Church.[10] These three discourses, which came so opportunely, revealed him definitively as an orator, and introduced him at once into the apostolic life and the militant life.[11]

Called, from 1840, to preach before a numerous and select audience the sermons of all the Sundays of Lent at the cathedral, the abbé Pie felt his talents grow to the height of this more solemn apostolate. Since 1835, Christian apologetics had entered upon a bold path which the genius of Lacordaire had traversed with

brilliance. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the curate of Chartres, the celebrated lecturer of Paris had not sounded deeply enough the theological foundation of religion. He therefore resolved to borrow from theology the plan of an apologetic course, with the intention of following it faithfully each time he should have to speak in the pulpit of the cathedral. Accordingly he devoted his first Lenten station to setting forth *The preliminaries of faith*, showing the necessity of hearing the word of God, the importance of studying the Christian religion, and the method to be employed in order to be instructed.[12] "God is my witness," he said to the sympathetic audience crowding at the foot of the pulpit of Notre-Dame, "that I do not covet the glory of an orator, nor pursue the periods of human eloquence. I ask of my lips only the expression of a priestly and apostolic zeal which I beseech the Lord to increase daily in my soul. All of us, as many as we are, have no need of the applause of men; we have only one need: to serve the cause of God and of His holy Church."

During the following Lent it was on Friday that he had to preach, instead of Sunday. "Simplicity of manner," he said, "will be the character of these evening conferences, to which I can scarcely bring more than the preparation of the heart: neither time nor strength permits me to do more." (That year 1841 had announced itself as very stormy: "What are we," the young orator asked himself, "that we should hope our voice will dominate the noise of the tempest?") He took as the subject of his preachings: *The union of dogma and morality*,[13] demonstrating forcefully the insufficiency of morality without the dogmas and the Catholic practices; the necessity of the priesthood for the maintenance of morality and of society; truth necessarily attacked and fought on earth, because it belongs to its nature to be intolerant in matters of doctrine. In the development of this important subject, the hearers perceived very quickly that the abbé Pie, despite his frail appearance, had heard the word of the Lord: "Go, and fight even to death for the truth." One cannot say, observes Monsignor Baunard, what effect was produced by the contrast between this apostolic zeal and the youth of the orator, "whose soul seemed about to break its fragile envelope." God had already poured into his mind and heart an intrepidity bolder than the hatred of the world, a love stronger than death.

After presenting the reason for faith with an energy of language far removed from both that liberalism which diminishes the truth and that moderatism which fears to speak it, the preacher entered upon the *practice of faith*, not content with "a few vague homilies" or "a few theses of morality," but never ceasing to protest "against the audacious and insolent effort of error." In his beautiful and solid conferences of 1842, 1843 and 1844, he treated successively the necessity of external worship, Catholic temples, the existence and advantages of the law of Sunday, the manner of sanctifying the Lord's Day, the nature and grandeur of the Sacrifice, attendance at Mass, the offices of the Church, the ecclesiastical cycle, the day sanctified by the Church, the necessity and power of prayer, the reading of the holy Books by persons living in the world,[14] etc.: in a word, the whole body of the external practices of the Christian life.

If dogma, he had said, is the *Why* of morality, grace is the *How*. Just as morality is not reasonable without beliefs, so it is not practicable without the sacraments. Mr. Pie, having become vicar general, approached the vital question *Of grace*. It was passing from the temple into the sanctuary. Existence and reality of a supernatural life, necessity for man to live this life and insufficiency of the purely natural life, Jesus Christ considered as author of grace, opposition and harmony between nature and grace: such were the principal subjects treated by the orator, with great loftiness of view and remarkable precision of language, during the Lenten station of 1845.[15] One might have feared, we shall observe after Monsignor Baunard, that these conferences of such lofty doctrine would "lose their attraction for an audience no longer stirred by the passion of current polemics. Nothing of the kind happened; and one could see what superior interest, and even what profound charm, the purely theological is capable of taking on, on lips that know how to speak the language of the Gospel."[16]

Invited by the Bishop of Metz, in 1846, to preach in his cathedral the solemn novena of the Assumption, Mr. Pie would have wished to speak there only of Mary; but, convinced that in the present state of souls every word, to be conquering, must be apologetic, he chose as the subject of this station the duty of *Return to*

God, which he had already carried into the pulpit of Notre-Dame de Chartres on the Sundays of Lent of the same year. The state of public opinion having suggested to him the timeliness of such a subject, he seized upon the currents of opinion to turn them in the evangelical direction. The magic word *Reform* was then the order of the day. Formerly, he exclaims, "it was against the Church that this clamor, a thousand times repeated, was raised! Today it is no longer the Church that needs reform, it is society. The reform it needs is Christian conversion, or the return to God." Hence the division of this new series of discourses: the return to God considered as a duty and a need of the whole of society; the return to God considered as a special duty of the leaders of society; the return to God considered as a duty of each one in particular.[17] At Metz, as at Chartres, the success was immense. "In setting forth the crimes committed by human reason," the preacher wrote, "I attacked Guizot, Thiers, Cousin, Michelet head-on. I am delighted to have this discourse among my papers."

Persuaded that the foundation of faith must first be laid in order to restore the social reign of Jesus Christ, Mr. Pie opened, during the Advent station of 1847, a series of conferences on the articles of the Creed.[18] "This series of instructions that I am beginning," he cried, "when will it end? When it pleases God. However that may be, ambassadors and consuls of Jesus Christ, charged with bearing the word in His name, we shall make His rights prevail. Alas! we know it only too well: today the name of this King, our Master, is scarcely known to the nation to which we are sent; His rank of precedence has been taken from Him; His standard is threatened soon to float no more on this inhospitable coast where His rights are contested, and where people are only waiting a few more days to plead prescription against His sovereignty. Shall we, for that reason, cease to speak? God forbid! My Lord,[19] you have shown us how a bishop fulfills the embassy of Christ: *Pro Christo ergo legatione fungimur* [we are ambassadors for Christ]. After you, and according to our strength, God will give us the grace to labor until death for the glory of His name." The conferences on the Creed were to be the summit of this course of apologetics which he had opened in 1840; but the terrible catastrophes which soon shook France and Europe did not permit him to complete his courageous undertaking in peace.

It was only in 1849, for the Lenten preachings, that Mr. Pie reappeared in the pulpit of the cathedral of Chartres. Communist theories were then agitating minds and stirring the masses. To combat them, Monsieur Thiers had just written a book in which he relied only on reason to found the right of Property. The orator of Notre-Dame seized upon a question that then preoccupied everybody, and made it the subject of his entire station,[20] boldly affirming that this social problem would be solved "neither by the compromises of philosophy, nor by the necessary deployments of force, but by the sole return of society to the principles of religion."

In the first conference he established that religion was the one necessary and solid guarantee of property, because religion alone demonstrates its rights beyond reply. After the rights, he set forth the duties of property: "duties with regard to what is placed above it: God, the Church, the State; duties with regard to what is placed below it: the little ones, servants, workmen."[21] These discourses of so lofty and powerful a conception, of so close a dialectic, of so carrying an eloquence — Mr. Pie declined the honor of them, declaring to the Bishop of Metz that he owed them to a particular assistance of God.

Alongside this brilliant ministry of the word in the pulpit of the cathedral of Chartres, Mr. Pie often exercised another, no less fruitful, before very varied audiences. Besides the parochial confraternity of the Holy Heart of Mary which he gathered every Sunday, he evangelized the communities of the city, where he had made it his task, with the pious Monsieur Lecomte, to revive the direction of Saint Francis de Sales. Moreover, he gladly agreed to speak wherever his inexhaustible charity was called upon.[22] The reader will find, each in its place, some of these addresses, which will allow him to know on all sides the so supple talent of Mr. Pie; but we have had to choose, for not all are finished. The preacher, sure of himself, was sometimes content to jot down a few thoughts in the form of an outline, reserving to himself the improvisation of the expression and the web of the discourse.[23]

Several occasional discourses which had great repercussion at the time should also belong to the collection of the *Priestly Works*. Such are, for example: the panegyrics of Joan of Arc at Orléans and of Saint Louis at Blois, the discourses for the blessing of the viaduct of Maintenon, of the tree of Liberty, of the railway of Chartres, etc. But these have been published in the first volume of the *Episcopal Works*.

This honor accorded by Bishop Pie to some of the discourses of his priestly life is for us a powerful encouragement in the publication we have undertaken. Often, in fact, during a long episcopate of thirty years, he had recourse not only to the solemn sermons he had delivered as vicar general of the diocese of Chartres, but also to the simple homilies he had preached as curate of Notre-Dame.[24]

We do not intend to begin again, for the detached discourses which we reproduce farther on, the analysis and appreciation already so well made by Monsignor Baunard. Nevertheless we cannot dispense ourselves from tracing a sketch of Mr. Pie as a sacred orator. To succeed, it will suffice for us to group into one general picture the principal traits scattered through the fine *History of the Cardinal*.

It was in prayer that the young preacher disposed himself for the ministry of the word.[25] "God knows," he said, "and the holy altars are witnesses, that it is at their foot that we have prepared ourselves." He never mounted the pulpit of the cathedral without a candle first being lighted before Our Lady of the Pillar, where it was to burn, and as it were pray for him, throughout the sermon. He asked that this candle, emblem of the truth he preached to the faithful, be placed in such a way that he could see it, so that, he said, it might remind him of the duty of making his word pass through the Heart of Mary.[26]

The great attraction and the proper character of Mr. Pie's preaching is that it presented itself, in substance and in form, as an evangelical word. It never ceased to be such: in all his discourses the sacred orator shows himself the man of the Bible. Seeing the use he makes of it, one would think he had received that gift called by the Apostle *interpretatio sermonum* [the interpretation of speeches]. Nothing is more admirable than the assimilation which takes place, thanks to his interpretation, between the word of the priest and the word of God; nothing is more striking than those applications which reveal in the Gospel the book of all times, or, as Saint John calls it, the eternal Gospel: *Evangelium sempiternum*. Hence for his discourses an authority and an efficacy that are not of man; hence also a beauty made up of all the beauties blossomed in Scripture and at the breath of the Holy Spirit. And from this continual mixture of contemporary questions and eternal doctrine, of present subjects and biblical allusions, there is formed a speech at once so ancient and so modern, so Christian and so French, that one would say it was the voice of all the centuries united, and one does not know whether one is hearing Isaiah or Hilary, Chrysostom or Fénelon, Gregory Nazianzen or Saint Francis de Sales.[27]

Then a deep passion lifts up this speech: the love of Jesus Christ and of the Church, which, like a burning coal, had touched the lips of the young prophet.[28] "The angels of the sanctuary," he said, "can bear witness how many times we have besought them to purify our lips and to tear from our heart every fiber that would vibrate for any sentiment other than the purest love of Jesus Christ and of His Church."

Never, too, was a heart more French than his — that is, more Christian: there was scarcely a great feast on which he did not recall in his discourses the union of Jesus Christ and France.[29] "Ah!" he cried on the feast of Saint Michael, "I would not touch on any irritating question. But shall we say too much, and be taxed with imprudence, if, with eyes bathed in tears, at the sight of the name of God and the blood of Jesus Christ disowned and outraged, we beseech the Archangel, patron of the fatherland, to carry to the heart of France that cry of faith with which he lately rejoiced heaven and made hell tremble: *Quis ut Deus?* [Who is like God?]"

Moreover, Mr. Pie suffered: several times, on the point of mounting the pulpit, he felt himself stopped by a sudden crisis that fell upon him.[30] It was truly his life, together with his word, that he gave to the people eager to hear him. "Do not think," he said, "when we come to announce to you the holy word, that we bring

you the fruit of a study devoted to combining thoughts and polishing fine phrases." He confessed, like Saint Paul, to know only one thing: Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. "I beseech you, therefore," he added, "do not judge as a work of nature what is only the work of grace and of suffering. Listen to us, my brethren, as Christians, as we speak to you as a priest."[31]

People came to hear him from all the parishes of the city and from beyond. The announcement of a sermon by Mr. Pie filled every church where he was called. Everything in him spoke for him. "His forehead," writes one of his hearers, "already very developed, shone like ivory framed in his fiery hair. He began by turning toward the altar to seek light and blessing there; then his piercing gaze traveled over the audience, as if to take possession of it. Then a smile of communicative kindness settled on his lips, seeming to answer the inner voice of truth which urged him to speak. He spoke: his voice, limpid, fresh and well modulated, penetrated on every side with modulations peculiar to him which made of his discourse a beautiful music… One was carried away by all the powers of the mind, without thinking of withdrawing from that fascination of ear and soul; and the only regret, when he had finished, was to see broken the charm under which he had held us too short a time. But one went out instructed, strengthened, moved."[32]

When he came down from the pulpit, the preacher would go and cast himself at the foot of Mary's altar, to beseech her to complete what he had just sketched.[33] "O holy Virgin," he said, "O Mother of poor sinners, give me souls! And the rest, glory, health, I humbly lay at your feet: *Da mihi animas, cætera tolle tibi* [Give me souls; take the rest for yourself]."

The young priest to whom God had inspired this lofty flight of spirit, which we have recognized as the special seal of his preaching in the pulpit of Notre-Dame de Chartres, was ripe for a vaster theater of apostolate. The Lord had marked him to become one of the chiefs of His people, and already one could foresee, what the future has confirmed, that he was destined to carry the word into all the questions of his time and for all the great interests of the Church.[34]

This rapid glance at the first years of the abbé Pie will suffice, I think, to allow the reader to appreciate properly the discourses we publish today. These two volumes of the *Priestly Works*, being only an introduction to the nine volumes already published, it was fitting that they should not depart from the method adopted until now. That is why we have followed the same course as in the *Episcopal Works* — that is, the chronological order rather than division by subjects. This course has moreover the advantage of favoring the study of the young preacher's oratorical talent, by showing him to us successively in his formation and in his progress, up to the fullness of his development, which he had reached when Mr. Pie was preconized, at thirty-five, Bishop of Poitiers.

To give this publication of the *Priestly Works* more authority, we first consulted Mgr Gay, formerly auxiliary to Cardinal Pie, and Mgr Juteau, who has so much at heart whatever concerns the memory of his illustrious predecessor; then we associated with ourselves, for the choice of the discourses, two competent men: the abbé Bernaud, parish priest of Notre-Dame, formerly private secretary to Bishop Pie, and the abbé Gallot, professor of dogma at the major seminary of Poitiers. It would be difficult, I believe, after running through the table of contents, not to regard these volumes as able to be of very great help not only to ecclesiastics, but also to the faithful. Dogma, morals, liturgy, piety — nothing important is omitted; and this collection seems a veritable arsenal perfectly suited to all the needs of the time. We have placed in an appendix: (1) The exact note of the sermons and instructions preached by Mr. Pie. In this note, drawn up by himself, is found the indication of all the manuscripts deposited by Monsieur Héline, dean of the Chapter, in the archives of the major seminary. — (2) The plan of a sermon on Saint Joseph, which will give an idea of the outlines which we have not reproduced. — (3) The facsimile of a manuscript with the corrections of the first draft and those added later, which are easy to distinguish by the difference in handwriting.

And now, may this publication attain the end for which alone it was undertaken: to perpetuate in our France, in the Church, by a lasting monument, that sublime apostolate of souls to which Cardinal Pie had consecrated himself from the first years of his priestly life, and which he continued throughout his whole episcopate, fighting, valiant soldier of Christ, the good fight even unto death:

Defunctus adhuc loquitur! [Being dead, he yet speaketh!] — V. Mercier, S.J.

Poitiers, 13 January 1890, feast of Saint Hilary.

Translator's notes

1. ***"A. et c. c. d. M."*** — the abbreviation of *Amour et compatissance au Cœur douloureux de Marie*, as the editor himself explains.

2. **"seventh-form class" (*classe de septième*)** — in the French classical collège the lowest class (7e), for beginners in Latin.

3. **"Mr. Pie" / "Monsieur Lecomte."** The editor calls the priest "M. l'abbé Pie" / "M. Pie" before 1849; rendered "the abbé Pie" and "Mr. Pie" for the vicar-general period. The editor says Pie was preconized bishop of Poitiers "at thirty-five"; he was appointed in 1849 (born 26 Sept. 1815), i.e. in his thirty-fourth year — the text is left as printed.

4. ***"Quis putas puer iste erit?"*** (Luke 1:66, said of John the Baptist).

5. **"Saint Ivo, Saint Fulbert, Peter of Celle"** — Ivo of Chartres, Fulbert of Chartres, Peter of Celle, all connected with Chartres.

6. **Footnotes** on the "Appendix no. I" ("Note exacte de mes sermons et instructions") refer to the numbered list given in Volume II, Appendix I.

7. **The Brief of Pius IX of 27 July 1876** (on the Lourdes coronation discourse) is cited from *Œuvres épiscopales*, vol. IX.

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[1] By the name *Priestly Works* [*Œuvres sacerdotales*] we mean only the oratorical works, which alone have been published among the *Episcopal Works*.

[2] *History of Cardinal Pie*, 1st ed., vol. I, p. 33.

[3] *History of Cardinal Pie*, vol. I, p. 42.

[4] Brief of 27 July 1876, on the occasion of the discourse delivered at the coronation of Our Lady of Lourdes. *Episcopal Works*, vol. IX, p. 380.

[5] *History of Cardinal Pie*, vol. I, p. 54.

[6] Ibid., p. 66. — The reports have been preserved in the archives of the Saint-Sulpice catechism.

[7] Cf. *Episcopal Works*, vol. II, p. 289; vol. III, p. 488.

[8] Appendix no. III: Facsimile of a manuscript.

[9] Appendix no. I: *Exact Note of my Sermons and Instructions* (A, nos. 2, 3, 4).

[10] Appendix no. I: *Exact Note of my Sermons and Instructions* (A, nos. 5, 6, 8).

[11] *History of Cardinal Pie*, vol. I, p. 84.

[12] Appendix no. I: *Exact Note of my Sermons and Instructions* (A, nos. 10, 11, 12, 13).

[13] Appendix no. I: *Exact Note of my Sermons and Instructions* (A, nos. 27, 28, 29, 30).

[14] Appendix no. I: *Exact Note of my Sermons and Instructions* (A, nos. 48, 49, 50, 51, 53, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 65, 66, 67, 78, etc.).

[15] Appendix no. I: *Exact Note of my Sermons and Instructions* (p. 20, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4).

[16] *History of Cardinal Pie*, vol. I, p. 96.

[17] Appendix no. I: *Exact Note of my Sermons and Instructions* (p. 22, nos. 13, 14, 15).

[18] Appendix no. I: *Exact Note of my Sermons and Instructions* (p. 28, nos. 46, 47, 48).

[19] Mgr Clausel de Montals, Bishop of Chartres.

[20] Appendix no. I: *Exact Note of my Sermons and Instructions* (p. 32, nos. 64, 65).

[21] *History of Cardinal Pie*, vol. I, p. 202.

[22] Appendix no. I: *Exact Note of my Sermons and Instructions* (AB, and from p. 20 to p. 38, *passim*).

[23] Appendix no. II: *Plan of a Sermon on Saint Joseph*, of the parish of Notre-Dame. This shows us in the young orator a talent fully formed from his earliest years.

[24] Since the same subject is sometimes treated in the *Priestly Works* and in the *Episcopal Works*, we did not nevertheless think it necessary to suppress the first drafts of a thought that was to ripen later; we have, on the contrary, judged it useful to preserve them, in order to allow the reader an interesting comparative study.

[25] *History of Cardinal Pie*, vol. I, p. 99.

[26] Ibid., p. 100.

[27] *History of Cardinal Pie*, vol. I, p. 96.

[28] Ibid., p. 97.

[29] *History of Cardinal Pie*, vol. I, p. 98.

[30] Appendix no. I: *Exact Note of my Sermons and Instructions*. Indication of several discourses not preached because of illness (AB, nos. 66, 67).

[31] *History of Cardinal Pie*, vol. I, p. 100.

[32] Ibid., p. 101.

[33] *History of Cardinal Pie*, vol. I, p. 203.

[34] For the *Episcopal Works*, see in vol. VIII the fine study by Father Longhaye, entitled *Twenty-five Years of Episcopate*.

n° 1. Discourse on This Proposition: That Mary Is the Channel of All Graces, and on the Necessity of Invoking Mary

[Undated.][1]

Maria, de qua natus est Jesus. Mary, of whom was born Jesus. (Matt. 1:16.)

In these few words, my dearly beloved brethren, are contained all the grandeurs, all the glories, all the prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin Mary: from her divine maternity flow all her titles, all her powers, all her rights. By giving us Jesus, who is called the Christ, she has given us everything; and because she has given us everything, evidently we are bound to render her something; or rather, because it is from her and through her that we continue to receive all that Jesus is the source of for us, it is in the order of things that we have recourse to her to obtain the goods of which she has the dispensation. On this doctrine rests the most solid foundation of devotion to the holy Mother of God.

All graces come to us through Mary, God having so willed it: *Totum nos habere voluit Deus per Mariam* [God willed that we should have everything through Mary]. This proposition is Saint Bernard's, and the great theologian Suárez, after a thorough study and discussion, teaches that such is the sentiment of the Church: *Sentit Ecclesia* [the Church so holds]. Therefore it is the will of God that we seek grace through the intermediary of Mary: *Quæramus ergo gratiam, et per Mariam quæramus, quia sic voluntas ejus qui nos totum habere voluit per Mariam* [Let us then seek grace, and let us seek it through Mary, because such is the will of Him who willed that we should have everything through Mary]. This is the very logical conclusion of the same holy doctor, and this consequence indeed issues naturally and rigorously from the premises.

I. All graces come to us through Mary. A celebrated text of Bossuet casts marvelous light on this doctrine.

The Redeemer could have come down upon the earth without passing through a woman's womb; in other words, God could have saved men without employing the intervention of Mary. He could have: He did not will it. "From all eternity God predestined her to give Jesus Christ to the world through her. Having called her to this glorious ministry, He does not wish her to be a mere channel, but a willing instrument. That is why the eternal Father sends an angel to propose the mystery to her, a mystery which will not be accomplished so long as Mary is uncertain: so that this great work of the Incarnation, which for so many centuries has held all nature in expectation, when God is resolved to accomplish it, still remains in suspense until the divine Virgin

has consented to it."

"This truth being known," Bossuet continues, "I do not mean to explain it to you; but I shall not hide from you a consequence which perhaps you have not sufficiently meditated. It is that God having once willed to give us Jesus Christ through Mary, this order is changed no more; and the gifts of God are without repentance. It is and always will be true that, having once received through her the universal principle of grace, we receive through her intervention also its various applications in all the different states that make up the Christian life. It is and always will be true that her consent having been necessary for the mystery of the Incarnation, it will be so eternally for all the other operations which are only its dependencies." The blood of Jesus Christ would remain indefinitely suspended above our heads, if the application of it were not made to us by the concurrence of the Mother of the Redeemer.

And thus, my brethren, Mary is always the mother of Jesus. This title is not for her a title of past glory; her childbearing is perpetuated, her fruitfulness is always in act. Saint John saw her in heaven, clothed with the sun as with a garment, having the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars, and she cried out like a woman in the pangs of childbirth. What does this mean? It means that from the heights of heaven Mary continues to produce Jesus Christ, by bringing Him forth in our hearts; it means that Mary, who gave us the Author of grace, continues to be the Mother of divine grace, as the Church teaches when she brings together these two invocations: *Mater Christi, Mater divinæ gratiæ* [Mother of Christ, Mother of divine grace].

"Indeed," Bossuet says again, "theology recognizes three principal operations of grace, on which our salvation depends. God calls us, God justifies us, God gives us perseverance. The vocation is the first step; the justification makes the progress; the perseverance concludes the journey. Now, if it is of faith that in these three states the influence of Jesus is necessary to us, it is also certain from the Scriptures that Mary is associated with these three works: witness the vocation of Saint John, and the first supernatural leaping excited in him by the voice of Mary, as soon as it had penetrated the ears of his mother; witness the miracle of Cana accomplished at the prayer of Mary, whose fruit was to produce in the apostles the lively faith that procured their justification; witness finally the perseverance of those same apostles and of the first disciples under the auspices of the Mother of Jesus… Those who know how to consider (it is still Bossuet speaking) how fruitful and mysterious the slightest words of Scripture are, will know, by these three examples, that Mary is by her intercessions the mother of the called, of the justified, of the persevering, and that consequently her fruitful intervention is a general instrument of the operations of grace."

All graces come to us through Mary, even those which flow from our priesthood, and from the sacrifice and the sacraments. The treasure of the Church is composed of two great things, and, as Saint Denis [Dionysius] says, the Christian priesthood has its double term in the real body of Jesus Christ, which is the matter of our sacrifice, and in His mystical body, which we sanctify by the sacraments. Now, just as Mary furnished from her own womb the heavenly Victim whom we immolate, who is nothing else than the true body born of the Virgin; likewise it is she who places in our hands the merits and fruits of the redeeming blood which we pour out upon souls, and we owe her no less this second substance of our priesthood than the first; so that our priesthood is, as it were, a derivation of the priesthood of Mary, virgin-priest *par excellence*: *virgo sacerdos*; so that the sacraments themselves, those mysterious signs instituted by Jesus Christ precisely to be the channels and instruments of grace, are, with respect to Mary, only secondary channels and instruments. Let us hear Saint Cyril, in that discourse which the Fathers of Ephesus had inserted among the acts of the Council, in that celebrated harangue which has almost the authority of an ecumenical decision: "It is through you, O Mary, that the baptismal water justifies the catechumen; it is through you that the holy oil confirms the neophyte": *Per te baptismus obtingit credentibus, per te oleum exultationis infunditur* [Through you baptism comes to believers, through you the oil of gladness is poured out], and the rest: which has allowed it to be said that Mary is the universal sacrament.

All graces come to us through Mary: the graces granted to individuals, as we have just seen; the graces granted to nations and peoples. Let us hear Saint Cyril again: “It is through you, O Mary, that faith has penetrated into infidel lands; through you that nations have been brought to penance; through you that new Christian churches have risen at the ends of the universe”: a doctrine admirably confirmed by the apostle of the Indies, Saint Francis Xavier, who used to say that he had always found minds rebellious to the Gospel when he had not presented to them, along with the cross of Jesus, the image of Mary.

All graces come to us through Mary: and truly God owed it to His Mother to bestow on her, to continue to her, this noble mission. For if, after having been here below necessary for the work of the Incarnation and the Redemption, she had become, in heaven, a stranger to the consequences of the one and the other, heaven would be for her only a sort of honorable retreat, where she would gather homage, but where her power would have ceased. Her condition would resemble what our administrative language calls *non-activity* [being placed on the inactive list]. God could not, ought not, make this her condition, as the mother of God.

Let us say then, with Saint Bernard, that God has really established that everything would pass through the hands of Mary: *Deus nos totum habere voluit per Mariam*. Let us say that, if in the supernatural order Jesus Christ is the center, Mary is the circumference, according to that word of Jeremiah: *Femina circumdabit virum* [A woman shall compass a man]; and that, as it is impossible for anything to escape from the center without passing through the circumference, so, in the sphere of graces, nothing can emanate from Jesus without passing through Mary. Let us say finally, with another Father, that if the fullness of grace is in Jesus as in the head from which it flows, it is in Mary as in the neck which transmits it to the rest of the body: *In Christo tamquam in capite influente, in Maria vero tamquam in collo transfundente*.

But after these speculative considerations there is a final conclusion to be drawn from this doctrine. All graces come to us through Mary: therefore it is necessary to address oneself to Mary. This consequence, which issues naturally from the principle, nevertheless asks to be developed.

II. There are Christians who, without contesting and without despising the worship of the Blessed Virgin (for then they would be struck by the thunderbolts of the Church), nevertheless omit and neglect to address themselves to her. They readily place the invocation of Mary among those supererogatory practices which must be left to popular devotion, and which do not accord with a nobler and more manly religion: practices respectable no doubt, but which have nothing to do with the dogma and the essence of Christianity. For them it is a matter of piety; it is not the fulfillment of a necessary duty. Now, there is in this an error that tends to nothing less than compromising salvation. Let us explain ourselves.

But first, to avoid even the shadow of exaggeration, let us set forward a principle of Saint Augustine which will bring light into this question of the necessity of recourse to Mary. “God,” says the holy doctor, “and this is of faith, grants certain graces to men although they do not pray to Him; but it is equally of faith that there are many other graces, necessary for salvation, which God grants only to prayer.” Now, my brethren, this same principle applies to our subject. From the fact that Mary is constituted the dispenser of all graces, shall I conclude that she never anticipates our prayers? Did she wait for the prayer of men to give her consent to their redemption? We are all born debtors to Mary. And as soon as divine grace seeks to penetrate into our soul, whether by the virtue of the baptismal water or by first purely gratuitous supernatural movements, Mary eagerly associates herself with these holy advances of heaven. When God runs to meet His creature, Mary does not hold back. Where God does not wait for our merits or our requests to grant, Mary is no less disinterested in transmitting: never does the divine channel refuse itself to the generous outpourings of the source. There is more: this blessed instrument, always ready, always prompt to grant them, even most often provokes these first operations of grace. How often, without having been asked by the guests, it is at Mary’s request that the water is changed into wine! How often, perceiving in sinners wounds which they do not feel themselves and whose cure they do not ask, Mary, attentive mother, is the first to reveal their needs to her Son: *Fili mi, vinum non habent!* [My Son, they have no wine!] But, that said, it must be acknowledged that

there are graces, and necessary graces, which God grants only to those who employ the intercession of His Mother. It must be acknowledged — and this proposition will express my thought in its precise form — that the Christian who puts Mary outside his practical habits of religion shuts against himself the channel of grace and the access to heaven. Give me a few moments more of attention.

By the very fact that God has established as a general law that His Mother should be the dispenser of all graces, is it not manifest that He wished to put us under the obligation of having recourse to her? For it to be otherwise, either Mary would have to be the obligatory channel of grace even for the benefit of those who would not wish to address themselves to her; or else God would have to make an exception and change for them the ordinary course of grace. Now, are these two suppositions admissible?

And first, is it credible that, in making grace pass through the hands of His Mother, God wished to use her as a mere passive instrument? The Creator could well, by a general law, force the sun to shine even on those who blaspheme its light: it is a material globe, a star without reason, and which has no honor to save. But Mary, that intelligent star, and, as the Fathers say, that animated heaven — Mary would be compromised, or rather God would have compromised Himself toward her, had He laid down such a law. No, cries Saint Bernard, Mary is a star that pours out her light and her warmth with discernment, according to that oracle which the Church attributes to her: *Ego diligentes me diligo* [I love them that love me]. Woe to those who turn their back on this sun: *Væ qui solem istum adversantur!* Jesus Christ, in placing His Mother between us and Himself, did not wish to make of her a mere footstool that would raise us toward heaven while we trampled it underfoot. Obliged as we are to seek grace, it is our duty to seek it through Mary, since such is the will of Him who willed that we should receive everything through her: *Quæramus ergo gratiam et per Mariam quæramus… quia sic est voluntas ejus qui totum nos habere voluit per Mariam.*

The ever extreme spirit of the heretics, in order to attack this doctrine with a greater appearance of reason, has sought to make us draw from it an exaggerated consequence. They have said: Since the intervention of Mary is always necessary, it will therefore never be permitted to address oneself directly to God. But we shall have answered this difficulty by recalling that our proposition concerns only those who affect to exclude Mary from their practical piety. For as for him who acknowledges and proclaims himself her client, there is no doubt that he can often, and even must, address himself directly to God, source and principle of grace. In that there is no exclusion given to Mary; there is even implicit recourse to her. And as the Son is not jealous of the honors rendered to His Mother, the Mother is not astonished at the immediate worship rendered to her Son: let us not suppose in heaven the base rivalries that defile the earth.

The heretics have asked further: But if Mary is the universal channel of graces, what use then can the invocation of the saints be? The answer is no less easy; for the saints whom we invoke know as well as we, and better, the road of grace; we employ them then as intercessors, either with Mary, that she may obtain for us the help of God, or directly with God Himself; and, in either case, the rights of Mary are not wounded, she is not ignored, her mediation is not set aside.

But at least, we are told, in this doctrine it is impossible for God to save us without Mary. And this objection leads us to our second hypothesis: Can God save us without Mary? Yes, as He can enlighten us without the sun. God having laid down as a general law that everything, as regards grace, would come to us through Mary — *Totum nos habere voluit per Mariam* — He can nevertheless work a miracle in the supernatural order, as He does in that of nature. But who is he, O my God, who will dare to ask You, and who will have the confidence to obtain, this miracle and this exception? I make you the judges of it, my brethren. God, wishing to honor His Mother and to treat us with love, established that all graces would be dispensed by His Mother. And here a human creature comes to say to Him: Lord, this intermediary that You have placed between You and me does not please me. Are You not powerful enough to save me by Yourself, and what need have I of Mary? I know well that You have constituted her the gate of heaven; but I also know that You can open another gate for me, and I ask to owe nothing to Your Mother.

What have I said, my brethren? God can save us without Mary as He can enlighten us without the sun. I was mistaken. When God works miracles, it will never be to satisfy a caprice injurious to His Mother. Besides, hear yet the reasoning borrowed from the holy doctors. God, with His omnipotence, can He now bring it about that, in His eternal decrees, He did not associate Mary with the work of the Incarnation, and that she did not take part in it by an active cooperation? Surely not. And now, Mary, by this concurrence, having acquired rights over all creatures regenerated in Jesus Christ, can God dispossess her of her rights and release us from our obligations toward her? Again, no. Therefore there is a worship of gratitude, of love and of invocation from which nothing can dispense us toward Mary, and it is to leave the way of salvation to place oneself outside her worship.

That is why the great bishop of Meaux, after discussing this same question with that doctrinal exactness and loftiness which he brings everywhere, concludes with these terrible words from lips so masterly and at the same time so reserved: “Since devotion to Mary is so well founded,” he says, “anathema to him who denies it and takes from Christians so great a help! Anathema to him who diminishes it, he weakens the sentiments of piety.” If any man love not the Virgin Mary, let him be anathema!

Let us stop here, and perhaps you already find that I have insisted too much. Is there need of long discourses to establish that one must love one’s mother, that one must have recourse to her? Ah! this is one of those truths that carry their proof in themselves. Mary, who is the Mother of God, is also our mother: *Ecce Mater tua* [Behold thy mother]. The law that binds us to invoke her is too sweet a law for us to wish to withdraw from it. All the saints have blessed God for having established this merciful arrangement; all have hastened to throw themselves into the arms of the mother to obtain the graces of the Son; and when all tender and delicate souls have accepted this law with love and gratitude, when all good hearts have applauded it, it is not we who shall ask God to derogate from it for us. O holy and immaculate Virgin, more than ever shall we bring you our wishes, our homage; more than ever shall we lay before you our necessities, our needs; more than ever shall we prove to you our confidence and our love.

The conclusion of the doctrine we have just heard sums itself up for us in the final exhortation of the holy doctor who expounded it to us: *Totis ergo medullis cordium, totis præcordiorum affectibus Mariam hanc veneremur, quia sic est voluntas ejus qui totum nos habere voluit per Mariam* [With all the marrow of our hearts, with all the affections of our inmost being, let us then venerate this Mary, for such is the will of Him who willed that we should have everything through Mary]. Let us love, then, with all the strength, all the powers, all the fibers, all the marrow of our heart, and let us invoke with all the emotion and tenderness of our inmost being this divine Virgin Mary, since such is the will of Him who has willed to give us nothing without her, and who has willed to give us everything through her and with her. Amen.

Translator’s notes

1. **Source text.** The footnote (1) of the French says the discourse is an episcopal-period reworking of two lost Chartres homilies. “Preface, p. XVII” refers to the editor’s preface (Avertissement).

2. **Bossuet.** The quotations are from Bossuet’s Marian preaching (probably the sermon(s) for the Annunciation); Pie gives no reference and I have not checked them against Bossuet’s text — the translation is of Pie’s French.

3. **Saint Bernard / Suárez.** *Totum nos habere voluit per Mariam* is from Bernard’s sermon *In Nativitate B.V.M. (De aquaeductu)*; Suárez is cited for *Sentit Ecclesia*. Pie gives no references.

4. **Saint Cyril.** The “discourse inserted in the acts of the Council” is the homily attributed to Cyril of Alexandria at Ephesus (431), *Hom. IV* (PG 77).

5. **“Saint Denis.”** French usage for Dionysius the Areopagite (pseudo-Dionysius). Rendered “Saint Denis [Dionysius]”.

6. **“non-activité.”** French administrative term for the status of an officer without assignment, hence the bracketed gloss.

7. **“Femina circumdabit virum”** (Jer. 31:22). Pie takes the text in the Marian sense common in the Fathers.

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[1] This discourse is taken from a folder entitled: *Sermons copied out fair*, without indication of date. The style of the handwriting and the format of the paper belong to the time of the episcopate; but in substance it is only a transformation of two homilies preached at the cathedral of Chartres, which have not been preserved to us. — Cf. Appendix I: *Exact Note of my Sermons and Instructions*, A, 2, 3. Preface, p. XVII.

n° 2. Homily Preached on the Anniversary Sunday of the Miraculous Cessation of the Cholera: on the Spiritual and Temporal Helps That Mary Grants to Men

(25 August 1839)[1]

Dies autem victoriæ hujus in numero sanctorum dierum accipitur, et colitur ex illo tempore usque in præsentem diem. And the day of this deliverance was reckoned among the holy days, and from that time to this day it has been kept in remembrance. (Book of Judith, ch. XVI, 31.)

My dearly beloved brethren,

The people of Israel, so often and so marvelously favored by the Lord, had learned from Him to fix and to perpetuate the memory of His benefits. The days on which the Lord had manifested His power were counted among the feasts of the nation, and were celebrated with an everlasting worship; sometimes monuments were set up at the place of the deliverance; and when the children asked their fathers about the origin of those monuments and those feasts, the elders of Israel answered them by the account of the wonder the Lord had wrought. Thus the memory of the divine marvels and the gratitude of Israel were perpetuated from generation to generation.

Above all after a deliverance forever memorable, when that valiant woman, the honor and joy of her country, had slain the cruel Holofernes and saved the city of Bethulia, the high priest Joachim came from Jerusalem with all his priests, and all with one voice blessed the deliverer, crying out: *You are the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, and the honor of our people! Blessed be the Lord who directed your arm while you pierced the head of our enemy, and be you yourself blessed forever!* And the people answered with their acclamations to the acclamations of the pontiff and the priests. And that day was a day of feast in Israel. And the sacred historian tells us that the anniversary of this deliverance was placed among the holy days, and that up to the time when he writes it has not ceased to be solemnized: *Dies autem victoriæ hujus in numero sanctorum dierum accipitur, et colitur ex illo tempore usque in præsentem diem.*

You know it, my brethren: great and frequent wonders have been wrought in our midst by the arm of Mary, protectress of this city; and in every age our grateful church, not satisfied with having set down the authentic account of them in her precious annals, has consecrated their memory by monuments and by feasts. And this evening again a solemn ceremony will recall one of the latest and most brilliant benefits of Mary: a miraculous deliverance, whose anniversary has been placed among the holy days, and which we have not ceased to solemnize to this day. *Dies autem victoriæ hujus in numero sanctorum dierum accipitur, et colitur ex illo tempore usque in præsentem diem.*

But, my dearly beloved brethren, some hearts perhaps have already forgotten this benefit; a new generation is beginning to grow up which did not witness it. So that this ceremony may be mute to no one, and also that the holy word may pay its tribute to Mary, let us recall the great favor she has granted us, and, enlarging our subject somewhat, let us speak of the powerful helps that Mary never ceases to give to men, whether in the spiritual order or in the temporal order. Already, in two consecutive instructions, we have established, by a rigorous discussion, the solid foundations of devotion to Mary.[2] Our words were received with piety, and we

have the sweet confidence that they awakened the love of Mary, perhaps asleep in some hearts. Today our argument, though less pressed, will be no less strong; for how can one not love her who loves us so much? how not invoke her who procures us so many helps?

I. And first, Mary is truly the help of Christians in the spiritual order: help of individuals, help of the whole Church. I shall not recall that, Mary having given us the Author of grace, and having been constituted forever the dispenser of graces, it is therefore from her that we receive every kind of spiritual help. That proposition has been proved; and it is the detailed account of Mary's benefits that I owe you on this day. The eye of God, you know, my brethren, distinguishes among men two great classes: that of the just who possess His grace, that of sinners who have lost it. Now Mary has helps for sinners and for the just.

Sinners are the object of Mary's particular attentions; she has for them, if I dare say it, a sort of predilection. This proposition is not mine; it is that of a great servant of Mary whom our Church of Chartres gave, nearly a thousand years ago, to the episcopal see of Paris [William of Paris]. According to William of Paris, Mary is a debtor to sinners: (1) because she is Mother of God, (2) because she is Queen of mercy, (3) because she is mediatrix.

Yes, Mary loves sinners, and she owes them her help and her predilection. Thus, in the prayer which the Church puts so often on our lips, what title do we set before Mary to obtain her protection? *Ora pro nobis peccatoribus.* Pray for us sinners. What! would our quality of sinners be a recommendation with Mary? Yes: *ora pro nobis peccatoribus.* For why did the Son of God come down from heaven to earth? Hear Him: *Non veni vocare justos, sed peccatores* [I came not to call the just, but sinners]. Consequently, concludes Saint Anselm, if Mary is Mother of God, it is for sinners rather than for the just, and sinners may glory in having been the cause of Mary's divine maternity. *Ora pro nobis peccatoribus.*

What gives us a right to the physician's concern? Is it not precisely that we are sick? And the physician's glory, is it not to triumph over a mortal and inveterate disease, to tear from the depths of the body the cancer that devours it? Mary is the queen of mercy: therefore our title with her is to be miserable; and the greater our misery, the more right we have to her concern. For a great mercy there must be great miseries to relieve, and the hand that knows how to give much would groan at meeting only half-wretched men. Therefore, O holy Virgin, the depth of our misery will make the masterpiece and the triumph of your mercy. *Ora pro nobis peccatoribus.*

Mary is mediatrix: how will this mediation be exercised? Between God and the just — that is, between God reigning in His glory and God reigning by His grace? No: mediation requires two opposite terms between which it comes to place itself, and the farther apart these two terms are, the more glorious the mediation will be. Consequently the masterpiece and triumph of Mary's mediation will be that, while with one hand she touches God, whose mother she is, with the other she goes to seize the sinner who calls upon her in the depth of nothingness, and lower still, *in inferno inferiori* [in the lower hell], in the second nothingness of sin; and then, while with one hand she inclines heaven and the heart of her Son, with the other she draws the great criminal up again, and thus reconciles in a kiss of peace God and the sinner, the judge and the guilty one. Once more, is not that the glory of Mary? *Ora pro nobis peccatoribus.* Yes, holy Virgin, I understand the thought of the Church, and when I go to cast myself at your feet I shall gladly, with the Apostle, glory in my miseries, since they are a title to your protection. *Ora pro nobis peccatoribus.*

We read, my brethren, in the life of a fervent saint, that one day after a conversation of love with Mary, she said to her at the end: "But you do not speak to me of my sinners…!" *My* sinners! as the physician says: my patients! as the hand that dispenses alms says: my poor! *Ora pro nobis peccatoribus.* So we would sooner have counted all the stars of heaven than all the conversions wrought by Mary. History is full of them, and since the famous example of Mary of Egypt, converted in the twinkling of an eye by the mere sight of a picture of Mary, how many thousands of similar examples down to our own days, when they seem to

multiply even more; and the account of them cannot fail to reach your ears. As for us, instead of enumerating the helps given by Mary to sinners, we would rather ask, with Saint Bernard, what help she does not grant; and we shall dare, with that great saint, to issue solemnly this challenge: that we consent that her mercy never be spoken of again, if a single sinner has invoked her without being heard.

But perhaps we shall have excited the jealousy of the just, by speaking of the quite particular helps that Mary grants to sinners. Ah! let them be consoled, for though Mary's love shows itself with more eagerness and solicitude toward the child she had lost and finds again, there is nonetheless in the depth of her heart a more distinguished place for him who has always remained faithful, and she never ceases to protect him, to help him, to console him. The Christian meets at every step, on this stormy sea of the world, reefs where his virtue would suffer sad shipwreck if Mary did not guide his vessel.

Mary has helps for earliest childhood, and her maternal hand receives us at the very entrance of life. Have you not observed, my brethren, how susceptible little children are to devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin? It is a point of religion that it is not at all difficult to teach them, so well does the worship of a mother who is in heaven harmonize with the disposition of those little souls. You have more than once remarked, as we have, with what joy and at the same time with what recollection these innocent creatures come to kiss the feet of Mary; and you have felt that it was not a mere childish game, but that already Mary was revealing herself to their hearts. And which of us does not count, among his first and most precious memories, some very sweet moments when he laid at the feet of a statue of Mary a few wild flowers with the first-fruits of his prayer? Ah! continue, Christian mothers, those touching customs that our fathers bequeathed us: clothe your children in the liveries and colors of Mary, lead them to the foot of her altars; they come back from them more graceful and more lovable in the eyes of men, and they carry away in the depth of their hearts seeds of virtue which will bear fruit in their time. Soon childhood will give place to the burning age of the passions, and you will then understand that one cannot let Mary put down her first roots too early in a heart. The young Count of Aquino, who was afterwards the great Saint Thomas, and who at sixteen drove off with a burning brand the crime that came to tempt him, had been vowed to Mary from his mother's womb; and when an image of the Mother of God was first presented to him, he had put it to his mouth and kissed it so avidly that it could not be torn from him.

Mary is the help of youth. Let someone cite me a pure young man, let someone cite me a Christian maiden who does not love Mary. He is very near to slipping into evil who begins to forget Mary; he is on the way back to virtue who finds again, even once, the road to her altars. Yes, Mary is for youth a necessary pledge, but an assured pledge, of innocence. She is that tower of David from which hang a thousand bucklers and all the armor of valiant men. With her there are only victories; without her only defeats. Examples abound.

Mary is the help of the Christian throughout his life. And as she sowed the first seeds of virtue in hearts, it is she again who protects them and assures their perseverance. She sustains us amid dangers, revives us in disgust, raises us in our falls, enlightens us in our darkness. How often the discouraged soul has found hope again at her feet! How often the cold and languishing soul has found fervor there! It has been renewed like the eagle's, and has taken a fresh flight toward virtue. There is above all, my brethren — ah! there is a cruel pain for the just man: not to know whether he is pleasing to God, whether he is the object of His love or of His hatred. Sometimes even, by God's permission, a soul dear to Him comes to persuade itself that it is in His disgrace and has nothing to expect but hell: a frightful trial which God ordinarily reserves for the solid virtue of a more advanced age, but which He sent to Saint Francis de Sales while still a young man. And you know in what manner he was delivered from that cruel trial, after a fervent prayer at the feet of a statue of Mary.

So, my brethren, in our troubles, in our anxieties about our salvation and our predestination — a question so frightening and so mysterious — what have we to do? It is to throw ourselves like children into the arms of Mary. For hear this reasoning: Scripture and the Fathers, speaking of the Incarnation, often say that the times

were shortened, *abbreviata sunt tempora*, and that they were shortened out of consideration for Mary, whose ardent prayer merited that this great work of mercy be hastened, *meruit accelerationem*. And elsewhere the Gospel teaches us that when Mary asked Jesus Christ to work His first miracle, the times assigned by His Father had not yet come. Jesus Christ is obliged to say so to His mother; but no matter. Mary has asked; the eternal decrees will lend themselves to it, and the miracle will be done. Thus, say the Fathers, and above all Saint John Chrysostom, many who would not have been saved without Mary will be saved through Mary; that is, many who would not have been predestined without her are nevertheless predestined because God foresaw from all eternity that the intercession of Mary would obtain their salvation. Instead then of worrying whether we are predestined or not, let us busy ourselves with putting Mary on our side, to make thereby, in the expression of Saint Paul, our predestination certain. If Mary is for us, who will be against us, since Mary is strong against God Himself? These are always the words of the Fathers.

Mary is the help of Christians at the moment of death. Religion, in its lofty philosophy, had taught this Christian, scarcely out of the cradle, and when he still seemed so far from the tomb, to provide himself a help for that last moment, which he did not yet even know how to foresee. From his entrance into life he had stammered these words: “Holy Mother of God, pray for us, now and at the hour of our death.” And behold, that hour has come. Oh! who could say what a consolation it is for him then to have implored, so many thousands of times in his life, this help of Mary for the hour of death? And Mary, who was not deaf to so many prayers, could she then forsake her servant? Let someone cite me a servant of Mary who died in despair. For my part, I shall cite thousands to whom she appeared then, sometimes in a sensible manner, whose last moments she softened, and whose soul she came to take to carry it to heaven. If the priest and the sacraments of the Church were lacking to them, Mary supplied; for she too, says Saint Antoninus, has jurisdiction, and holds in her hands the keys of grace: *Clavigera gratiæ.* And if something delayed their entrance into glory, in the midst of the abode of expiation Mary was still their help and consolation, and she shortened the duration of their sufferings. Mary, in a word, is the help of our soul from the moment when the breath of God produced it until it is reunited to Him.

After speaking of the spiritual helps that Mary grants to individuals, shall I tell what she does for the whole Church? When Jesus Christ left the earth to ascend into heaven, He left us His mother still for some time, and all the Fathers teach that it was in order that she might confirm the Church, to whose birth she had contributed so much. But from the height of heaven she continues this care. And already fourteen centuries ago Saint Cyril recognized that to the protection of Mary was due the extension of the Church and the conversion of infidel countries: *Per quam gentes adducuntur ad pœnitentiam, per quam toto orbe terrarum fundatæ sunt ecclesiæ* [through whom the nations are led to penance, through whom churches have been founded in all the world]. In favoring the growth of the Church, Mary has also removed all the obstacles that arise within her bosom. And all tradition has taught what the Church sings, that with that same foot which crushed the infernal serpent Mary alone has stifled all heresies: *Cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in universo mundo* [Alone you have destroyed all heresies in the whole world]; and this is why no heretic has ever loved Mary. Finally, when storms have arisen in the Church, the arm of Mary has always been stretched out to succor her.

You all know this incident, my brethren. About three centuries ago, the fury of the Mohammedan threatened to bathe the Church of Jesus Christ in blood and to destroy it. The army that was opposed to him seemed too weak, and already victory was declaring itself for the infidels. But the holy Pontiff Pius V was at prayer in Rome with all his clergy before an image of Mary, and he had made a vow for the deliverance of the Church. Suddenly he opens the window and cries: “The Christians have conquered,” and he intones the *Te Deum.* The next day a courier came to confirm this victory: a marvelous victory, which was renewed later, and which was due then to the vow the brave Sobieski had made to Mary. And the Pope, to acknowledge Mary’s benefit, had added to the litanies this beautiful invocation: *Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis.* The day

of the battle of Lepanto was henceforth counted among the feast days in the Church, and its memory has been celebrated down to our own days. *Dies autem victoriæ hujus in numero sanctorum dierum accipitur, et colitur ex illo tempore usque in præsentem diem.*

At a recent epoch, whose date is contemporary for most of you, my brethren, this protection of Mary over the Church was again clearly manifested. A man before whom the universe trembled, and who had thrown into chains the head of the Church, his benefactor, irritated at being unable to bend what he called priestly obstinacy, boasted loudly, on setting out upon a distant expedition, that on his return he would be done with these priests. The prince was all-powerful, and he knew only too well how to execute great measures when they were to serve his despotism. What was there not to fear for the Church if he returned victorious! But from the depth of his captivity the holy Pontiff had implored Mary. A series of unexpected events came to change the face of things: the persecutor was struck down, and the head of the Church, after such long trials, mounted again the pontifical throne on the very day when the battle of Lepanto had formerly been won. And the first care of the great Pope was to confirm to Mary the title of help of Christians, *auxilium Christianorum*, which had been given her on that same day. And since then the day of that deliverance, under the name of the feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, has been counted, on a double title, among the holy days, and the Church of Rome celebrates its memory annually. *Dies autem victoriæ hujus in numero sanctorum dierum accipitur, et colitur ex illo tempore usque in præsentem diem.*

II. Until now, my brethren, I have spoken of the helps that Mary grants to men in the order of their salvation; would that I had time to speak to you of the temporal helps she never ceases to grant them: help to individuals, help to kingdoms and cities.

Help to individuals. The world is full of the monuments of Mary's beneficence. Travel the Catholic universe in every direction: everywhere you will meet temples, chapels erected to Mary; consult the inhabitants of the place and their traditions: you will learn that this temple, that this madonna were raised by grateful hands; enter the sanctuaries of Mary: you will see around her venerated image the tributes that gratitude has heaped up there. Here is the armor of a warrior miraculously saved from enemy hands; there the representation of a ship escaped from shipwreck; these are the crutches of a paralytic cured; more often they are hearts, monuments of a sorrow softened by Mary. On one you will read: *Homage to Mary, who made fruitful a long-barren mother*; on another: *Homage to Mary, who restored health to the only son of a despairing mother.* What shall I say? Mary is the consoler of all afflictions, the cure of all ills. The poor and the sick call her Our Lady of Pity; the sailor calls her Our Lady of the Guard and Star of the Sea; the afflicted heart invokes Our Lady of Gladness; the warrior invokes Our Lady of Victory, and when he is weary of laurels, Our Lady of Peace. In a word, Mary has as many names as we have needs and miseries, and to count all her benefits one would have to compile all the sufferings and all the sighs of men.

Help granted to empires: and let us speak here only of our own nation. How much France owes to Mary, and in how many circumstances has Mary shown her protection toward France and toward her kings! Thus our most Christian princes did only an act of justice and gratitude in consecrating their States to her, a consecration which has won and will win us, to the end, new favors from Mary — one is not permitted to doubt it. About a century ago, when already the first echoes of a frightful revolution were being heard; when Bossuet, with his eagle's glance, had perceived in the distance one of those catastrophes which empires seldom survive; when Fénelon, alarmed by I know not what dull sound of independence and unbelief, had feared for France the loss of her faith and her civilization, another, more imposing voice prophesied in more consoling terms. The most learned pope who has governed the Church for a long time, Benedict XIV, uttered these words forever full of hope for French hearts: *The kingdom of France is the kingdom of Mary, it will never perish. Regnum Galliæ, regnum Mariæ: non peribit in æternum.* Yes, my brethren, no doubt that our country has triumphed over so many elements of destruction which threatened it with barbarism only by the protection of the Most Blessed Virgin its patroness. France would have perished a thousand times if a

kingdom consecrated to Mary could perish. *Regnum Galliæ, regnum Mariæ: non peribit in æternum.* And if new misfortunes are reserved for us yet, as it seems, no doubt again that France must come out victorious from this trial. *Regnum Galliæ, regnum Mariæ: non peribit in æternum.*

But where has the protection of Mary shone forth more than in our city which is hers, in our city where everything is the memory of a benefit of Mary, and, as an ancient historian said: *Ubi omnia Mariam sonant* [where all things sound of Mary]? Against the city of Mary the fury of the barbarian Norman, who threatened to invade everything, came to break, and the infidels were repulsed and scattered over a place whose name still attests the miracle of Mary: *Ubi omnia Mariam sonant.* Later, when the jealous Englishman had seized our fairest provinces, his victorious army was suddenly destroyed not far from our ramparts. And the conquering king, recognizing from what hands those blows came, turned at once toward the temple of the holy Lady of Chartres, and the destroying thunderbolt ceased its ravages only when he had pledged himself to leave France and lay down his arms. And if all our authors, in speaking of a famous treaty, did not agree, to establish the wonder, with the monuments of our church too little consulted on this historical point, the arms and the debris that the plough meets in furrowing the plain would suffice to recall that miraculous defeat: *Ubi omnia Mariam sonant.* Some centuries later, heresy itself, arms in hand, dared to attack the city of Mary; proud of their number and strength, the impious said ironically that the Lady of Chartres would be no more powerful to save her city than Diana had been for her Ephesus. Already they triumphed; a breach was made in the ramparts; but she who has triumphed over all heresies could not let heresy enter her city. That same relic of Mary, which had put the army of Rollo to flight, was borne to the point of attack, and at once some terror, I know not what, having seized the enemy army, it was thrown back into the meadow whose name had attested for six hundred years a first miracle of Mary: *Ubi omnia Mariam sonant.* A monument was raised on the place of the wonder, and if revolutionary fury has torn down the sanctuary of Our Lady of the Breach, a Mass and a solemn procession still recall every year that miraculous deliverance, and that day is still a holy day in this church. *Dies autem victoriæ hujus in numero sanctorum dierum accipitur, et colitur ex illo tempore usque in præsentem diem.*

Finally, my dearly beloved brethren, at a more recent time, new wonders have multiplied. Already that terrible scourge which the wrath of God was slowly carrying around the globe had made its entry — or rather, by an inexplicable leap, had thrown itself suddenly into the bosom of the capital. Soon, extending its ravages, it had penetrated even into our department. But while it raged furiously through all the neighboring countryside, Chartres, by a particular privilege, had seen none of its inhabitants perish. For six months death had been harvesting numerous victims all around our city, but there its rage came to break. It seemed that Mary had addressed to the pestilential flood those words that the waves of the sea heard: *Usque huc venies… hic confringes tumentes fluctus* [Hitherto shalt thou come… here thou shalt break thy swelling waves]. Assurance redoubled as the great feast of Mary approached, for could one persuade oneself that she would cease to protect her city on the days when she is more honored there? However, it was the wish of all the faithful that, for the continuation of Mary's benefit, the solemn procession, interrupted for some years, should be held on that great day. But the times were bad, and moreover human science had said that Chartres had nothing to fear from the scourge, and that the column of air there was too strong and too high not to present an impenetrable barrier to the vehicle of the cholera. It was therefore clear that without the Blessed Virgin there was still nothing to fear. The feast had to pass without procession. From that moment the cholera declared itself in the city. The number of the dead grew every day in a frightful proportion, and the octave of the Assumption seemed to be celebrated only by funeral convoys. In this desperate state recourse is had to prayer. The Blessed Sacrament is exposed, and, at whatever hour one enters the church, one hears there the grave and mournful chant of the penitential psalms. Salut services [Benediction] are ordered for each evening, and after the blessing an immense crowd throngs the chapel of Mary. No matter; God is deaf, and it seems that Mary herself has no more ears to hear the wishes of her people, no more heart to pity their ills. The contagion took on every day a more alarming intensity.

There are diseases over which only one remedy can have power. The population is stirred and asks that the shrine of Mary [the reliquary of the Holy Veil, “la Sainte Chemise”], so fruitful in miracles, be carried around the ramparts. If I believe our annals, it was for the seventeenth time that the treasure was carried through the streets of the city afflicted by plague; and you all remember, my brethren, what order, what recollection, what fervor presided at that ceremony. After the holy relic had spread its blessings all around the city, the procession entered the temple, and the cholera was no longer at Chartres. I am mistaken: one more victim was given up to the scourge, and you know that it was precisely to confirm the miracle. When the tomb closed on that unfortunate man, it opened no more for any cholera victim; and the civil registers bear witness that the following week was one of those of the year in which they recorded the fewest deaths. Soon a new ceremony was ordered in thanksgiving; and, like Joachim of old with all his priests, the first pontiff of the diocese, on the advice of his clergy, decreed that henceforth the day of this deliverance should be counted among the holy days; and this evening again we are going to solemnize its memory. *Dies autem victoriæ hujus in numero sanctorum dierum accipitur, et colitur ex illo tempore usque in præsentem diem.*

Since that time, my brethren, I could still show you sensible proofs of the protection of Mary over our city and over her temple: the monuments of it are before your eyes, and the memory of it is recent. Thanks to the mercy of Mary, we have not been consumed![3] And the pontiff of this church desires that the ceremony of this evening recall to posterity both these great deliverances, and that this day be counted, on a double title, among the holy days. *Dies autem victoriæ hujus in numero sanctorum dierum accipitur, et colitur ex illo tempore usque in præsentem diem.*

I have been able only to sketch, my brethren, the picture of the spiritual and temporal helps that Mary grants to men. Let us conclude that we ought to have a very great confidence in Mary. In whatever position, in whatever danger you may find yourselves, confidence, confidence in Mary: *Respice stellam, invoca Mariam* [Look to the star, call upon Mary]; she is all-powerful to help us. And if thousands of others, who have not engraved the name of Mary on the sail of their vessel, suffer sad shipwreck before your eyes, no matter; your bark, led by the arm of Mary, will arrive happily at the port of salvation. No one has hoped in Mary and been confounded. One is a child of heaven when one is a child of Mary.[4]

Translator’s notes

1. **Judith 16:31 (Vulgate 16:31).** The Latin is Vulgate; the English is Pie’s French rendered, not Douay verbatim.

2. **Historical allusions.** The “man before whom the universe trembled” is Napoleon, who held Pius VII prisoner. Pius VII returned to Rome on 24 May 1814 and afterwards instituted the feast of Our Lady Help of Christians for that date (24 May); the battle of Lepanto was fought on 7 October 1571. Pie says the Pope returned “on the very day” Lepanto was won — a conflation in his text, left as written. “The Normans” = Rollo’s siege of Chartres (911); “Our Lady of the Breach” refers to the Huguenot attack of 1568.

3. **“Notre-Dame de Liesse”** — a Marian shrine (Picardy); *liesse* = gladness; rendered “Our Lady of Gladness”.

4. **The “Salut”.** French devotional service of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament; rendered “Salut services [Benediction]”.

5. **“Saint Anselm … the cause of Mary’s divine maternity.”** As Pie states it (a rhetorical inversion: sinners the occasion of the Incarnation); no source given.

6. **“Benedict XIV … the kingdom of France is the kingdom of Mary.”** Quoted as Pie gives it; the attribution to Benedict XIV is traditional but I have not verified it.

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[1] The sudden cessation of the cholera in the city of Chartres, in 1832.

[2] Appendix I: A, 2, 3.

[3] The burning of the cathedral of Chartres in 1836 (the roof and timberwork; the stone structure and the glass were saved).

[4] Cf. Appendix I: A, 4; AB, 10 bis, 22 bis, 31, 86 bis.

n° 3. First Homily on Education: The Duties of Parents with Regard to the Education of Their Children

Preached on the thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost, on the occasion of the opening of the catechisms: the duties of parents with regard to family education (1839).

Erudi filium tuum, ne desperes. [Instruct your son; do not despair.] Educate your child; do not despair. (Book of Proverbs, ch. 19, v. 18.)[1]

Quanta mandavit Deus patribus nostris nota facere ea filiis suis… ne fiant sicut patres eorum, generatio prava et exasperans. [How great things He commanded our fathers to make known to their children… that they may not be as their fathers, a perverse and provoking generation.] (Ps. 77.)[2]

One of the saddest results of our social position, such as the upheavals of half a century have made it for us, is without contradiction, my dearly beloved brethren, the sort of impotence in which parents find themselves today when they try to raise their children in those principles of religion and virtue which made the happiness of former generations. I do not know what spirit of independence the children breathe in with the very air; a premature knowledge of evil, and a profound corruption that fastens upon the first age of life as upon its favourite prey — a corruption that has invaded the workshops as it has the schools, so that there is no longer any trade or any branch of learning that must not be bought at the price of morals; and on every side a cry escapes from the bosom of Christian families, a cry of despair and discouragement…

The evil is great, my dearly beloved brethren; will it console you if I tell you that it is not new, and that it would be unjust to blame circumstances alone, seeing that the thing itself has always been exceedingly difficult, and that already, many thousands of years ago, the wise man needed to revive the failing courage of parents: *Educate your child,* he said to them, *and do not despair: Erudi filium tuum, ne desperes.* And it appears that the observant mind of a sage of Rome had noticed in the parents of his day the same tendency to discouragement; that rhetorician met the thought of Scripture admirably when he said: A son is born to you; your first duty is to hope: *Primum est ut speres.*

Once again, the difficulty is great, but it is not insurmountable; and it will be much smoothed for those parents who are willing to have recourse frankly and seriously to the helps that religion offers them.[3]

To treat the subject in its whole extent, we should examine the duties of parents in three successive periods of their children's existence: during their early childhood, during their youth, and at the moment when they must choose a state of life. In other words, the duties of parents: first, with regard to family education; second, with regard to public education; third, with regard to the vocation of their children. This matter would be immense. I ask of God and of His holy Mother only the strength and the grace needed to treat the first question with all the importance it deserves. *Ave Maria.*

I. There are certain duties toward children which nature itself would seem to proclaim loudly enough, without religion's making its voice heard. Yet no. Nature, left to itself, does not even know how to retain those first principles, those first instincts which she holds from the Creator. Most of the ancient legislations granted parents a barbarous power over their children; they never failed to expose and put to death those who displeased the vanity or the greed of their parents. The religions themselves consecrated these cruelties; and you know that dreadful worship which mothers had the courage to pay to Saturn: they went to lay the fruit of their womb in the arms of his burning statue, and they watched in cold blood the sacrifice of those innocent victims. It was one of the happy effects of the Gospel to rescue childhood from these cruel severities, and, in the expression of the Prophet, to turn the hearts of parents to more humane feelings toward their sons:

Convertet cor patrum ad filios. [He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children.] Go out of those lands which the Gospel has civilised; or else, among Christian peoples, consider that class of beings who have broken with Christianity, and see what a frightful morality they profess on this point.[4]

And impartial history will establish that our centuries of impiety have been the most fruitful in infanticides, more or less criminally carried out. So true is it that on ceasing to be a Christian one soon ceases to be a man, to take on the heart of a ferocious beast: *Cor ferum dabitur ei* [a savage heart shall be given him]; and that it belongs to religion alone to maintain all noble sentiments, even that of paternal tenderness: *Convertet cor patrum ad filios.*

My brethren, it is the wish of nature and of religion (and the Catholic Church makes it a duty of her ministers to proclaim this truth from time to time among Christian families) — it is, I say, the wish of nature and of religion that mothers nurse their children themselves; saving the cases, doubtless numerous, in which infirmities and embarrassments of position make the thing difficult or dangerous. For, besides the fact that mutual tenderness often loses by this sort of exile to which a child is condemned during his first years, it is so rare that a stranger deserves in every respect the confidence that such a trust demands. And this is what our materialistic century ought to understand better than any other: it that attributes everything to the influence of the blood and the humours — how does it not conceive the close affinity of this first nourishment with the moral organisation of children? This is what the Church, always so wise and so philosophical in her laws, had understood when, in several of her ancient canons, she insisted upon this obligation of mothers. A mother nursing her child — what is there, my brethren, more touching and more religious? It seems that the Holy Spirit watches this tender scene with interest, for in a thousand places of Scripture He loves to draw from it the most graceful similitudes; and Jesus Christ Himself compared Himself to the mother who suckles her son. O happy times of old, when mothers, more Christian, found in their tenderness the courage of self-denial, and did not so readily sacrifice the cares of motherhood to fickle tastes and to the pull of pleasures!

Far graver considerations are now to fix our attention. One of our moralists has said it in his own original language: our principal government is in the hands of our nurse; and the ancient philosophers spoke wisely of that soul of wax which lets itself be kneaded and fashioned, and of those budding vices that are easy to kill in the germ, and of those first instincts of virtue which must be helped and directed. I applaud all these teachings of human wisdom and morals. But the Christian faith makes me look at things from a much higher standpoint, and presents to me the function of parents during the first age of their children as a sort of priesthood and angelic ministry — *et quodammodo episcopale officium* [and in a certain way an episcopal office], says Saint Augustine. Follow my thought.

When a child is brought back from the sacred font to the paternal roof, it is a great deposit that religion places in your hands. This soul, for an instant enslaved to sin, has been washed and purified; it is pure with the purity of the second Adam, who was created according to God in the justice and holiness of truth; sacramental grace, in effacing from this soul every trace of defilement, has laid up in it a rich treasure, and infused habits of faith, hope and love, and the aptitude for the acts of all the supernatural virtues. There is more, and it is of faith: God Himself, who always accompanies the gift of justification with His own presence, has descended into this regenerated heart, and these innocent limbs are the temple of the Holy Spirit. I know it well, all these rich gifts lie dormant for a time, in a manner of speaking, in this soul which does not yet have the use of reason; but how important it is to watch for and forestall this first dawn of intelligence, so that at the moment when religious teaching is presented to this soul, it may still find there the freshness and integrity of baptismal grace!

O happy child, for whom the torch of faith will come to blend its lights with the first glimmerings of reason! For him nothing will be difficult: outward teaching will find an admirable harmony in his inner disposition; the same Spirit who breathes without teaches within; the God of religion was beforehand the God of his

heart; and the acts that faith asks of him, infused habits long repressed were seeking to produce. But alas! if it were otherwise; if an imprudent word, a dangerous object, a fatal example were to deliver to evil the first-fruits of this intelligence; if the devil, jealous of our first thought of the morning, and how much more of the first act of life, were to surprise from this awakening reason the treasure of which it is beginning to be able to dispose; if religion, when she comes to knock at the door of this soul, should find the place already taken — ah! woe, woe to this child! The effect of baptism is, so to speak, lost in regard to his education; there is for his intelligence a sort of second original sin; the lights of faith will long make vain efforts to reach this reason, which has risen in the clouds; this child, as we know by experience, though intelligent in all else, will not even have a memory for the things of religion, because the sacred teaching meets with resistance in the depths of his soul, and the devil defends the place against the Holy Spirit who seeks to recover it.

Ah! once again, woe to the child in whom corruption has outrun faith, and whom the Lord has not possessed from the very beginning of his reasoning existence! How I am moved with pity for him, and how many pains and anguishes I foresee in his life! Perhaps later the zeal and skill of a spiritual guide will succeed in forming a covering of religion and virtue around this poor heart. But how much it is to be feared that it will be only a sleeping volcano, and that the original corruption will soon throw off this second and painful work of grace! Poor child — his happiest condition, perhaps, will be an alternation of good and evil, of falls and relapses; he will have to hold the treasure of grace with both hands so that it may not escape him, and he will be Christian and virtuous only by the sweat of his brow. Whereas the child in whom faith came first will walk by an easy path; and if the tempest of the passions should snatch him for a moment from religion and virtue, the first habits of good and the acquired strength of grace will not be long in bringing him back.

Was I wrong, then, my dearly beloved brethren, when I called your ministry during the first age of your children a sort of priesthood, since you are, as it were, the protectors and guardians of divine grace in their hearts: *Protector salvationum Christi* [protector of the saving works of Christ]? Yes, your children, still in the cradle, possess within themselves a precious inheritance of which you are the guardians, and you must see to it that the first use they make of it is not to squander it: *Atque omnia faciamus*, says Saint John Chrysostom, *ne fur id nobis astutus auferat* [And let us do everything, lest the cunning thief take it from us].

To fulfil this ministry worthily, a Christian mother must make her son suck in religion with her milk. Religion is so well suited to the heart of man that the Christian truths can be proportioned to every age. A mother excels at teaching her son; and the first minister of religion to man is his mother. The first name she will teach him to lisp will be that of God. She will speak to him of a Father, of a Mother whom he has in heaven; the child will know how to say Jesus and Mary. In the presence of the great and touching beauties of nature that so early strike the imagination and heart of a child, she will sometimes pronounce the name of the Creator. Sometimes also she will lead him to the temple — not perhaps yet that he may offer his homage to the Lord; but if he is not yet capable of giving, at least he is capable of receiving. And since the same God who dwells in the sanctuary is at the same time within his heart, mysterious exchanges will take place between those two tabernacles. I grant, once more, that the child’s reason is a stranger to all this; but is it not much that education has made him contract in advance habits of virtue and instincts of religion? The work of education will in this have imitated the way in which divine grace proceeds, which, in the sacrament of baptism, confers on the child the supernatural habits long before he produces their acts.

A privileged child — to what shall I compare him? He will be like a musical instrument, like a lyre, set in tune beforehand in a dark chamber; and as soon as a ray of intelligence comes to touch and awaken the fibres of his soul, he will be astonished to sing a hymn to his Author, and to pour forth harmonies more celestial than human, whose chords had been prepared unknown to him in his heart by the finger of the Holy Spirit and by that of his mother. Thus will that child have offered to God the first homage of his reason — an act the omission of which is, in the judgment of Saint Thomas and of nearly all the theologians, the first sin of most men. If you have reached this goal, I dare say already, a great victory has been won. One more name is

written irrevocably in the book of the elect.

And now, my dearly beloved brethren, do they understand their duties, those parents who leave their children until the age of seven or eight without giving them any religious care or any example of virtue, and who treat them until then as mere automatons? No; the child, even without reason, ought not to be treated so, and none of his actions or habits is indifferent, because he will have reason one day, and what he does today under the sway of a mechanical habit, tomorrow he will continue under the sway of reason. And now, do they understand their duties, those parents who, in the house, abandon without reflection and without supervision all the care of their children to strangers whose religion and delicacy they have often not tested, and who will allow to be contracted, if they do not insinuate them, those habits and instincts of vice which the devil on his side and corrupt nature inspire in them only too much — habits and instincts which an innate modesty already makes them hide, and which will be transformed into faults from the day when conscience shall light up these acts with its light? And now, shall I say at last with the great Bossuet, commenting on those words of Saint John, *Scribo vobis, infantes* [I write to you, little children], do they understand their duties, those parents who seem to fear initiating their children too late into the vanities and pleasures of the world, and who make them act out by turns, as the great bishop always says, the passions that alas! they will play out in reality only too soon? Unhappy parents, wait at least until the baptismal water has dried on the still-damp brows of these children before making them renounce the engagements of their baptism!

II. When the child has grown, his mother's teaching soon becomes insufficient; he begins to need a more solid and more powerful religious instruction. Until now the hearth of the paternal home has been for this child like a domestic church; from now on he needs the public teaching of the Church. Christian parents, imitate the mother of Samuel, of whom Scripture tells us that when she had ceased to nurse her son she brought him with her to the temple of the Lord; and, small as he was, he grew great before God: *Et postquam ablactaverat, adduxit eum secum ad domum Domini. Erat adhuc infantulus… et magnificatus est apud Dominum.* [And when she had weaned him, she brought him with her to the house of the Lord. He was yet a little child… and he was made great before the Lord.]

My brethren, the moment at which a man becomes capable of a moral act varies in individuals, and can be ascertained only by the eye of God. Besides, the light of reason rises upon our soul as the light of the sun rises upon the world, that is, by degrees. The shade of difference between the first rays of that star and the last glimmers of the dawn that preceded is impossible to seize. However that may be, I can assure you that children are susceptible of religion sooner than is commonly thought, and that for the things of God there is a development of reason which precedes all the rest. I have as my guarantee the eternal Truth, in that oracle which the Holy Spirit once pronounced by the mouth of the Psalmist, and which Jesus Christ, that tender friend and attentive observer of childhood, took pleasure in repeating: Have you never read, He said, that the most perfect praise which God draws from creatures comes from the mouth of children who still feed on milk and who can scarcely speak? *Nonne legistis quia ex ore infantium et lactentium perfecisti laudem tuam, Domine?* [Have you never read: Out of the mouth of infants and sucklings You have perfected praise, O Lord?] Yes, my brethren, when nothing comes to destroy the work of God, man is in a manner religious before being rational. *Nam puer cœpi rogare te* [For as a child I began to pray to You], says Saint Augustine: for, still a child, I began to pray to You, O my God. See, indeed, how this little child, kneeling beside his mother, hands joined, eyes lowered, mind attentive, already knows how to pray! A moment later, the lightness of his age will draw him toward some trifles, but no matter; it is none the less true that in the instant of recollection his religion was felt and deep, and that his artless and original prayer reached the throne of God: *Nonne legistis quia ex ore infantium et lactentium perfecisti laudem tuam, Domine?*

Since children are so soon susceptible of piety, bring them to us, then, my brethren, early, that early the authority of the priest's teachings may confirm those of the mother. Bring us these children: the Catholic priest loves to babble with them, to give them to drink of that spiritual milk of which Saint Paul speaks; he is

proud to exercise this ministry of which the saints have held so great an idea, a ministry which Saint Francis de Sales had reserved to himself in his episcopal charge. And the first author of his life, who had the happiness, as he says, of attending that blessed catechism, tells us that “it was a marvel to hear how familiarly he set forth the rudiments of the faith, and how at every turn rich comparisons rose to his lips to make himself understood by that little people, with whom he knew how to make himself little in order to form in them the interior and perfect man according to Jesus Christ.”

Bring your children to our religious instructions. And even if they should not understand us as to the particular object of our teaching, at least they will understand that there exists on earth a teaching authority, and that will be much. They will see a man who speaks with authority on behalf of God, a people who listen with religious respect; and they will conclude that what they have learned from their mother, their mother had learned from a minister of heaven; and that will be enough to keep doubt from entering their budding minds and to make their faith reasonable, that is, resting on an authority proportioned to the requirement of their age.

And besides, your child will find in our temples another teaching which will always be within his reach: the teaching of the beauties and pomps of our worship. My brethren, parents, even Christian ones, do not know what an immense resource they can find, for the development of the mind and heart of their children, in the ceremonies of the Church. Here allow me, I beg you, a few familiar details. A few weeks ago, during an expiatory procession of the Blessed Sacrament, in the evening, in that magnificent church… I was observing how several young children followed with their eyes the whole march and unfolding of that solemnity. Those long files of virgins dressed in white garments, all those levites and priests clothed in sacred vestments, all those burning candles passing before them, those flowers thrown into the air, those vessels of perfume swung in cadence, that radiant sun borne with such respect beneath a precious canopy, those noble ladies dressed in black walking humbly in the train of the pontiff, and the whole multitude of the faithful bowing and prostrating at the passing of that procession — all this produced on those young minds, on those budding hearts, an indefinable effect. And I said to myself: it is thus, then, O my God, by this sweet and easy way, that religion, that faith, enters these souls, where she meets as yet no resistance, but where on the contrary she is welcomed by the candour and the liveliness of feeling.

Suppose that all worship had been destroyed, that the temples had been closed during the whole first age of these innocent creatures: what happy impressions they would have lost! and how hard it will be to make up for them later! Let us take two children, my brethren: the one a stranger to the holy pomps of the Church, the other a witness of them from his earliest years; the latter, whom a delicate and pious mother led with care to all the sacred ceremonies, the former, who has been able to tell Sunday from other days only because he is dressed again in his holiday clothes in the evening to be walked about the boulevards. Teach these two children, for example, the article of the catechism concerning the real presence of Jesus Christ. The one will hardly understand you; this truth awakens no feeling in him; at most you will be able to get it into his head. The other, on the contrary, thrills with joy, his heart leaps; this dogma he believed in beforehand, he had divined it. The faith in the real presence is for him in those altars of repose, in those hangings, in those wreaths of flowers, in those sweet canticles.

My brethren, an infinite charm attaches to everything that touched us in our childhood. Let us see to it, then, that religion mingles her sweetness with that of our first emotions, so that all our life we may be drawn back to her as to a friend of childhood. Why does nature seem so beautiful to us? Ah! because we find her always as we saw her, as we loved her when we were young. For my part, it seems to me that I should love religion less if I had known her later. Later she would have needed reasoning to reach my mind, whereas she reached my heart by feeling. We hear persons at times lamenting that they do not have faith. Alas! the misfortune of the times has willed that they should not have it from childhood, and now it has become difficult for them to acquire it; painful efforts would be needed. I pity them; but the more they are to be pitied, the more they

ought to strive to spare their children the same misfortune.

Bring your children to our temples, to our instructions, to our holy ceremonies; bring them early also to the sacred tribunal of penance, because early these children of a prevaricating father need to be reconciled with God. The confession of children — this is what we cannot recommend too much to parents, and what will be for many a ground of grave reproach on the last day.

Never perhaps has the physical development of children been so carefully tended as in our century. Science has discovered a happy secret of preventing, by the inoculation of a foreign virus, a deadly disease which disfigured the greater part of those whom it did not slay; and the law, I must believe, was wise in imposing this useful remedy on all. But tell me, will you not do for the beauty and innocence of the soul what you do for the preservation of the body? And will you not obey the religion that presents you with a sacrament to forestall, and to calm in the soul of your child, the eruption of the passions and the effervescence of corrupt nature? In our century, again, people have devised I know not what means of correcting the slightest bending or deviation of the limbs. But tell me, are there not also for the soul deviations to be corrected, inclinations to be straightened? Your child has a harsh and difficult character which you cannot master; you are in despair over it, and you do not think of using the supernatural remedy that religion offers you. One sees well, says Saint John Chrysostom, that these mothers are mothers only of bodies. The slightest wound of their children makes them turn pale; they know no compositions delicate enough, no preparations fine enough, to heal this slight bruise. But if anger, jealousy, lying and other more deadly vices begin to wound the soul of these poor children, they look on the evil coolly and put off the cure to a more advanced age. And when they neglect none of the common cares for them, they do not know how to lead them to the saving baths of grace.

But to give parents something precise on this matter, let us listen to Benedict XIV, who treated it, if not with his authority as head of the Church, at least with his learning as a great theologian. Every child who has sinned gravely, he says, can and must prepare himself by confession to receive the pardon of his fault, and consequently there is an obligation for the parents and for the priest to dispose him to it. The child can be absolved; for if he had enough reason and will to sin, he has enough to repent; and let no one object the lightness of his age, which may prevent the lasting result of his resolution, but does not prevent its present sincerity, which suffices for the sacrament. The child must be absolved as soon as possible; for the divine and ecclesiastical precept is for him as for others. Besides, what frightful drawbacks in leaving that soul under the power of evil! The child may die, and this precocious sinner would fall into hell. Pope Saint Gregory relates a frightful example of it, which would be incredible were it not backed by the authority of so great a pope, and if our ministry had not taught us a thousand times how much even the most vigilant parents deceive themselves about the innocence of their children. And if this child lives, shall we, at an age when everything is decisive, let vice take possession of his soul? Which of you, O tender parents, would not shudder if a serpent were to slip into the cradle of his son? And you would let him live with the devil in his heart! And if it is true, as theology teaches, that parents are obliged under pain of grave fault to have their children baptised within a fairly short time after birth, ought not the same reasons to lead to a nearly similar decision in the present matter?

And now let certain persons, even Christian ones, pity and regret as much as they please the time that priests spend in instructing and directing children; let them smile at the idea of those penitents of eight or nine years; we shall put to them this question: If, instead of dating your conversion from the age of fifteen, twenty or thirty, you could, like Saint Louis Gonzaga for example, date it from seven years, would there not have been, and would there not still be, in your life many anguishes and bitternesses the fewer? Would you be subject to so many falls? Would your very virtues be mingled with so many defects? And would the guide of your soul need to exhaust his ingenuity to reassure you and reconcile you with yourselves? Ah! for pity’s sake, do not envy others a happiness that you have missed, and of which perhaps you were worthy. Let the priest’s zeal cultivate these flowers that ask only a breath to blossom. Let him prepare in these hearts virtues that will be

stamped with a seal of delicacy, freshness and virginity which a late conversion will never be able to imitate. This is what was answered by that illustrious chancellor Gerson, who, in the most eminent post of the ancient University of France, after having been the light of two great councils, passed his life in instructing and confessing little children. For the rest, we ought to be grateful to the detractors of that great man; for they have won for us, from his pen, writings of justification, of which in our eyes he certainly had no need, but which will be forever the most precious ecclesiastical monument on this matter, and in which the latest generations will still come to learn by what holy devices one may draw little children to Jesus Christ.^[**Variants.** 1° “I stop here, my dearly beloved brethren; I have treated the part of my task that I had set myself for this day. The first domestic education is a thing so important, so decisive in the eyes of religion, that it will not disown, I am sure, at this moment, its unworthy minister for having devoted to this subject the whole discourse of so solemn a feast. Ah! my brethren, if these words were understood; if my feeble voice could make them resound from one end of our country to the other in the ears of all families; if childhood became among us the object of these attentive and delicate cares, how religion would dry her tears! how country and society would flourish again! What a race of Christians and of citizens would that not be — a generation thus nourished from the cradle on the strong doctrines and solid principles of the Catholic faith! Christian parents, you regret for your children the sad necessity, and you dread the baneful influences, of public education; I share your embarrassment and your alarms, and I shall tell you another day my whole thought on this matter. But what I can tell you today is that most parents have no right to complain of the masters, because they have made their task difficult, even impossible. God forbid that I should make myself the apologist of what I reprove with all the indignation of a Christian and a Frenchman; yet I do not wish to be unjust toward the institutions of my country, and I owe it here to confess that in the question of teaching the first culprits are the parents, and not the masters. Public education is so bad among us only because, before all else, domestic education is nil. And the teaching body would not hold a wholly unreasonable language if it said to families on giving them back their sons: you complain of our work; but let us examine what you had given us, and see what we return to you. My brethren, yes, the times are difficult, the institutions are defective. On the other hand, I understand your perplexity, your requirements of position and fortune, the necessity of opening a career to your son. Well, then! amid all these embarrassments I have but one counsel to give you. Your child is still young; his first education depends entirely on you; give the most scrupulous care to this domestic education. And if later you are forced to submit to one of the necessities of your century, you will have done your duty as fathers, and grace from on high will not fail you. There are privileged ones who come out safe and sound from the burning furnace.” 2° “But there is another duty of which I must speak to you in closing. You first, Christian mothers: the first mark of tenderness you can give to your child, even before you have brought him into the world, is to sanctify yourselves for his sake; because it is written that the generation of the just shall be blessed, that God is in the generation of the just, that the piety of the parents is attributed to the children. And Saint John Chrysostom establishes, by proofs and examples drawn from Scripture, that it is a general rule, suffering very few exceptions, that children resemble their parents, so that a father, a mother after God’s own heart are the first and most signal favour of Providence. Christian mothers, tell us: is it not true that among your children the son of blessing, he who makes your happiness and your glory, he who will be the consolation of your old age, is the one whom your piety begot? And you, afflicted mother, who weep over the wanderings of one of your sons — oh! far be it from me to embitter your grief! — yet go down into your conscience and see whether that child might not reproach you with having disinherited him of the virtue which is the portion of his brothers and sisters, because you were more negligent of your duties, less faithful toward God, less delicate while you carried him in your womb. My brethren, impiety becomes no one, doubtless; but there is no being to whom it is less suited than a woman, a mother. Even levity in matters of religion has something shocking in a mother; motherhood is essentially religious, and the family has lost all its charm when the mother has stripped herself of the ornament of piety.”O mothers, listen a moment longer to the words which Saint Gregory of Nyssa addressed to the mothers of his time: your child, brought back from the sacred font, was brought back to you

full of beauty, purity, innocence. The angels contemplate him with respect, and they adore God who dwells in his heart as in a temple. Now tell me, sinful mothers, if you have kept faith in the dogma of the presence of God in the hearts of the just, does your guilty conscience say nothing to you when, holding this child on your breast, you suddenly think of the immense disproportion there is between your soul and his? For after all, however closely you press him to your heart, that dear child, there is between him and you an infinite distance — shall I say it? the distance from heaven to hell; for the innocence and God who are in the heart of that child are indeed heaven; and the sin and the demon that are in yours are indeed hell. And do you not hear around you the angels, who take offence at seeing innocence in the hands of sin, and who say: *Sancta sanctis*, holy things to the holy! *Mundamini qui fertis vasa Domini*, purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the Lord! No, a flower so beautiful, so fresh, so delicate is not made to be carried by an unclean stem. This angel of innocence must be carried by innocent hands; his pure lips must drink a pure milk, and his heart, where heaven dwells, must find heaven again when he presses against his mother's breast! "And you, O fathers, heads of families, who hear me, too few in number here to suit my desires — perhaps the unhappy times in which we live have estranged you from religion. Ah! it is by your duties as fathers that you ought to be brought back to it. If a father had lost the spirit of prayer, he ought to find it again in the feeling of his son's needs. If the individual is not a Christian in you, at least let the father be one. Take care: your child has his eyes open on you; all his study is to copy you, to imitate you; nothing that you say, that you do, that you omit, is indifferent. For pity's sake, my very dear brother, let your child see you pray morning and evening; let him not ask his mother, when she leads him to church, why you never go with them."Or else, if you are still deaf to this language, at least — shall I say it in the name of Jesus? — let these little children, let them come to us: *Sinite parvulos venire ad me.* [Suffer the little children to come to me.] The time is past when a father, a mother could have some mistrust of our pastoral ministry. Thanks be to God, our priesthood is beginning to be better understood; our fellow citizens know how to see in us friends who are devoted to them,"[5]

My brethren, I have fulfilled the first part of my task; I have spoken only of the first education in the family. Soon your child will leave the paternal house, either to learn some useful trade, or to go and receive an education in some house of studies. What shall I not have to tell you, both on the importance of the choice of his masters, and on the relations you must always keep up with him? Finally will come the moment to decide his future. Then your fatherhood will have something sacred and august. The necessity of consulting God on the vocation of children; the outrage which an arbitrary decision does to the sovereign dominion of God, and the misfortunes it brings on individuals, on families and on societies; the mania for leaving one's condition; the ambitious and fatal concentration of all tastes upon two or three professions; the unjust exclusion of the ecclesiastical or religious vocation: these, my brethren, are a host of important questions which belong to our subject and which we hope to treat later. But we shall not regret having insisted today on the duties that concern the first education of childhood, and we shall be only too happy if they are put into practice.

Jesus Christ, who had in His heart so much love and interest for children, poured some emanations of that love into the souls of His priests. No heart resembles a mother's heart so much as a priest's heart. Let the little ones come to us, then: *Sinite parvulos venire ad me.* [Suffer the little children to come to me.] Must I tell you, Christians: if there were reason to despair of children, alas! the ground for despair would come from the side of the parents themselves. There are in these young hearts happy dispositions and tender attractions toward piety. And almost never have we been in contact with them without saying to ourselves: Must the parents themselves come and undo and destroy this work! Ah! for pity's sake, my brethren, if you will not give us your cooperation, at least do not be obstacles. Let these little children come to us, let them come: *Sinite parvulos venire ad me.*

But no, I have a better opinion of you, my brethren; do not merely let your children come to Jesus Christ, carry them there yourselves by the ways I have tried to point out to you. They will lead them, they will lead

you yourselves, to that abode of happiness where it will be so sweet for the mother to see herself surrounded again by her sons, who will be her crown and her joy. This is the grace that I wish you.[6]

Translator's notes

1. In the edition the variants (the 1839 wording) are printed as footnotes running over several pages beneath the main text, which is the 1842 version. The main text of the end of the sermon (from "My brethren, I have fulfilled the first part of my task…") is continuous across printed pp. 46–49 and ends with the formula "This is the grace that I wish you."

2. The variant footnote on pp. 46–48 (the 1839 wording) breaks off at "dévoués," (p. 48), as printed; the second variant's opening line on p. 46 ("But there is another duty…") follows directly on the first variant ("I shall tell you another day my whole thought on this matter… hell. There are privileged ones who come out safe and sound from the burning furnace").

3. Scripture and patristic quotations are given as they appear; precise references are not supplied by the editor and are not verified here. *Cor ferum dabitur ei* recalls Daniel 4:13 (*cor ferae detur ei*); the preacher gives no reference.

4. "M. T. C. F." (*Mes très chers frères*) is rendered "my dearly beloved brethren"; "M. F." as "my brethren".

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[1] This homily was copied, with variants and slight modifications, at the Rouaudières and at the château de la Lande-Chasle, in the month of September 1842, under the title: *Sermon on the First Education in the Family*. It is this latter text that we publish in preference; we shall nevertheless give the variants in the notes. — Editor's note.

[2] Editor's note: "Variante. — Ps. 77." The verse is the epigraph of the 1839 text; it recurs in the first variant of the exordium below.

[3] **Variants.** 1° "Pardon me, my brethren, if I seem to forget the natural subject that I ought to be treating on this solemn occasion. But I have learned from the great Bossuet that the Christian orator ought to profit by the most imposing and most solemn circumstances to announce the truths that are most important and most practical; and that great bishop also told me that the supreme law of the Christian pulpit is the present usefulness of the children of God. Now, my brethren, no question touches our social and religious future more keenly than the one on which I come to speak to you: the education of children. Alas! it must be admitted, our condition will always be a sad one, we who have put down our first roots in an ungrateful soil, amid the debris of an impious and perverse century, of a century whose insulting laughter had tarnished everything that is holy in heaven and on earth, of a century that had driven God out of society. My brethren, my brethren, the generation that preceded us was very guilty, and we are reaping the sad inheritance of the faults of our fathers. The great were guilty, and the little ones too. Great and little found it convenient to laugh at everything, to laugh at You, O my God, and at Your Christ, and at His Gospel, and at His Church. My brethren, let us cast a veil over the faults of the past. Let us try, as far as possible, to check the sad consequences that weigh so heavily upon the present. But above all let us be religiously careful to spare the rising generation the crimes and the sorrows of the generation that went before. And from this point of view, what is not the duty of the parents of our century? *Quanta mandavit Deus patribus nostris nota facere ea filiis suis… ne fiant sicut patres eorum, generatio prava et exasperans.* [How great things God commanded our fathers to make known to their children… that they may not be as their fathers, a perverse and provoking generation.] 2°"What I have to say to you, my brethren, will perhaps seem paradoxical to you; for perhaps you have never suspected its importance. If I spoke to you of the education of your sons and daughters when they have reached the age of adolescence; if I spoke to you of your duties toward them when they are about to enter the world and take a definitive place in the ranks of society — that is to say, if I treated those two questions which I must precisely omit today — perhaps you would listen to me more willingly. But if I speak to you of your duties toward your children from the moment they are born until that moment when, their reason beginning to grow firm, one thinks of leading them to the Eucharistic banquet; if I tell you that this first domestic education is so essential in the eyes of religion that nothing can take its place; if I tell you that faith, ordinarily speaking, will never penetrate or perfectly soak into a soul that has not been penetrated and soaked in it from the earliest years; if I tell you that my eyes fill with tears and my heart is wrung with grief at the thought of a child who has reached the age of ten without anyone having developed in his soul the immense religious resources that this first age offers; my brethren, if I tell you these things, will you accuse me of paradox? No, I hope not — after you have at least heard my reasons."

[4] **Variant.** That Genevan, so vaunted by the philanthropists, had a heart of iron toward his children; he had five of them, and all five, repudiated by a philosopher father, were gathered up by religion in her hospitals — unhappy victims destined to perish had Christian charity not been there to make up for philanthropy.

[5] The variant breaks off at this word in the printed text (end of the footnote on p. 48); its continuation is not given.

[6] Cf. Appendix I: A, 5, 49; AB, 29, 29 *bis*, 37, 39 *bis*, 39 *ter*, 39 *sexies*; p. 21, 8 *quinquies*, 8 *septies*; p. 22, n° 16, 17 *bis*; p. 25, n. 29 *bis*. — Avertissement, p. XXI.

n° 4. Second Homily on Education: The Duties of Parents with Regard to the Public Education of Their Children

Preached on the last Sunday after Pentecost (1839).

Quanta mandavit Deus patribus nota facere ea filiis suis… ne fiant sicut patres eorum, generatio prava et exasperans… et non est creditus cum Deo spiritus ejus. [How great things God commanded our fathers to make known to their children… that they may not be as their fathers, a perverse and provoking generation… and whose spirit was not faithful to God.] What great lessons does God not charge fathers to hand on to their children, that they may not resemble the generation that has passed away, a perverse or provoking generation, which had driven God out of society! (Ps. LXXVII, v. 7 ff.)

MY DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

In our last instruction we took your child at his entrance into life; we led him by a virginal path to the very table of the Lamb. That angel of the earth has fed on the Bread of angels. His piety, his modesty, and I know not what of the divine that shone in his face, have richly repaid you for all your pains. And that great action which you had shown him from afar has come to end and to crown that first period of your ministry which I called the family education of your child.

My brethren, you have laid a solid foundation; but will you be like that foolish man who, having raised deep foundations to ground level, rested peacefully upon his finished task? There was no need of so costly a labour in order to let brambles and thorns grow up on top of it. My dearly beloved brethren, the foundation awaits the building; there is not a moment to lose. This child, until now in your hands, is perhaps about to leave the paternal house; to family education there succeeds, for many children, public education. And during this second period, how many duties there are still for parents! Duties with regard to the choice of the house and of the masters to whom they are to entrust their children; duties with regard to the kind of relations which they should always maintain with them. That, my brethren, is what I have to speak to you about; and my words will not apply so exclusively to any one class of society that the others cannot draw some profit from them.

I. And, to say it at the outset, my brethren, the idea which will dominate this instruction is contained in the words of my text. They present in its true light the mission of parents, and the direction that must be given to the education of children in our century. The generation which preceded us was a perverse generation. Men no longer wished God to meddle in human affairs; they tore up the testament which He had made with our fathers; they contested the wonders He had wrought before their eyes. And in order to destroy that supernatural imprint which religion had engraved everywhere, they altered everything, disfigured everything. They made history lie, made nature lie, made conscience lie. No more authentic facts, no more certain principles, no more recognised morality. Doubt weighed upon everything. And when all other weapons failed them, they had that of ridicule; I know not what laughter that had escaped from hell passed over their lips; and the best-established fact, the very point most deeply engraved in the soul, could not hold out against an irony. What has come of it? So many poisons sown in society have produced a frightful mortality. With religion, peace and life left the earth. Everything has crumbled. Empires have perished. Families have been drowned in blood and in tears. And above all suicide has come to put an end to a burdensome life. And it has become evident that there is no peace for the wicked, and that a people without God is a lost people. Surely, my brethren, for a century God has given us great lessons, and it is for parents to hand them on to their children. *Quanta mandavit Deus patribus nostris nota facere ea filiis suis!* [How great things God commanded our fathers to make known to their children!] The dominant care of the education of this century must be to set up a wall of separation between the generation that has gone before and the one that is rising. And since it is impossible to prevent all contact between two generations so close together, it is the task of education to warn youth against the influence of that evil spirit, to enlighten it as to the falsity of those

sophisms, to bring out the crime of those ironies, and above all to set forth those facts, those results which experience has demonstrated, so that the rising generation may not resemble the generation that has passed away, a perverse generation, whose insulting laughter had tarnished everything that is holy, and which had broken off all relations with God. *Quanta mandavit Deus patribus nostris nota facere ea filiis suis!*

After this general idea, I come to the detail. And I shall begin willingly with this story from Saint John Chrysostom: "I knew in the city," says this great bishop, "a man, a lover of the arts, who had in his house a block of marble from which he wished to have a statue made; and he made inquiries on every side to discover who was the most skilful sculptor in Constantinople. This same man had a son and a daughter, and the one needed a master, the other a mistress. He consulted no one for that; chance and proximity decided his choice. And I said to myself: What! so many steps and so many efforts to have a lifeless statue fashioned! and so much negligence about the most precious of all statues, the soul of this child! As if the master capable of fashioning or developing the soul of a young man were not a thousand times more important and more difficult to find, and as if he were not a thousand times more estimable than all the painters and all the sculptors! *Omni certe pictore, omni statuario excellentiorem hunc duco qui juvenum animas fingere non ignoret.*" [I reckon him more excellent than any painter, any sculptor, who knows how to fashion the souls of the young.] In good faith, my dearly beloved brethren, did this happen only at Constantinople? And could Saint John Chrysostom have better characterised so many parents of our century, who will ask every kind of security before lending a modest sum, and who thoughtlessly entrust to the first comer the so precious deposit of their children?

And what have you done, my very dear brother? Perhaps in that house where you have thrown your son, the teaching is irreligious. There perhaps there still reigns that spirit of impiety and falsehood which is beginning to be out of fashion everywhere else. There perhaps young people are still sent to draw learning from those impure sources from which so many errors and crimes have overflowed upon society for fifty years. There perhaps the names of those great impostors whom the new generation is beginning to devote to contempt are still cited with praise and enthusiasm. There perhaps still, in the presence of the lofty majesty of our holy Books or of some one of our mysterious dogmas, there escapes from the master's mouth one of those cold and cynical laughs of which Satan is the father. There perhaps history is presented only in a false light, with all the prejudices of hatred and all the falsifications of bad faith. There perhaps they will teach one of those degrading philosophies which destroy faith in all good principles, which do not allow us to believe in the true, the beautiful and the good, which busy themselves only with discrediting truth, upholding ignoble hypotheses, and drawing despairing conclusions.

If it were so, my dearly beloved brethren, let me say it with Saint John Chrysostom: no, I do not yield to a movement of anger, but I say it without passion: the crime of the parents who send their children to such houses is more atrocious than infanticide: *Patres parricidis ipsis crudeliores* [fathers more cruel than parricides themselves]. It would be less cruel to take the sword and plunge it into the breast of that innocent victim. The father's crime would not make the child guilty; it would only separate his soul from his body; whereas you deliver up his body and his soul to hell from this moment. He will carry hell within him all his life, and he will fall afterwards into the eternal flames. Withdraw, thoughtless parents, withdraw your children promptly, that they may not resemble the generation that has gone before, a perverse and cynical generation, possessed by hatred of God. *Ne fiant sicut patres eorum, generatio prava et exasperans, et non est creditus cum Deo spiritus ejus.* [That they may not be as their fathers, a perverse and provoking generation, and whose spirit was not faithful to God.]

I shall say the same to you, parents who have placed your son or your daughter in one of those workshops, in one of those houses of work where impiety and hatred of religion and of priests make up the usual cost of the conversations. Once again, says Saint John Chrysostom, I do not speak with anger or passion; but your crime is greater than infanticide; and soon your children, when they reap the sad fruits of this education, will be

able with good right to curse you in those words which Saint Cyprian puts in their mouths: *Patres habuimus parricidas* [We had parricides for fathers].[1] Unhappy parents, you are preparing for the century that is to follow all the crimes and all the sorrows of the century that has gone before. *Ne fiant sicut patres eorum, generatio prava et exasperans.*

Would to God, my dearly beloved brethren, that up to now I had drawn only an imaginary picture! Yet, I confess, it has become rarer for irreligion to be positively taught; but what is infinitely common is a teaching wholly foreign to religion. Listen again to Saint John Chrysostom, and you will be astonished at the aptness of his words; one must believe there is a great resemblance between our social state and that of the time in which he lived. I quote him first in Latin: *Eorum quæ superflua revera sunt et indigna, veluti ea necessaria sint et principalia, curam gerere ingentem; animas autem ut vile aliquid ac superfluum negligere* [To take immense care of things that are really superfluous and unworthy, as though they were necessary and principal; but to neglect souls as something vile and superfluous]: to give excessive care to superfluous and unworthy sciences, and to make them the necessary and principal part of education; and, on the other hand, to neglect the culture of the soul as a vile and superfluous accessory. My brethren, is that the history of education in the fourth century, or in the nineteenth? What has not become a science today? It is little to learn languages and history; in our *gymnases* [secondary schools] there are chairs of commerce and agriculture; they teach riding and swimming; there are courses of politeness and good bearing; what do I know! and a thousand other sciences whose very name is still a mystery to many people. And if, in the midst of so many diverse things, some moments are asked for the study of religion and the cultivation of the heart, one is answered with great coolness that religion is doubtless held in esteem, but that the other branches of education absorb all the time, and that one cannot attend to everything. Is it not exactly what Saint John Chrysostom says?

But hear the results which this great man had already been able to observe. “Who does not know,” he says, “that a young man carries within himself a fatal inclination to vice, and that amid the physical and moral development of his faculties religion alone is able to keep his heart pure? Do not hope that the studies with which you burden his mind and memory will make a sufficient diversion from the ardent passions of his heart. No, once more; grace alone can work this miracle. Hear, therefore, the story of the young man whom the care of his first family education had kept chaste until fifteen. One day he had read some scandalous details in the history of the heroes of Homer or of Virgil. Yielding to his gloomy reveries, he bent his head over his book, he meditated evil and he committed it. Soon his corruption divined the corruption of some others. Those who had the greatest horror of vice could not hold out against example and mockery. The plague became universal, and what a plague!” Here Saint John Chrysostom enters into details which I cannot reproduce, but which are no less the history of our *lycées* [state secondary schools] than of those of Constantinople; and he concludes that to send one’s children into a house where religion counts for nothing is a thought that makes one shudder. “And yet,” he adds, “it is the crime of many parents. If we informed them that the plague was in the city where their children reside, they would find no words to thank us. And when a plague a thousand times more frightful has penetrated everywhere, our counsels are taxed with indiscretion, and it is at most if we are not placed among the enemies of public repose.”

“What then!” someone will say to me, “must we destroy all the colleges of Constantinople? *Scholasne omnes diruemus?* [Shall we pull down all the schools?] they ask.” I do not say precisely that, replies the great bishop; but I say that nothing can authorise you to let the living edifice of this soul which is entrusted to you be destroyed. “What then are we to do?” they will rejoin. “Shall we leave our children without science and without instruction?” Here, my brethren, I confess that my answer will be far more difficult than that of Saint John Chrysostom. I scarcely dare tell you his, Christian parents, for it is hardly suited to anything but to excite your regrets. The discourse from which I borrow nearly the whole of this instruction is directed against the disparagers of the monastic life; and the saint, after setting out the abuses of the education of the age,

resumes with a triumphant eloquence: “You ask me what the religious are good for; and I answer you that they are good for bringing up your children.” This was because then, my brethren, all the despotism of that power so absolute which governed the world had not thought of attempting the sacred and inalienable rights of paternal power; and we see that at that time the whole flower of youth, withdrawn by the parents from those public gymnasia changed into so many Sodoms, went into the religious solitudes to receive an education at once Christian and learned.

But once more, that answer cannot be given today, and you know the reasons, my brethren. I shall nevertheless arm myself with courage, and I shall tell you again with the holy bishop of Constantinople that if your condition and fortune made it your duty to give your children a great education, and you had no resources of Christian teaching near you — well! even if you had to go and seek it among a foreign people, to the farthest islands, into another hemisphere, there would be no hesitating: *Nam si ad externas gentes, si ad mare et extremas insulas, si ad eum qui citra nos est orbem, huc filii certe pertrahendi essent.* [For if it were to foreign nations, to the sea and the farthest islands, to the world on the other side of ours, our sons would certainly have to be drawn thither.] For what must not parents do, and what sacrifices must they not impose on themselves, to prevent the demoralisation of their children? *Nonne omnia facere et pati debueram, ne hujusmodi flagitia fierent?* [Ought I not to have done and suffered everything, that such shameful deeds should not happen?] But, after all, however great our distress, it is not yet so absolute. There are still among us Christian houses and religious masters; and all France knows that not only those families which have preserved the ancient principles, but even men who profess to have abjured those principles and who attack them in public, nevertheless choose by preference those houses where religion is held in honour when it is a matter of placing their sons or daughters.

What I know also is that there are others who very positively refuse to follow this example. And would you like to know what their reasoning is? Saint John Chrysostom again will tell you: so true is it that men have always been the same. “If I place my children,” they say, “in a Christian house, his education there will be weaker, and perhaps he will not be any more virtuous there.” And I, says the great bishop, am going to turn your sentence around and say: If you leave your child in a house foreign to religion, he will certainly be less virtuous, and perhaps his education will not be any stronger. And I think I reason better than you; because if there are chances to be run on both sides, it is surer to put the chances of success on the side of morality and religion. The reason is that in order to attain eloquence and learning, one needs morals and virtue; whereas one may be upright and virtuous without learning and without eloquence. Which of the two, then, would you choose: either to have a son who will have skimmed all the sciences and who, for lack of religious principles, will become a burden to society; or a child less eloquent and less lettered, who will conscientiously fill the charges that are entrusted to him, and who will make the happiness of his family?

But there are parents who will not listen to me, and who have so much in view the learning and literary glory of their children that, if these are to gain anything by the sacrifice of religion and morals, they are quite ready to resign themselves to it. And Saint John Chrysostom proves to these parents that they will not even attain the goal to which they aspire, and he recalls the well-known principle: *Vir bonus, dicendi peritus* [a good man, skilled in speaking]; and he pronounces in advance the sentence which one of our poet-philosophers — in this a prophet against himself and his own — was later to promulgate in that famous line: “A corrupt mind was never sublime.” He shows that the Christian philosopher may indeed admire in the learned men of the age certain sciences of detail, but that he pities their narrow views; and that it is a myopic science, not to say blind, that does not contemplate things from the heights of religion. Do you wish, then, at any price, for glory and eloquence for your child? Make him a Christian: *Fac eum christianum, inde fiet splendidior et gloria illustrior.* [Make him a Christian; from that he will become more splendid and more illustrious in glory.]

What do I say, glory and eloquence? “As if it were not known,” says Saint John Chrysostom again, “that paternal love is more positive than that in our century; that people seek so much to procure learning for their

children only because it is the road to fortune, and that they would make very little of eloquence if it were not a means to wealth. Well, then! I shall tell you again: you want your child to try the career of public offices; make him a Christian. For in that career there is no lack of aspirants who know Greek and have philosophy, *multi sunt illic et græci et philosophi.* [there are many there, Greeks and philosophers.] What is rarer are morals and probity; without which all the learning of your children, however great, brings them nothing: *Nullum erit lucrum rhetorices, quantumvis multæ.* [There will be no gain from rhetoric, however much.] Witness that young man, to whose literary successes the whole city had applauded, and who, after carrying his uselessness about through the world, died in obscurity and distress. And since this argument touches you more, you destine your child for the world: make him a Christian, he will be the fitter even for the world: *Fac eum christianum, etiam in mundo ipso erit aptior.*" [Make him a Christian; even in the world itself he will be fitter.]

II. It seems to me, my dearly beloved brethren, that I have well established the importance of having children given a religious education. I beg you to consider in my words only the authority and the experience of the great man from whom I have borrowed them, and in whose footsteps I am still to walk for the few developments which time will allow me to give to my second thought: the duties of parents with regard to the kind of relations they should always keep up with their children.

There are only too many parents who, after placing their children in a college or elsewhere, concern themselves with them no more than if they had ceased to belong to them. And yet there are things in education for which the action of a father and a mother cannot be replaced. There are, above all, for this age of adolescence, quite particular needs. It is the age when the passions develop, when there takes place in the physical and moral constitution of children a revolution which can be directed only by the prudence of the parents. There are, for adolescence, dangers which only a father's counsels can make known, mysterious questions to which no other mouth than a mother's can answer. Our priesthood itself is not competent and has not the language of those teachings; the grace for them has been given only to fatherhood. I am forced to be brief; but the masters will understand me if I say that a great part of the success of their ministry depends upon the cooperation of the parents, and upon the nature of the relations which they maintain, even from afar, with their children — relations which must change character and form according as the master's teaching needs to be supported and strengthened in this or that way.

The masters will understand me better still if I say that, most of the time, the parents' relations, instead of being a help, are an obstacle, and that parents seem to make it their business to destroy and contradict their teachings. The master has exhausted himself in rousing the young man to noble and generous sentiments; he wishes him to accustom himself to act on principles of virtue and religion. And the father arrives, who proposes only motives of interest, ambition and vanity. Here again it would be piquant to hear Saint John Chrysostom speak of that father who comes to exhort his son to study. *Audias patres, cum filios suos ad studia litterarum hortantur, hujusmodi verba jugiter insusurrare* [You may hear fathers, when they urge their sons to literary studies, constantly whisper words of this sort]: "Look at this one," he says to him; "he was born in an obscure class; but by the eloquence he acquired he has become a great advocate, he has passed to high offices, he has made a rich marriage, built fine houses, and is feared and honoured by everyone. Look at this other: he has had successes in letters, he has made his way into the sovereign council, and he administers the whole interior of the empire, *cunctaque intus administrat.*" [and administers all things within.] In short he proposes twenty of them one after another, all who have distinguished themselves in the world; but examples of honour, probity, religion, he does not even think of; and it is evident that, if the young child had already conceived some great and generous design, his father's talk would be like a violent rain that would choke that seed before it could produce any fruit.

And when the child comes back to the paternal house, they seem to make it their business to lose all the fruit of his education. They no longer know how to forbid youth anything; they take it everywhere. "But do," says

Saint John Chrysostom to you again, “do for the innocence of your sons what you do for the safety of your houses. When one of your servants lights a lamp, you often tell him not to carry it among straw and combustible matter. And your son, that young man whose imagination is so easily inflamed — you lead him to the theatre, you walk him among indecent statues, you leave licentious books in his hands, you admit to his company persons whose dress is immodest.” Ah! I hear you say that he must know the world; and I tell you that you ought to watch over his innocence as one watches over that of a virgin, because the Lord wishes you to keep him for Him pure and chaste, and to hand him back to Him a virgin, on the day when He shall have enlightened you as to the state for which He destines him and the course he is to embrace.

My brethren, I have finished the first two parts of my task; the third remains for me to fulfil: the duties of parents with regard to the vocation of their children; it will be, God willing, the subject of my next instruction.

I conclude by recommending to you, Christian parents, a duty more essential than all the others. You owe your children teaching, example; but you owe them, above all, prayer. There are things it would be more pernicious to attack in them than to tolerate; there are things that must be left to God. In spite of all your care, they will fall: pray God to make even those falls serve their good. If a father had lost the spirit of prayer, he ought to find it again in the sense of his son’s needs. Happy the children whose father, like that just man of Idumea of old, offers every evening a sacrifice to the Lord in a spirit of expiation, for fear that his children may have offended Him! Happy the poor young men who, while they perhaps forget all principles of morality and virtue, have, like Augustine, a Monica for mother, who prays unceasingly for the conversion of a son who is going astray! Yes, happy those poor young men! The prayer of a father, the prayer of a mother has so much power over the heart of God that it will bear its fruits both in this life and unto eternal life.[2]

Translator’s notes

1. Quotations attributed to Saint John Chrysostom are the preacher’s (largely a free paraphrase of Chrysostom’s *Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae*); the precise passages are not identified in the edition and are not verified here.

2. “The man of Idumea” is Job (Job 1:5, sacrificing for his children).

3. The line “A corrupt mind was never sublime” is quoted without attribution by the preacher (“one of our poet-philosophers”); the source is not verified.

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[1] As printed; the attribution to Saint Cyprian is the preacher’s and has not been verified.

[2] Cf. Appendix I: A, 6; AB, 30.

n° 5. Homily for the Day of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Holy Virgin

(1839)[1]

Beati immaculati in via! [Blessed are the undefiled in the way!] Blessed are those who are immaculate in their ways. (Ps. cxvii [Vulgate; Ps. 118].)

The feast which we celebrate on this day, my dearly beloved brethren, seems to be not only the feast of a privilege particular to Mary. It has, it seems to me, a more general object; it is the feast of Christian purity and holiness. The Immaculate Conception is, in the order of time, the first mystery of the new law and the first of the feasts of the ecclesiastical year. It seems that purity was laid down as the first stone of this great edifice. And so it had to be, since the Christian religion is, before all else, a religion of purity. That is the first character of that philosophy which has come to us from on high: *Ea quæ desursum est sapientia, primum quidem pudica.* [But the wisdom that is from above is first indeed chaste.]

The mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God is the most expressive manifestation and the most sensible form of one of the attributes of God Himself. The feast of the Immaculate Conception is the feast of the sovereign purity and holiness of the divine essence, which has been reflected with splendour, and has in a manner expressed itself in the purity and immaculate holiness of Mary. The feast of the Immaculate Conception is at the same time the feast of all delicate souls who have a horror of vice and who love purity of heart. Gather together, with Saint Paul, all that is chaste and virginal, all that is just and holy, all that is lovable, all that is venerable, all that is virtuous and honourable. All this belongs to the feast of this day; feast of all those who are immaculate in their ways. *Beati immaculati in via!*

I. There are persons who receive the feast of the Immaculate Conception coldly. May not this disposition of indifference have its principle in the little delicacy of those souls? And may they not have their reason for not loving the feast of purity, which perhaps is not theirs, because they do not have the happiness of being immaculate in their ways? *Beati immaculati in via.*

God is by essence infinitely pure, and in some places of Scripture His purity is presented as the reason of several others of His attributes; it is said, for example, that the divine intelligence embraces and reaches all things because of its great purity: *Attingens omnia propter suam munditiam.* [Reaching everywhere by reason of her cleanness.] Will it then be astonishing that this God, so pure in Himself, should seek besides, outside Himself and in His relations with men, that purity and virginity which bring us near to His nature, as the Holy Spirit has also said? *Incorruptio autem facit esse proximum Deo.* [And incorruption makes us near to God.] Will it be astonishing above all that this God, willing to become incarnate in the womb of a creature, should choose a virgin ever pure and immaculate?

During the four thousand years that the gross sacrifices lasted, did you not hear the Lord, now Himself, now by the mouth of His lawgiver Moses, now by that of the prophets, demand pure offerings and immaculate victims? *Agnos immaculatos, arietem immaculatum, vitulum immaculatum*, etc. [Lambs without blemish, a ram without blemish, a calf without blemish.] I have counted this recommendation as many as forty times in Scripture. These victims, you know, were only figures of the true Lamb immaculate and without spot, who is Jesus Christ: *Quasi agni immaculati Christi et incontaminati*, as Saint Peter says [as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled, Christ's].[2] Now if the figures of those lambs without spot had to be without spot themselves, how much more must the mother of the Lamb be immaculate? It is the reasoning of a Father: Since every tree is known by its fruit, he says, must we not believe that the mother of the Lamb was immaculate as the Lamb? *Quoniam omnis arbor ex fructu suo cognoscitur… Talis agnus qualis mater agni.* [For every tree is known by its fruit… As the lamb, so the mother of the lamb.] The tints of this dawn must have been pure like those of the sun which came forth from her womb.

I have learned elsewhere, from Scripture, that the way of God is immaculate: *Deus, immaculata via ejus* [As for God, His way is undefiled]; and in another place: *Deus meus, impolluta via ejus* [My God, His way is unpolluted]. And Saint Augustine, applying this thought to the incarnate God, says, in the most graceful language, that this spotless Lamb, Jesus Christ, walked only by a virginal path: *Ecce agnus ille graditur itinere virginali* [Behold, that Lamb goes forward by a virginal way] — an assertion exactly justified by the Gospel narrative. Come forth virginally from the womb of His Mother, Jesus Christ allowed Himself to be governed only by holy and virginal hands.

Joseph, His father, was a virgin. The angels, when need arose, came to serve him. John, His beloved, who rested on His breast and in whose favour He made so precious a testament from the height of the Cross, was a virgin. He wished even His tomb to be found virgin, so great was His love for virginity! And in heaven too we know that His attraction has not changed, and that His familiar retinue is composed wholly of virgins. David and Saint Augustine had therefore told us well: the way of God is immaculate… His path, virginal! *Deus, immaculata via ejus… Ecce agnus ille graditur itinere virginali.*

Yet, O my Saviour, let us retrace Your steps a little. I see well that You made Your course escorted by virginity; but tell me, at Your starting point, is there nothing in You at which You must blush? When You left the glory of the heavens, on what ground did You first set Your foot? That womb into which You descended — can it be true that it had once been defiled, and that Your cruellest enemy had dwelt in it for an instant? — Oh no, Lord, pardon me this injurious doubt. No, Your course was immaculate from its beginning; it was virginal at its starting point as at its end. The womb of Mary, Your first dwelling, was not of worse condition than Your sepulchre; the Holy Spirit was not less delicate toward You than Joseph of Arimathea. When His divine operation formed Your body, it was from a substance which had always been pure; the womb in which He placed it was immaculate, and the soul of Your mother was a virgin sanctuary that no one had defiled: *Posuit eum in sindone munda, et in monumento novo ubi nondum quisquam positus fuerat.* [He laid Him in a clean linen cloth, and in a new tomb, wherein no man had yet been laid.]

I do not undertake, my dearly beloved brethren, a sustained argument in favour of the Catholic belief in the Immaculate Conception; I have neither the time nor the will.

However, the analogies I have just drawn from Scripture lead me to cite to you a fine text of a Father, which proves that if there was a break in the chain of Catholic tradition with respect to the Immaculate Conception of Mary, this belief none the less belongs to the primitive ages of the Church. It is the great Saint Cyril, in that admirable discourse which the Council of Ephesus entered in its acts. Who ever heard it said, asks this great man, that an architect, building a house for his own use, yielded to his chief enemy the privilege of dwelling in it first? *Quis unquam audivit architectum, qui sibi domum ædificavit, ejus occupationem primo suo inimico cessisse?* Is not the argument conclusive for the Immaculate Conception of Mary? God, who, as the Church says, prepared, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, the body and soul of the glorious Virgin and Mother Mary to be the worthy dwelling of His Son, *dignum Filii tui habitaculum* [a worthy habitation for Thy Son] — could He have yielded to the devil the first use of it? No, once again; the Word could descend only into an immaculate temple and into a new sanctuary: *In monumento novo ubi nondum quisquam positus fuerat.* Mary was immaculate in her conception; and you will hear with pleasure, my brethren, that this belief has always been that of our Church of Chartres. Our two great bishops, Saint Fulbert and Saint Ivo, are the first two and perhaps the only two doctors of the Church of the West who, before the establishment of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, spoke openly of this privilege of Mary. Saint Ivo in particular says in so many words that Mary was no less exempt from original fault than from all actual fault, *tam originalis quam actualis culpæ.* Yes, holy Virgin, I love to proclaim it with the whole Church: you were immaculate in your conception. The Lord possessed you from the beginning of His ways. I hear the Spouse who calls you His dove, His all-fair, His immaculate: *Columba mea, formosa mea, immaculata… tota pulchra es, et macula non est in te.* [My dove, my beautiful one, my undefiled… Thou art all fair, and there is no spot in thee.] Mary was immaculate in her conception. Which of us, my dearly beloved brethren, comprehends all the beauty of this mystery? Bossuet, taking his eagle's flight, celebrated in his sublime elevations the eternal and chaste generation of the Word. Disengaging fecundity from the gross ideas of our corruption, he contemplated it in its primitive and original purity, and he cried out with the Holy Spirit: "How beautiful is virginal fecundity! How beautiful is the mystery of a chaste generation!" *O quam pulchra est casta generatio cum claritate!* [O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory!] It is for us only, my brethren, to repeat the same words, and to say: How beautiful is the mystery of a chaste generation and an immaculate conception! *O quam pulchra est casta generatio cum claritate!*

II. Mary was immaculate in her conception — that is the common belief. Mary was immaculate in her life — that is the Catholic faith; he would be a heretic who denied it. That river, pure at its source, did not defile itself in its course. The flowers of our fields, beautiful and fresh in the morning, abandon to the fires of noon their grace with their perfume, and in the evening they fall without scent and without beauty. Mary, mystical lily, grew lovelier to the end with a whiteness more sweet and more resplendent; in the middle of her course

she had all the freshness of the morning dawn. When the Word solicits her to open her womb to Him, I hear this divine Spouse tell her that she is ever immaculate; that she is at her noon, and that her head is still wet with dew; that her locks distil the pearls of night, the drops of dawn. And when she is about to leave the earth, her Spouse, who invites her to go up to heaven to seek her crown, repeats to her that she is still all fair, all pure, all immaculate: *Veni, columba mea, formosa mea, immaculata mea, veni, coronaberis.* [Come, my dove, my beautiful one, my immaculate one, come, thou shalt be crowned.] Thus Mary's life was immaculate like her conception; and her last breath was no less pure than her first. She must therefore be placed at the head of those whom David calls blessed: *Beati immaculati in via!* Blessed are those who are immaculate in their ways!

But after Mary will there come to range themselves others who can call themselves immaculate? Yes, my brethren; listen to Saint Paul: Jesus Christ, he says, loved the Church, and gave Himself up for her in order to sanctify her by the water of baptism and the word of life, that she might have neither spot nor wrinkle, but be holy and immaculate, *sed ut sit sancta et immaculata.* Now, you know, the Church is all Christians. We can therefore all be immaculate after our fashion. I know that we cannot be so as Mary was; I know that by Adam's fault we lost that immaculate holiness of our primitive condition; I know that we cannot tear out a first very sad page of our history; but what I know also is that by baptism our soul has become holy and immaculate again: *Mundans eam lavacro aquæ… ut sit sancta et immaculata.* [Cleansing it by the laver of water… that it may be holy and without blemish.] What Saint Paul teaches me is that, having taken with the blood of the immaculate Lamb a second birth, our conception in the faith has been immaculate in the same sense as that of Mary: *Renati non ex semine corruptibili, sed incorruptibili.* [Born again not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible.]

But alas! my dearly beloved brethren, that immaculate robe of our baptism — have we known how to keep it as Mary kept that of her original holiness? Well, nothing is desperate, and we can still become immaculate. There is in the Church a fountain of living water which does not merely hide the stains of our souls, but wipes them out, destroys them, annihilates them, and gives back in their place the primal beauty, the immaculate purity. For listen to Saint Paul: if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of the victim sprinkled on defiled persons sanctified and purified their bodies, how much more shall the immaculate blood of Jesus purify our conscience from dead works, and make us holy, immaculate and irreproachable: *sanctos et immaculatos et irreprehensibiles!* Oh my dearly beloved brethren, the world prides itself on tolerance; with its tolerance it knows how to pardon nothing, and it records in cold blood, with the resolve never to forget them, all the faults that escape us. Religion is not so cruel, she who tells you that her sacrament does not cover, does not merely hide faults, but annihilates them. However great a sinner you have been, though you had despaired of the divine mercy, confess your fault, and your soul, redder than scarlet, shall become white as snow, and you shall be immaculate in the eyes of God: *Tunc immaculatus ero, et emundabor a delicto maximo.* [Then shall I be undefiled, and I shall be cleansed from the greatest sin.]

So, my dearly beloved brethren, we can be immaculate in our condition: *Elegit nos in ipso ut essemus sancti et immaculati.* [He chose us in Him, that we should be holy and unspotted.] Let each walk in his vocation, and he will be immaculate in the eyes of God: *Posuit immaculatam viam meam.* [He has made my way undefiled.] Even nuptial holiness the Holy Spirit calls immaculate: *Thorus immaculatus.* [The marriage bed undefiled.] The practice of the virtues, the fulfilment of the law of the Lord, will make you immaculate: *Lex Domini immaculata, convertens animas.* [The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls.] At all times holiness befits us, but on this day more especially, in order to imitate Mary, and in this season consecrated to penance and the practice of the virtues. During Advent, the Church speaks to us of that second coming of Jesus Christ, so terrible. Well, hear the apostle Saint Peter: *Exspectantes et properantes in adventum diei Domini, satagite immaculati et inviolati ei inveniri.* [Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of the Lord, be diligent that you may be found by Him unspotted and inviolate.] This season of Advent is also

consecrated to preparing us for the anniversary of the first coming, the temporal birth of Jesus Christ. Well, hear the same words again: *Exspectantes et properantes.…* Yes, make your efforts to be pure and immaculate when He gives Himself to you.

O God, the Immaculate Conception of Mary was a work of Your great power: *Fecit mihi magna qui potens est.* [He that is mighty hath done great things to me.] Exercise the same power toward me. May my heart, O my God, become immaculate: *Fiat cor meum immaculatum.* [Let my heart be undefiled.] Yes, I feel it, and my corrupt nature makes me feel it deeply, nothing less is needed than that creative word which produced the world: *Fiat cor meum immaculatum.* It is a creation I await from You: *Cor mundum crea in me.* [Create a clean heart in me.] It is possible to You, O my God; and however great our inclination to evil, the apostle Saint Jude tells me that You wish to preserve us without sin and to make us appear immaculate in the presence of Your glory at the day of the coming of Jesus Christ. *Potens est vos conservare sine peccato et constituere ante conspectum gloriæ suæ immaculatos in adventu Domini nostri Jesu Christi.*[3] [Who is able to preserve you without sin, and to present you spotless before the presence of His glory at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.]

Translator's notes

1. Patristic attributions (Cyril of Alexandria at Ephesus, Fulbert and Ivo of Chartres, Augustine) are the preacher's and are not verified here.

2. The title dates the homily 1839; the editor's footnote records that it was preached again, as a homily, at Notre-Dame of Poitiers on 8 December 1850.

3. "Saint Ivo" = *saint Yves* (Ivo of Chartres, bishop of Chartres).

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[1] This homily was preached as a homily at Notre-Dame of Poitiers on 8 December 1850. — Editor's note.

[2] The edition prints "Quasi agni immaculati christiani et incontaminati"; "christiani" is a misprint for *Christi* (1 Peter 1:19: "as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled, Christ"), corrected here.

[3] Cf. Appendix I: A, 7, 80.

n° 6. Third Homily on Education: The Duties of Parents with Regard to the Vocation of Their Children

Preached on the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas (1839).

Nolite conformari huic sæculo, sed reformamini in novitate sensus vestri, ut probetis quæ sit voluntas Dei bona, et beneplacens, et perfecta. [Be not conformed to this world, but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.] Do not bend yourselves to the prejudices of this age, but reform and renew your way of seeing, so as to discover the good pleasure of God and His good and perfect will. (Rom. XII, 2.)

We have finished establishing the duties of parents with regard to the private and the public education of their children. To a childhood nourished on a mother's milk and on the first insinuations of virtue, we have seen succeed a youth instructed in the school of religion, imbued with the sacred principles which are the guarantee of faith and morals. It remains for us to consider the duties of parents in a third period. This young man, this young woman, have finished their education and have returned to the paternal house. The moment has come when they are going to take a step on which their whole life depends. Oh! it is here above all, my dearly beloved brethren, that fatherhood has something sacred and august, and that it becomes as it were a priesthood, as Saint Augustine has said: *Disciplinam ecclesiasticam… et quodammodo episcopale implebit officium pater.* [The father will fulfil ecclesiastical discipline… and in a certain way an episcopal office.] Woe to parents, forgetful of God, who do not consult heaven for these great determinations! Woe to those

who share the common errors and faults with regard to the establishment of their children, and who do not hear this precept the apostle gives them: Do not bend yourselves to the prejudices of this age, but reform and renew your way of seeing, to discover the good pleasure of God and His good and perfect will. *Nolite conformari huic sæculo, sed reformamini in novitate sensus vestri, ut probetis quæ sit voluntas Dei bona, et beneplacens, et perfecta.*

You understand, my dearly beloved brethren, that I wish to speak to you of the duties of parents with regard to the vocation of their children. I enter at once upon the matter; your attention will easily grasp the order and natural sequence of my ideas.

All Christians have one and the same general vocation, which is heaven. For all, the affair of salvation begins with the grace of baptism and is completed by that of a good death. But between these two graces common to all the predestined, there open an infinity of different ways by which the divine wisdom, so varied in its forms, works the salvation of men in a thousand mysterious manners. Hence that great diversity of conditions and states which divide society. Now here are the principles I lay down at the outset: that if all the ways lead to salvation, each does not lead everyone equally, but only those for whom it was marked out.

From all eternity God has destined us for a special state; and it is this divine destination that we here call vocation. To deny the divine vocation is to deny Providence. For either God does not meddle at all in the affairs of this world, or we must acknowledge that He assigns us at least that general part which we are to fill on earth. In assigning us a vocation, God destined for us from all eternity particular graces conformed to that vocation; He created us with a kind of mind, with physical and moral faculties, coordinated to that end. To miss one’s vocation is to disobey God, and to disconcert the order of Providence, a fault that entails the most frightful results. Therefore parents who constitute themselves despotically arbiters and masters of the vocation of their children are gravely guilty toward God, whose sovereign dominion they offend (this is evident, and I shall not have time to come back to it); guilty toward their children, to whose happiness and salvation they put the greatest of all obstacles; guilty toward society, for which they prepare turbulent citizens or at least useless ones. Let us give some development to these last two assertions.

I. I say that parents who do violence to the vocation of their children are guilty toward them, because they rob them of almost all chances of salvation, of happiness and of success. Our whole predestination turns almost wholly on the choice of the state we shall embrace; on this depends almost solely the affair of our salvation and our eternity. And here is the reason theology gives: predestination is nothing else, on God’s part, than a certain chain of graces prepared for us; now, as most of these graces are graces determined for our state, once the order of Providence has been disconcerted one enters as it were into a moral impossibility of being saved, for God does not change the immutable decree of His counsels. It is then no longer that attentive providence, interested in some sort in sustaining us in a career in which it itself engaged us; it is no longer that good will which finds its pleasure in stretching out a hand to us, *voluntas Dei bona et beneplacens*; it is nothing more than a certain general providence, nothing more than certain common graces, capable indeed of saving us, but with which one is rarely saved. It is no longer grace that accommodates itself to man, that follows him step by step, that leads him, that directs him; it is man who must accommodate himself to grace; it is only presented to him, he must apply it to himself, and rarely does the weakness of man save itself in this way.

Would you like to know, my dearly beloved brethren, the answer to a riddle which you have sometimes sought to explain? How is it that certain persons of a fragile age and sex preserve all their innocence and all their piety amid impious and corrupting elements, whereas others, amid a concurrence of more fortunate circumstances, lose faith and morals? Ah! it is because the former are in the condition God wills for them, and God works miracles to save them; the others are in a way they have marked out for themselves, and in spite of all the apparent advantages of their position, they do not know how to profit by them. It is true, then, O my God, what Tertullian already said, that the whole reason of damnation is often found in unfaithfulness

to vocation. That man who has appalled the earth by his crimes, perhaps, had he listened to the voice of God, would have been a saint; and he who seems a demon would have been an angel. There are, my brethren, good beings, profoundly virtuous, who nevertheless often fall into gross faults; their life is a succession of falls and relapses; it seems that a demon has sworn their ruin. Tertullian will always answer: *Tota ratio damnationis, perversa administratio conditionis.* [The whole reason of damnation is the perverse management of one's condition.]

Therefore, parents who have imposed a vocation on your child, you have lost him for eternity, and one day you will know that your crime is the whole reason of his damnation: *Tota ratio damnationis.* Or rather, I hope, God, who in His mercy has graces of resource, as theology puts it, even for those who have voluntarily and spontaneously left their vocation, will be still more merciful toward those unhappy victims whose weakness and condescension are in some sort excusable, since in obeying their parents they yielded, in good faith perhaps, to the natural instrument of the divine will. But it remains that you will have gravely compromised their salvation, and God will demand an account of it from you.

Outside vocation there is neither success nor happiness. No success: God has given to no one a universal genius; each of us has received his gift conformed to the state for which he is destined. Providence, which is consistent in all its dispositions, has put our natural faculties in harmony with our end. Such a man, unskilled in everything else, succeeds marvellously in his own line. It is said of him that he has the genius of his state; that no one equals him in his speciality. I conclude that he is a man who is in his vocation.

But that young man who had announced great dispositions in his childhood, that young man whose first successes had been the admiration of all his masters — there was no science in which he did not succeed. Every year, on a solemn occasion, amid public applause, the palms bowed down in his hands, and crowns rained upon his head. It was a concert of praise; mothers envied his mother; everyone wished to cast his horoscope, and all augured a brilliant future for him. Yet, no one knows why or how, that star, so fair at its morning, has suddenly paled; nothing is heard of him today, and he has fallen back into that rather insignificant class of beings who are without colour and without talent. How did he belie all hopes to that extent? How did he become so different from himself? Would you like to know? He went out of his vocation. His parents, guided by views of interest, made him embrace a career to which he was not called. He is for the rest of his life a failed man; his talent is buried. A flower blessed with the dew from on high, it was brilliant with grace and freshness; but from the day it was transplanted out of the providential soil, it closed up.

Outside the divine vocation there is no perfection of any kind, because man can do nothing great, nothing noble, nothing lofty without a heavenly inspiration; the impulse must be given him from above, his action must be sustained by the divine action, and God does not grant these helps to those who apply their talent and their faculties to anything other than that for which He destined them. Therefore, parents who have imposed the vocation on your child, you have killed in him the germ of every high talent, every eminent virtue; you have robbed him of all chances of success. Henceforth he will drag along close to the ground, and he is incapable of excelling in anything, save in evil, which happens only too often; for the devil is on the watch to seize those beings who have deviated from the divine will; these are the instruments he ordinarily chooses, and when, instead of heavenly inspiration, it is infernal inspiration that makes them act, they go far in evil.

Outside vocation there is no happiness. That illustrious Roman senator who suffered so much for justice and the faith, Boethius, in that immortal treatise which he wrote from the depths of his prison on the consolations of philosophy, made this great remark: it is, he says, a general order which binds and embraces all things, that whoever separates himself from the primitive order falls at once into another order, so that rashness may have no power in the kingdom of Providence: *Ne quid in regno providentiæ liceat temeritati.* You have gone out of the order of God's merciful will; you will not escape order, and you are going to fall back into that of His vindictive justice. Do not hope that the eternal decrees will bend to your caprice, and that God, by favours and successes, will authorise your rashness. No, that divine will which you have offended will not

leave you any respite. No peace, my dearly beloved brethren, for him who has resisted God: *Quis restitit ei, et pacem habuit?* [Who hath resisted Him, and hath had peace?] You have ordained it, O my God, cries Saint Augustine, and so it is, that every disordered spirit, which departs from the order of Your providence, should become its own punishment. God has traced for man, as for all physical agents, the sphere in which he is to act and move; man's vocation is like his sphere of activity: *centrum omnis motus vocatio* [vocation is the centre of all movement], says Saint Augustine. And as the magnetised needle is agitated until it has found its pole again, and as the moving body oscillates until it is restored to its central position, so man, gone out of his vocation, is in a kind of eccentricity where he can find no rest. People wonder to see certain persons undecided all their life; passing from one state to another, they sound all the professions and attach themselves to none; they drag their sorrow through all the conditions of life; they go about begging everywhere a repose they cannot find. The reason for this perpetual indecision is a vocation missed, around which they whirl without being able to enter it. Certain beings, once displaced, are fit for nothing more. There was in the order of Providence only one place that could suit them; they have gone out of it, they will never settle anywhere else, and they will be unhappy all their lives. Yes, my dearly beloved brethren, misfortune clings to those who have missed their vocation. A missed vocation — there is the reason of those frightful catastrophes which sometimes fall so swiftly, and with an evident affectation of Providence, on certain families. One is surprised every day to see enlightened men, skilful in the handling of affairs, full of good qualities, not only not advancing their fortune, but rolling from abyss to abyss, from misfortune to misfortune. If at times Providence, as though by distraction, leaves them some little success, it is at once paid for by dreadful reverses. People look for the cause of so much misfortune; they do not guess it; they content themselves with pitying these unhappy families. Listen, my dearly beloved brethren, to a passage of Scripture by which Saint Augustine will explain this mystery to you. One day the word of the Lord came to Jonas and said to him: Go to the great city of Nineveh, and announce the destruction of that guilty city. Jonas was sad; the mission seemed dangerous to him; he did not feel the courage to answer the call of God. The sea was calm, the sky pure, the navigation favourable. Instead of embarking for Nineveh, he embarks for Tarshish, imagining he would escape the hand of God. But suddenly a horrible tempest put the ship in danger. The inspired pilot judges that the cause of so sudden a change cannot be natural, and that his vessel carries some secret enemy of heaven. To be enlightened, they cast lots, and it falls on Jonas. They question him, and learn from him the fault he has committed. Take me, he said, and cast me into the sea, for this great tempest has come upon you only on my account, and do not hope that the storm will cease so long as I am in the ship. *Tollite me, et mittite in mare; scio enim quoniam propter me tempestas hæc grandis venit super vos.* [Take me up, and cast me into the sea; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.] My brethren, there is the secret of so many sufferings and bitternesses with which certain families are made to drink. That alliance had been applauded by everyone; on both sides there was fortune, talents, virtues, understanding of business; it was the happiest of unions; everyone was braiding in threads of gold the web of their destiny. The sky was always to be pure, that bark was to glide over the waves as the bird crosses space. When suddenly the horizon darkened; a tempest arose; misfortune seems to have taken possession in that family; sorrow gnaws those whom the tomb has not swallowed. Hear the word: there is a member of the family who has disobeyed the voice of God. The Lord wanted him on the road to Nineveh, and he embarked for Tarshish. It is on his account that the tempest has risen; do not hope that the storm will cease so long as he is in the ship. *Tollite me, et mittite in mare; scio enim quoniam propter me tempestas hæc grandis venit super vos.*

Therefore, parents who have imposed a vocation on your children, yours is the fault if misfortune has taken possession in your family. You make vocations, but you pay dearly for them. To excuse yourselves, you will tell me that life is strewn with troubles for everyone; and I am quite willing to grant you that even had your child followed his vocation, he would still have had many reverses; but at least he would have had the consolation of knowing that these reverses came to him from the hand of God; he would have had grace to

suffer; he could have kissed that hand which sometimes takes pleasure in choosing victims among the just; whereas he can only curse the hand of those who tore him from the path of his vocation.

II. Parents who dispose despotically of the vocation of their children are guilty toward society. Would you like to know, my brethren, why there is social malaise, why there are such frequent riots and revolutions? I shall give you the reason with a great man and a great politician, Saint Augustine. There can be no doubt that Providence occupies itself very specially with the prosperity of empires and monarchies, and that it has fixed for each the rank he is to hold in society, with the grace of his position. God has thus distributed in society graces altogether different: grace of majesty, grace of priesthood, grace of magistracy, grace of the public man, grace of the private person, grace of retirement, grace of the father of a family, grace of marriage, grace of celibacy, grace of widowhood. The well-being and happy administration of society consist in each one's occupying the post for which he has received grace and vocation from on high.

My brethren, wrote Saint Paul to the Romans, we make up one body in Jesus Christ; now, as in a body all the members are destined to their particular use, so in the Church of Jesus Christ all the faithful have their rank and their employment. But if each one leaves the place God has marked out for him in order to intrude into another ministry, what will become of the commonwealth? What will the magistrate do with the graces of the priesthood, the priest with the graces of magistracy, the public man with the graces of retirement, the politician with the graces of a man of letters or writer, the artist with the graces of an artisan, the husband with the graces of celibacy? And will not society resemble a monstrous body in which the ear had taken the place of the eye, and the feet the place of the head?

Ah! my brethren, that is the evil of our century. It is because the study of vocation is no longer known today that the world is the victim of so many upheavals, and that turbulent generations bring us disorder upon disorder. When no one is in his place, how could peace and harmony reign in society? Vocation now depends only on each one's caprices; a position has been chosen wholly out of fancy; one is out of one's sphere, one succeeds in nothing. Young men advance pell-mell toward an unknown future, with a vague thought, undecided tastes, doubtful talents. People covet posts they are incapable of filling; they hope to gain in disorder. Hence that opposition to all powers. O men who busy yourselves with what is called high politics, listen to Saint Augustine: his views are as good as another's. Give me, he says, a perfect Christian, who of himself ranges himself in the state which Providence has marked out for him: what an admirable administration of his office and of his family! what evenness and what sweetness in his life! Now a man, says the great bishop, a man is the beginning of a State. If therefore you give me a body of men like that, will there be anything better ordered than the State? Laws will flourish there; ambition and disturbance will be banished from it.

My dearly beloved brethren, let parents throughout France become Christians again, let them consult God on the future of their children, let them favour their vocation, and everything will return to order, and an admirable harmony will reign in society. I have sufficiently established the importance of studying the vocation of children. Let us speak of the means of doing so. Vocation depending on the free will of God, the first duty of parents is to consult Him and to say with the holy king Josias [sic]: *Cum ignoremus quid agere debeamus, hoc solum habemus residui ut oculos nostros ad te dirigamus.* [As we know not what to do, we have this only left, to direct our eyes to Thee.][1] But, says Saint Augustine, one must not walk before God, one must follow Him; one must not give Him counsel, but receive it from Him. How many parents take their own ideas for inspirations from on high, and their imagination for the will of God! They consult God by first making Him His answer; they do not receive counsel from God; it is they who counsel Him. The second duty of parents is to study the inclinations and tastes of their children, God declaring His will almost always by the attraction that inclines the heart toward this or that state. The wise man recommends that we not despise the first fancies of childhood: *Et primos cogitatus illius ne contemnas.* [And despise not his first thoughts.] Turenne fought battles at ten, Raphael tried his hand at pictures, Saint Charles celebrated in a little oratory;

there are a thousand similar examples. It is for parents to gather up carefully these first indications, to follow and favour their development, not to set too great obstacles to these nascent vocations, under pretext of testing them; often the test kills a very real vocation.

Finally parents must take care not to let themselves, or their children, be carried along by the current of habit and the whim of the age. There are, in each century, certain prejudices, certain infatuations, certain antipathies which decide all choices of a state of life. For a long time, in many families, it was a received principle that the eldest was for the world and for business, the second for the Church, the third for arms; the one who was out of favour for the cloister, the other for marriage. Providence had to make do with these principles, and perhaps sometimes it made do with them; but there were also many miscalculations.

Other times, other manners. The reefs to be pointed out today would be first the mania that parents have for making their children rise out of their condition. The father would be ashamed for his son to see him walk in the same path as his forefathers; often parents hasten to make, at the expense of probity in their business, a fortune large enough to raise their children higher. And what drawbacks! How much happier were those times when virtue, probity and public confidence were hereditary in families, like the profession and trade of the parents!

The second reef to be pointed out is the concentration of all choices upon two or three professions. A remark has been made: for a numerous class of society preference seems to attach itself almost exclusively to two states, medicine and the bar. Add to this the infatuation for the arts, and you will have more than half the youth. Vocation counts for nothing, taste for not much, in this concentration of choice; it is a mania, an unreflecting impulse. No doubt these vocations are honourable, but it is not possible that Providence has multiplied them to that point.

Finally, one last reef to point out to parents, and I end with it, is the unjust exclusion of the ecclesiastical and religious profession. The greater number of parents have renounced consecrating any of their children to God. The great and the rich of the world especially, who invaded the Church so long as she was opulent, have abandoned her since she is poor, fully resolved to re-enter her on the day when the sanctuary should outbid the age. My brethren, what an injury that is to God and to the Church! Not that the Church has need of the great and the powerful: she established herself without them, and in all ages they have made her pay very dear for the consideration which they thought to lend her in the eyes of men. It is therefore not so much the wrong done to the Church that I deplore as that done to these children. Here I let Saint John Chrysostom speak:

“This young man had been, in his childhood, full of piety and modesty; he seemed religious by character; his first youth had been free of passions, and the whole city admired his virtue. Today he is no longer at all the same; scandalous rumours have been running for some time about him; he has been seen in public squares in suspect company; what do I say? he has dropped the mask, he is impious and corrupt. Unhappy parents, you deplore his loss; but tell me, consult your memories. Is it not true that in the first years of this child his piety frightened you because you feared it would carry him toward the ecclesiastical state? Is it not true that you threw out here and there a few words to make him foresee all the obstacles he would find to his vocation? Is it not true that after he had shown you a pronounced inclination for the priesthood, you affected to take him more often into the world, and to give him more liberty, under pretext of testing his vocation? Ah! your tactics succeeded perfectly; they succeeded more than you would have wished. The young man took a liking to the world, forgot his vocation there; you thought that in renouncing being a priest he would at least remain a Christian; you were mistaken. See what he is today. Unhappy parents, what have you done? He would have honoured the sanctuary, and he makes even the world blush; he would have saved his brothers, and he will not save himself; it might be he today who would speak from the height of this pulpit, and, held by his passions and by human respect far from our temples, my feeble voice will not reach him to open his eyes to his state. I could say as much of that unfortunate girl who groans in the bonds of a marriage that was imposed

on her. Cruel parents, it is your work: she would have edified the cloister, she will perhaps defile the marriage bed; she would have lived happy in retirement, she will die of grief in the world."

Ah! my dearly beloved brethren, why can I not follow here step by step Saint John Chrysostom, refuting one after another all the prejudices of an unbelieving father who will not let his son or daughter embrace a holy vocation? You would be astonished again, my brethren, at the aptness of his discourses. It seems that he speaks for our century. "You do not wish, you say, your son to embrace the priesthood, because it is a vile and despised state? And I tell you: if your son remains in the world, he will find there some flatterers, doubtless; but how many who will curse his luxury and wealth, how many who will envy his fortune! Let him be a priest, on the contrary, and all will admire him: as he could have been rich in the world, it will not be said of him what the world, unjust doubtless and lying, says of others, *iniqua sane et mendacia verba* [unjust indeed and lying words], that he took this course of apparent humility from vanity and ambition. And when he crosses the city, scattering among the poor his rich fortune, all will admire him, and will point him out to each other as an angel come down from heaven.

"You do not wish your son to embrace the priesthood, because he is of high extraction; and I tell you: but if the priesthood has conferred on plebeians a sort of nobility even in the eyes of the world, if the sons of workmen and villagers have been rendered by their character respectable enough that those in the highest dignities do not disdain to go to their humble dwelling to seek counsels and useful conversations, how much more will your son, rich, noble and powerful in the world, be ennobled still by his holy state? For must we believe that the priesthood, which ennobles what is common, will dishonour what is already illustrious?"

And Saint John Chrysostom continues: "If you were Christians, I should add that there is no nobility and glory but in serving the Church; and I should ask you since when the Son of God is no longer of good enough family to be the Spouse of your daughter who asks you to enter into retirement. If you were Christians, I should speak to you also of the suffrage of the prayers and sacrifices that your son would offer for you. But I see you in tears; be calm, they will soon be changed into tears of joy. Hear what I have seen.

"I had formerly, during my religious studies, a friend who had an unbelieving father, a rich man and illustrious in the world. At the first disclosure that his son made to him of his desire to leave the world, the father cried aloud, had recourse to the courts, refused his son the most necessary clothing and food; he tried everything, thinking to make him come back to the world. But then, seeing that he was unshakable, and admiring his angelic virtue, suddenly a revolution took place in this father's heart; he yielded, and gave his hand to everything: *Victus tandem manus dedit, et palinodiam cecinit* [Vanquished at last, he gave his hand, and sang the palinode]. Today he honours his son, he cherishes him, he reveres him more than if he were his father: *illumque amplius ac si pater esset colit et reveretur.* And although he has other sons in high position in the world, he scarcely judges them worthy to be the servants of that one; and it is in him that he puts all his pride and all his glory: *Atque ex eo ipso filio longe clarissimus est.*" [And he is by far the most illustrious through that very son.]

This story told by Saint John Chrysostom was afterwards that of the father of Saint Francis de Sales. For a long time he had put obstacles in the way of his son's vocation; but later with what consolation he came, as the patriarch Jacob once did, to kiss the pastoral sceptre of his son! And has not the Bishop of Geneva made his father's name more illustrious by himself alone than all the other members of his family who held great employments in the world? And the mother of this great saint, confessed and communicated by her son, wished him to be unceasingly beside her deathbed; and as she sometimes feared that her other children might be jealous: "That one," she said, kissing him tenderly, "is at once my son and my father."

Oh! yes, my dearly beloved brethren, happy the parents who have consecrated one of their sons to God! God never asks except in order to give; they will receive in return thousands and thousands of blessings.[2]

Translator's notes

1. The scripture reference printed in the title (“Ro. XI, 2”) is Romans 12:2 in the Vulgate numbering; the 2 Chronicles verse is attributed in the source to “Josias” (an error; left as printed and flagged).

2. Patristic material attributed to Chrysostom, Augustine, Tertullian and Boethius is the preacher’s; precise passages are not identified in the edition and are not verified here.

3. “Tarse/Tarsis” is rendered “Tarshish” (Jonah 1:3).

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[1] As printed: “le saint roi Josias”. The words are those of King Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20:12). The error is in the source; left as printed, flagged here.

[2] Cf. Appendix I: A, 8, 76.

n° 7. Fourth Homily on Education: Completing the Three Instructions on the Duties of Parents Concerning the Education of Their Children

Preached for the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin and the Presentation of Our Lord (1840).[1]

Tulerunt puerum in Jerusalem ut sisterent eum Domino. [They carried the child to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.] They carried the Child to Jerusalem to consecrate Him to the Lord. (Luke, ch. II, v. 22.)

MY DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

What a graceful picture does the feast of this day not present to our eyes! Joseph, chaste spouse of the divine Virgin, and Mary, Immaculate Mother of Jesus, carrying to Jerusalem their new-born child to consecrate Him to the Lord; that precious burden passing alternately from the virginal hands of the mother into the arms of her chaste foster-father; I know not what ray, escaped from the infant brow, graciously reflected upon his gentle parents, as the rose adorns the rosebush; the Child Himself borrowing a new grace from the charms of what surrounds Him, as the fruit hanging on its tree is fresher and fairer; that precocious Sovereign entering His temple, all of whose stones have trembled at His approach; then, to complete the picture, Mary, that chaste and unique dove, offering at the altar a turtle-dove and its young one — that is to say, the Redeemer and the Redemptress presenting the symbols of redemption. And then again that old man and that widow, representatives of the ancient law, to whom it is given to contemplate the sweet objects of the consolation of Israel: Simeon, touching personification of the expectation of the Saviour, a tender old man pressing in his arms and covering with kisses the divine Child and, after having blessed Him, dying in peace, happy to have seen the salvation of Israel; Anna, pious widow and holy prophetess, personification of the expectation of that Virgin who was to bring forth the Saviour, Anna congratulating the young mother and proclaiming, doubtless the first, the happiness of that womb that had borne Jesus and of those breasts that nursed Him.

Is not this, once again, my dearly beloved brethren, the most touching and at the same time the most vast picture, in which contrasts and juxtapositions multiply; where figures come to place themselves beside realities to melt into them after having adorned them and been adorned themselves; where expectation and prophecy, meeting their object, embrace in a kiss of love? In the midst of all this, O my Beloved, how beautiful You are! Yes, how all this sets off Your graces and those of Your mother! *Ecce tu pulcher, dilecte mi! Ecce quam pulchra es, amica mea, columba mea!* [Behold thou art fair, O my beloved! Behold how beautiful thou art, my love, my dove!]

But it is not enough, my dearly beloved brethren, to admire the touching object of this feast. The double mystery which the Church celebrates on this day is full of teachings. And in this religion is admirable, that all her mysteries have a grace of their own, and as it were sacramental, for some age or some position of life. Jesus Christ, God of God, Jesus Christ in whom humanity, united hypostatically to the divinity, was so admirably consecrated by that union — Jesus Christ nevertheless carried to the temple and consecrated to God by His parents: is not that, my dearly beloved brethren, evidently a lesson, a teaching given to all parents? Was it for Himself that the God-Child could be consecrated to God? Evidently not; but it was to

teach parents what they have to do. And likewise the most holy Virgin, immaculate in her Conception and in all her life, virgin before her childbearing and in her childbearing, submitting nevertheless to the ceremony of purification — is not that again evidently a teaching? For she who was pure had no need of purification; but she wished to teach all mothers to purify themselves in order to fulfil holily the duties of motherhood. Here, then, is the double teaching of the Presentation of Our Lord and of the Purification of Mary.

I. *Tulerunt puerum in Jerusalem ut sisterent eum Domino.* They carried the Child to Jerusalem to consecrate Him to the Lord. Saint John Chrysostom, in an admirable sermon *On Anna and the Education of Samuel* [*De Anna et educatione Samuelis*] (I should love to follow that great man as he proposes this example for the imitation not only of mothers but also of fathers): "Which of you," says that great bishop, "which of you would not like to have had Samuel for his son? Do you wish to have that happiness? It depends only on you, fathers and mothers. Long beforehand offer to the Lord the son you ask of Him, and I promise you, on His part, that this son will be another Samuel, lovable to God and to men."

Indeed, my brethren, open the Lives of the Saints, and you will see that almost all of them had been consecrated to God by their parents. Saint Basil and Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, those two young flowers that preserved all their purity in the midst of the most impure elements; those two saints who, as young students in that Greece as corrupt as it was learned, and in that old academy which was going into putrefaction, knew in the city only two streets, that of the school and that of the temple, and resembled, says their historian, those happy rivers that keep their sweetness amid the bitterness of the sea; those two great bishops who were the charm of their century and the glory of the Church, teach me themselves that from their mothers' wombs they had been vowed to God, like other Samuels, and that often in their earliest childhood they had been led to the foot of the altars… Saint Bernard also teaches me that he had been the fruit of the long prayers of his mother, *longarum fructus orationum* [the fruit of long prayers]; and I have already told you, my dearly beloved brethren, that young Count of Aquino, who was afterwards the great Saint Thomas, and who at sixteen drove away, with a firebrand in his hand, the crime that came to tempt him, had been vowed to Mary by his mother even before his birth.

And Saint John Chrysostom lays down as a principle that the virtue of children is in the hands of their father and mother, because God cannot give the lie to fatherhood, because God is a debtor whom it is good to bind to ourselves: He returns a hundredfold. And so, my dearly beloved brethren, how I love that Christian father (whom I could name) who has beforehand inscribed the child that is to be born to him on the register of the servants of the Heart of Jesus and of His Mother, and who already makes him pay tribute for the propagation of the faith in infidel countries! So that this child is, so to speak, pious before being born, as the holy Fathers have said of Samuel that he was a Levite and a Nazirite before being a man, and that Anna had brought him forth for the tabernacle and not for herself! How I love that pious mother (and I could name her also) who has beforehand hung the heart of her son upon the breast of Mary, and deposited his name in one of those sacred ornaments which touch so closely that same Jesus who caressed and blessed the little children! How I love again that mother who leads her child to the feet of Mary, who clothes him in her white livery; that mother who, bearing her child in her arms or perhaps still in her womb, goes to bow before the priest that he may recite a prayer over his head!

Let certain cold and systematic Christians, more or less tainted with unbelief, amuse themselves with these practices, "popular" as they call them: their laughter and irony cannot gainsay established facts and results. Let them read the history of the Saints. Ah! says the great Bossuet, shakings of the head are not reasons. For example, my brethren, that last practice of which I have just spoken, which, thanks be to God, is still preserved in our church — the practice of having a gospel recited over the heads of children; do you know by whom I find it recommended, and since when it has existed, that practice which a sufficient ignorance calls new and popular? Saint John Chrysostom, enumerating the duties of mothers, says that they should often lead their children before the priest so that he may stretch the stole of peace over them and recite a prayer

upon their heads.

Imitate, then, O Christian parents, imitate the mother of Samuel, imitate the ancient holy families, imitate above all Joseph and Mary in the mystery of this day. Take, like them, your new-born child in your arms and come and consecrate him to God and to Mary in her temple: *Tulerunt puerum in Jerusalem ut sisterent eum Domino.*

II. But in order that the presentation you make of your children may be perfectly pleasing to the Lord, imitate also the second mystery which we celebrate on this day, I mean the Purification of Mary. The Virgin without stain, the immaculate mother, comes to submit to the ceremonies of purification; hear that, sinful mothers, and forget no more to come and wash yourselves in the saving bath of grace to prepare for motherhood.

My dearly beloved brethren, what dangerous negligence do most mothers not have to reproach themselves with in this regard in our century! In vain do terrible examples multiply: they face the perils of motherhood without having thought of rendering God favourable. But if your own interest does not touch you, be at least sensitive to that of your children. The first mark of real tenderness that you can give them is to sanctify yourselves for them: *Ego pro eis me sanctifico* [For them do I sanctify myself], because it is written that the generation of the just shall be blessed: *Generatio rectorum benedicetur* [The generation of the righteous shall be blessed]; that the Lord is in the just generation: *Dominus in generatione justa est* [The Lord is in the just generation]; that the piety of the parents is attributed to the son.

Saint John Chrysostom says that it is a general law, suffering very few exceptions, that children resemble their parents; so that a father and a mother after God's own heart are the first and most signal favour that can be granted to children. Christian mothers, tell us, is it not true that among your children the son of blessing is the one whom your piety brought forth? And you, afflicted mother who weep over the wanderings of one of your sons, go down into your conscience, and see whether he might not reproach you with having disinherited him of virtue because you were negligent in your duties. Yes, it is the piety of the parents that makes children virtuous and well-born; it is the piety of the parents that makes the happy success of the education of children.

Impiety, my brethren, becomes no one, doubtless, but there is no being to whom it is less suited than a mother. Even levity and indifference in matters of religion have something shocking in a mother. Motherhood is essentially religious, and the family has lost all its charm when the mother has stripped herself of the ornament of piety and virtue. O mothers, listen to me one moment more.

Your child, brought back from the sacred font, was given back to you full of beauty, purity and innocence. The Angels contemplate him with respect, and they adore God who dwells in his heart as in a tabernacle. Tell me, if you have faith in the intimate presence of God in the hearts of the just, does your guilty conscience say nothing to you when, pressing this child to your heart, you suddenly think of the immense disproportion between your soul and his? Holy things to the holy! and if Scripture has said: "Purify yourselves, you who bear the vessels of the Lord," is not this child a living vessel of the Holy Spirit? And do you not hear the Angels who take offence at seeing innocence in the hands of sin, heaven so near to hell? No, a flower so fresh, so beautiful, so delicate is not made to be carried by an unclean stem. Honey is not in its place upon poisons: *Sancta sanctis!* [Holy things to the holy!] Yes, it is necessary, as our Church sings of Jesus and His mother, that this angel of innocence be carried by innocent hands; his pure lips must drink a pure milk, and his heart, where God dwells, must find heaven again when he presses against his mother's breast. My dearly beloved brethren, let there be more religion among parents, and there will be, as of old, thousands of children of blessing![2]

There you have, my dearly beloved brethren, there you have, for Christian parents, the teachings of the mystery of the Presentation of Our Lord in the temple and of the Purification of Mary. O Lord Jesus, I ask it of You in the name of all parents and all mothers: the grace of the mystery of this day was a grace wholly of

superabundance; You had no need of it for Yourself; this grace is too precious to be lost: You were presented by hands so pure! Yes, may the graces of Your Presentation fall upon all the children who are in this temple! Look upon them as presented and consecrated to You by Mary. And you, O holy Virgin, the grace of your Purification was also for you, immaculate mother, a grace wholly of surplus: may this grace of your Purification flow back into the soul of all the mothers who are here! O Jesus, O Mary, may the sacrifice which is about to be offered in memory of this double mystery be for the children a grace of consecration, for the fathers and mothers a grace of purification![3]

Translator's notes

1. The second half of the homily (the passage on mothers, "Your child, brought back from the sacred font…") repeats in condensed form the variant of the first homily on education (n° 3, second variant), as the editor's cross-reference indicates; the wording is parallel, but the text here is translated as it stands.

2. "Livery" (*livrées*) of Mary: the white garments in which children were consecrated to Our Lady. "Sacred ornaments" (the name deposited in one of them) is obscure in the source and is rendered closely.

3. Patristic attributions (Chrysostom *De Anna et educatione Samuelis*, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Bernard, Aquinas) are the preacher's and are not verified here.

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[1] This homily was preached as a homily at Saint-Porchaire of Poitiers on 2 February 1859 [as printed]. — Editor's note.

[2] Cf., for the developments of this second part, the second homily on education, variant n° 2, p. 46.

[3] Cf. Appendix I: A, 9.

n° 8. First Sermon on the Importance of Studying the Christian Religion

Preached at the cathedral of Chartres, on the First Sunday of Lent (1840).[1]

Si quis non acquiescit sanis sermonibus Domini nostri Jesu Christi… superbus est, nihil sciens, sed languens circa quæstiones et pugnas verborum. [If any man consent not to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ… he is proud, knowing nothing, but sick about questions and strifes of words.] Whoever does not acquiesce in the sound doctrine and in the religion of Our Lord Jesus Christ is a proud man who knows nothing, but who pines away over frivolous or wretched questions. (1 Tim. vi, 3–5.)

MONSEIGNEUR,[2]

The Gospel teaches me that one knowledge alone is necessary and indispensable, the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ His Son and His envoy. All other sciences are of themselves vain and often criminal; they become praiseworthy and important only in so far as they pay tribute to religion. The sacred studies, as Saint Thomas has excellently said, make use of the human sciences as of handmaids in a subordinate rank, just as architects have themselves served by labourers charged with furnishing them the materials: *Utitur eis tanquam inferioribus et ancillis, sicut architectonicæ utuntur subministrantibus.*

Thus, my brethren, there is but one first and essential study; the others, when they are not stepping-stones toward this one, become futilities or crimes. Now, by an inexplicable contradiction, men busy themselves with everything, study everything, want to know everything; they neglect only religion. It is the only study to which they make it a merit and a glory to remain strangers. A pride most ill placed, doubtless; and the learned of the age would find my language very cutting, if my feeble voice were not the echo of another voice far more imposing, that of the great apostle, who cries to them that if they exclude from their studies Jesus Christ and His doctrine, they are proud men who know nothing: *Si quis non acquiescit sanis sermonibus Domini nostri Jesu Christi, et ei, quæ secundum pietatem est, doctrinæ, superbus est, nihil sciens.* [If any man consent not to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing.] They may have certain knowledge of detail; but it is a

very limited science that does not know how to view things from the noble heights of religion. They pine away, they dry up over vain questions — a wretched object of eternal conflict of opinion among men of corrupt mind, who are all outside the truth: *Superbus est, nihil sciens, sed languens circa quæstiones et pugnas verborum… conflictationes hominum mente corruptorum, et qui veritate privati sunt.*

To busy oneself with all the rest with a sort of fury and to disdain the study of religion — this is what distinguishes our epoch: an inconsistent and guilty conduct, whose whole disorder I have thought it useful to show you by establishing, in a series of instructions, the importance and necessity of studying religion, as well as the means and the method to be used to know it well. And to bring out in its full light how inexcusable the ignorance of the Christian religion is, I lay down at the outset these two propositions:

1° Christianity, considered from a purely human point of view, would still deserve to be known and studied in depth as the most astonishing of all institutions.

2° All the more must Christianity be studied and examined in depth if it is considered from its true point of view, that is, as a religion revealed by God for the salvation of men.

The development of these two propositions will accordingly tend to show that it would already be an inconsistency and an unjust partiality to exclude Christianity from our studies, even if it were not, besides, a crime against God and against ourselves. — Let us invoke the light of the Holy Spirit through the intercession of the most holy Virgin. *Ave Maria.*

I. There is a numerous class of men who pretend to have convinced themselves that Christianity is a purely human and natural institution. Where did they draw that conviction? I do not know; they do not know themselves; for, by their own admission, they have never taken the trouble to study this religion which they condemn, and it seems to me that examination ought to have preceded condemnation. Be that as it may, to open their eyes to their inconsistency and unjust partiality, I am quite willing to agree with them for a moment that Christianity is only a human institution; but I say that in that case it is the most astonishing of institutions, that it is an institution unique in the history of humanity, and consequently an institution which ought to be studied and examined in depth by all who flatter themselves they study and examine anything in depth. I consent for an instant no longer to see in the Church of Jesus Christ those characters of divinity which eighteen centuries had recognised and venerated in her; I am willing to believe that so many fine minds were mistaken, that the universe was idolatrous for eighteen hundred years, and that our modern philosophy has unmasked this superstitious and idolatrous worship; once more, I admit all these falsehoods as so many incontestable principles. But I confine myself today to saying (and that suffices to lead this class of men a very long way), I confine myself to saying that Christianity, viewed historically, has played and still plays a fine enough part in the universe to deserve to be the object of our studies. And here is how I reason.

Men of the world, you profess to study everything. History, above all things, is the object of your researches and your meditations; you neglect no detail of it, and every institution has won rights to your interest and your studies from the moment it has figured with some brilliance in the world, whether favourable circumstances have promoted its establishment and duration, or it has in itself and in its inner constitution the principles of its glory and success. But if I prove to you, history in hand and by the exposition of facts, that Christianity is the greatest and most marvellous thing that has appeared in the world, shall I not be entitled to conclude that you cannot neglect its study without an unreasonable contradiction and partiality? Now all this is easy to establish.

Is it not a fact that an institution called Christianity is today, to our knowledge, spread throughout the whole world? Is it not an historical fact that this institution has lasted eighteen hundred years? Is it not an historical fact again that this marvellous institution existed, so to speak, before being born, and that, arrived at its Founder, it joins on to another institution which goes back to the origin of the world; so that this same Christianity which we see today can, by a visible chain, date its birth from the day when days were born? Is it

not a fact that this institution has had in all ages the most illustrious and marvellous destinies? Cast your eyes on the magnificent picture offered us by the *Universal History* of the great Bossuet: you will see there, for four thousand years, all the nations bowing to give passage to Christianity; the whole universe, for forty centuries, will seem to you as it were in the pangs of childbirth. At last it appears. The son of a poor artisan is its hero or, if you like, its inventor; poor fishermen are its apostles; it is established and propagated through three hundred years of persecution; the instrument of the torture of its Founder overthrows the idols of the whole universe and takes their place on the altars. Soon Christianity triumphs over the Caesars and goes to sit upon their throne. From there it presides at the formation of all modern kingdoms, it links itself with all events, identifies itself with all institutions.

In our national history above all the remark is striking. There we see Christianity and royalty presiding together over the first French institutions; there the most glorious title of sovereigns is that of most Christian kings, eldest sons of the Church; there the most ancient laws are capitularies and canons; there the first order of the State is the clergy, the first peers are bishops, and it has been said of them that they made the monarchy as bees make a hive. It is impossible to read a page of the history of France without finding in it the history of Christianity. Frightful upheavals have occurred; they have changed many things, doubtless; but this first union of Christianity and French institutions was so close, that embrace was so strong, that even now there is hardly a point of the social constitution whose origin and cause do not lose themselves in Christianity. So thoroughly has the Christian institution naturalised itself on French soil; so deep has it driven its roots there! If from the influence of Christianity on the great institutions we passed to that which it has exercised on manners and common habits, we should see that everything in our civil life presupposes the action of Christianity. Our days of work and rest, our popular feasts and our great commercial gatherings, our domestic rejoicings, our calendar, the names we bear — what do I know! — everything, almost everything, has a Christian cause. Christianity is like the element in which we live; it has mingled with the air we breathe; nothing is more familiar and intimate to us. Christianity is found again even in the language of those who have driven it from their hearts; habits are still Christian when the will no longer is. So popular has Christianity become, so deeply has it entered into our manners, so does it press and invest us on every side! Experience has proved it for eighteen hundred years: everything that Christianity mingles with becomes eternal as itself; and everything to which it remains a stranger cannot maintain itself. Nothing is durable but what Christianity has consecrated.

II. Are these, my brethren, historical facts remarkable enough? Might I not stop here, and should I not already be entitled to conclude my invincible argument on the injustice and unreasonable partiality of those who study all the rest and disdain Christianity? But must I insist further? Must Christianity itself descend into the arena to measure itself against those other institutions, those other sciences which are so injuriously preferred to it? Must the giant come to measure himself with the pygmy, the cedar with the hyssop? Well then! if the folly of the adversaries of Christianity requires it, following the example of its great apostle Paul, it will take the floor and say: If I must glory, I am in a position to do so: *Si gloriari oportet, libenter gloriabor*. [If I must needs glory, I will gladly glory.] What kind of celebrity do you find in the other institutions that I too have not? *In quo quis audet, audeo et ego* [Wherein any man is bold, I am bold also]; that I have not in a more eminent degree? *plus ego* [I more].

Will you speak to me of duration? And what institution, what society will come to match its short existence with my antiquity? Nothing of what is was yet, and I already had several centuries of life. I have seen ten empires born, grow and fall on the same soil. Thebes, Babylon, Nineveh heard the voice of my prophets. Paul, my apostle, discoursed of me before the Areopagus; and the Roman magistracy was shaken by his word. The great power of Rome had been prepared for me, and after attending her funeral I placed my throne upon her tomb. All that exists today, all modern societies, are my work. It would ill become daughters to dispute age with their mother. Do not speak, then, of duration: I have as much, I have more than all of you. *In*

quo quis audet, audeo et ego… plus ego.

Will you speak to me of extent? Yours is that of a nation, a corner of the globe. Mine has no other bounds than those of the earth. I dwell in all the countries which the sun lights; and my first pontiff stretches out his arms from one end of the world to the other, commanding through his intermediaries almost as many subjects as there are men, and realising by his power that universal monarchy which some of your ancient conquerors had dreamed of. All legislations, all religions were made for a particular people. Numa made laws and a cult for Rome; Lycurgus worked for Sparta, Solon for Athens. My legislation is made for the universe; my teachings, my morality, my worship ally themselves with all manners, with all forms of government. I speak all languages, and if I have preferred some, my adoption has propagated and perpetuated them over all the earth. Do not dispute extent with me: your narrow dwelling would contrast unfavourably for you beside my immensity and my catholicity. *In quo quis audet, audeo et ego… plus ego.*

Will you speak to me of the trials and resistances you have met, of the combats you have sustained? Ah! it is here above all that, showing my noble scars, I may say with my apostle: *Plus ego.* It is here above all that I shall have matter to glory: *Si gloriari oportet, libenter gloriabor in infirmitatibus meis.* [If I must needs glory, I will gladly glory in my infirmities.] For three centuries every form of cruelty, every invention of rage, was exhausted against me: anguish without number, prisons, tortures of every kind, often death: *In laboribus plurimis, in carceribus abundantius, in plagis supra modum, in mortibus frequenter.* [In many labours, in prisons more frequently, in stripes above measure, in deaths often.] Since that time the struggle has been less terrible, less continuous perhaps; yet it has often revived, and I have scarcely ever breathed on one point without being attacked on another.

The history of the cruelties I have endured, of the perils I have run, is mingled with the last pages of human history: dangers of every sort, *periculis in mari, periculis fluminum* [perils in the sea, perils of rivers]; it is not yet fifty years since the rivers were reddened with my blood, and your fathers have spoken to you of those drownings so sadly famous. And yet these are not the worst of my trials. When my enemies rested, alas! my own children rose against me: *Periculis ex genere, periculis ex falsis fratribus.* [Perils from my own nation, perils from false brethren.] Heresy came to sound, one after another, all the stones that compose my vast edifice. Then, ashamed of its impotence and its vain attempts, error affected to pass by me with a disdainful indifference. At last, to debase me in the eyes of the peoples, the astute policy of the apostate Julian has been renewed against me. The services I had rendered to humanity had surrounded me with a certain external brilliance; I have been stripped of it. Those privileges which I had so legitimately acquired have been ravished from me; and in the most Christian nation, the code of public law speaks of me no more except to rank me in the class of children and insane persons who are held in tutelage because they are regarded as incapable of governing themselves.

Everything has been permitted against me. What in any other case would be called crying injustice becomes just when I alone am the victim. *Periculis latronum* [perils from robbers]: I had cleared the lands by the sweat of my brow, I have been dispossessed. I had built and endowed asylums for the education of youth and the relief of sorrows, I have been driven out of them. My very temples are no longer mine, it is said, and I should think myself happy that I am left the use of those which have not been given over to licence and crime. I who loved only to give and to pour out, I see myself reduced to holding out my hand, to begging for my subsistence and for the support of the houses where my defenders are prepared, and where I have the sorrow of being able to offer them only privations in exchange for the sacrifice they make me of their whole life; *in fame et siti* [in hunger and thirst]: it is literally true, bread is lacking for them, and the voice of my pontiffs wearies itself almost in vain in asking for it; *in frigore et nuditate* [in cold and nakedness]: and while they strip me, there are still men to speak of my encroachments, and multitudes to believe them. And when an enemy faction ever watches, guards all the avenues of my sanctuary and seizes every occasion to enslave me, I am still reproached with I know not what *parti-prêtre* [priest party]! Ah! I call the universe to witness,

if it is the property of truth to be always fought and persecuted on earth, I may flatter myself that I have the truth, and that I have it alone. For all other sects, all other institutions are tolerated, praised, protected; there is only one against which intolerance and injustice are universal: it is I. *In quo quis audet, audeo et ego… plus ego.*

Will you speak to me of the sciences? And what institution would still dare to compare itself with me in this respect? Is it not I who gave asylum to studies, and who saved from shipwreck all those rich monuments of ancient science that you admire? The sciences! they are all within my province; I have them all at my command, and at need I put them all under contribution. It was to the melodious accents of the lyre that I insinuated myself into the heart of the savage Indian; it was with brush, compass and telescope in hand that I had the gates opened to me of the inaccessible empire of China; it was by all the riches of philosophy, literature and poetry that I lately dominated the most enlightened of all centuries.

The sciences! they are all for me; even those which have been undertaken in a spirit of hostility have been brought to bear me witness. Science, for instance, has dug into the earth to put some details of my ancient annals at fault; but in the profound pages of that great book it has been forced to read as it were a second edition of my narrative. Sixty years of study and observation have brought science to discover what the child whom his mother lulls to sleep by reading him the two chapters of the creation and the deluge learns from me without pain or effort. Science again, in these latter times, has compared with each other all the ancient and modern languages; and after half a century of laborious research it has just recognised that there existed one single primitive language of which all the others have carried away the fragments. Without having done this painful work, I had taught it so for centuries: *Terra autem erat labii unius et sermonum eorumdem.* [And the earth was of one language, and of the same speech.] Every system in opposition to my doctrine has always ended by being shown false; every true science is in harmony with me.

Science! and has not one of your philosophers proclaimed that I am the only aromatic that keeps it from corrupting? And for a century, since they are no longer Christian, have not the sciences changed their beneficent lights into incendiary torches? The sciences! I have created several and perfected all the others. There is no truth of any importance that was not Christian before being philosophical, and it is impossible to attack me at all seriously without warring against my own gifts. Do not speak, then, of the sciences: I have acquired in this line as much celebrity as you all, and more. *In quo quis audet, audeo et ego… plus ego.*

Will you speak to me of civilisation? And what other has contributed more than I to civilising the world? It is I who repressed among warring nations that ferocity which the law of the most civilised peoples had introduced. To me are due the small number of reasonable laws that govern the world; they were in the canons of my councils before they were in your codes. Civilisation! and is it not I who abolished slavery on earth? And even now, if you wish to emancipate and civilise a people, is it not to me that you turn, is it not of me that you ask help? The emancipation of slaves! Your politicians are beginning to think of it, and they are quite proud of it. I can show you an entire volume of documents issued by my pontiffs in all ages for this work so eminently Christian. Civilisation! and is it not I who freed woman from that brutal despotism under which she still languishes wherever my voice is not heard? And had I not had a firmness of bronze, had my pontiffs not known how to wield thunderbolts and strike even sovereigns with them, would not hideous passions have a thousand times annihilated that dogma of the indissolubility of the marriage bond, a dogma so essential to civilisation, since apart from it motherhood is degraded and human generations fall into the promiscuity of brutes? Do not boast to me, then, of your influence on civilisation: I have worked at it alone as much, and a thousand times more, than you all. *In quo quis audet, audeo et ego… plus ego.*

Will you speak to me of virtues? Virtues! Would it be seriously, and would you dare to come and set your ignominy beside my brow resplendent with innocence? Virtues! I say only this word in my favour: the Roman Empire needed, for the upkeep of its worship, only a few vestals, and the universe was not great enough to furnish them; honours and dignities compensated their sacrifice, and history records that in half a

century twelve unfaithful vestals incurred the last penalty. I have peopled the universe with virgins. My cities, my solitudes have sprouted virgins as a tree puts forth its fruits: virgins of every condition, of every age, of both sexes (which was unheard of); virgins, not only in their body but also in their heart, which Roman law did not ask. After that, what institution, what philosophical sect will come and speak to me of virtues? I produce some of which you have not even the idea; and those that you practise, which seem to have become natural virtues, it is again I who brought them or kept them up in the world; had they not been in my Gospel, they would long since have ceased to be in human morality. *In quo quis audet, audeo et ego… plus ego.*

But must names be cited and things personified? Certainly, Christianity will continue, I dread this new challenge little. Is it a question first of philanthropists, of benefactors of humanity? Contemplate that long line of men whom I have produced, from Jesus, my Founder, who passed through doing good, down to Vincent de Paul, the founder of the Daughters of Charity, or, if you like, down to that great Archbishop of Paris whose loss the whole Church of France still mourns, who forced calumny to admire him and who opened an asylum to the children of his persecutors.[3] Philanthropists! And who gave to the hospitals those angels in human form who speak so well the language of hope and resignation? And who placed in the midst of the snows of Saint Bernard those hospitaller brothers? And who sent to the barbarous coasts those Fathers of the Redemption of Captives? Philanthropists! This word of which you are so proud belongs to me; it is Christian; Saint Paul said it of my Founder: *Apparuit Philanthropia Domini nostri Jesu Christi.* [The philanthropy of our Lord Jesus Christ appeared.] Do not speak, then, of benefactors of humanity: the true benefactors of humanity are found only in my house. *In quo quis audet, audeo et ego… plus ego.*

Is it a question of the learned, of men of genius? O heaven! people vaunt various philosophical schools because they have produced a few pages; and my doctrine would not be studied, which has produced great men by thousands! my doctrine, which counts in the chain of its defenders the Pauls, the Augustines, the Thomas Aquinases and the Bossuets. Great men! But yours, if you have had any, mostly did not believe the doctrines they taught. Socrates and Cicero amused themselves with the absurd fictions of Greece and Rome. My great men belong to me down to the depths of their soul. Paul proved by his life and by his death that he regarded everything else, as he said, as dung beside my heavenly doctrine; the great soul of Augustine felt itself rapt into the heavens when it contemplated the whole of my truths; Thomas Aquinas, by the learned labours of the day, prepared for the night an object of sweet meditations and ecstatic contemplations; and the sublime Bossuet, already bent toward the grave, Bossuet whose noble life had been wholly consecrated to me, after several years of rest, speaking a last time of my doctrine in presence of kings, regretted, pointing to his white hair, that his strength failed him to tell my praises. Great men! Let us take the biographies, and count those who belong to you and those who are mine. In whatever city it may be, for example, I am ready to produce the catalogue of my bishops, and I defy any social body to present me a series of names like it. Great men! Ah! I produce them as the star of day produces light. They form about me a radiant aureole as the sun surrounds itself with its rays. Great men! I alone have begotten, in every kind, as many and more than all the schools, all the sects, all the institutions together. *In quo quis audet, audeo et ego… plus ego.*

Is it a question of heroes, of warriors? People study pagan fables and mythological fictions because they attach to the history of heroes often imaginary. And my doctrine would not be studied, which produced the martyrs, begot the Theban Legion, armed the Godfreys of Bouillon and the Saint Louises; my doctrine, at whose voice the whole of Europe rose as one man and set out to deliver the holy city of my Founder! Heroes, warriors! And has it not been proclaimed? There are no true heroes but the Christian hero; all the others pale beside him. *In quo quis audet, audeo et ego… plus ego.*

Finally, is it a question of artists? Ah! this above all is what occupies our century; and it flatters itself with descending, as it says, into the depth of the soul of the great masters to seek there the motives of their inspiration, to assist in some sort at the labour of their intelligence. And my doctrine would not be studied,

and that faith of Catholicism would not be studied which made those marvellous cathedrals spring from the earth, which hurled into the air those bold pyramids, which bent and rounded those graceful ogives, which chiselled those stones docile to take all forms, which tempered the light through media where the liveliest and most durable colours play! Artists! And has not our century recognised that Catholic truth, left to itself and to its beautiful, noble and pure inspirations, has surpassed the greatest efforts of Greece and Rome? And is not all that is most admired today on the globe the work of Christian art? And if I flew off to heaven with all I have created on earth, would not your cities, your palaces and your museums remain almost wholly empty of monuments and masterpieces? Artists! And who inspired Michelangelo? And have you not sometimes seen the statue of my great bishop of Chartres, Fulbert, holding in his hands the plan of that admirable church of which it is asserted he had conceived alone the vast and marvellous design? Thirty others of my bishops, of my religious, in that same century and in the following one, were the architects of their churches. Do not speak, then, of the arts: I have acquired in this line too as much glory as any institution, any tribe and any nation, and more. *In quo quis audet, audeo et ego… plus ego.*

My dearly beloved brethren, Christianity could continue much longer the eloquent plea of the Apostle in its own favour. It could avail itself of that sublime language which it has taken in the heavens, and which no one but it knows how to speak on earth: *Arcana verba quæ non licet homini loqui.* [Secret words which it is not granted to man to utter.] But it is time to stop, and you will admit, my brethren, that with respect to facts alone Christianity, if it is not a supernatural institution, is at least the most astonishing of all institutions, and that consequently, even humanly speaking, there is none on earth which deserves more to be studied. Yet, my dearly beloved brethren, it is this very institution, precisely this one, that certain men, who study everything else, have chosen to make the object of their indifference and disdain. Everything else interests; but Christianity is not even judged worthy of occupying a moment's thought; one would be ashamed to appear to give it any importance; sometimes one affects on this matter even more ignorance than one has. And one thinks in this to raise and enlarge oneself; as if to be ignorant of all that is greatest in the world could be a motive for pride!

If I told you, my brethren, that a distinguished traveller, who prides himself on observing every curiosity, has come to our city; that he has gone through it in every direction, visited it in every detail: not an object has escaped him, not an historical memory that he has not saluted on the spot, not an inscription so enigmatic that he has not explained it. What do I know? Only there is one monument that he neglected, as of little importance doubtless, and little worthy to occupy a man of taste: it is the cathedral. That excepted, he is the man in the world who knows the city of Chartres best; he has seen everything, studied everything, is ready to discuss everything. — You tell me, my dearly beloved brethren, that my supposition is absurd, that the conduct of that man would border on madness, and above all that his pride as a pretended connoisseur would be very ridiculous; the more so as in a single one of its portals, in a single one of its columns and stones, the cathedral contains more curiosities than all the rest of the city together. Well, nevertheless, my very dear brother, I am sorry to tell you, that man so ridiculously proud in his ignorance is you, whoever you may be, who pride yourself on being a stranger to nothing, and who glory in being ignorant of Christianity. For as much as that colossal edifice and its gigantic spires dominate, overwhelm the rest of the city, so much does Christianity eclipse the other institutions; and under a single one of its aspects, in a single one of its details, it is a thousand times more worthy of your studies than all the things you prefer to it. Do you understand now my thought in the text of Saint Paul: "If anyone disdains Jesus Christ and His doctrine, he is a proud man who knows nothing; he knows nothing, for is it knowing something to pine away and dry up one's whole life over frivolous and wretched questions?" *Si quis non acquiescit sanis sermonibus Domini nostri Jesu Christi, superbus est, nihil sciens, sed languens circa quæstiones et pugnas verborum.*

Indeed, my dearly beloved brethren, in the sphere of human things Christianity occupies the centre; all the sciences, all the institutions are on its circumference. Its radiance reaches everything, and everything

converges toward it. What, then, does a man do who has resolved to take no account of Christianity in his studies? He begins by turning his back on the centre, he settles on one of the points of the circumference. There he takes a question, isolates it from all its relations, restricts it within the narrowest limits (for a little farther on it would touch Christianity). And even this question, thus isolated, thus narrowed — if he considers it with any attention, more than once he will be forced to shut his eyes in order not to meet there the inevitable Christianity, which has entered everywhere, which has mingled with everything, and whose imposing image always comes to present itself to him who runs through the field of the sciences, much as our inevitable steeples would pursue unceasingly him who wanted to walk through our city without seeing them. Therefore, my brethren, outside Christianity, science is essentially narrow; there are only isolated views. Do you understand Saint Paul: “If anyone takes no account of Jesus Christ and His doctrine, he is a proud man who knows nothing, but who pines away over frivolous and wretched questions”? *Si quis non acquiescit sanis sermonibus Domini nostri Jesu Christi superbus est, nihil sciens, sed languens circa quæstiones et pugnas verborum.*

People speak much, in our century, of what is called the philosophy of history. Well! the greatest of all historians, Bossuet, whose authority counts for something quite apart from his Catholic faith, Bossuet has shown by the facts that the true and only philosophy of history is Christianity, and that before as since His coming Jesus Christ has been the reason of everything, as Saint Paul teaches. Consequently, Christianity is the keystone of all humanity, and in the study of the centuries whoever does not see things from the Christian point of view sees nothing. He may have loaded his memory with dates, with particular facts and with all the thankless and painful apparatus of history; he may have the details of it, but he has not its philosophy. Hear Saint Paul: “Whoever does not study Jesus Christ and His doctrine is a proud man who knows nothing, but who pines away over frivolous and wretched questions.” *Si quis non acquiescit sanis sermonibus Domini nostri Jesu Christi superbus est, nihil sciens, sed languens circa quæstiones et pugnas verborum.*

Cease then, O men of the age, cease to be proud of your ignorance with regard to Christianity, if you do not want to be proud of your pettiness and mediocrity. Admit that if anything on earth deserves to fix our gaze, it is Christianity, and that if people disdain to study it, when they study all the rest, it is an inexplicable contradiction, a striking inconsistency; or rather, let us say the word today: it is an injustice that has its principle in prejudices and perhaps in a criminal aversion. Yes, all the rest is studied because pride finds its pasture there without the heart dreading to meet troublesome convictions. But Christianity, at the first glance, seems too great to be merely an ordinary institution; one soon perceives that to exclude the prodigy is to bring it back, that if the Christian Church is a human work there is no longer any way to explain its success, and that the most probable hypothesis is that of a divine establishment. Yes, whatever may be said, in Christianity the supernatural pierces through at once, and that is why it is rejected so far. It is a work from on high, it is a religion, and people do not want religion, because it would demand the submission of our mind and the sacrifice of our passions. The light of heaven is there, and people do not wish to ask heaven for its light, because they feel beforehand that they would regret, and, to use the fine expression of the poet, would groan at having found it. My dearly beloved brethren, the aversion of the world for Christianity is wholly explained by this word of the devil to Jesus Christ: “I know well who You are, Holy One of God; You are come to destroy us.” *Scio te quis sis, Sanctus Dei; venisti perdere nos.*

If people were convinced, as they say, that Christianity is a purely human work, empty of practical consequences, there would not be voices enough on earth to exalt it; all the rest would be forgotten to study it; everyone would want to go deeply into it as the last effort of wisdom and reason. But it is not so. I ask this man, who is called learned, what Plato is and in what his doctrine consisted. This man satisfies my request at once: he would be humiliated not to know the fundamental maxims of the most famous school of antiquity. It seems to me, however, that this ignorance would still be excusable enough, for it is some thousand years since there have been any Platonists on earth. I ask this same learned man what Jesus Christ is and in what

His doctrine consisted. He stammers a few very inexact words, and ends by answering me, with an ironical laugh, that the catechism is no longer of his age. Yet Jesus Christ like Plato, Christianity like Platonism, have had their historical existence; the world is still peopled today with Christians, that is a fact; and this very man is called a Christian. Whence then this contradiction and this inconsistency? Ah! it is because the doctrine of Plato, a purely human doctrine, binds to nothing; but the doctrine of Christianity… "I know well who You are, Holy One of God; You are come to destroy us." *Scio te quis sis, Sanctus Dei; venisti perdere nos.*

Listen, my brethren, to the history of this man who affects to speak so disdainfully of Christianity. In his youth the Christian truths had charmed his innocent heart; but soon, that heart having become corrupt, he took Christianity in disgust, because Christianity condemned his vices. Having arrived at a certain age, he would have wished to convince himself definitively that Christianity was false; he desired it so keenly that he hoped to persuade himself of it without trouble. One day he entered the temple while the Gospel was being announced to the faithful. He listened with attention, and, in spite of his prejudices, he was shaken. Christian truth appeared to him such as he had believed and cherished it in his childhood: *In modico suades me christianum fieri* [In a little thou persuadest me to become a Christian]; he felt himself becoming a Christian again. But as he had firmly resolved to be one no longer, he understood that his researches would lead only to establishing painful things; he put off the examination to another time: *Audiemus te de hoc iterum* [We will hear thee again concerning this matter], and that other time has not yet come. And he has gone back into the class of those who speak with contempt of Christianity, as of a heap of superstitions incapable of sustaining a moment of enlightened examination. The truth is that he knows well what Christianity is, and that he is afraid of it: "I know well who You are, Holy One of God; You are come to destroy us." *Scio te quis sis, Sanctus Dei; venisti perdere nos.*

These men who are enthusiastic for everything else and who have broken with Christianity — sometimes reasons of propriety still bring them into our temples. It is, either for a nuptial ceremony, for example, or for a funeral convoy. In the first case, the language of the Christian rite has an inimitable grace, sweetness and delicacy, leading in some sort the spouses through the tents of the patriarchs, and even under the bowers of the garden of delights, to show them the touching models and the divine type of conjugal union. In the second case, Christianity borrows now the mournful voice of Job, now the royal lyre of David, casting at once upon that tomb accents of hope and holy sadness, songs of fear and of consolation.

Yet I observe these men who pride themselves on feeling all that is great and beautiful. I see them, some nonchalantly stretched out on their seats, others mingling laughter and light chatter, taking no part in the ceremony. Are they then wholly insensible to it? No. And indeed there is in their attitude an affected impropriety which reveals rather than disguises their true disposition. Christianity is there as an intruder: it troubles them, it embarrasses them. Transport these touching and majestic rites into the temple of some ancient divinity; let it be, instead of the Catholic minister, a pagan priest! There would not be eyes or ears enough to see everything, to hear everything, to take account of everything: they would want to procure at any price the liturgical book in order to follow the whole ceremony. But here it is a Christian ceremony. The forms of this worship cover something that must not be looked at too closely. There are underneath grave and serious thoughts, teachings that they do not wish to hear: "I know well who You are, Holy One of God; You are come to destroy us." *Scio te quis sis, Sanctus Dei; venisti perdere nos.*

Is it not true, my dearly beloved brethren, that this is the answer to the riddle? Is it not true that this is the principle of that partiality which everywhere excludes Christianity? Saint Paul had told me so in the sequel of the text I have so often cited: "If anyone does not fix himself on Jesus Christ and on His doctrine, he is a proud man who knows nothing; but he pines away, he dries up over frivolous and wretched questions, the object of an eternal conflict between men whose heart is corrupt, and who are outside the truth": *Conflictationes hominum mente corruptorum, et qui veritate privati sunt.* Descend into your heart and answer me whether the reason for your opposition to Christianity is not that secret opposition you have to the truth.

Is it not that Christianity breathes an odour of virtue and purity, and that your heart is corrupt? Admit it: all your reasons, all your objections, all your contemptuous and disdainful affectations, all that is only pretext and sham. The truth is that you do justice to Christianity, but that you are afraid of it; and that you have such estrangement from it only because you are estranged from God. So that, my brethren, this aversion of men for Christianity is the most striking testimony that can be rendered to it. Yes, holy Church of Jesus Christ, your crime is to have the truth in you. Cease to be so holy, so pure; renounce your heavenly origin, and you will begin to please the world. But no, rather be proud of being hated by the world. Not everyone who wishes has this privilege; you possess it alone. Alone on earth, like Jesus Christ your Founder, you can say to all the sects, to all the other pretended religions: "You, the world cannot hate; but me it hates, because I condemn it": *Mundus non potest odisse vos; me autem odit quia testimonium perhibeo de illo quod opera ejus mala sunt.* [The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I give testimony of it, that the works thereof are evil.]

But, my dearly beloved brethren, if the divinity of Christianity is a motive of aversion for certain men, for every sensible man on the contrary it imposes a new duty, an absolute duty to study it. For if Christianity is a divine religion, can it be permitted to despise the knowledge of it? And thus, my brethren, we should arrive logically at our second proposition: All the more is it a duty to study and examine in depth Christianity, if it is considered from its true point of view, that is, as a religion revealed by God for the salvation of men. The development of this second proposition will, if it please God and with the help of His most holy Mother, be the object of another instruction. "I know who You are, Holy One of God; You are come to destroy us." My dearly beloved brethren, I am happy to tell you in closing that this phrase was true in the mouth of the devil, but it is false in the mouth of men. Ah! if it is the devil who speaks in you, if it is pride, if it is vice, if you have resolved to remain forever under the empire of evil, yes, it is still true; Christianity has for its mission to destroy all that. All the vices together may cry to it: *Scio te quis sis, Sanctus Dei; venisti perdere nos.* But your evil passions, that is not you, my dearly beloved brethren; vice is not man, any more than rust is iron and an ulcer is the body. Man — hear Jesus Christ, Founder of Christianity — "man, I have come not to destroy him, but to save him": *Hominem non veni perdere, sed salvare.*

O you, then, whoever you are, whom sad prejudices have made avoid until now the least contact with Christianity, draw near, contemplate it close at hand; and you will see yet another wonder that I have not been able to tell you. You will read on all its pages these words: Charity, love. Charity, love — that was all Jesus Christ; charity, love — that is all Christianity. No, Christianity has not come to destroy anything. Your intelligence — Christianity, instead of destroying and narrowing it, will open before it a new horizon it did not know. Your heart — Christianity, instead of constraining and confining it, will dilate it in an ineffable manner; your passions — it will not annihilate them, but it will purify them, ennoble them, divinise them. And soon, prostrate at the feet of Catholic truth, you will cry out: "Holy One of God, ah! I know, I know now who You are. You had said it well: You are come not to destroy us, but to save us." *Scio te quis sis, Sanctus Dei… hominem veni non perdere, sed salvare.*

Shall I communicate to you, in closing, my dearly beloved brethren, an observation we have been in a position to make more than once? From time to time it happens that, whether in the relations of civil life or in religious ceremonies, the Christian priest finds himself face to face with the pretended enemies or despisers of Christianity. And then, through those looks that are fixed on us, and in which one might see only half hatred and disdain, half that interest which is given to a curious object, there is another sentiment, ill disguised, that we have often caught, and which is almost always the only real one. As they see in us the personification of Christianity, they seek to discover on our brow, to read in our heart, what they might expect from us, and what dispositions the religion of which we are the ministers would inspire in us, in case they should finally yield to those remorses and anxieties which ever keep watch at the bottom of the soul. Ah! my very dear brother, look, read on our brow and in our heart: you will find there only what is the spirit

of Christianity. Love, charity, pardon: that was all Jesus Christ; that is all Christianity; that is all the priesthood.

Once more, my beloved brethren, you whom prejudices keep away, draw near, then, that you may see for yourselves. Come at least and make the trial of Christianity. Do not judge it without having heard it. It seems to me I have proved that it well deserves this justice. Come, and if you are in good faith, I am sure that soon you will throw yourselves into its arms crying out: “Holy One of God, ah! too long have I misjudged You; I know, yes, I know now who You are. You had said it well: You are come not to destroy us, but to save us.” This is what I wish you, my dearly beloved brethren, with the blessing of Monseigneur.[4]

Translator’s notes

1. The preacher addresses the bishop of Chartres (“Monseigneur”) at the opening; the final formula “with the blessing of Monseigneur” refers to him. Footnote 1 in the source gives the copy date (Sept. 1841); the sermon itself is dated 1840 in the title.

2. The long passage “Will you speak to me of duration…” is a prosopopoeia: Christianity itself speaks in the first person, in the pattern of 2 Corinthians 11:21–27, with the refrain “*In quo quis audet, audeo et ego… plus ego*”.

3. *Parti-prêtre* (“priest party”) is a polemical term of the period (clericalism-baiting); given in French with a gloss.

4. “Presumably Mgr de Quélen”: the text names no one (“ce grand archevêque de Paris dont toute l’Église de France pleure encore la perte”); the identification is the translator’s inference and is not stated in the edition.

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[1] This sermon was copied at Saint-Julien de Royaucourt, near Laon, in the month of September 1841. — Editor’s note.

[2] Monseigneur Clausel de Montals, bishop of Chartres. — Editor’s note.

[3] Presumably Mgr de Quélen (d. 31 December 1839); the preacher does not name him.

[4] Cf. Appendix I: A, 10; AB 21 *bis*, 21 *quater*, 25 *bis*, 55, 61; p. 21, n° 10 *bis*, 11. — Avertissement, p. XXII.

n° 9. Second Sermon on the Importance of Studying the Christian Religion

Preached at the cathedral of Chartres, on Wednesday 25 March, the feast of the Annunciation (1840).[1]

Hæc est vita æterna ut cognoscant te, solum Deum verum, et quem misisti Jesum Christum. [This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.] Eternal life consists in knowing the true God, and Jesus Christ His Son and His envoy. (St. John, ch. XVII, v. 3.)

MONSEIGNEUR,

In our preceding instruction we established this first proposition: Christianity, considered from a purely human point of view, would still deserve to be studied as the most astonishing of institutions. We showed that Christianity united in itself alone, and in an infinitely more eminent degree, all the kinds of celebrity found in the other institutions; and we concluded that even those who would see in Jesus Christ only an ordinary man and in His Church only a natural institution could not, without an unreasonable contradiction and inconsistency, study everything else and despise the study of Christianity. But, if you have observed it well, my dearly beloved brethren, we went farther; and, as we had announced to you, there is such a logical chain between our two propositions that the development of the first led us to conclude in anticipation the point apparently the most difficult and longest to prove of the second. Allow me to sum up my argument.

I ask this man of the world, this despiser of the Christian religion: Why do you not study Christianity? — He answers me: Because I do not believe in the divinity of Christianity; I regard it as a purely human institution. — I take up at once: Have you excluded from your plan of study all purely human things? What do you

study, then, day by day? Are they not the human sciences? — Yes. — Well! if I show you that Christianity is, even humanly speaking, the most marvellous thing there is, and consequently that which most deserves to be studied, what will you have to answer? — Nothing. — You are therefore inconsistent? — Yes. — And why are you thus inconsistent when it is a question of Christianity? For after all one is not inconsistent for pleasure and without any interest in being so… You hesitate. Let me conclude: You told me that you do not study Christianity because you regarded it as a human institution; and I tell you on the contrary that you do not study it because you feel well that it is not a human institution. Knowing on the one hand that secret opposition which men have to truth and to religion, and seeing on the other that you eagerly study everything on earth except Christianity, I conclude, and I defy you to answer anything to this reasoning, I conclude that truth and religion are found in Christianity, and that you affect to despise it only on that account. Your disdain, your aversion for Christianity is, in my eyes, the most authentic testimony and the most irrefutable proof of its divinity.

I have therefore not to establish today the divinity of Christianity. Christianity gives itself out as divine, and the pretended unbelievers know well that it really is so, or at least an irresistible instinct leads them to believe it. Unbelief is too often done the honour of being combated. To need combating, it would have to exist, and it does not exist. “Not everyone is an atheist who wishes to be,” said Bonaparte on his deathbed (and *atheist* in his mouth was synonymous with *unbeliever*).[2] Every man who has any frankness will say as much. Wish it as one may, one is not an unbeliever. The truth is known everywhere. In heaven it is known, and it is loved and adored. In hell it is known, and it is trembled at and dreaded. On earth it is known, and all one can do is pass by it with contempt, saying one does not know it; but at bottom, I know well who You are, Holy One of God: *Scio te quis sis, Sanctus Dei.*

No, no, not everyone who wishes is an unbeliever. Not everyone who wishes can doubt the existence of the sun. Study a little the man who is called an unbeliever; follow him in those circumstances where man reveals himself involuntarily, and see whether he does not pay homage to Christian truth. Sometimes it is by the hatred with which he honours it; more often by his avowals in speech or conduct. Whence comes it, for example, that on his deathbed, when an unbeliever is converted (it is not so rare; all the principal unbelievers have been converted and confessed), whence comes it that it is toward the Catholic religion that he at once turns his eyes? Never has a man who wished to be reconciled with God at death deliberated for an instant whether he should call a Protestant minister or a Catholic priest. During his life, however, this man seemed to regard all religions as equally good or equally bad. Whence comes it that now he makes up his mind so quickly, if not because this converted unbeliever is, in sober truth, only a believer, who all his life tried to disguise his belief from others and from himself?

Thus, my dearly beloved brethren, to prove the divinity of Christianity to most of those who are called unbelievers is to undertake to prove to them what they know well, what they feel at least it would be easy for them to ascertain, but what they have resolved not to examine, not to study. And it is precisely this disposition of indifference toward the true religion, known, or at least strongly sensed as such, that I wish to combat today by establishing this second proposition: All the more, if Christianity is a religion revealed by God, is it a rigorous duty to study it and examine it in depth; a duty whose violation is a great crime against God, and entails the most dangerous results for ourselves. Two serious reflections which interest everyone, and which I shall set forth in the simplest and most familiar language; reserving to close with some considerations which it would have been easy to fuse with the rest of the subject, but which, presented apart, may produce a greater effect. Let us invoke the lights of the Holy Spirit through Mary. *Ave Maria.*

I. God created man to know Him, love Him and serve Him in the manner in which He wishes to be served: this is what plain common sense alone would teach in the absence of the catechism. God, who does nothing and can do nothing except for His glory, having created outside Himself an intelligent and reasonable being, must necessarily be the first object that occupies this reason and this intelligence. And if it pleases God to

reveal Himself in a particular manner to His creature, it is evident again that the latter is bound to lend an ear to the voice of its Creator, on pain of offending Him very gravely.

My dearly beloved brethren, if while a respectable person addresses us we affected to pay no attention and to busy ourselves with something else, who would not see in this conduct a dishonesty and an outrage? If this person had authority over us, and while he gives us his orders we turned our head away so as not to hear him, would there not be in that an insolent disobedience and a revolt? Now, my brethren, tell me, is it not the least we owe to God — allow me the word — to have as much politeness and good manners toward Him as we have toward our fellow men? What! He who reigns in the heavens deigns, from the height of His throne, to enter into communication with the children of men, to lower upon them a ray of His divine light; He condescends to reveal to them something of His knowledge and His infinite perfections, to speak with them of their dearest interests… And behold man, that humble worm, does not think fit to listen to the voice of the God of glory, to whom he returns only rebuffs and disdain in exchange for His holy advances! What! it is the sovereign Master of all things, He on whom depends our life and all we have; it is that powerful King who traces for us the rules of our conduct, who teaches us the road to follow to arrive at Him… And behold man, proud creature, will not receive the orders of the Creator, and distracts himself with trifles not to hear them! What insolence and what revolt!

But also what ingratitude! For, says the great Bossuet, what renders our audacity and our indifference more inexcusable is that the eternal Truth has not done as the sun, which, remaining always in its sphere, is content to send its rays to men. She, whose native place is heaven, willed also to be born on earth: *Veritas de terra orta est.* [Truth is sprung out of the earth.] She was not content to send us her lights from afar; she herself came to bring them to us. And men, ever obstinate, closed their eyes, and closed them with a new and more insurmountable obstinacy. Ingrates who reject so precious a benefit!

For do you know, my brethren, what it cost God to make us this revelation, to give us this religion of which we take no account and of which we do not even wish to take cognisance? When our learned men return from those long journeys undertaken through a thousand dangers to gather some information on unknown peoples, to bring back some products useful to society, at once everyone presses around them; people are eager to learn from their lips the detail of what they have seen in those other climes. This curiosity is quite natural and altogether permitted. Now, my dearly beloved brethren, it is the Son of the living God, it is substantial Truth that tears Himself from the bosom of the divinity, that descends from the height of the heavens to reveal to the earth the marvels of the heavenly kingdom; He clothes Himself in our miserable nature; it is at the price of the most ignominious sufferings and the most cruel death that He leaves us the sacred code of His doctrine, and we make no account of it! This heavenly stranger, this divine traveller come from eternity, is received with indifference. In vain are His accounts supported by authentic testimonies; in vain does He speak to us of what touches us most closely, of the history of our family, of its first nobility, of its unhappy fall, of its admirable restoration, of its eternal future; in vain does He offer to take us with Him into that fair kingdom of which His Father is king, and where He is king Himself, and where He promises us thrones and crowns — we do not listen to Him, and there is nothing we do not prefer to Him.

And this, my brethren, further aggravates the crime of the despisers of religion: it is the odious preference they give to everything else. O heaven! there is no production so insipid that it is not read; and the heavenly doctrine, the divine book has no readers. What do I say? and it is the thought of the eloquent priest of Marseilles, Salvian: let a charlatan retail absurdities in the public square, he will have hearers, he will make dupes; and Jesus Christ is listened to by no one.

O men of science, what are you doing? You search with your instruments for some new star in the heavens; but the God who hung those worlds in the firmament — will you never seek Him? Unfortunates! if you were to find the Creator behind one of those globes, is it not true that, frightened by this fatal discovery, you would break at once your dangerous instrument? That is to say, you value the work only so far as it hides the

workman from you. The workman! you do not want him. Men of science, what are you doing besides? You move mountains and valleys, you dig the earth in its entrails to extract some debris of I know not what sketches of broken ancient worlds. But tell me, is there not another ruin that touches you more closely, and on which you ought above all to meditate? It is yourself. Interrogate religion; she will tell you of that frightful fall you have made, of those supernatural gifts you have lost, of the terrible breach made in your nature, and of the admirable repairer given to you, Jesus Christ. But you scarcely listen to me. Men of science, what are you doing besides? You study with care the severe rules of language, often traced by ignorance; but the rules of faith and of conduct, traced by God Himself, you do not study. Grammar, in your eyes, outweighs the Gospel.

There are even the follies of paganism which today still, as in the time of Saint Augustine, obtain the preference over Christianity. Tell me, is it not a very revolting outrage to God to attach more value to mythology than to the catechism? And yet, cries the holy bishop of Hippo, how many men are there who would be ashamed not to know that I know not what goddess of wisdom came forth fully armed from the brain of the master of the gods, and who have never learned anything of the eternal generation of the Word? How many who will tell you the whole story of an Apollo turned shepherd, and who are absolutely strangers to the history of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd come down upon earth to run after the strayed sheep? How many who know in detail all the superstitious observances of antiquity, and who have not the first idea of the Christian sacrifice, of the doctrine of the sacraments, or of any of the Catholic practices?

And you, men of toil and pain, with what studies do you occupy yourselves, since the century has wished to give you too the pride of knowledge, to make learned men of you? Instead of those books which spoke to you of God, of Jesus Christ, of heaven and the means of arriving there, of hell and the means of avoiding it; instead of those books which made your fathers religious and upright men, what do I see in your hands? The history of shells, insects and minerals: as if God had put us into the world to know before all else insects, minerals and shells! You are taught the history of the manners and religion of the most distant peoples; but your own religion, its dogmas and its moral rules, no one speaks to you of any more; and you have arrived on this point at such a state of indifference that I do not well know what could be said of your worship and your God to the other peoples who might be curious to know them.

I see you still studying I know not what new sciences. For, my brethren, everything has become a science among us, since religion is no longer one: science of agriculture, science of commerce, what do I know! All this, doubtless, may have its usefulness; but the culture of the heart, but that noble commerce which every creature must maintain with the Creator, and in which eternal interests are in question — is that nothing any more? Has it become superfluous to go to the temple to hear the divine word, since chairs have been set up from which you are taught your material interests? Let us say it: each gives what he has, teaches what he knows. Our century knows how to count; it counts marvellously; that is what it has most perfected. Let me traverse France entire: I shall see in all the cottages men very busy learning a certain new way of calculating and measuring. That may be praiseworthy; but He in whom unity and number are found together, He who made all things in weight, number and measure, He to whom a terrible account will have to be rendered — are you then dispensed from knowing Him?

Where do we stand, my dearly beloved brethren, where does the world stand with regard to this principle that I laid down at the outset: God created man to know Him? Is it not true that if this was God’s intention in creating man, this intention is totally misunderstood, and that men busy themselves with knowing everything except God and the religion which He has given them? Outrage, revolt, ingratitude, injurious preference: these are the characters of the crime committed against God by whoever neglects to study the Christian religion.

But will this crime remain unpunished? And if the man forgetful of religion is guilty toward God, has he nothing to fear for himself? We have seen the crime of this ignorance; let us see its dangerous results, both for the life to come and for the present life.

II. Allow me, my brethren, to gather here and adapt to my subject some thoughts of Pascal. “The truth of Christianity is a thing that matters so much to us, and touches us so profoundly, that one must have lost all feeling to be indifferent about it. All our actions and all our thoughts must take such different roads according as religion is true or false, that it is impossible to take a step with sense and judgment except by regulating it by the view of this important point… Between the indifferent man and hell or nothingness there is only life, which is the most fragile thing in the world. For heaven certainly not being for those who despise religion, they have nothing to expect but hell or nothingness. There is nothing more real than that, nothing more terrible. Let us play the brave as much as we like: this is the end that awaits the finest life in the world. It is in vain that men turn their thought from that eternity, as if they could annihilate it by not thinking of it. It subsists in spite of them, it advances; and death, which is to open it, will infallibly soon put them in the horrible necessity of being either eternally annihilated if religion is false, or eternally unhappy if religion is true… That is why,” continues this great man, “there are on earth only two sorts of persons who can be called reasonable: either those who serve God with all their heart because they know Him, or those who seek Him with all their heart because they do not yet know Him… Yet experience proves that most men belong to neither of these two classes. They do not even doubt the divinity of religion; they know it or at least they feel it, but they despise it and do not wish to examine it deeply. They are people who counterfeit themselves, and who, not being at bottom unbelievers, hold it an honour to appear so and to become so, if possible. They are persons who have heard it said that the fine manners of the world consist in playing the hothead thus. As for me, I confess, this negligence of men in an affair in which their eternity is at stake, this affected ignorance of a religion which alone can procure their salvation, this insensibility to the most terrible things, this brutish repose in which one would still have to fear nothingness for want of hell, all this is a monster to me; and I have no terms to qualify such extravagant and stupid creatures…” Such, my brethren, is the manner in which this fine genius, one of the greatest thinkers the world has produced, viewed the indifference and contempt of men for religion.

And indeed, if our ignorance in matters of religion could excuse us, if one could escape hell by not thinking of it, I should see a motive for this prodigious carelessness. But not to think of it is on the contrary the surest road to arrive there. To turn away one’s mind from the truth, to be indifferent to it, is precisely the crime that God will punish with the most severity and justice. My brethren, there are nevertheless men who very seriously resemble that stupid animal which, it is asserted, believes it is no longer seen and has put itself out of danger when it has shut its eyes and sees nothing more. There are men who persuade themselves that by dint of forgetting God, He will forget them, that by dint of forgetting hell, hell will forget to swallow them up; they flatter themselves with having become as it were strangers, with having been put outside the law, with having conquered a sort of exceptional position in creation, and they hope to pass clandestinely through the world and to hide from the sovereign Being. What folly! And what is that half-slumber which one succeeds perhaps in procuring by dint of intoxicating sophisms, compared with that horrible awakening which will necessarily follow it and which nothing will follow any more? Your contempt, your smiles, your shakings of the head, as Bossuet says — all that is easy. But wait. God also will smile and shake His head: *Deus irridebit et subsannabit eos.* [God shall laugh at them and mock them.] It is evident, my brethren, that the sole voluntary ignorance of religion is of itself a crime worthy of death, because it includes contempt of God and the will to escape His almighty hand.

But besides, God, who destines us for heaven, having given us religion to arrive there, from the moment we do not know this religion we do not know the road to heaven, and it is consequently impossible to arrive there; God was able to prescribe in His religion, and Christianity teaches that He has in fact prescribed,

certain things as necessary means, and of a necessity that nothing can supply, for obtaining eternal happiness. Now if you do not know the means, you cannot use them; and not using them, since they are of absolute and indispensable necessity, what becomes of you? God besides was able to promulgate in His religion, and He has in fact promulgated, laws; He has ordered certain practices, certain observances. He had every right to. Not knowing them, you cannot fulfil them; and not having fulfilled them, what will you have to plead to avoid the terrible sanction which God has attached to them? Will you go to the dread tribunal to plead your ignorance as an excuse? My brethren, when a law has been publicly proclaimed and posted at every point of the city, is he who would neither hear nor read it admitted before the courts to justify his infraction by his ignorance? Therefore, my dearly beloved brethren, ignorance of religion necessarily compromises our eternity. And surely our eternity is something!

But I add that the knowledge of religion is necessary to our happiness from this life, and that without it something will always be wanting to us. I only touch lightly on this matter, often treated, but always worthy of attention. God, my dearly beloved brethren, in giving us religion, did not make us a superfluous present which we could refuse without consequence. In giving us religion, God only consulted our need and satisfied it. For just as in giving us the organ of sight God owed us light, so in giving us a conscience, a moral and religious sense, God owed us a religion. So that ignorance and forgetfulness of religion leaves a faculty idle in us, and consequently puts us in the impossibility of being happy, since happiness can only be the result of the perfect development of our faculties. What do I say? and what faculty does not suffer in us from the absence of religion? Our mind, which thirsts for truth, will never be satisfied except by the contemplation of infinite truths; and, lacking infinite truth, it will precipitate itself into errors and absurd systems.

And here, my brethren, ah! I could develop with new vigour this text of Saint Paul which already had so much significance even when we consented to see in Christianity only a human institution: “Whoever does not attach himself to Jesus Christ and to His doctrine is a proud man who knows nothing, but who pines away, who dries up over frivolous and wretched questions.” For what are, my brethren, what are all the sciences that occupy worldly people, beside that divine science which Jesus Christ has brought us? What are human institutions compared with that Daughter of heaven whose destinies, for an instant linked with those of earth, alone give any interest to the events down here, and who, when she flies away to the heavens, will leave this globe, henceforth useless to the designs of God, a prey to flames and to all the elements which will dispute among themselves its destruction?

No, my brethren, apart from God and religion nothing can satisfy the mind of man, nor his heart either. As Saint Augustine has so well said, this heart, made for God, will always be restless and will not be able to settle outside its centre; for want of that infinite object of its love which it does not know, it will prostitute itself to vices, to egoism, it will fall into filth. For who will chain the passions of an unbelieving heart? and if its passions know no bridle, where will they stop? Thus, my brethren, ignorance of religion leaves at the bottom of man a frightful void that nothing can fill; an essential element of his happiness is lacking to him. In vain he asks it of all creatures one after another; his life is a series of disappointments and bitternesses which often end in despair. This, my brethren, this is the history of so many unfortunates who do not know religion, and who, having never known it, do not know how, cannot even at the moment of death lift their eyes toward her to implore her consolations and her pardons. This, my brethren, is the principle of those crimes that desolate families and societies.

Who could describe the happiness of those ancient families where religion was so well known from the earliest age? What has become of those happy times, when the father, amid his numerous children ranged around the hearth, told, and made the youngest repeat, the naive and touching stories of the Old Testament, or the marvellous deeds of the Saints and heroes of religion? Ah! the simplicity and also the felicity of those patriarchal houses exist now only in memory. Since religion is no longer the first study of childhood nor the most important study of youth, who could tell how many evils this negligence has caused in families, and

how many mothers it has made shed tears of sorrow? Who could tell above all how many upheavals and crimes ignorance of religion has caused in society?

My brethren, does not what has happened in the last half-century cry to us loudly enough that there is no peace for the nation where God is not known? Ah! it is truly in our days that this word of Isaiah has been accomplished: “Hear, children of Israel, what the Lord has said: The earth is destitute of the knowledge of God, and for this it will be reduced to a state so lamentable that, if it could weep, it would melt, it would be consumed in tears. Ignorance of the heavenly doctrine and discipline is the cause of all the crimes that desolate the world. Murders, thefts (it is still Isaiah who speaks), lying, impurity have covered the earth, for this great reason that the knowledge of God is not found in it.”[3]

It is then true, my brethren, that the only hope of our social regeneration rests on the study of religion; that the first step of return to peace and happiness will be the return to the science of Christianity. But a knowledge of religion of any kind would not suffice. What must be its characters? What are the means and the method to be employed? So many questions which we shall treat successively. And before all, to know religion, it is necessary to come and hear the word of God: a grave and important subject for our next instruction.

But we promised to add here some considerations which will complete what we have already said, and which will cast beforehand some light on what we are to treat later. It seemed to us that these reflections might be useful to certain minds, elevated otherwise, but who still have the weakness of regarding the study of revealed religion as dishonouring to reason. It is therefore this great objection against the study of revealed religion that we are going to refute in a third reflection, and whose value and motives we are going to discuss, after having drawn breath for a moment.

III. One often meets men who tell us: God gave me reason to raise me to Him; I have in my reason all my religion; I find in my own depths, in my natural sense, a worship worthy of God. Why then should I go and seek outside the science of religion? It would be doing outrage to my reason, and consequently to God, of whom it is the most perfect work.

My very dear brother, God has given you reason, I know. I am far from contesting the nobility, the excellence and the heavenly origin of your reason. Those very Scriptures that you disdain as outrageous to reason have spoken to me of it in very magnificent terms. They have taught me that God, in creating man, breathed into him a breath of intelligent life, that He imprinted in his soul the seal of His divine light, and that He gave him a right sense. They tell me again that the divine Word is the true light that enlightens every man coming into this world; that the kingdom of God is within man; that God is not far from us, but has His throne in our intelligence and in our heart.

God gave you reason… I like to see that you acknowledge having received it from Him. But tell me, is not one of the first teachings of your reason that if God speaks you are bound to listen to Him and to believe Him? Does your reason tell you that God was bound to impose silence on Himself, and to condemn Himself to an eternal mutism toward you after He had created you?

What is your reason? I have just said it after the Scriptures: it is that divine breath which was breathed into you; it is that spark which was deposited in your soul. God, in creating you, engraved in your mind and heart certain first truths, certain fundamental principles: these truths, these principles constitute your reason. Reason is that first irradiation, that first illumination of the Word, or rather it is the Word Himself, in so far as He enlightens every man coming into this world: *Erat lux vera quæ illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum.* [That was the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.]

And what is revelation? It is a divine word addressed to you, and added to what the same divine mouth had primitively inspired in you: it is a second illumination of the Word, a revelation made first to our fathers by

the ministry of angels and prophets, made afterwards by the Word Himself incarnate. Revelation is the Word in so far as He enlightens every man who is born again by faith and by grace: *His qui credunt in nomine ejus, qui non ex sanguinibus… sed ex Deo nati sunt.* [To them that believe in His name, who are born not of blood… but of God.]

Now, these notions of natural reason and of supernatural revelation once supposed, in what can the second be an outrage to the first, and how can you be so docile toward reason and so opposed to revelation? Since you acknowledge having received the first from God, why do you make so many difficulties in accepting the second? That same divine truth which was engraved at the beginning on the tables of your heart, why does it repel you so much to read it more developed, more extended, on the tables of the law? Why be proud of what God wrote in your soul, and humiliated by what He wishes to reveal to you besides? That same sun which woke you in the morning by the glimmers of its dawn, why and by what right would you forbid it to guide you, to enlighten you through the day by new effusions of its light?

The incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, in presenting Himself to your reason by revelation, presents Himself before His own domain: *In propria venit.* [He came unto His own.] He comes to knock at the door of His own dwelling, since reason is natural Christianity, as Tertullian says, that is, reason; it is the same Jesus Christ who, as eternal Word, enlightens our soul on its entrance into the world. Revelation, in relation to reason, is a second ray which comes to superimpose itself on the first.

God, in imposing revealed truths on your reason, only perfects His work: it is a right, it seems to me, that cannot be contested to the workman. Or rather, the reasonable man, on coming from the hands of the workman, was a perfect work in his kind; but it pleases the workman to raise him to a perfection of a higher kind and nature. The tree was good, and would have produced good fruits: I grant it; but the hand that planted it wishes to draw from it still more excellent fruits, and for that purpose on the trunk of nature it grafts the branches of grace. The eyes of man, I grant again, were good enough, piercing enough, and they sufficed for an ordinary and natural range; but it pleases the author of man to open before him a new horizon beyond the visible spaces; and to put man in relation with this supernatural world, God (allow me this language) adds to the eye of reason the telescope of faith. Why refuse this second gift, which is an amplification of the first, as theology says? Once more, why is man so proud of reason and so opposed to revelation, both coming from the same source?

Ah! my brethren, it is because reason is something man makes pretty much what he wishes. Man uses his reason to contemplate and admire the truth so long as the truth pleases him, and he makes it be silent as soon as the truth troubles and thwarts him. Reason is the vague, complaisant teaching of truth; the will makes of it the interpretation and commentary at its pleasure. Reason is a ray of the divine light of the Word deposited in the heart of man; this light which is in him, man, by a sacrilegious attempt, by an adulterous crime, can denature, decompose, alter, corrupt: *Adulterantes verbum.* [Adulterating the word.] Reason, man uses at need against truth, against virtue, against God.

But revelation, Christianity, is the precise teaching of truth; there is no evading it. Revelation is the incorruptible light of truth; it is beyond our reach. Jesus Christ, Son of God, has said, *magister dixit* [the Master has said]; and if you raise difficulties as to the sense of the word of Jesus Christ, the Church, alone charged with interpretation, pronounces; there is nothing more to do but believe and submit. Revelation is a clear word, a clearly stated decision; they are very positive practices. There you are taught, for example, that there is an eternal hell, that marriage is indissoluble, that one must confess and communicate once a year. All this is sharply cut, well articulated; and people do not want truth thus formulated, thus rendered inescapable.

Allow me to reproduce on this subject an ingenious remark of Saint Gregory. We are, in regard to truth, says this great pope, like hedgehogs: when this animal is a little way off from you, it looks at you rather boldly, and you can make out its head, its feet and its body. But as soon as you approach to lay a hand on it, you find

nothing more than a ball bristling with points, and you are forced to withdraw your hand all bloodied.[4] So it is, my dearly beloved brethren, that in a cloudy and uncertain distance man contemplates the truth quite willingly, he poses with a certain complacency before it, and so long as it keeps at a distance great enough for admiration to be purely speculative, this lover of truth is at ease; there is in his attitude something of abandon, of ease, of benevolence. But if that vague and distant something comes nearer and becomes precise, if truth wants to lay its hand on him, that is, to apply its principles to his conduct, ah! suddenly this admirer of truth changes countenance, he takes fright, he entrenches himself and wraps himself up in himself, and truth finds nothing more than a shapeless, ungraspable mass, on which there is no hold, and which seeks to wound.

I am the truth, said Jesus Christ: *Ego sum veritas*; and you, you want to kill me because my word has no hold on you: *Vos vultis me interficere, quia sermo meus non capit in vobis.* [You seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.] Yes, my brethren, men still quite willingly put to Jesus Christ the question of Pilate: *Quid est veritas?* What is truth? What thing is it? *Quid?* But if, instead of the neuter which is expected, the answer is made in more precise terms, in personal names: *Ego sum veritas*, it is I who am the truth, I who speak to you, *principium, qui et loquor vobis*; and you, you are that man whom I, the truth, condemn, and whose conduct is not in conformity with my principles: *Tu es ille vir* [Thou art the man] — oh! then, says Saint Gregory, this answer has far too much precision; people no longer have ears to hear, and, if need be, they arm themselves to fight and to kill truth thus personified: *Vos vultis me interficere quia sermo meus non capit in vobis.*

That, my brethren, is why revelation is so little relished by men; it is too precise and too clear. There are men who speak emphatically of God, of the Supreme Being: that costs little. After all, God is a sort of abstraction; so long as He stays in His heaven He is not too much to be feared, and besides our reason gives Him the colours we want Him to have. But Jesus Christ, that is, God made man, God in the midst of us, God speaking, commanding, threatening — ah! that is much too serious. Let God reign over us from the height of heaven, very well! but this one, *hunc*, we want none of: *Nolumus hunc regnare super nos.* [We will not have this man to reign over us.] Others will still admit Jesus Christ and His Gospel. Jesus Christ has proved His divinity, one must believe it. He has given us the Gospel, one must receive it. Besides, the Gospel contains great beauties. Certain men protect the Gospel. Very well, then, for the Gospel! But the Catholic Church with her supreme tribunal, her severe and inflexible interpretation of every word of Scripture — ah! that again is much too precise; there is not even a little reasoning to slip in between truth and us. The Gospel, by all means! but this Church, this teaching body, this Pope, this Council, *hunc*, we want none of: *Nolumus hunc regnare super nos.* There are still other men, my brethren, who accept religion as it is; they love religion, it is necessary; it was before us, it will be after. But priests, that is, the immediate instruments, the only instruments by which religion, coming out of generality, can apply itself to the individual, to man — oh! that is another matter. Religion is a sort of abstraction again which does not trouble much. Religion, for example, does say that one must confess; but if there were only she, she does not hear confessions, religion. But the priest, the man of religion, the man of confession — oh! that touches us too closely. Religion, yes; but the priest, this one, *hunc*, we want none of: *Nolumus hunc regnare super nos.*

Do you understand well now, my brethren, the whole aptness of Saint Gregory's comparison, and may I not say with that great Pope, using a passage of Scripture, that there is here, in our heart, something which does not too badly resemble the hedgehog: *Ibi fovea ericii?* (cf. Is. 34:15) [There the hedgehog had its hole.]^[Cf. Isaiah 34:15 ("There hath the ericius had its hole").] And it is this something, my dearly beloved brethren, that has such a great opposition to revelation, which is far too clear, too explicit on an infinity of points where reason would be much more accommodating. Reason is made to be silent, it is made to lie; revelation, revelation understood Catholically, is not made to be silent, is not made to lie. With reason alone, feeble, weak, such as we inherit it from our prevaricating parents, we feel that we should be excusable up to a certain

point, and that we could plead our ignorance; and we do not want revelation, because, having resolved to take no account of it, we understand that it would make us inexcusable — but that very thing takes away all excuse from us. Besides, says Saint Augustine, in vain does our reason turn its back on revelation to hide in its shadow. This divine light envelops us at too many points, and if it does not enlighten us from the front, we cannot nevertheless avoid its inconvenient rays. That is why reason, wearied and irritated, ends by taking up arms against it.

My brethren, I close with a consideration which will perhaps flatter your hope. This combat of reason and revelation, of philosophy and the Gospel, can, it seems to me, be regarded in two different ways. If one regards it as the opposition of the heart of sinful man to truth and virtue, as the resistance of nature to grace, as the enmity of the world with Jesus Christ, as the effort of hell against heaven, this struggle will last to the end of the centuries. To the end it will be our duty to fight for God against evil, for Jesus Christ against the world. The opposition of reason to revelation will be a disorder of all times, because it is rooted in the very depth of our corrupt nature. But one can say also that this struggle has taken a particular character for three centuries. Jesus Christ, descending upon earth, found it covered with the fogs and clouds that human reason had heaped up there; His divine light dissipated these shadows, the Gospel triumphed over philosophy, faith imposed the yoke on reason. There were indeed, in all times, some attempts of reason to shake off the yoke on one side or another: for every heresy, my brethren, is an effort of reason against revelation, since heresy tends to constitute reason the interpreter and supreme judge of some point of revelation; and that is why, in the first centuries, all the heretics were comprised under the generic name of Gnostics, that is, rationalists. In all times, then, reason did try to raise its head, but always with caution, and it attacked a point only while protesting its respect for all the rest.

It was only about three centuries ago that human reason undertook to deliver a general assault upon revelation. A sect arose which laid down as its fundamental principle the most absolute rationalism. For three hundred years men, arming themselves with one gift to combat another, have said to God: Reason is mine, I want neither You nor Your revelation: *Dixerunt Deo: recede a nobis, scientiam viarum tuarum nolumus.* [They said to God: Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.] God has withdrawn, indeed, and He seemed to concern Himself with this struggle only to furnish arms to His adversaries. Everything has come to favour the revolt of human reason. Printing had just been discovered; the liberty of printing everything was not long in coming. The arts found the secret of effacing distances; one runs over almost the globe as one runs one’s eyes over the map of the world. Science has been able to consult the monuments of all countries and all ages, to interrogate the mountains and the seas, the earth and the heavens. Reason, for three hundred years, has been able to heap up and publish at its ease all its grievances against revelation. The struggle has been long, terrible. But behold one of the combatants begins to weaken; human reason grows weary, all its weapons are blunted, it has vainly exhausted its quiver. Already at different points one hears science, science which lately seemed the irreconcilable enemy of revelation — one hears it here and there deplore having waged so long a ruinous war; one hears it regret not having associated itself with revelation at the very first instead of combating it, and not having taken it as the starting point of all its researches. Yes, the term of this great combat advances; the denouement approaches; this great drama is about to end. Reason, throwing off its bandage, its mask, will at last recognise in revelation its sister, its sister who held it by the foot on the day they were both born, its sister whom it had too long persisted in combating, its younger sister to whom it must yield and obey.

Reconciled at last, reason and revelation, science and faith will embrace as daughters of one father. Natural man will recognise in the God of Christianity the God of his heart, in the author of revelation the author of reason. And the latter, confused by its long persecutions of revelation, will come, as Joseph’s brethren once did, to prostrate itself before its sister, and implore her, in the name of their common father, to forget its crime and to take it henceforth for her slave. And religion, moved, will shed tears, and seeing reason

prostrate at her feet, will say to it: No sorrows or regrets; even in your persecution God had His designs. You meditated evil against me, but God changed it to good, and used it to raise me to that state of glory in which you now see me, and to work the salvation of many peoples. My sister, fear not: we shall always be sisters; your submission will not be that of a slave; I shall feed you and treat you with kindness; there are in the kingdoms of faith rich domains for reason. And religion will thus console her sister, and speak to her with love. And the latter will remain faithful to her; she will acknowledge no more than one Jesus Christ speaking inwardly and outwardly, than one sun illuminating man with two parallel and not contrary rays, of different nature but not opposed, reason and faith; one star, whose natural and supernatural lights reach our soul fused, mingled, divinely amalgamated.

Oh! who will grant us, Lord, who will grant us days long enough to be witnesses of this drawing together of reason and faith! Hasten, O my God, hasten the return of this great prodigal, the human mind, who asked for the portion of his inheritance, who went away into far countries, who squandered all his substance and is reduced to feeding on husks [*la pourriture*, literally “rottenness”]! Hasten, O my God, the return of this great prodigal to religion, to religion who is on the roads awaiting him, who goes every day upon the mountains to see whether he is not coming back, and who already more than once has leaped with love, because it seemed to her she saw in the distance this poor wanderer returning to her.

O Lord Jesus, when You descended from the heavens, almost two thousand years ago, human wisdom had plunged the world into darkness and the shadows of death; and Your light enlightened the world, and by the glow of Your torch You directed our steps in the way of peace. But the key of the abyss has been given again to Satan; the earth has been covered with a thick smoke; prouder and more indocile than ever, philosophy, once vanquished by faith, seems to wish to avenge itself and triumph over her in her turn. O Jesus, it is a new triumph that You have prepared for Your religion. It is time, Lord; the world acknowledges it, its wisdom has begotten only clouds. Return to illumine those who sit in the shadows of death, return to direct our steps in the ways of peace. *Illuminare his qui in tenebris et in umbra mortis sedent, ad dirigendos pedes nostros in viam pacis.* [To enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to direct our feet into the way of peace.]

And you, O Mary, you who are the gate through which the light rose upon the world — *Porta ex qua mundo lux est orta* [the gate from which light has risen upon the world] — with your maternal hand reopen the eyes of this blind man who no longer wishes to see the light; with your powerful hand incline our hearts and minds to the study of the faith and of the religion which Jesus Christ, your Son, brought us from heaven on this day. This is, my brethren, the grace that I wish you, with the blessing of Monseigneur.[5]

Translator’s notes

1. The long quotation from Pascal (“The truth of Christianity is a thing…”) is given in the preacher’s version, a composite and adaptation of the *Pensées* rather than a verbatim excerpt; it has been translated as it stands and not checked against any edition of Pascal.

2. The attributions to Bossuet, Salvian, Augustine, Gregory and Tertullian are the preacher’s and are not verified here. The “Isaiah” quotation is Hosea 4:1–3 in substance (see the note in the text).

3. The date of delivery (25 March 1840) is the feast of the Annunciation; the sermon closes with an allusion to “this day”.

4. In the prodigal-son passage the French has *la pourriture* (“rottenness”), a freer rendering than the Vulgate’s “husks of the swine”; the literal gloss is given in the text.

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[1] The copy of this sermon, with modifications, begun at Saint-Julien in 1841, was finished at the Renaudières [as printed; elsewhere “Rouaudières”] in the month of August 1842. — Editor’s note.

[2] As quoted by the preacher; the saying is not sourced in the edition and has not been verified here.

[3] The passage is attributed by the preacher to Isaiah; it paraphrases Hosea 4:1–3. Noted as printed.

[4] The comparison is attributed by the preacher to Saint Gregory; not verified here.

[5] Cf. Appendix I: A, 11; AB, 55 *bis*.

n° 10. Instruction on the Necessity of Hearing the Word of God

Preached at the cathedral of Chartres, on the Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent (1840).

Quomodo ergo invocabunt, in quem non crediderunt? Aut quomodo credent ei, quem non audierunt? Quomodo autem audient sine prædicante?… Ergo fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi. [How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?… Faith then cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.] How then shall they call upon him in whom they do not believe? Or how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard speak? And how shall they hear speak of him without preaching?… Therefore faith comes from hearing, and one can hear only by attending the preaching of the word of God. (Epistle to the Romans, ch. x, vv. 14, 17.)

MY DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

Rarely has the Holy Spirit employed, in the Scriptures, that severe and methodical form of argumentation which He later inspires in the Catholic Church as a means of defence against the astute attacks of heresy. Here, however, hear how pressing are the reasonings of the Apostle, how vigorous his logic; he seems to speak the language of the schools: “How shall they call upon him in whom they do not believe? Or how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard speak? And how shall they hear speak of him without preaching?… Therefore faith comes from hearing, and one can hear only by attending the preaching of the word of God.” *Quomodo ergo invocabunt, in quem non crediderunt? Aut quomodo credent ei, quem non audierunt? Quomodo autem audient sine prædicante?*

Now, my brethren, this language of the Apostle has kept all its force, and if it then proved the necessity of preaching in order to bring unbelievers to Christianity, it proves no less today the indispensable necessity of this same means to confirm Christians in the faith, and above all to bring back to it that guilty generation which has broken for a century with all the practices and all the beliefs of Christianity. People speak of a religious reaction that is manifesting itself on every side. I am willing to believe in it, if I learn that on every side an eagerness and a sort of enthusiasm for the word of God is awakening. But where this stirring has not yet reached, where the pulpits are still deserted, where heedlessness and human respect still chain society, there is no sign of a return to religion; the first step is yet to be taken. For how shall they call upon him in whom they do not believe? Or how shall they believe in him whom they do not know? And how shall they know him without preaching? *Quomodo ergo invocabunt, in quem non crediderunt? Aut quomodo credent ei, quem non audierunt? Quomodo autem audient sine prædicante?*

So, my dearly beloved brethren, the necessity of coming to hear the word of God is the grave and important subject of our conversation today. And as this question interests at once the faithful and the unbelievers, I shall have regard to the needs of both, whether in developing the principles on which rests the necessity of hearing the word of God, or in refuting the pretexts on which people dispense themselves from coming to hear it.

I. The necessity of hearing the word of God rests on the doctrine of Jesus Christ and of His Church: a doctrine confirmed by promises for those who are faithful in hearing the divine word, and by terrible threats against those who despise or neglect it.

My dearly beloved brethren, it is a truth, mysterious doubtless, but fundamental nevertheless, that God, who redeemed us by His Word, that is, by His uncreated word, has attached our salvation, in the ordinary ways, to the evangelical word. That is why Saint Augustine and several illustrious doctors call preaching a great

sacrament: *Verbum Dei… sacramentum magnum.* And here is how these great men prove this assertion, which tends to establish not that the word of God is strictly a sacrament, but that it shares much in the nature of the sacraments. The incarnate Word, having come down upon earth to instruct and save men, had necessarily to manifest Himself to them everywhere and always. Now, not being able to remain always on earth, nor to be everywhere such as He was seen among the Jews conversing with them, before ascending into the heavens He left three kinds of sacraments to the earth: the Eucharist, by which He dwells in our midst in the truth of His flesh; Baptism, Penance and the other sacraments properly so called, by which He dwells in our midst in the truth of His grace; and preaching, by which He dwells in our midst in the truth of His word.

Hear this divine Saviour on the point of returning to His Father: Go, He says, teach all nations, and baptise; and I am with you until the consummation of the world. *Euntes ergo docete omnes gentes, baptizantes… Et ecce ego vobiscum sum, usque ad consummationem sæculi.* [Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptising them… And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.] Observe: just as He says, I am with you when you confer Baptism, so I am with you when you teach: *Docete omnes gentes, baptizantes eos… Et ecce ego vobiscum sum.* When you administer the sacrament, I am with you mingling My grace with the matter you use; it is not natural water that washes the soul, it is the power of My Spirit that comes to mingle with these elements: *In aqua et Spiritu Sancto.* When you exercise the ministry of preaching, I am with you mingling My grace with your voice; it is not your word, your eloquence that produces faith in hearts, it is the power of My Spirit that comes to borrow your word: *Non estis vos qui loquimini, sed Spiritus Patris vestri qui loquitur in vobis.* [It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.] Your voice is only a sound that strikes the ears; it is My grace that teaches and touches within: *Magnum sacramentum*, cries Saint Augustine, *sonus verborum nostrorum aures percutit; magister intus est.* [A great sacrament: the sound of our words strikes the ears; the Master is within.]

What the Eucharistic species are in relation to the body of Jesus Christ, our words are in relation to His truth; they are only signs, but signs which the divine institution has made efficacious and necessary, says Bossuet. For as one receives the grace of Baptism, and that of Confirmation, only by employing water and oil, as one receives the body of Jesus Christ only by receiving the species, so one receives the divine light only through that sensible and exterior word to which it has been united in a certain sacramental fashion: *Fides ex auditu.* It is an established law, continues Bossuet, that, to pass to the understanding, the mysteries of Christianity must first present themselves to the senses: *Fides ex auditu.* And it had to be so, to honour Him who, being invisible by nature, willed to appear for love of us under a sensible form.

The word of God, my brethren, is therefore a sort of sacrament, which the priest administers by preaching. What theology teaches concerning the priest who confers a sacrament, Tertullian assures us of the priest at the moment he teaches; it is that at that instant he is himself raised to the sacramental state: *Homo mixtus Deo.* [A man mixed with God.] These are the words of Tertullian, which are only a reproduction of those of Jesus Christ: Go, teach, baptise, I am with you; with you when you teach in the same fashion as when you baptise: *Docete… et ecce ego vobiscum sum.* The priest in the act of preaching is therefore, as well as in the act of administering a sacrament, a man mingled with God, that is, a sacramental man: *Homo mixtus Deo.*

From all this, my dearly beloved brethren, it results that preaching has almost the character of a sacrament. It is of divine institution, it is a sensible sign of the secret action of Jesus Christ, it has its determined minister. The only difference there is between the word of God and the sacraments properly so called is that the latter confer immediately justifying grace, whereas preaching confers the graces which dispose to justification. The word of God is the preparatory sacrament for all the others: *Docete… baptizantes.* The door of salvation is faith, and faith comes by hearing, by hearing receiving the word of God: *Fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi.* In the child without reason, faith doubtless is conferred by Baptism independently of preaching: that is the exception God has made in His mercy for the salvation of a great number who die

before the use of reason; but even so Baptism has conferred on them only the habit of faith; and when they have reached the age of reason, the exterior word, religious teaching, is needed for them to produce the act of faith: *Fides ex auditu.* And during his whole life the Christian maintains himself in the faith only by the same means which produced it in him: *Fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi*; and in the ordinary ways it must be the word, not written but articulated, of the priest, sole minister constituted of preaching: *Fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi… et quomodo audient sine prædicante? quomodo vero prædicabunt nisi mittantur?* [and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they be sent?]

This fine doctrine, well established and well understood, has answered beforehand several of the objections we should have had to examine. For do not come and say to us any longer: I supply for preaching, I converse with instructed persons, I read excellent books of piety. All that is good, my brethren, but if it is true that Jesus Christ has attached His graces of faith, of teaching, of interior illumination only to preaching, nothing can wholly supply it. Have we not in Syria rivers better than those of Judea, said a leper to the prophet who sent him to wash in the Jordan? A bad reasoning. For as it is not the natural virtue of the water that is to heal you, but a supernatural virtue; if it pleases God to attach it only to the water of such a river, all your reasonings on the limpidity and beauty of the rivers of your country have nothing to do with the question.

You have good books in which you find better things than those that are preached; but if it pleases God to attach more graces to preaching than to reading, what have you to answer? Now so it is: *Placuit Deo per stultitiam prædicationis salvos facere credentes.* [It hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.] You read sermons that are better than those that are preached; but it pleases God to attach more graces to a mediocre sermon heard than to the reading of an excellent sermon: *Placuit Deo per stultitiam prædicationis salvos facere credentes.* The sermon you read, in the mouth of the preacher has worked marvels; but in your hands it no longer has the grace it had then. A sermon read is, in relation to a sermon heard, about what holy and doubtless venerable water resting in the sacred font is, compared with that same water raised to the sacramental state at the instant the priest’s hand pours it while pronouncing the words. Yes, a sermon read is about like the matter taken apart from the circumstances which constitute the sacrament. You read Holy Scripture; and did not that eunuch of Ethiopia read it too? and yet the preaching of Saint Philip was necessary to open his eyes. You read; but it is not the natural result of teaching that leads to faith, it is a certain divine virtue, and once more this virtue is attached, in the ordinary ways, only to preaching: *Fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi.* To beget truth in a heart, the intervention of the ministry of the word is required: *Genuit nos verbo veritatis.* [Of His own will hath He begotten us by the word of truth.]

That is why the Church, interpreter of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, makes it a strict and indispensable obligation for all Christians to hear the word of God often; that is why the Church of France in particular requires of all the faithful that they attend the parish Mass, where the instruction of the pastors ordinarily takes place. And if in the large towns, for the necessity or utility of Christians, ecclesiastical superiors authorise other Masses, it is because they suppose that other resources exist for hearing the word of God. But if you are in the habit of attending neither the parish instruction nor any other instruction; if you hear the word of God only on the rare occasions of a great solemnity, or of the Lenten station, it is incontestable that you do not fulfil the law of Jesus Christ and the intentions of the Church. By attending an authorised Mass you have fulfilled the precept of sanctifying Sunday by hearing holy Mass; but there remains for you to fulfil another precept, quite distinct, that of hearing the word of God. If you know of anything in theology that dispenses you from it, let me know it, for I have never seen anything like it there. And to excuse those who never or almost never hear the holy word, it would be necessary to erase several quite precise texts of the doctrine of Jesus Christ and of Saint Paul, to tear out an entire page of the Council of Trent, and to destroy in particular a great number of monuments of our Gallican Church.

Thus, my brethren, the necessity of hearing the word of God is established first by the doctrine of Jesus Christ and of the Church. But let us see this doctrine confirmed again by the promises made to those who hear the word of God, and by the threats pronounced against those who despise it.

My dearly beloved brethren, one of the most consoling promises God can attach to the fulfilment of any law or practice whatever is to make of it a sure pledge of predestination; and also one of the most terrible threats that can be pronounced against an infraction or a neglect is to present it as a character and pledge of reprobation: now this is what Jesus Christ has done with regard to the question that occupies us.

Let us hear Saint Bernard speaking to his religious: I feel great consolation, my brethren, when I think of this word of Our Lord Jesus Christ: He that is of God heareth the words of God: *Qui ex Deo est, verba Dei audit.* For, my brethren, one of our great torments on earth is to be ignorant whether we are predestined, and whether we are in the grace of God: *Quis potest dicere: Ego de electis sum, ego de prædestinatis ad vitam, ego de numero filiorum?* [Who can say: I am of the elect, I am of those predestined to life, I am of the number of the sons?] Yet, if no one can have on earth certainty in this regard, there are nevertheless certain reassuring signs — what do I say, manifest and almost indubitable signs. Now the first of all the signs of predestination is taught us by the words of Jesus Christ: *Qui ex Deo est, verba Dei audit.* You hear it, my dearly beloved brethren, you who love the word of God, who receive it eagerly: you possess a moral assurance of your predestination: *Qui ex Deo est, verba Dei audit.* But hear it also, my brethren, and tremble, you who make so little of the word of God: *Propterea vos non auditis, quia ex Deo non estis.* [Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God.] You are so insensible, so estranged from the word of God only because you are not destined for heaven; you do not belong to Jesus Christ, you are not among the number of the elect: *Propterea vos non auditis, quia ex Deo non estis.*

Yes, my brethren, this is the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Fidelity or infidelity to the word of God are signs of predestination or of reprobation; and they are efficacious signs, that is, signs which concur in causing and producing what they signify. People are often frightened, my brethren, over the great mystery of predestination; but I can tell you that our predestination is in our hands, and that it is above all by our fidelity or infidelity to the word of God that the eternal decrees are accomplished and realised. You, my brother, who had guilty habits on which you had never reflected, who neglected essential duties whose importance you had never appreciated; because you love the word of God, one day when you had come near this pulpit you were enlightened on the state of your soul, you reformed your conduct; it is the instruction you heard on that day that will make your salvation, it is from that day that the eternal decree of your predestination was justified by yourself. You are of God, because on that day you came to hear the word of God: *Qui ex Deo est, verba Dei audit.*

But you, my brother, you Christian father, Christian mother, who, while fulfilling your religious duties, in the eyes of God are nevertheless not enlightened enough, delicate enough, for example, about certain duties toward your children: one of these Sundays when, as is your wont, you neglected to hear the word of God, your pastor from the height of this pulpit spoke of the education you owe your children; he pointed out certain vices, unveiled certain illusions; his words could apply to no one better than to you. As you have an upright heart and a timorous conscience, had you been present you would have gathered and put into practice those salutary counsels; but you were not there, and by your absence, on that very day, you laid the cause of your reprobation. From that day the eternal decrees were justified. That instruction which was given and which will never be reproduced before you, will judge you on the last day: *Sermo quem locutus sum vobis, ipse vos judicabit in novissimo die.* [The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.] Yes, on that day you were quite tranquil, you heard a solemn Mass perhaps, you had consequently fulfilled one of the precepts of the Church; you went home with a certain satisfaction, a certain applause of your conscience, and that very day was decisive for your eternity. In fulfilling one precept you should not have omitted another. You are not of God, because on that day you did not hear the word of God: *Propterea vos*

non auditis, quia ex Deo non estis. Ah! my dearly beloved brethren, if eagerness or aversion for the word of God are signs of predestination or of reprobation, what consequences for a great number of Christians! When, from the height of this pulpit, I consider the audience, what do I perceive there? I look first for the men; I see scarcely a few here and there. Ah! those, doubtless, Lord, who dare to resist the torrent, yes, those are Your elect; I love to tell them so on Your behalf: *Qui ex Deo est, verba Dei audit*; yes, they are of God, God destines them for Himself since they come to hear His word. Perhaps they are not yet purified from their faults, perhaps they are brought by still imperfect dispositions, perhaps some even come with intentions hard to justify; but no matter, their attendance at preaching will be rewarded, if it does not bear its fruit today, it will later. Because they come to hear the word of God, I conclude that they are elect and that God destines them for Himself: *Qui ex Deo est, verba Dei audit.*

But, my brethren, how few they are, the men who come to hear the word of God! I still perceive a great number of women, of young persons; and those too I love to tell, especially knowing their dispositions: they are of God, since they love the word of God: *Qui ex Deo est, verba Dei audit.* But so many men, otherwise upright and conscientious, so many fathers of families — where are they? Lord, is there then a mystery of Your justice in their desertion of the holy word, and are they so strange to our audience only because they are strangers to heaven? If they came only once, their uprightness would welcome our words and bring them back to religion. But they do not come, and, not coming, they are themselves the authors of their reprobation. That word which is preached in the temple and which they have not heard will judge them on the last day: *Sermo quem locutus sum vobis, ipse vos judicabit in novissimo die.*

Ah! I explain to myself the small number of the elect and the predestined, since there are so many who exclude themselves from predestination. I explain to myself why there are so few who hear the word of God: *Propterea vos non auditis, quia ex Deo non estis.* From the height of this pulpit I cast my eyes over the temple; and, if not today, often at least I perceive Christians who make so little of the word of God that they do not deign to move a few moments to come and hear it. And the terrible word of Jesus Christ comes at once to my mind: He who is a son of God loves to hear the word of God. You do not hear it, because you are not of God.

Yes, my dearly beloved brethren, you will quite allow me to tremble for your eternal destiny, when I see you carry to such a point of affectation your indifference for the word of God. In vain will you tell me that during that time you pray at the feet of the altars: that untimely prayer is not heard; God has no audience for you in the sanctuary while He speaks to you from the height of the pulpit; He ceases in a manner to reside in the tabernacle while He manifests Himself here in the truth of His word. Hear then today what you would risk learning on the last day. While you were before the altar saying “Lord! Lord!” God put on the lips of His minister a word to which your eternal salvation was attached. Those three steps you would have taken to hear the preaching would have placed you among the predestined; by your negligence you are the cause of your reprobation. From that moment the eternal decrees were justified as regards you. That word which was announced will judge you on the last day: *Sermo quem locutus sum vobis, ipse vos judicabit in novissimo die.* You are not destined for heaven, since you are so indifferent to the word of God: *Qui ex Deo est, verba Dei audit. Propterea vos non auditis, quia ex Deo non estis.* I feel, my brethren, that I am announcing to you terrible and dreadful truths. Soften, if you can, the words of Jesus Christ, and willingly, ah! very willingly shall I soften my teaching.

There is, my dearly beloved brethren, yet another threat of Our Lord Jesus Christ against the despisers of the evangelical word, a terrible threat which often comes to freeze our heart while we announce the truth. “When you enter a city,” He says to His apostles, “and they will not hear you there: *Quicumque non receperit vos, nec audierit sermones vestros* [Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words], go out at once and shake the dust from your feet; in truth I say to you, Sodom and Gomorrha will be treated with less rigour on the day of judgment than that city: *Tolerabilius erit terræ Sodomorum et Gomorrhæorum in die judicii, quam*

illi civitati." [It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for that city.] My dearly beloved brethren, we cannot hide it from ourselves: this city we inhabit is one of the cities of the Catholic world where the word of God is most abandoned, where it is the object of the most unjust disdain; what do we do, then, when we announce the holy word? Ah! unfortunates that we are, we heap burning coals on the head of our fellow citizens. We preach in order that on the last day our word may serve as testimony against them: *In testimonium illis.* [For a testimony to them.] We preach in order to justify the severe vengeances of God, who will say to so many men: My ministers announced the truth near you, and you did not go to hear them. With these helps I wished to save you; by using them thousands of others would have been saved. Go, ye cursed, into the eternal fires.

My brethren, at this moment when I speak to you, and announce truths that might be useful to so great a number of those who are absent, I cannot tell you all that my soul experiences in thinking of these words of Jesus Christ: *Tolerabilius erit terræ Sodomorum et Gomorrhæorum in die judicii, quam illi civitati.* Lord, have You then constituted us prophets only for the ruin of our brethren, are we priests only to justify Your rigours? Must it be, O my God, that men convert our ministry, all of mercy, into a terrible ministry? Must our words kindle Your thunderbolts instead of calling down Your graces? My dearly beloved brethren, deliver us from this bitter thought which is our torment, by henceforth coming more faithfully to hear the word that God puts in our mouth, and by no longer alleging so many bad pretexts to dispense yourselves from it.

II. What are they, my dearly beloved brethren, these pretexts? There are, I admit, there may be valid reasons for dispensation: reasons of dependence, of infirmity, of position. We admit, my dearly beloved brethren, all legitimate reasons. And we beg you, as a favour, not to attribute to us a false exaggeration, so as then to think you have the right to invalidate the rest of our doctrine. Thank God, we dread even the shadow of exaggeration. But how can we admit those pretexts that are commonly brought forward?

People say, for example, that they are instructed enough. Oh! my brethren, is it not certain on the contrary that people have never been more ignorant in matters of religion than in our century? Even the learned world is in this respect of an inconceivable ignorance. *Erudimini qui judicatis terram:* [Be instructed, you that judge the earth:] know at least your catechism, you who govern the world. We never hear religion spoken of in the world — I say in the enlightened world too, among Christian, pious men — without having to suffer much, so great is the inexactness in their words, in their thoughts. To lend their language some colour of orthodoxy one must give it an altogether complaisant interpretation; and even then one does not always succeed. My dearly beloved brethren, these Christians instructed enough often do not even know what is essentially and rigorously necessary. You are instructed enough! No, my brethren, in a century where there are so many false ideas so long accredited, in the midst of a world quite full of prejudices, if you do not come from time to time to verify, to check religion as it is in your mind and in your heart, by confronting it with the teaching of the Church, it is impossible that you should not soon have a religion wholly disfigured. It is a certain amalgam of religion and worldliness, it is I know not what secularised Christianity; it is no longer the religion of Jesus Christ. My brethren, the man most instructed in matters of religion needs to come often to relight his torch at the hearth of the evangelical doctrine. And besides, I have said it and proved it: however instructed you may be, you are not excepted from the law of Jesus Christ and of His Church which commands to hear the word of God often: *Fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Dei.*

People say again: I have not the time; it is too early in the morning. You have not the time, once a week, to find half an hour to hear the word of God? My dearly beloved brethren, one cannot say that seriously; we know so well how you spend your time. But it is too early, we are told, with regard to our parish instruction. They already said so in the time of Saint Augustine. It is true that then (before dawn) the word of God was announced, at least on certain days; and Saint Augustine none the less sharply reproached those who did not come. Alleging the example of the Jews, who had to go and gather the manna before sunrise, he was indignant that Christians were less zealous and less diligent in gathering a manna a thousand times more

precious, the manna that feeds souls. We have no need, we, my dearly beloved brethren, to allege the example of the Jews; that would be an expense of erudition altogether superfluous; for at the hour when we distribute the word of God to you each Sunday the sun, even in winter, has already crossed half the height of the heavens.

If it is too early, I understand nothing of it; unless you tell me also — for I have seen that too in Saint Augustine — unless you tell me, like the Christians of that time, that you spent part of the preceding night in vigils at the foot of the altars, singing psalms and prayers to prepare yourselves for the solemnity of the morrow. That was a rather strong objection which Saint Augustine had to resolve. Do you object the same to us, my brethren? Ah! I hear you too speak of certain nocturnal vigils; but what vigils? You have made of the night preceding the day consecrated to the Lord a night of pleasure; and then the next day the manna of heaven falls too early: God and the Church would be unjust to require of you that you go so soon to gather it. Sleep, sleep, men, women of the world; but be not astonished that this word which is to be announced during your sleep should testify against you on the day of the universal awakening and call down on your head the sentence of death: *Sermo quem locutus sum vobis, ipse vos judicabit in novissimo die.*

Another pretext: I would go to sermons if the sermons were more interesting; I went once, and I was bored; I shall not go back. — You would go to sermons if the sermons were more interesting. My brethren, what would you think of a man who, because he had no exquisite foods to sustain his existence, renounced eating altogether? I would nourish myself if I had at my disposal a splendidly served table; but since I have scarcely anything but bread, I prefer to die. Such is the fine reasoning of those who will not nourish their soul with the bread of the word of God because this bread is not always accompanied by certain other seasonings.

You went to the sermon once, you were bored there, you will not go back. But have you never gone a second time to a place where you were bored? On leaving the theatre I hear you say: The play was bad and boring; but perhaps on Sunday we shall be luckier. On leaving church you say: The sermon bored me, I shall not come back. Why these conclusions so different? — You will not go back. And where will you go, then, instead of going to the sermon? You will go and be bored elsewhere; for, my brethren, who does not know what frightful boredom weighs today upon the human race? The moralists of these latter times have remarked it: the most brilliant gatherings are but an assembly of bored people. Our century of egoism is a century given over to boredom. Worldly people are encumbered with themselves, they do not know how to kill time; everything serves them for that, except the word of God of which they are afraid.

You went to the sermon once, the sermon was mediocre, the preacher was languid, and you will not go back. Good. But here is something you do not know and which will astonish you. It is that if the holy word was badly announced on that day, it was you who were the cause of it, and the sole cause. For, my brethren, it is a truth often taught by the holy Fathers and in particular by Saint Augustine, Saint Peter Chrysologus and Bossuet, all three such great and renowned preachers: it is that good hearers make good sermons. God, my brethren, gives us His assistance only in proportion to the dispositions of our audience: *Hoc accipit doctor, quod meretur auditor.* [This the teacher receives which the hearer merits.]

So, my brethren, do not persuade yourselves that one draws that divine word from heaven when one wishes, says Bossuet. It is neither the force of genius, nor assiduous labour, nor vehement effort that makes it descend. It cannot be forced; it must descend of itself: *Non exigitur, sed donatur.* [It is not demanded, but given.] When we mount the pulpit, something mysterious takes place in us; and if it often happens that God gives us a virtue which is evidently not from us, on certain days also it is sensible to us that God chains and constrains even our natural power, because of this or that disposition of our hearers: *Hoc doctor accipit, quod meretur auditor.*

Well then, my very dear brother, the day you attended the preaching, God saw at the bottom of your soul that you came seeking a pretext to authorise yourself not to return; He read in your heart that you would be glad

to catch the preacher at fault, and, to your misfortune, and as a beginning of justice against you, He granted you your wish. As your disposition was bad, that same God, who has commanded us not to cast pearls before unclean beasts, refused us on that occasion those words full of grace and unction which He sometimes gives us to distribute. Go, my brother; amuse yourself at your ease with an evil that was your own work; applaud yourself for the punishment God has just inflicted on you; faithfully carry out your resolution not to come any more. Tomorrow other hearers, more worthy than you, will receive, by the mouth of the same preacher inspired by the Holy Spirit, graces that will touch them and work their salvation. And as for you, on the last day, that word which you heard, and the one you no longer come to hear, will bear against you a judgment of death: *Sermo quem locutus sum vobis, ipse vos judicabit in novissimo die.*

My brethren, we often hear the priesthood reproached with no longer having orators such as it formerly produced. Oh! my brethren, a great man of our century, whose voice was too soon extinguished, knew how to oppose to this reproach very bitter truths and very bloody personalities.[1] Allow me to borrow for a moment, if not his language, at least his thought. Tell me, if the evangelical doctrine is no longer announced among us with the same brilliance as formerly, whose fault is it? Might it not be your disdain and your haughty disgust for the holy word that have brought upon you this great famine, not a famine of bread or thirst of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord: *Non famem panis neque sitim aquæ, sed audiendi verbum Domini*; scourge most terrible with which God threatened His people by the prophets.

Is it indeed to this guilty generation, after it has hurled pontiff, priest and levite into one same tomb, is it for it to reproach the mutilated holy tribe with the weakening of its brilliance and strength? Has it the right to demand that we, feeble shoots planted by the tempest on the debris of that Church of France lately so illustrious and so flourishing, should by ourselves alone revive all her glory, and sustain the whole weight of her ancient renown? Alas! reduced to so small a number, coming out of those asylums where we were beginning to dig the foundations of learning, thrown suddenly into the midst of a painful ministry, divided among a thousand diverse functions, stripped of those helps of every kind with which the generous piety of your fathers had enriched the Church, where is our leisure, where are our resources, to give ourselves to the studies and deep meditations in which our predecessors consumed a whole half of their lives? Ah! instead of disdaining our efforts and thus finishing the casting down of our courage, would it not be more just to console our pains and animate our confidence by more eagerness than ever? And if divine preaching has lost something of its exterior ornaments and magnificence in our mouths, ought it not, on the other hand, to be so much the more precious to you as it is more rare? Ought you not to preserve with a more jealous care those last sparks of the sacred fire that remain to you, and which threaten at every moment to go out?

Oh! my dearly beloved brethren, I will say this word to you in closing. You complain of the weakness of the orators; it depends only on you to have better ones. Come and hear them. Your presence will double, triple, centuple the strength of their voice. Come then, my dearly beloved brethren: it is not for ourselves that we ask it, it is for your soul, it is for your salvation. Despise our persons as much as you please, we permit it you without trouble; but do not despise your soul, and our ministry established to save it.

We read in several places in Bossuet's sermons these words which he addressed to his audience: Let me represent to you, he said, with Saint Augustine, gently and in simplicity of heart, that we lead a laborious life because of you. We wear out our minds in seeking in the holy letters and in the ecclesiastical writers what is useful to your salvation, what is most adapted to our century. These pains we do not reproach you with; after all, it is our duty. But when we mount the evangelical pulpit, and see that those very ones to whom our word would be most useful have not deigned to come and hear us, then our soul is filled with bitterness, all our faculties are annihilated. Faith not allowing us to doubt that our word never returns void, we feel that all our labour ends only in making our brethren more guilty, and this thought breaks our heart.[2]

Come then, my dearly beloved brethren, come; your presence will increase our strength; soon you will find our word less unworthy of our ministry; and one day perhaps will come when a salutary arrow, escaped from

our mouth, will go and wound your heart with that wound which heals hearts. This is the grace I ask for you, my brethren, of God and of His most holy Mother.[3]

Translator's notes

1. The scripture reference in the heading is Romans 10:14, 17.

2. "Chair" (*chaire*) is rendered "pulpit" throughout; "prône" elsewhere is rendered "homily". The town referred to ("this city we inhabit") is Chartres, where the instruction was preached.

3. Patristic and Bossuet attributions are the preacher's and are not verified here.

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[1] The preacher does not name him; the edition gives no note. Not identified here.

[2] The "Bossuet" passage is given as the preacher presents it (paraphrase); not checked against Bossuet's text.

[3] Cf. Appendix I: A, 12.

n° 11. Instruction on the Method to Be Used in Order to Know Religion Well

Preached at the cathedral of Chartres, on the Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent (1840).

Semper discentes, et nunquam ad scientiam veritatis pervenientes. [Ever learning, and never attaining to the knowledge of the truth.] These persons are always learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth. (2 Tim. ch. III, v. 7.)

MY DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

During the course of this Lenten station we have established, in several conversations, the necessity of instructing oneself in religion. We began by bringing out the inconsistency, then the crime and misfortune, of those who remain indifferent to the knowledge of the Christian religion. Then, turning to the means of arriving at this knowledge, we proved the indispensable obligation that rests on every Christian to hear the word of God. There remain still, on this subject, important things to tell you; but we reserve them for another day.

Today, my dearly beloved brethren, it has seemed to us useful to trace certain rules and communicate certain observations to a fairly numerous class of men who are beginning to occupy themselves somewhat seriously with the study of Christianity. It must be recognised and admitted, my brethren: our century recalls many of the detestable maxims of the century that has just ended. The fairest and most interesting portion of French youth has conceived a just disdain and a noble indignation for that coarse impiety which was for some time in fashion, and which is hardly found any more today except in the most abject class of society. Let us set aside a few old men who have preserved beneath their white hair the pitiable levity and criminal irony of the past century; let us join to them those unfortunate young men who spend the finest years of their life in dissipation and debauchery. That excepted, where is impiety today? It drags itself in the mud; there it is found in all its power.

There cannot be, my brethren, any great merit in being an unbeliever, there cannot be need of great learning or of a fine education to be impious, since impiety and unbelief have been able to obtain such great successes in the most ignorant heads. There is not today a village doctor who has not all the impiety of Voltaire summed up in five or six axioms that have become popular. And the cynical laugh, which had passed from the lips of Satan to those of that infernal man, is found again in all its ugly and criminal expression on the face of his coarsest adepts. My brethren, the reign of impiety is past; the fine philosophical wit is reduced today to the sad condition of the prodigal: *Misit eum in villam ut pasceret porcos.* [He sent him into his farm to feed swine.] Voltaire aspired to be the Voltaire of the cottages; his wish is accomplished, he is no longer found except there today, and even there only where there is an absence of every honourable sentiment: *Misit*

eum in villam ut pasceret porcos.

The philosophy of the eighteenth century walks about in rags in our streets. I met, a few days ago, while conducting the remains of a Christian to their last dwelling, a man half drunk, who said before the whole procession: “When one is dead, one is quite dead.” And he accompanied these words with a frightful laugh, which made me take his face for a moment for that whose features are still peddled among us, to little purpose, features soon become execrable to everyone; for I have learned it from a man who plies this sort of trade, the buyers have to be sought in the most obscure villages. It is there that a certain refuse of humanity, it is there that immorality and irreligious ignorance still make an ornament of his features and a pasture of his books. And when one knows the manners of this class of men, who are today the personification of the Voltairian spirit, one may without fear apply the word of the Gospel: *Misit eum in villam ut pasceret porcos.*

Saint Paul had so predicted. Know, he said, that in the last times there will be men of corrupt mind whose science is reprobate in matters of faith: *Homines corrupti mente, reprobi circa fidem.* Now as Jannes and Mambres resisted Moses, wishing to equal his miracles by their prestiges, so these will resist Jesus Christ, flattering themselves, for example, with destroying and replacing without difficulty what the son of a poor carpenter and twelve miserable fishermen had established. But, continues Saint Paul, their successes will be very short: *Sed ultra non proficient*; and soon their folly will be manifest to all as was that of those magicians: *Insipientia enim eorum manifesta erit omnibus sicut et illorum fuit.*

I repeat it, then, my brethren: the reign of impiety is past; the evil may still make long ravages in the limbs to which it has descended; but at last the head is healthier. Whoever should come to soil Christianity and glory in his ignorance and contempt with regard to religion would be ill received in our present society. In several parts of France one notices a great eagerness to hear the word of God. Christian studies have come back into favour; art professes to be Christian, history becomes Christian again, and we know, in the world, young men destined for public office who would not go more carefully into Christian dogmas than they do if they were destined for the sanctuary. There is also a certain number of graver men who feel the defect of the education they received from an unbelieving century, and who seek to repair it.

My dearly beloved brethren, it is in presence of these efforts and these first attempts that it behoves the ministers of the sanctuary to second the impulse given by grace and by the sad experience of past and present results. It is from the sanctuary that the luminous star must shine which will clear up and direct the march. For it must be said also: if our century returns to the study of religion, ah! this reaction has great need of being led and regulated. Many never cease learning and yet come to almost nothing: *Semper discentes et nunquam ad scientiam veritatis pervenientes*, because they have no method that leads to truth, or because they are not on their guard against certain reefs which they do not know.

It is therefore, my dearly beloved brethren, to these men who seek in good faith to instruct themselves in religion that we address ourselves today; it is to them that we are going (1) to teach a short and easy method of coming to know the whole of religion well; and (2) to point out certain dangers peculiar to religious studies in our century.

I. Yes, my brethren, we often see men who seek truth in good faith advance hardly at all in their work; after several years of study they have still arrived at next to nothing; they have acquired, in matters of religion, many ideas and few convictions. Their mind is quite full of difficulties; if they find at times some ray of light which encourages them, they soon meet a thousand obscure clouds which drive them to despair; they examine one after another all the Christian dogmas, all the points of morals, all the practices of discipline; they glimpse the reason of certain things, and see nothing in most of the others. They study all their life with indefatigable perseverance, and death arrives sooner than the result of their labours: *Semper discentes et nunquam ad scientiam veritatis pervenientes.* Others complain that the study of religion demands too much time and trouble, that it is beyond their reach, and they abandon everything. The fruit of several years of

study and conscientious research is lost: *Semper discentes et nunquam ad scientiam veritatis pervenientes.* My dearly beloved brethren, all this comes from taking a bad method for studying religion. With regard to religion, as with regard to all the sciences, the important thing is to have the method. Instead of banging on a door in all directions to open it, turn the key the right way, and the door will be open.

My brethren, nothing is so common in the world as to forget, with regard to religion, the rules of method whose necessity is generally recognised with regard to the other sciences. In every science method consists in proceeding from the known to the unknown, from the clearer to the more obscure, from the easier to the thornier. One begins by laying down those incontestable principles, those evident axioms, those truths in some sort palpable and sensible, by whose aid one then rises higher. What the mind could not have attained directly it obtains by conclusion from the principles laid down; what the eye could not have grasped by intuition it sees as in a mirror of reflection. This is how one proceeds, for example, in the exact sciences. What would you say of a man who wearied himself trying to solve a problem of transcendental mathematics and who had never studied arithmetic? That is to want to arrive at the end without the beginning; it is to pretend to find oneself transported all at once to the end of the journey, *impertransito medio*, as the school says, without having crossed the middle of the distances.

Now, my brethren, that is the unreasonable manner in which religion is studied every day. We meet men of the world who are wholly occupied with some lofty and difficult dogma of religion, and who have never examined a little attentively the bases on which this religion rests. Instead of beginning by going deeply into the elements, instead of attaching themselves to the examination of those first truths which can in some sort be touched and handled and which would answer for all the others, instead of discussing according to the rules of sound criticism certain brilliant and sensible facts in which religion has as it were wrapped herself entire, people begin on the contrary by wanting to judge the loftiest and most obscure points of Christian revelation; they substitute for a question of fact, always easy to clear up, a host of metaphysical questions very difficult and almost inaccessible to human intelligence. They do not possess the principles, and they want at once to resolve the most specious and embarrassing difficulties.

That is evidently a vicious method, a method with which one will study long without finding anything but embarrassments: *Semper discentes et nunquam ad scientiam veritatis pervenientes.*

My dearly beloved brethren, to be entirely convinced of religion the way is short and easy; little time is needed. There is no need of a great reach of mind. And so it must be, since God had to make His religion for everyone. To be convinced of the whole of religion there are only three things to examine, and these three things rest on facts: 1° Does a God exist? 2° Is Jesus Christ the envoy of God? 3° Is the Church the organ of Jesus Christ? These three truths once admitted, all is finished. Does a God exist? Yes. You are no longer an atheist. Is Jesus Christ sent by God? Yes. You are no longer either a deist, or a pagan, or a Jew. Is the Church the organ of Jesus Christ? Yes. You are not a heretic, then; you are a Christian, a Catholic just as much as I am. Here, my brethren, is a very short method, since there are only three things to examine; very easy, since these things rest on facts, and nothing is easier to verify than facts, especially when they are sensible and brilliant facts.

It has sometimes been said that God ought to have written His religion in the sun. But that is what He has done: *In sole posuit tabernaculum suum* [He hath set his tabernacle in the sun]; for these three great fundamental truths of religion, which are its guarantee, these three great truths rest on facts as brilliant as the sun. First the fact of our own existence, of the existence of language, the fact of the existence of the world, of the order that presides over the universe: these are brilliant facts, which lead us as it were of themselves and without reasoning to recognise the existence of a God. Open your eyes: the existence of God is a truth as luminous as the sun: *In sole posuit tabernaculum suum.* The astonishing revolution wrought in the world by the preaching of Jesus and the Apostles, the rapid diffusion of Christianity and its present existence throughout the world: these again are brilliant facts which demonstrate to the least clear-sighted the divinity

of Jesus Christ and of Christianity. Open your eyes: is not Christianity, in the midst of us, what the sun is in nature? *In sole posuit tabernaculum suum.* Finally the sole fact of the origin of all the societies separated from the Roman Church, and the great characters of unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity which are found only in the latter, sufficiently demonstrate that she is, and that she alone is, the true society founded by Jesus Christ to be His organ and interpreter. Open your eyes: is not the Catholic Church, in the midst of all the sects, what the sun is compared to the palest stars? *In sole posuit tabernaculum suum.* Now these three great truths once admitted, if once you have recognised that a God exists, that Jesus Christ is the envoy of God, that the Church is the organ of Jesus Christ, all is finished; there is no more reasoning to do, it is only a question of believing all the dogmas and practising all the precepts. You are now a perfect Catholic.

Ah! how, you say to me? Because I admit a God, the divinity of Jesus Christ and the mission of the Church, you judge my examination finished. Far from it, it seems to me. I believe in God, I believe in Jesus Christ, I believe in the Church. But the mysteries we have not spoken of: the Trinity, for example; and then the precepts, that of fasting and abstinence, for example; I do not admit all that. — You do admit all that, my very dear brother. Tell me, do you believe in Jesus Christ? Yes, that is the supposition. Does Jesus Christ speak clearly of the Trinity? Yes! Well; see now the alternative in which you are placed. Tell me which of the two is more reasonable: to say, Jesus Christ, sent by God, was mistaken; or: Jesus Christ, sent by God, revealed a truth that my reason does not understand well? Which of these two assertions is the more reasonable? I make you the judge. Likewise the precept of fasting and abstinence. Do you believe in the authority of the Church? Yes, that is the supposition. Does the Church order fasting and abstinence? Yes; see again the alternative in which you are placed. Tell me which of the two is more reasonable: to say, The Church, inspired organ of Jesus Christ, does not know what she is doing; or: The Church has reasons that I cannot understand? Once again, which of these two assertions is the more reasonable? My brethren, there is no hesitating.

To admit that the envoy of God and the infallible organ of that envoy are mistaken in their words and acts is to admit an unreasonable thing; to admit on the contrary that the envoy of God and his organ reveal to us, command us things whose reason surpasses our mind is to admit the most reasonable thing in the world. For is it not supremely evident that, if the divine reason wishes to manifest itself to ours, infinitely more limited, there must necessarily be mystery for us in these communications? And religion would not have the character of the infinite from which it comes if it did not surpass our short and feeble intelligence. We do not conceive the grain of sand we tread under foot, and we want to conceive heavenly truths; our reason does not comprehend itself, and it would comprehend the divine reason! Impossible. No: from the moment it is proved that God has spoken, it is supremely reasonable to believe Him on His word. And if the thing He reveals to us is mysterious, as it must almost always be, it is then, says Bossuet, that one must hold firmly the two ends of the chain, although one does not see well all the middle of it.

According to these principles, my brethren, if an unbeliever came to make objections to me against the Trinity, for example, I should ask him first: Do you believe in God, do you believe in Jesus Christ, do you believe in the Church? And if he answered me that he had never occupied himself with these questions, I should be entitled to say to him: my very dear brother, first learn arithmetic before making me objections on higher mathematics. I have nothing to answer you. You do not understand your objection, and you are still less capable of understanding my answer. You have not the first notion of religion, and you want to speak of the most difficult questions. You may have a great deal of wit, your objections may be made in an ingenious manner; but you have no logic, you have no method. You upset method, you substitute for a question of fact very easy to clear up a host of metaphysical questions of the loftiest sort and almost inaccessible to human intelligence. So, my dearly beloved brethren, to have the right to be an unbeliever and to make an objection one must first of all have decided negatively with regard to these three great truths: God, Jesus Christ, the Church, after an attentive examination of the facts on which we make them rest. Every unbeliever who has

not studied these three points is an ignoramus who has no right to speak of religion. As also a man who seriously examines these questions will necessarily be a Catholic if he is reasonable, and will practise his religion if he is consistent.

But let us continue for a few moments to examine how fruitful this method is for answering all objections. What shocks me in revelation, a certain Christian will tell me, is the dogma of original sin; it cannot, in my view, be reconciled with either the justice or the goodness of God. — And what shocks me, I shall answer this Christian, is that human reason, finite reason, should thus go out of its sphere to argue against the infinite reason of God. Tell me, have you very clear ideas, on the one hand of the nature and consequences of original sin, and on the other of the attributes of divine justice and goodness? All that is a sealed letter for you, and you want to start from these mysteries to combat a fact well attested and well authenticated. Is it not a fact that God revealed by Jesus Christ and the Church the existence of original sin? Yes. Can God fail to be just or fail to be good? Impossible. Therefore, recognising on the one hand that God is essentially just and good, recognising on the other that He revealed the existence of original sin, conclude that this dogma certainly does not wound either His justice or His goodness. If your reason does not see the how of it, this is the case for making the act of faith. And if you make this act of faith, I undertake afterwards, with God's help, to remove for you at least the greatest difficulties by setting out for you the different systems of the theologians, that of Suarez, for example, who explain this mystery in a more or less plausible manner.

And so I would answer, my brethren, the objections that might be made to me on all the points of Christian revelation: eternity of hell, real presence, and all the others. Whenever it is a question of mysteries, in order not to rave, one must start, with Catholics, from the well-attested fact of revelation, and conclude from it that God, who is equity as well as sovereign goodness, being unable to reveal anything but what is true, anything but what is conformable to justice and mercy, there is no other reasonable course than to admit what it befits Him to reveal, and to believe on His word incomprehensible dogmas: dogmas whose nature and fittingness one may then seek to go deeply into, once reason has made an act of submission to revelation. And thus, my brethren, the exposition of this method shows how, in the study of religion, reason and faith are reconciled.

The terms *obscure faith* and *blind faith*, employed by mystical theology, have often been misunderstood. And if reason has many times been granted too much, it has also sometimes been refused too much. Faith doubtless will always have great obscurities in its object, and we have seen that it must be so; but at the same time it is very clear in its motives, very reasonable in the principles of its credibility. If God speaks to me by an envoy, if this envoy leaves me an organ, an interpreter of his word, it is evident to my reason itself that I must believe this divine envoy and his organ. Only, if God wishes thus to manifest Himself to me, it is necessary that He give to His envoy, to His organ, characters of authenticity by which my reason can recognise that they really come from Him. It is a guarantee due to my reason, and which it has a right to require.

When an ambassador is sent to a foreign court, the first thing asked of him is his letters of credence; these letters once read and recognised as authentic, one can no longer doubt his mission. And this, my brethren, is also what religion submits to the examination of our reason. Jesus Christ, in coming down upon earth, exhibited to us, if I may so speak, letters of credence; examine them: He Himself urges you to. I do not ask you at first to believe my words, but see my works; consult the Scriptures, see whether they speak of me; interrogate those blind men to whom I gave sight, those deaf to whom I gave hearing, etc. But afterwards, if once you have recognised by my works that I am really the envoy and the Son of God, believe the truth that I announce to you. What Jesus Christ said to the Jews, my brethren, religion says to all. Examine the bases on which I rest; arm yourselves with the criticism that you employ on other historical facts, to discuss the divine facts on which I lean. I give over these facts to your curiosity. Dig around these foundations; try to shake them; descend, with the torch of philosophy, to that ancient stone so many times rejected by unbelievers, and which has crushed them all; but when, having reached a certain depth, you find the hand of the Almighty that

supports edifices, stop at last, and do not dig down to hell. There your reason must stop. As soon as you have recognised that my doctrine is truly divine, there remains for you only to believe.

Thus, my brethren, in the study of religion, it is reason that takes the first step; it lays down as it were the preliminaries, by examining and recognising that religion comes from God. Doubtless, even in this first labour, reason already needs to be directed by certain helps from on high; and I believe, with Saint Augustine, that God gives each man a first seed of intimate and secret grace which mingles imperceptibly with reason. This is what Saint Augustine calls *Inchoationes quædam fidei, conceptionibus similes* [certain beginnings of faith, like conceptions]. It is a very remote beginning in order to arrive step by step at faith, as a very shapeless germ is the beginning of the child who is to be born long after. God mixes the beginning of the supernatural gift with the remains of good nature, so that the man who holds them united together in his own depths does not distinguish them and already carries within himself a mystery of grace of which he is profoundly ignorant. It is only when the germ begins to open that faith shows itself distinct from reason. Up to that point, then, it is properly reason that takes the initiative in the study of religion, in recognising that God exists, that it is reasonable to believe Him if He speaks, and that He has really spoken by Jesus Christ and by the Church. But here the control of reason stops; here the intelligence submits to faith. Man has now only to believe, to adore, to love, to practise. And in believing without reasoning, man still makes an act of reason, since his reason itself explains to him that he must so believe.

Surely, my brethren, it is a salutary and glorious humiliation that of human reason before divine reason, a humiliation moreover which becomes the principle of a new exaltation; for, my brethren, do not think that henceforth reason is condemned to an eternal inaction with regard to revealed truths. No, God treats reason with more honour than that. And after it has submitted to faith, religion does not forbid it to seek still, doubtless with reserve, with humility, the fittingness and natural reasons of the mysteries that are proposed to it. Then, if it wishes to examine one after another the dogmas and precepts, it will be by always making its examination preceded by an act of faith. Then, God enlightening man with His light, he will see first of all that these mysteries have nothing formally contrary to reason, and often even he will discover that they are marvellously adapted to our nature and to our sound way of thinking and feeling.

It is thus, my brethren, that after reason has submitted to faith, there is a reaction of faith upon reason. Human intelligence, starting from the principles known by revelation, can fly even into the heavens and steal from divinity its most intimate secrets: recognise, for example, with the great Saint Hilary of Poitiers, that the dogma of the Trinity is so reasonable that it would be impossible to believe in a God in a single person; recognise with Saint Augustine and several others, in the dogma of original sin, the answer to a long riddle, the explanation of an infinity of mysteries inconceivable before they had been enlightened by this one. And so with all the mysteries and all the points of religion one after another. For, my dear brethren, reason and faith, proceeding from one and the same source, cannot be contrary. There is more: faith having been superadded to reason, grace having been grafted on nature, there must be between these two things made one for the other a perfect harmony. Far too much has been criticised in the great men who in these latter times have occupied themselves with making the human side of religion admired. If it is not in itself the principal side, it is at least one of its true sides. And there may have been such or such a disposition in a particular century that required beginning with that side in order to effect the rapprochement. Pascal and Fénelon, witnesses of the birth of that unbelief which has grown so much since, already thought that it was essential to present religion as lovable and useful, to make it at least desired that it should be true, reserving to themselves afterwards the task of proving its truth solidly by the method we have just set out. Thus, to show religion in its points of immediate contact with natural man can be a useful work. Jesus Christ, author of religion, is God and man; religion, placed between heaven and earth to unite these two terms, partakes of both. She is at once divine and human; if the first links of that chain are lost in divinity, the last links are attached to our heart, and it is quite permitted to observe it under this latter aspect. That ladder, resting on one

side in the heavens, is on the other firmly planted and skilfully seated on our heart.

It is therefore not to be outside the truth to bring out the fittingness there is between religion and our nature, to speak of the nourishment she furnishes to our mind, to our heart, to our imagination, to all our senses, to the whole man. It is therefore not to be outside the truth to speak of the genius, the poetry, the philosophy and the lofty social harmonies of Christianity. No; these expressions contain truths, truths whose development would not be unworthy of the pen of a minister of religion; all the more must we be grateful to those great men who, placed in the ranks of the simple faithful, had the noble thought of carrying out this design. And if the earth has not sufficiently recognised their services, because of some imperfections inseparable from humanity, heaven will be more indulgent and less ungrateful, eternity will be grateful to them for it; one must even hope that impartial history will rank them among those lay doctors who, in several centuries of the Church, were, after their fashion, worthy apologists of Christianity. Their work, put in its place, is useful. Let reason begin by examining the facts, let it then submit to faith, let it, always submissive and united to faith, pursue these investigations with humility and reserve; and religion will find nothing to blame in the fact that reason and revelation thus lend each other, in mutual understanding, the helps they can and ought to expect from each other.

My dearly beloved brethren, it would be an undertaking quite worthy of our evangelical ministry to carry out this admirable plan. To begin by examining what concerns the three fundamental questions: God, Jesus Christ, the Church; to discuss all the facts with the criticism of history and with all the care that so important a matter demands; and then, these three truths admitted, no more discussion, the discussion closed for ever. Then to set out the whole Christian doctrine, to examine its beauty, its fittingness, its mysterious reasons: this would be, my brethren, according to Saint Augustine, the most complete and most logical ensemble of Christian teaching. My dear brethren, if it please God, in whose hands we are, we and all our words, we do not despair of filling this vast frame in the instructions that we are to address to you later, and for which these have been only a preliminary.

Today, having set out the short and easy method for knowing religion, it remains for me to point out to you briefly some dangers peculiar to religious studies in our century.

II. [The edition prints “I.”] My dearly beloved brethren, a last recommendation to make to all who wish to study religion somewhat seriously is to go and draw from the pure sources of Catholic teaching. I shall not speak of the danger of most histories nor of the bad spirit of most historians: your pastor has enlightened you too well on this point, much more important than is commonly thought; the more so since, as we have said, God having put all religion in facts, if the facts are constantly disfigured, religion suffers greatly in our mind. After reading history written by such and such a Catholic author, one asks oneself whether the divine promises have truly been realised with regard to the Church, which is represented to us as having always been in the wrong, as never having done well. But I wish to speak of something else.

Everyone nowadays meddles in speaking and writing on religious matters; some great men of the century have done so with brilliance, and in opportune circumstances. It is the property of everything great, everything beautiful, everything useful, to drag after it useless, idle and bad imitations. In the works of these great geniuses there have been some spots, as one discovers in the sun; in those of their obscure imitators there are some pearls, as one finds in dung. In the eyes of the severe theologian who rigorously weighs all the terms, nothing is exact, nothing is true in most of these modern productions; often there are even gross errors, traces of unpardonable ignorance. And yet, my brethren, we are astonished every day to find these so pitiable works in the hands of instructed people, and to hear all the echoes of the press, paid echoes it is true, vie in praising what is so little worthy of praise. If you wish to know the Christian religion, my brethren, solid works do not fail you; and without going back to those of the first centuries, we have to offer you Bossuet, Pascal, and so many other writers of the great century, as also so many ingenious and solid apologists who combated the philosophy of the eighteenth century, and finally the works of several great men of our day.

But the Christianity of pamphlets, the Christianity of fashionable writers, the Christianity of volumes at seven francs fifty, the Christianity of most of the gazettes: that, my brethren, is a bastard and degenerate Christianity, it is a wholly sensual, wholly material Christianity, a Christianity dressed in all the follies of our epoch; it is an unfaithful and coarse copy in which the religion of Jesus Christ does not recognise itself.

Allow me, my brethren, this familiar illustration: last year at the exhibition there was a magnificent picture representing a procession of the Blessed Sacrament. As a piece of art it was a remarkable work and was remarked; but as a representation it was a very unfaithful picture, for, for example, among other things, the priest who carried the Blessed Sacrament had a square cap on his head. It is one of those unpardonable *quiproquos* [mix-ups] that would make one believe the artist had never seen the ceremony he wished to represent. Well! my brethren, to a mind somewhat solidly instructed, all that is written today on religion is full of similar blunders, so that it appears evident that these apologists of Christianity never learned their catechism. So our century, which knows itself how to define admirably its own failings, calls this simulacrum of religion a *religiosité* [religiosity], and these kinds of believers *cathohcistes* [sic — "catholicists"]. I admit that there is truth in these productions, there are good intentions sometimes in the authors; but it remains that it is not there that one must go to study the Christian faith, because if there is truth there, there is still more falsehood, and often even evil. And that leads me to a second observation, far more serious still.

Would we have fallen, my dearly beloved brethren, from one reef onto another? Would our century wish to cease to be a stranger to religion only in order to exploit religion for the profit of the passions? Would those days have come when, according to the prediction of Saint Paul, corrupt men must beg vice from religion itself, seeking in Christianity their pleasure rather than God: *Voluptatum magis amatores quam Dei* [lovers of pleasures more than of God]? I know not what new novelists, rather like those whom the chancellor Gerson so well unmasked in a treatise composed expressly for that, and whose reproduction would be today of great piquancy; I know not, I say, what new novelists make a monstrous alloy, a sacrilegious amalgam of Christianity and of the most criminal passions. France is flooded with these productions which, under religious forms, distil the subtlest poison of impurity; to the most Christian, the most pious narratives are mingled the most lubricious descriptions; it seems that the writer's pen has been dipped at once in religion and in voluptuousness. If the Catholic priest is spoken of, it is to throw into his beautiful and noble life sacrilegious weaknesses, unworthy of his character; if an angel is taken from the heavens, it is to lend him senses, in order to drag him into a mire into which he could not fall by nature. Poet who called yourself Christian, you have done an evil work there!

Nunc dicere de dulci Jesu, fonteque dulcissimo, et agno castissimo, et mox recensere vilia turpissima [Now to speak of sweet Jesus, of the sweetest fountain, of the most chaste Lamb, and presently to rehearse the vilest filth] — these are the words of Gerson, characterising a novelist of the Middle Ages. And he adds: what more frightful than those pictures in which the names of Jesus and of the Virgin Mother are mingled with disgusting intrigues, and in which the holy and sweet joys of heaven come to divinise vice and to give to voluptuousness a mystical modesty and a heavenly odour! These works, my brethren, would be at once the ruin of religion and of morals, since they tend to confound all ideas by reconciling Christianity with vice. No, my brethren, no, that is not Christian teaching. *Ea quæ desursum est sapientia, primum quidem pudica*: this religion which comes from the heavens is, above all, chaste. Purity is an article on which the Christian, Catholic religion has never capitulated. This is what it was indispensable to say a few words about in the century in which we live.

Finally, my brethren, one last observation. We live in an epoch in which the new is much loved, and our sick society resembles somewhat that of those degenerate Athenians of whom Saint Paul speaks. The new is sought everywhere, it is wanted in religion also. One would be humiliated to follow beaten paths. People absolutely want to put Christianity in progress. My brethren, that is a ridiculous pretension. Christianity does

not change, and it is one of its remarkable characters that it has been equally sheltered from the alterations and the perfectionings that time brings to all other institutions. Christianity, according to the need of times and places, has indeed been able to modify some disciplinary forms. And as to its teaching, it is also quite true that elevated minds can discover certain truths under points of view hitherto unperceived, express them in a new manner. But the substance will always be the same, that is, the ensemble of the things revealed by Our Lord Jesus Christ two thousand years ago, and taught since, more or less explicitly, by all the centuries: *Non nova, sed nove.* [Not new things, but in a new manner.] At most one may find some new forms, but the substance cannot be new.

This is what Saint Vincent of Lérins already said in his *Commonitory*, a work as admirable in style as in doctrine: whoever would wish to teach something new in religion would be a heretic, since religion is wholly of tradition. It is impossible to bring it about today that Our Lord said, two thousand years ago, a thing which He really did not say and which tradition has not transmitted to us. Besides, my dearly beloved brethren, let us be humble in our study of religion. Let us leave to eminent men those lofty investigations which, after all, are completely useless for salvation. Let us attach ourselves to those first truths which alone are indispensable, and which are already very admirable and very lofty. It is not those new stars that art discovers with its instruments that serve to direct our steps. No, it is that father of days, that ancient sun, it is those less distant stars that the eye perceives at once, and whose light has sufficed since the beginning of the world to enlighten our fathers.

I stop, my dearly beloved brethren. O Lord Jesus, we have tried, in several instructions, to convince these Christians our brethren of the necessity, and also we wished to teach them the means, of returning to the study and knowledge of Your holy religion. You know it, Lord, we have but one thought, one desire: to bring light and conviction into their souls. Bless, then, O my God, bless our feeble efforts. Encourage our unworthy labours, animate our nascent strength, by showing us some results around us. My God, You permit us to say it, this encouragement You have given us; we have had the consolation of seeing a great number of our brethren come back to press around this pulpit of truth; they seem to have taken a liking to Your holy word; some have had the generosity to go farther, and have drawn conclusions that we had not even indicated. Continue, Lord, continue Your work. Continue to bring back to You the poor human mind that has gone astray in all the roads, that has wandered over all the seas, that has no more star or compass, and that begins to feel the need of returning to You and of fixing its eyes on Your holy religion.

O Mary, tender protectress of this city, of this country that is yours, grant that Our Lord Jesus Christ your Son may no longer be unknown among us, but that we may all make our delight to study, love and practise this holy religion which alone can make us happy here below and in eternity.[1] [Cf. Appendix I: A, 18.]

Translator’s notes

1. The scripture reference in the heading is 2 Timothy 3:7.

2. The second major division is numbered “I.” in the edition; it is given as “II.” (the first division begins “Oui, mes Frères, nous voyons souvent…”).

3. “Catholicistes” is the preacher’s coinage.

4. The final bibliographical footnote is by the author (the then abbé Pie) and is retained. Titles are left in French; they are not verified here.

5. Attributions to Gerson, Augustine, Hilary, Bossuet, Pascal and Vincent of Lérins are the preacher’s and are not verified here.

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[1] See M. Gosselin: *Méthode courte et facile pour se convaincre de la vérité de la religion catholique*. — Fénelon: *Lettres*. — Bourdaloue: *Pensées*; agreement of reason and faith. — Guénard: *Discours sur l’esprit philosophique*. — Loriquet: *Mes doutes*, vol. 1.

(Note of M. l’abbé Pie.)

n° 12. Homily for Low Sunday (Quasimodo), Preached at the Cathedral: On the Peace and Joy That Are the Fruit of the Paschal Solemnities

Preached at the cathedral of Chartres, Low Sunday (1840).

Gaudium et pax. [Joy and peace.] Joy and peace be with you. (St. Paul.)

MY DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN, the risen Jesus Christ knew how to say only this word to His apostles: Peace be with you! We do not see that, during His life, He was accustomed to approach them with this form of greeting; He employs it only after His resurrection, but then He employs it with a kind of profusion: “His disciples being assembled, Jesus came, and standing in the midst of them, said to them: Peace be with you… Jesus said to them a second time: Peace be with you… And eight days after, Jesus came again, and said to them: Peace be with you.” *Venit Jesus et stetit in medio discipulorum et dixit eis: Pax vobis… Dixit eis iterum: Pax vobis… Et post dies octo, venit Jesus et dixit: Pax vobis.* To this threefold greeting of peace, the apostle Saint Paul adds a threefold command of joy: “For the rest, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord; rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice.” *De cetero, fratres mei, gaudete in Domino… Gaudete in Domino semper; iterum dico, gaudete.* Joy, says the great Bossuet, is the commandment of the risen Jesus Christ.

This peace, my dearly beloved brethren, granted between heaven and earth through the mediation of the Saviour Jesus, and the joy that must result from it for us, being the principal subject of our gospel, will be the matter of this discourse. And, seeking the motives of this peace and of this joy which the Church preaches to us again and again and in every way during these days, we shall see that they must flow both from the mysteries that we have celebrated and from the sacraments that we have received.

I. My dearly beloved brethren, said Bossuet, explaining the gospel of this day, the deluge is past, the cataracts of heaven have closed again; all the floods of the divine wrath which were to overwhelm men having passed over the head of Jesus, the waters have now withdrawn; the dove approaches us with an olive branch; Jesus Christ advances into the midst of His own and announces to them that peace is made: *Et dixit: Pax vobis.* [And He said: Peace be to you.] At this word peace all hearts are seized with joy, all troubles vanish, the terrified apostles are reassured, they leap with happiness at the sight of the Lord: *Gavisi sunt discipuli viso Domino.* [The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.]

What is this olive branch, what is this sign of peace that the sweet Jesus brings and shows to His disciples? Learn it from the Gospel, my dearly beloved brethren: “And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet”: *Et cum hoc dixisset, ostendit eis manus et pedes.*

Behold then, my brethren, behold Jesus Christ presenting the wounds of His glorious members as the motive of the peace and joy that He wishes to His disciples and, in their persons, to all men. And this is also why I said that the peace and joy of the Paschal time must flow first of all from the mysteries that we have celebrated: the mystery of the passion and death, the mystery of the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

But in what way can the remembrance and the representation of the sufferings and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ be a source of peace and joy? Is not the punishment of Jesus Christ, put to death of old by men like ourselves and our brothers, rather the eternal opprobrium of the whole of humanity? Here, says Bossuet, I shall advance a thing which has no example in any history: it is that peace having been broken between God and men, it was to be concluded only by the death of the ambassador deputed to negotiate it. Here is a proposition unheard of among all the peoples of the world; for you know, my brethren, that the person of ambassadors is sacred and inviolable; that God Himself, as protector of society, is interested in their cause, and that every injury done to them is, in this respect, a kind of sacrilege. And behold Jesus, Jesus God and

Son of God, Jesus heavenly ambassador, sent to men to make their peace, was judged, condemned, crucified by them. All the majesty of God was manifestly violated by this action, not only because Jesus is His ambassador, but because He is His Son. And nevertheless this death which was to bring back an eternal war is what concludes the alliance. A crime which has so many times armed peoples suddenly disarms the eternal Father, and the sacred person of His ambassador having been violated by a dreadful outrage, He at once made and signed the peace. And this ambassador, rising from the earth, says to His enemies, showing them the wounds with which they have covered Him: Peace be with you; see My feet and My hands: *Dixit eis: Pax vobis… Et ostendit eis manus et pedes.*

Here, my brethren, is an incredible mystery. Saint Augustine will explain it to us. This great doctor, in the treatises he composed on the first epistle of Saint John, remarked that three kinds of persons concurred, in very different ways, in the death of Our Lord. He was delivered up by His Father: the Father did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us: *Qui proprio Filio suo non pepercit.* He was delivered up by His enemies: Judas delivered Him to the Jews: *Ego vobis eum tradam*; the Jews to Pilate: *Tradiderunt Pontio Pilato*; Pilate delivered Him to the soldiers: *Tradidit militibus*; and these delivered Him to death. Finally, delivered up by His Father, delivered up by His enemies, He also delivered Himself up: *Tradidit semetipsum pro me.* His Father delivered Him up through justice; His enemies through envy; He delivered Himself through obedience and love.

In these so different wills, let us look for what could make the peace of men. Is it the action of the Jews? No, for in delivering Jesus they heaped the measure of their crimes. Is it that of the eternal Father? No, for the Father was directed by a thought doubtless equitable, but a thought of rigour and vengeance, exacting from His own Son what was due to Him. Thus far I do not see our peace concluded; I see, on the contrary, on one side a God who avenges, on the other men who sink deeper into evil. But between these unjust and wicked Jews and this God, just doubtless but severe and avenging, I see a Son obedient and full of love, who takes upon Himself the whole debt of men and pays it entire to His Father. Men owe; God demands; Jesus Christ pays. Men, instruments of the death of Jesus Christ, multiply their debts; Jesus Christ charges Himself with this new obligation, His infinite merit being able to bear and pay all. As shed by the Jews, the blood of Jesus Christ cries for vengeance; as presented by Jesus Christ, this same blood cries for mercy, and the voice of Jesus Christ is doubtless the most powerful. However great the malice of an outrage committed against a God, there is still more worth and merit in obedience to and love of God. Thus mercy prevails. The ambassador is dead, and peace is at last concluded.

Do you understand now, my brethren, this great mystery of Christianity? Do you understand how the death of the ambassador was the purification of the world? Do you understand how, as Saint Paul says, Jesus Christ is our peace: *Ipse enim est pax nostra*? and how God was in Him, reconciling the world to Himself: *Deus erat in Christo, mundum reconcilians sibi*? Do you understand, my brethren, the word of the risen Jesus Christ: “Peace be with you… See My feet and My hands”? It is thus, my brethren, that the sorrowful mysteries we have celebrated are themselves motives of peace and joy: “Peace be with you… And He showed them His feet and His hands.” Ah! it is because these wounds made our peace; it is because He wishes us to read in them the treaty, the conclusion, the authentic ratification in His sacred wounds. These wounds He wills to bear even into heaven, so that if the malice of men should again irritate His Father, He may continually represent to Him, in these sacred marks, an image of the sacrifice that appeased Him, and so perpetuate the bonds of our peace, as the Church sings. Yes, my brethren, in the midst even of the eternal joys and the peace of heaven, the mystery of Calvary is as in a continual representation: *Agnum stantem tamquam occisum.* [A Lamb standing as it were slain.] There is as it were a perpetual Good Friday in the heavens. Yes, Jesus is in the heavens with saving scars, still all fresh and all vermilion, all tinged, if I dare say it with Bossuet, with that precious and innocent blood which pacified heaven and earth.

But, in carrying His adorable wounds to heaven, Jesus Christ wished to leave their sacred imprints on earth, where the sacrifice of the cross is likewise in perpetual representation upon the altars. See, from the rising of the sun to its setting, throughout the Catholic world: *Agnum stantem tamquam occisum.* And also, once each year, see in the whole Church the solemn and anniversary representation of the passion and death of Jesus Christ. That week the Church calls the Great Week. How imposing, my brethren, how at once sad and consoling are the ceremonies of the Church in those days of so salutary a memory! All that series of mysteries following one another, the voice of the prophets mingling with that of the evangelists to recount the sorrows of Jesus, those noises, mysterious echoes of the shock which announced the death of a God, that sacred fire which hides and goes out as the orb of day was eclipsed, that cross which the Christian people go to adore, that tomb which recalls the sepulchre where Joseph of Arimathea buried the Saviour, that lament and those chants of condolence for the sorrows of a mother: once more, my brethren, how beautiful all that is! how great all that is! how worthy of interest all that is!

My brethren, must I tell you? there was lacking to these mysteries which the Church celebrated only one thing: your presence. So beautiful a spectacle, and almost no spectators! It seemed to us that this basilica, accustomed formerly to see itself, on those days, filled with an immense multitude of the faithful, now showed its vast naves empty and deserted, and lamented, with the accent of Jeremiah, that no one came to its solemnities: *Viæ Sion lugent eo quod non sint qui veniant ad solemnitatem.* [The ways of Sion mourn, because there are none that come to the solemn feast.] And from the depth of His sepulchre Jesus Christ seemed to say also by the mouth of the same prophet: “I have trodden the winepress alone; I have looked all around, and there was no one to come and share My sorrows”: *Torcular calcavi solus. Circumspexi, et non erat qui consolaretur.*

We hear every day persons of a certain world, persons otherwise Christian and pious, excuse certain frivolous, dangerous, degrading reading; we hear, I say, Christian persons excuse these readings and allow them to themselves because, they say, there is nothing else that interests them and one must employ one’s time on something. The fine reasoning! But tell me, instead of reading the sombre, sad and disgusting pages of a woman who is the opprobrium of her sex, instead of devouring the miry descriptions of a pen that plays with filth and puts on the stage prostitution and the convict-prison, would it not be a thousand times more worthy of you, a thousand times more interesting, to come and follow the touching and majestic solemnities of the Church, whose admirably beautiful liturgy is all perfumed with unction and gentle sadness, and leaves in the imagination none of those mad ideas nor those feverish emotions which make you a burden to yourselves, to your husbands, to your children and to society? There are a thousand times more beauties in your book of offices, and in particular in the offices of Holy Week, than in all the productions of contemporary literature.

And you who allege to us your occupations, and who could not find a moment to come and adore the cross of Jesus and pour out some prayer before His tomb, you know well how to find time to go and see a scene of horror. The Calvary and the tomb of my Jesus are deserted; and men of every condition, and old age with white hair, and the mother of the family, and the daughters of the city and its surroundings, crowd to the place of a bloody execution: *Non hunc, sed Barabbam!* [Not this man, but Barabbas!] There is no time to lose for my Jesus; one does not regret the whole half of a day for another. But let us draw the veil over these pictures. Let us not forget that we are preaching peace and joy.

Peace and joy to you, faithful Christians, whom we saw follow, with so much interest and piety, all the ceremonies and all the mysteries of the Church! You recall to us that faithful disciple and those holy women who followed Jesus to Calvary. Peace and joy to you, Christian mothers, whom we saw surrounded by your children, to whom you strove to make these great mysteries understood, whom you taught to pray and to weep before the tomb of Jesus! Ah! do not regret some moments taken from their studies; there are in these mysteries high lessons, great teachings both for the mind and for the heart; and above all there are very

efficacious and very lasting graces. Peace and joy to you all, my brethren, who came to kiss the cross of the Saviour and to console the sorrows of His mother! Peace and joy to you all who celebrated the mysteries of the passion and death of Jesus Christ; but also peace and joy because of the mystery of His resurrection!

Oh! my brethren, for him who has followed the mournful ceremonies of Holy Week, how sweet and consoling is the feast of Easter! The feast of Easter is the feast of Christian joy and gladness: so all the holy Fathers speak of it in their homilies. Nothing is so beautiful as the ray of the sun after a long rain; and the smile of joy never has more charm than when it succeeds long sadnesses. There is for the heart an inexpressible charm, an ineffable sweetness in this passage from sorrow to pleasure. So, how sweet it is to greet the dawn of Easter day! The day before, it was still a tomb, Jeremiah and his songs of death; the tabernacle was empty, the sacrifice had ceased; the bells had lost even that mournful voice which they do not refuse to other mortals when they descend into the grave; the crowd was sad, pensive, silent. And the next morning, I know not what new thing had changed the face of everything; I know not what light had given the holy place an aspect wholly different; it was like a ray of life chasing away the darkness of death; the walls of the temple and the faces of Christians seemed rejuvenated.

The *alleluias* began to resound beneath the sacred vault. The whole Catholic universe sang at once: Christ is risen, alleluia! And in her ecstasy of happiness the Church interrupted all these phrases with that cry of gladness: Alleluia! Then in the evening she put upon our lips that hymn so naïvely joyful, that rhymed history of the resurrection which one of our old kings composed, and which little children know.[1] Is there, my brethren, is there a heart so indifferent that it is not moved when all the faithful, answering the voice of the choir-boy, repeat with so much enthusiasm and with so expansive a jubilation the refrain of the triple alleluia, and when the echoes of our churches repeat that tune which they have known so long, and that song of congratulation to Mary, which succeeds so well that of condolence for her sorrows, that song which an angel composed for earth: “Queen of heaven, rejoice, for He whom you were worthy to bear in your womb is risen”?

And what increases the joy of our Christian feasts is the thought that we rejoice on the same day on which our fathers rejoiced. This Pasch which we celebrate, the wandering Israelite already celebrated its figure; the first Christians celebrated it in their catacombs, and it was the great day of their agapes; our fathers celebrated it with transport. It was for them in all times the most joyful, the most revered, the most popular solemnity of Christianity. My dearly beloved brethren, I learned it from Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, who did not disdain to transmit to us these details: fourteen hundred years ago, as at present, Christians on this day renewed their garments, the mother had her child wear a new dress for the first time. And the little white daisy with a purple heart, which flowers at this season, our fathers called the *pâquerette* [the “Easter-flower”]. Oh! yes, my brethren, how much charm Christian feasts borrow from their antiquity! All the joy of past memories seems to be reflected on the present solemnity. Rejoice then, my dearly beloved brethren, peace and joy: *Gaudium et pax*, because of the mysteries which we have celebrated for a fortnight; peace and joy because of the sufferings and death, as because of the resurrection, of Our Lord Jesus Christ! My dearly beloved brethren, let me say it here: even pious persons have become too foreign to the spirit of the Christian mysteries. God, we have often said, has put all religion in facts. Let us enter into the spirit of the feasts of Christianity and be penetrated with the thought of the Church, let us weep with her over the death of Jesus, let us rejoice with her at His resurrection: these are the most excellent practices of piety. So did our fathers. Where are those ancient times when history, speaking of a remarkable fact, informed us that the thing had happened while the king, the court and almost the whole city were at the matins of Easter? Where are the nearer times when the greatest of our poets, after celebrating on his lyre the solemnities of Sion, went to Tenebræ, accompanied by the immortal fabulist his friend, to admire the poetry of Jeremiah and Baruch? Then people knew how to identify themselves with the thought of the Church; as they had shared her mourning, they shared her joys and her gladness.[2]

Today, my brethren, the solemnities pass and leave us nothing. For most men there is no longer a Good Friday, nor an Easter. My brethren, our cold and reasoning centuries have frozen everything. Religion has been stripped of the ornaments with which the wise and provident hand of God had adorned her. Under a pretended respect for her, it has been wished that she should keep only her essential dogmas, that she should address herself only to reason. She has been placed in a certain disenchanted sanctuary. Then people come and tell us that religion must have its part, doubtless, in our life, but that we need relaxations, that she is too serious to be occupied with always; that is, we authorise ourselves against religion by our own misdeeds. God had made religion for the whole man: that is, she had wherewith to satisfy his mind, his heart, his senses, his imagination; it has been wished that she should speak no more than to the mind, scarcely to the heart, and the senses and the imagination go to beg from the world, from its futilities and its vices, the pleasures of which man has need, and which religion undertook to offer him. Religion was called Noemi; they have wished her to be called Mara, and they come afterwards to reproach her with her bitterness.[3] Oh! my brethren, will there not then be one day a resurrection for that simple and artless faith which offered to our fathers, in the celebration of the solemnities of Christianity, so much peace and joy: *Gaudium et pax!*

II. I had said, my brethren, that the second motive of the joy and the peace which the Church preaches to us in Paschal time results from the sacraments that we have received. Time fails me: *Et nunc justificati, pacem habete* [And now, being justified, have peace], said Saint Paul.[4]

My brethren, in the early centuries of the Church it was the custom, except in case of danger, to confer baptism only at the feast of Easter. It was wished that the baptismal waters should be in some way mingled with the blood of Jesus Christ freshly shed for men. Since that time, because of too frequent dangers, and also so that the habits of faith might be mingled sooner with the habits of nature, the Church has changed her discipline; but she has not changed her rites and ceremonies. This is why that procession to the fonts, this is why those prayers for the neophytes, this is why those touching homilies of the holy Fathers which we still read, this is why that beautiful hymn which we sing this evening at Vespers, in which the newly baptised, having laid aside the white robes of their baptism, *in albis depositis*, give thanks to the Lord for the second birth they have won. Let us all enter, my brethren, into the spirit of the Church; let us appreciate the benefit of this first sacrament. Christian mothers, converse with your children about these ceremonies of the Church, and teach them to be grateful to Jesus Christ who procured them, with the grace of baptism, so much peace and happiness. Here, my brethren, here are important objects of conversation, here for your children is the matter of instructions full of interest: *Et nunc justificati, pacem habete.*

But there are other sacraments that we have received in these days. Oh! it is to you all, who have gone to lay your iniquities in the bosom of divine mercy, it is to you who have gathered round the Table of the Lord, that I must say with Saint Paul: *Et nunc justificati, pacem habete.* Yes, to you especially who for several years had resisted grace, to you who at last had the courage to shake off those heavy chains that weighed you down: *Et nunc justificati, pacem habete.* And you, my brethren, whom the Paschal graces have touched, have shaken, you who have taken one step more toward reconciliation, but have not yet dared to cross the whole distance that separates you from God, what shall I say to you? Oh! with all my heart too I shall say to you:

Peace and joy: *gaudium et pax!* But I know, alas! that this joy, that this peace will be very imperfect, so long as I cannot say to you with truth: *Et nunc justificati, pacem habete.* Justification is an essential condition of peace and of joy. What do you fear then, my brethren? Why remain so long unhappy? You are afraid of confession and of us, and in that you are wrong. You are afraid, and in that, if I dare say it to you, you lack judgment, for we live in the midst of you, you have been able often to read in our hearts, and it is impossible that with a little discernment you should not soon discover there that immense treasure of mercy and tenderness which God has poured into a priestly soul. Yes, it is in vain that you raise objections and difficulties about confession: the truth is that you are afraid of it, that you are afraid of us, and in that, I repeat, you are wrong. Oh! Lord Jesus, behold the days of the general feast are ended. The wedding is over;

but the table is still open. Bring back to it often, Lord, those who sat at it, those who fed on Your wheat, were inebriated with Your wine. And if some have forgotten to come and take their share, Lord, grant that they resist no longer the touching invitations which You address to them by our mouth, so that they may share, both on this earth and in eternity, the peace and the joy which You have promised to Your elect. It is the grace, etc.[5]

Translator's notes

1. The many quotations of Bossuet are the preacher's and are not verified here against Bossuet's text. The Augustine reference ("treatises on the first epistle of Saint John") is as the preacher gives it; not verified here.

2. "Pâquerette" is the French name of the daisy; the folk etymology from *Pâques* is the preacher's.

3. The allusion to a woman novelist ("a woman who is the opprobrium of her sex") is left unnamed in the original; the editor's identification is not given here and none is asserted.

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[1] The "old king" is the preacher's reference; he does not name him here. The traditional attribution of the hymn is not verified here.

[2] The preacher alludes, without naming them, to Racine and La Fontaine; this identification is the editor's reading, not stated in the text.

[3] Ruth 1:20: Naomi ("pleasant") asked to be called Mara ("bitter").

[4] Cf. Rom. 5:1: *Justificati ergo ex fide, pacem habeamus.* The words as quoted are the preacher's paraphrase.

[5] Cf. Appendix I: A, 14.

n° 13. Homily for the Fourth Sunday after Easter: On the Practices of Devotion toward the Blessed Virgin

17 May 1840.

Ecce ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes. [Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.] (St. Luke 1:48.)

MY DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN, nearly two thousand years ago a young virgin named Mary, seized suddenly with a prophetic spirit, dared to utter this oracle, whose fulfilment was naturally most improbable: Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed: *Ecce ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.* What! young child, are you thinking? All nations, all centuries will occupy themselves with you! But how can that come about? I know well, lovable child, that you are full of grace and modesty; but history does not record modesty, and the world scarcely celebrates it. I know well that you are one of the last shoots of the family of David; but your nobility is forgotten, your very nation hardly looks at you, and the universe takes little interest in misfortune.

Whoever had heard this young virgin presage to herself so glorious a future would have accused her of rash confidence, of presumptuous illusion. Yet never did a prophecy have a more brilliant fulfilment. It seems that, for eighteen hundred years, the whole universe has made it its task to realise the oracle which the lovable virgin of Nazareth pronounced in the secrecy of the family, and which was to remain buried in the mountains of Hebron. The holy Fathers made this remark, and the great and devout Cardinal Hugh of Saint-Victor said it after them: there is no nation, no sex, no state, no condition that has not contributed to the fulfilment of this prediction.[1] Jews, Gentiles, Greeks, Barbarians, men, women, kings, subjects, rich, poor, empires, private persons have honoured her, invoked her and loaded her with blessings. Heaven and earth, Angels and men have vied with one another in rendering her their homage.

Among the different prophecies which prove the divinity of religion, this one has not been sufficiently valued, though its fulfilment is so brilliant, so marvellous, so contrary to human foresight, so evidently supernatural: *Ecce ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.* I would like to be able to show you today,

my brethren, all that the Church has done since her birth for the glory of Mary; but the subject is too rich to be exhausted. Gathering only a few flowers from this beautiful garden, I shall speak to you of the principal devotions that the Church has authorised. Nearly a year ago we devoted several instructions to establishing the foundations of devotion to the Blessed Virgin; I wish today to speak to you of the practices and forms of this devotion, saying in turn a few words on the feasts, the prayers, the confraternities and the pilgrimages in honour of Mary.[2]

I. The Church, my brethren, has multiplied with a sort of profusion the feasts in honour of the most Blessed Virgin. There is not an important circumstance in the life of Mary that is not the object of a feast: the first instant at which this pure and immaculate Virgin began to exist, that in which this fair dawn lit us with her rising rays; her early immolation of herself to the Lord; her virginal marriage with the chaste Joseph; the appearance of the archangel Gabriel bringing the great news, and the solemn moment of the divine maternity; the charitable and hasty visit she paid to the mother of the Precursor. Then, leading Mary to the temple for her purification and the presentation of her divine Son, the Church gathers from the mouth of Simeon a sorrowful oracle whose fulfilment begins from that day; so there is no feast in honour of Mary, save the feast of her sorrows, until she leaves the earth, carried off by the Angels jealous to give this fair treasure to heaven. That is the great feast of Mary; but it is not the last. The heart of Mary in the heavens is still a mother's heart, and the Church wishes to celebrate that maternal heart too.

Here certainly is a great profusion of feasts in honour of Mary; yet these are only the feasts celebrated by the universal Church. There is besides an infinity of local feasts, some which consecrate either a prodigy or an attribute of Mary; others which belong to a religious order or to an association. Such are, for example, the feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, the feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and of the Rosary. There exists, my brethren, a daily calendar of the feasts of Mary, so that there is not a single day which is not, in some part of the Catholic world, consecrated to the most Blessed Virgin: *Ecce ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.*

Most of the feasts of the most Blessed Virgin are of the highest antiquity. We read in the works of Saint Athanasius, Saint Ambrose, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Augustine, sermons and homilies which they delivered before the people on these solemnities. For a long succession of centuries these feasts were celebrated with such zeal that they all had a popular name and designation. In the city we inhabit, the feasts of the most Blessed Virgin were so revered that four of them were for a long time the occasion of as many commercial gatherings. In the collection of the edicts of the kings of France one finds, under the year 1369, an ordinance concerning the duration of the merchants' assemblies which followed the feasts of Candlemas, the Annunciation, the Assumption and the Nativity. These popular assemblies were held in the cloister, and were nothing else than the result of the great number of pilgrims who flocked to Chartres on these feasts.

The feast of the Nativity in particular brought to Chartres Christians of every condition and from every land. So this feast is the only one which still offers us some historical remains of the old time. This feast, very ancient in the Eastern Church, was little known in the Latin Church, or at least it was not solemnly celebrated in France before Saint Fulbert, bishop of Chartres, the first who established it in this Church. We have from him three sermons which he preached on this day, and in one of these sermons he says that the feast of the Nativity of Mary is the particular feast of our city, because it is on this day that the very oracles of the Gentiles concerning the Virgin who was to bear the Saviour were fulfilled. Which supposes, my brethren, that the great Saint Fulbert believed the ancient tradition of our Church. This holy man also composed hymns and pious antiphons to the glory of the Nativity of Mary, songs of love which the vaults of this temple repeated for nearly ten centuries.

But at the same time as I know not what spirit of destruction, introduced by the breath of error, was bringing down, under the blows of the axe and the hammer, so many graceful, light and delicate sculptures, to replace them with Greek columns and with coatings more or less precious but of a uniform, monotonous and

symmetrical kind, an analogous work of destruction was casting out of our ancient liturgy those hymns and proses whose pious accent and artless charm offended a century sick with prejudices, a century in which even the good, by an unfortunate contagion, shared the reasoning spirit of error and unbelief. Oh! the good taste, indeed, and the judicious criticism, that which ravaged and buried these masterpieces of art which we should buy today at their weight in gold, and which tore out of our breviaries and our missals prayers which the Roman Church has borrowed from us and still sings! But let us not enter on this ground, we should have too much to say. The feasts of Mary were therefore formerly celebrated with great piety throughout the Catholic universe, and especially by our forefathers. But alas! my brethren, what a change now! I know well that wise reasons led the Church to suppress the obligation which these feasts formerly carried; but the Church made this suppression only with regret, and while most earnestly recommending to the devotion of the faithful to do henceforth through love what they formerly did through necessity. So the Church has kept for these feasts the same degree of solemnity. Ah! my brethren, let us not let the feasts of the Blessed Virgin fall away among us; let us not grow accustomed to letting them pass unnoticed. Let them always be dear to our piety! Let us prepare for them by religious exercises. We have so many needs! Let us ask Mary for a grace, a virtue, at each of her feasts. So did the saints. Read the letters of Saint Francis de Sales: you will see that at the approach of the feasts, and especially of those of Our Lady, his piety was wholly occupied with them. The object of the feast was so much in his mind and in his heart that it came quite naturally to present itself under his pen. My dearly beloved brethren, the celebration of Christian feasts is of the highest importance, and on it our religion and our piety depend in great part. The feasts are faith made sensible, the supernatural made intelligible, virtue made easy and practicable for all; the feasts, in a word, are Christianity made popular. Whoever should have celebrated well all the feasts that the Christian year brings back would be assured of possessing the whole spirit of Christianity. Do not neglect then, my brethren, the feasts of the most Blessed Virgin. Besides, I dare say that if the obligation has ceased for all the others, it remains in a sort for the faithful of this parish.

Not content with having established in honour of Mary feasts corresponding to all those of Our Lord, the Church wished moreover that there should be each week a day consecrated to Mary, as there is one consecrated to God. My dearly beloved brethren, the custom of honouring Mary on Saturday is very ancient, and it already existed for a long time when Pope Urban II, in the celebrated Council of Clermont, ordered that the Mass and Office of the Blessed Virgin be said every Saturday, whenever the day was not impeded. In our old writers Saturday is sometimes called the Sabbath of Our Lady, *sabbatum Mariale*, and at other times Mary's Sunday. Each week, then, throughout the Catholic world, there is a day on which the whole Church is occupied in singing the praises of Mary: *Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.*

But this is not yet enough in the eyes of the Church; as under the old law there was a whole month reserved to the Lord, she wishes also to consecrate a month to the Mother of God. And in the choice she has made, what a subject for lovable and consoling reflections! There is a month of the year in which everything grows beautiful in nature, when flowers are born again, when the earth adorns herself with a festal garment; and it is this month that the Church consecrates to her from whom religion borrows her sweetest truths and virtue its most lovable colours. No, my dearly beloved brethren, I cannot weary of admiring the happy inspiration which led the Church, in recent times, to make of the fairest month of the year that of the fairest of virgins: a touching devotion which binds by graceful harmonies the most flowery and most smiling season of the year with what religion has most attractive. This idea would have deserved to be born six or eight centuries earlier, when the Virgin Mother of God was the great thought which dominated all the conceptions of men, when everything most graceful in nature bore her name or became one of her emblems, and when, for example, the most beautiful flowers were called the Rose of the Virgin, Mary's Slipper, Our Lady's Gloves.[3] Sublime and intelligent simplicity, which touched the loftiest ideas and restored a creation degraded by sin! Admirable economy, which gave back to creatures a voice to raise us to God, and which embellished them themselves by lending them a sacred thought!

The pictures of nature, my brethren, take on a divine charm when religion comes to blend her sweet colours with them. Placed on the altars, flowers have a more exquisite fragrance; it is an emanation from the heavens. And behold the month of flowers and perfumes, become the jubilee month of Mary, goes round the Christian universe like a great altar from which all that earth has most sweet and most enchanting rises like a smoke of incense toward the throne of Mary. Oh! my dearly beloved brethren, with what consolation do we not see you come every evening to the feet of our tender Mother, to meditate her life so beautiful and so pure, and, if it be permitted to say so, her life so delicately, so gracefully retraced by a mouth from which the Angels themselves would love to hear their Queen spoken of! Oh! yes, my brethren, heaven must contemplate with complacency this pious devotion of our faithful, who come in silence to offer their homage to the Queen of the month of flowers.

And what takes place here, my brethren, is found in the whole Catholic Church: *Beatam me dicent omnes generationes.* There is almost no church where the decline of the day does not in this month bring the servants of Mary to the foot of her altars. In the capital of the Christian world, in all Italy, in Poland, what do I say? even on the banks of the Indies, and near those beautiful lakes of America, the neophyte and the savage go to lay the flowers of May before the statue of the Virgin. Under those other skies as under ours, the month of May is the month of Mary. What a fulfilment of that prophecy: *Ecce ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes!* No, my brethren, the age that could understand and welcome so poetically Christian a thought is not so foreign as it is accused of being to the conceptions of faith. The month of Mary, become popular in France, proves that the frozen hand of unbelief has not paralysed all hearts, and that our country of the nineteenth century has not lost all the characteristics of our country of old.

II. After speaking of the feasts in honour of the most Blessed Virgin, let us say a few words on the most usual prayers that Christians address to her. It would take a whole instruction to explain that prayer full of grace, the honour of composing which heaven and earth shared between them. Who could count how many times this salutation has been repeated since Gabriel and Elizabeth addressed it to Mary? For nearly a thousand years, how many millions of men every day repeat these words: “Hail, Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women!” The mere recitation of the Angelic Salutation is a prodigious fulfilment of this prophecy: *Ecce ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.*

And the Angelus, my dearly beloved brethren, ah! listen again. The humble Virgin of Nazareth, become the Mother of God, had said: *Ecce ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.* And behold, eighteen hundred years afterward, three times a day, throughout the Catholic world, the sound of the bells makes all Christians repeat these words: “The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary, and she conceived by the Holy Ghost; and the Word was made flesh in her womb.” What an event, my brethren, whose echo (this is physically true) does not cease a single instant on earth! For, owing to the unequal distribution which the sun successively makes of its light among the different regions of the globe, there is not a moment when the three most opposite points of the earth do not congratulate Mary on her happiness: *Ecce ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.* It was in France first, my brethren, that the public use of this prayer was introduced by one of our most Christian kings. Alas! for a long time our fair and religious France was in some sort the fatherland of devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Today we let ourselves be surpassed by several other countries, at least as regards the recitation of the Angelus. In Italy, in Spain, when the sound of the bell announces the Angelus, one still sees on the public squares the whole multitude kneel. Let us then recite this prayer exactly, my dearly beloved brethren; the Church besides has attached great indulgences to it.

I shall not speak to you of the Rosary; I did so in one of my instructions on the Rosary. But what could I not tell you of the *Memorare*, the most pressing prayer that can be made! It is impossible for the Blessed Virgin to resist it. With this prayer one would obtain the resurrection of a dead man. It is this prayer, met by chance, that delivered Saint Francis de Sales from a mortal perplexity. With this prayer Father Bernard did what he liked.[4] There is no grace that one cannot in some way wrest by a *Remember* recited with fervour. What shall

I say to you then of the *Salve Regina*, the sweetest, the most melodious prayer! “Hail, Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, our hope, hail! To thee do we cry, poor exiled children of Eve; to thee do we sigh, groaning in this vale of tears.” The Blessed Virgin has revealed that every time these words were sung: *Eia ergo, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte* [Turn then thy eyes of mercy toward us], she could not help lowering upon us her eyes full of mercy. My dearly beloved brethren, which of you has not often been touched on hearing, in this beautiful church, the evening offices end with the singing of this antiphon, a chant all stamped with unction, sweetness and holy sadness? And those words that close it: “Show unto us, after this exile, Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!” What shall I say too, my brethren, of that song of congratulation to Mary, all mingled with alleluias, the *Regina cæli*, which an angel composed and was the first to sing, and which is for earth like a sample of the poetry of the heavens? — I stop here, my brethren, for I wish to add a few words on the confraternities established in honour of Mary.

III. [Printed “II.”] My dearly beloved brethren, in the first days of Christianity, when the spirit of Jesus was poured over all the faithful, when all understood the great precept of love which He had just left to the world, then the whole Church offered the image of the most beautiful and most perfect association. They were, says the Evangelist, but one heart and one soul. Happy age in which a partial association would have been out of place in the Church, because the Church was herself but one great confraternity! But soon the spirit of Jesus having grown weaker on earth, and the ideas of the age having re-entered the Christian community, the Church felt the need of sustaining the faithful by pious associations, called by the sweet name of confraternities. The most ancient confraternities consisted in a certain union of prayer of persons living in the world with the religious and monastic orders. Later, confraternities independent of the religious orders were established in most churches. When one considers, my brethren, with the eyes of faith, this almost infinite multitude of edifying associations proposed to the emulation of the faithful, does one not seem to recognise that rich and precious fabric, varied with a thousand colours, in which the prophet saw the Queen, that is to say the Church, adorned on the day of glory?

Among these confraternities a great number have for their object to honour the most Blessed Virgin. There is the confraternity of the scapular, all balmed with the perfume of Carmel, with the majesty of its memories, its traditions, the richness of its indulgences, the multitude of its miracles, the surety of its promises. There is the confraternity of the holy Rosary, whose pious exercises, a sequel and complement of the divine office, contribute to the sanctification of Sunday and of feast days, by prolonging the time of prayer, by giving to the praise of Mary, to the cult of innocence, the hours of dissipation and frivolous amusements: a touching association which places a crown of roses on the brow of the Queen of virgins every time she recites the crown of prayers consecrated to her! There is the confraternity of the Living Rosary, which wishes to form for Mary a royal diadem of living and animated flowers, I mean the hearts of her devout servants. There is finally the confraternity of the Heart of Mary, a precious devotion reserved for these latter times, and of which heaven itself makes itself the apologist and zealot by prodigies of conversion which multiply at every point of the Church. The confraternity in honour of the Heart of Mary has existed for more than twelve years in this parish; how important that it should flourish there more and more! It is she that preserves innocence, that maintains youth in virtuous habits. By her piety is honoured, the sacraments are frequented: a sweet lure offered to young virgins to turn them from dissolute joys and profane songs by the attraction of holy pomps and melodious canticles. She edifies the assembly of the faithful, she adds to the impulse of the holy ceremonies by the fair order of her lines and the gravity of her march. What a beautiful spectacle to see, in our public processions, youth, and that sex above all whose piety is its fairest ornament, follow piously its unfurled banner! We have heard impiety astonished at the great number of young virgins who came to embellish the cortège of Jesus Christ in His triumphal march; as if the city of Mary ought not to be, above all others, a virginal city. Ah! I beg of you, young persons who hear me, do not give to Hell the consolation and the joy of seeing your ranks less pressed, your lines less prolonged. Do not yield to frivolous reasons and

slight susceptibilities. Say what they will, it will always be glorious for a young virgin, for a Christian virgin, to march under the standards of the Virgin of virgins.

O Mary, you whose glory all ages and all nations celebrate, holy Virgin, you are specially the patroness of this city. If your love were forgotten by the rest of the earth, it should take refuge in our hearts. Tender mother, may we always appear at the head of those who praise you, who honour you and who proclaim you Blessed, so that, having inhabited on earth a land which is so particularly cherished by you, we may also obtain by your side in the heavens a privileged place![5]

Translator's notes

1. "Cardinal Hugh of Saint-Victor" and the account of Urban II and the Council of Clermont, of Saint Fulbert, and of the origin of the Angelus are the preacher's statements; they are not verified here.

2. The preacher's remarks on the Council's decree and on the Angelus ("introduced by one of our most Christian kings") are reproduced as printed.

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[1] Hugh of Saint-Victor (d. 1141) was not a cardinal; the title is given as printed. The attribution of the remark is the preacher's; not verified here.

[2] M. l'abbé Pie probably intended to give a second homily on the pilgrimages in honour of Mary, since he had entitled the present homily "First homily on the practices of devotion toward the Blessed Virgin." In fact he spoke in this one only of the feasts, the prayers and the confraternities in honour of Mary, and the exact list of sermons and instructions indicates no homily on pilgrimages. (Editor's note.)

[3] The French names are *la Rose de la Vierge, le Soulier de Marie, les Gants de Notre-Dame*, folk names of flowers.

[4] "Le Père Bernard" is Claude Bernard (1588–1641), the "poor priest" of Paris, known as a devotee of the *Memorare*; the identification is the editor's inference and is not stated in the text; not verified here.

[5] Cf. Appendix I: A, 15, 69. For the confraternities, see the pastoral letter of Mgr Giraud, bishop of Rodez. (Note of M. l'abbé Pie.)

n° 14. Allocution for My Brother's Wedding

22 June 1840.

In ancient times, before Jesus Christ had brought His law to men, when a member of the family wished to be united to a wife, it was the custom that the father, or in his default the eldest brother, in the midst of all the relatives and friends, should consecrate this union and bless the young couple in the name of God. The house then served as a temple; the head of the family was its priest, or at least the priesthood of fatherhood supplied that of religion. A touching custom which the narratives of Scripture make us admire in the history of the patriarchs, and which nations foreign to Christianity still preserve. But Our Lord Jesus Christ, having raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament, entrusted in the new law to priests alone the consecrating and blessing, before the face of the altars, of the union and sacred engagements of Christians.

These two kinds of blessing, of which the second is doubtless infinitely more august, but of which the first is nevertheless venerable enough that the Church has kept in the expression of her sacrament the words of a father of the old law uniting his daughter to the young Tobias, these two kinds of blessing, I say, are today to meet upon your head. And it is with a sweet consolation, my beloved brother, that, uniting in regard to you the double priesthood of religion and of family, I am about both to bless and to consecrate your union with my power as priest and with my tenderness as brother. Most ardent wishes escape from my heart, at the same moment that my sacred ministry will bring down upon you and your young wife the blessings from on high.

The union you are about to contract is holy, it has been so from the beginning; but, I repeat, it has been raised by Jesus Christ to the dignity of a sacrament, that is, it has been placed among those religious signs which produce grace in souls. This sacrament is of great utility, and I congratulate you, dear spouses, on the serious preparation you have brought to it. For alas! there are so many bitternesses in the marriages that God does

not bless! God knows so well how to take back from us what we have refused Him! Oh! how you will applaud yourselves for not having despised a treasure of graces so useful, of graces that correspond to such great needs!

You, my brother, will love your wife tenderly. You will be gentle and good to her. You will apply yourself to making her happy, and the empire which you acquire today over her will be all of love. And you, my child (whom I shall soon call by another name), you will be toward your husband full of tenderness and of a lovable submission. By the sweetness and grace with which you will season all your relations, you will be the charm of the family. A wife who understands her duties well is the whole joy of a house. She exercises over her husband, and over all that surrounds her, a sort of fascination which carries happiness everywhere. It is for this reason that the Church, in the prayers she is about to address to God, will be particularly occupied with you, my child. She will ask for you, one after another, each of the virtues which shone with the greatest lustre in the holy women of the old law. Pray God well, my child, that the prayers of the Church may obtain their effect.

Enriched with the graces of this sacrament, you will fear God, dear spouses, you will pray to Him, both in the secrecy of the family and in the holy temple on the days consecrated to Him. You will be humble and irreproachable in the condition in which God has caused you to be born. You will not envy equalling by luxury a rank in which divine Providence has not placed you. You will be content with the lot that has been given you in society.

If God gives you children, you will bring them up in the fear and love of His law. You especially, young wife, will consecrate early to God and to His holy Mother the fruit you will bear in your womb. Your children will be rocked in the arms of religion, and above all in devotion to the most Blessed Virgin: they will suck it in with their milk. Become a mother, you will find in the memory of your youth the model of the virtues you will have to inspire in your children.

I stop. May heaven, dear spouses, grant all the wishes that I am about to form with you! May the most Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, join her blessing to that of her divine Son! I have placed your union under her auspices. May she herself direct my hand when it is presently to unite your hearts for ever; and may this day be for you, for me, and for all our relatives, a day for ever happy and precious! Amen.[1]

Translator’s notes

1. The “words of a father of the old law uniting his daughter to the young Tobias” refer to the blessing of Raguel, Tobit 7; the allusion is the preacher’s.

[1] Cf. Appendix I: A, 18.

n° 15. Homily Announcing the Collection for the Acquisition of the Bells

2 August 1840.

Locutus est Dominus ad Moysen, dicens: Fac tibi duas tubas argenteas, quibus convocare possis multitudinem… Filii Aaron sacerdotes clangent tubis; eritque hoc legitimum sempiternum in generationibus vestris. [The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Make thee two trumpets of beaten silver, that thou mayst call together the multitude… And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall sound the trumpets; and this shall be an ordinance for ever throughout your generations.] The Lord spoke to Moses, and said to him: Make two trumpets of silver by means of which the whole multitude may be assembled… The Levites, sons of Aaron, shall use them for this purpose; and it shall be a law for the whole succession of generations. (Book of Numbers, ch. 10.)

God, my dearly beloved brethren, who is admirable in all His works, has set an equal perfection in the magnificence of wholes and in the delicacy of details. The universe is a divine plan all of whose parts have been executed by a divine hand. A drop of water is no lesser marvel than the basin of the seas; and the infinite divinity reveals itself in an atom as well as in the immensity of the heavens. And if this remark has often been made in the order of nature, it is no less striking in the order of religion.

If you contemplate the whole of religion, if, like Balaam of old, you place yourself on the mountain to embrace at one glance the entire Catholic Church, at the sight of so many lofty mysteries, of so many elevated precepts, of that order and sublime hierarchy, you are seized with an indefinable astonishment. The more you look, the more the horizon recedes and draws back before you. When you think you can rest your admiration, suddenly, through I know not what openings, unknown worlds present themselves to you, sublime glimpses reveal to you new truths; it is a firmament where at each instant new stars appear; it is a cloud from whose flanks flashes escape at every moment and in every direction, to furrow your dazzled eyes. In the midst of so many marvels your mind is confounded and lost, and you cry out with the Prophet on the mountain: *Quam pulchra tabernacula tua, Jacob, et tentoria tua, Israel!* [How beautiful are thy tabernacles, O Jacob, and thy tents, O Israel!] Holy Church of God, what grandeur, what magnificence, what marvellous beauty in your whole! How beautiful are your tents, and how admirable your pavilions!

Then, having admired the Church in her whole, if you wish to consider some of her parts; if, in this immense picture, you fasten your attention on a few of the details, a new surprise awaits you. Everywhere you meet a perfection, a fittingness, an admirable harmony. The smallest Catholic practices belong on some side to an order of infinitely elevated ideas. Everything the Church touches she lifts up and divinises. All is great in the Church, down to the smallest things; all is admirable there, all is divine. The characters of her divinity are found both in the water she blesses, and in the incense she burns, and in the chants she uses, and in the vibrations of the bronze she has consecrated. There is not, in the liturgy of the Catholic Church, a ceremony, a practice, a usage, however unimportant one may suppose it, which has not furnished to some Father or Doctor considerations infinitely higher and loftier than all that ancient philosophy ever could produce. Holy Church of God, what aptness, what perfection, what fittingness, what harmony in all that concerns you, and how admirable are your pavilions! *Quam pulchra tabernacula tua, Jacob, et tentoria tua, Israel!*

My dearly beloved brethren, in a few weeks you will be assembled in this temple for a ceremony in which it is our duty to interest at once your piety and your generosity. We have therefore judged it useful to speak to you today of those trumpets of the new law by which the Church summons you to her solemnities. After some historical details, we shall try to explain the prayers and ceremonies of the blessing of bells, and the marvellous effects of this blessing.

I. Bells are one of those numerous marvels whose invention is properly due to Christianity. Jewish and pagan antiquity knew, of this kind, only instruments of very small size which it never perfected. We know from the Holy Books and from the historian Josephus that among the Hebrews the high priest wore, in ceremonies, a tunic fringed with golden bells. Similar usages are found in the mysteries of paganism; and one of the historians of Rome informs me that the Emperor Augustus had crowned the roof of the Capitol with little instruments which, to say so in passing, had rather the purpose of embellishment than of utility, like those which already ornamented the pavilions of China before that nation had learned from Christians to cast bells and to place them in its temples. It is therefore quite wrongly that, in these latter times, science, ever jealous to snatch from Christianity some of its titles to glory, has wished to dispute with it the invention of the magnificent instruments which resound at the summit of its temples.

I do not wish to display in this pulpit the erudition of a dissertator; but I shall content myself with saying that everything antiquity knew of this kind it equitably called by the name of little bells, *tintinnabula*. The name *cloche*, *nola*, *campana*, is a word of Christian origin. The first author who employed it is a Christian poet of the fifth century; and the pyramids that rise above temples have never had, save among Christians, the name

of *clochers* [bell-towers].[1] *Tintinnabulis fastigium ædis redimivit* [He crowned the summit of the temple with little bells]: that is all the Emperor Augustus had done for the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. Who would dare to draw a serious comparison between that and the enormous great bells with which the piety of our ancestors loaded the brow of these towers? One must have a great desire to disparage the Catholic Church to arm oneself against her with such authorities. Before the fifth century of Christianity this means of summoning an entire population was unknown. And it is for those trumpets of which I spoke to you in my text that the Church of the new law substituted bells: not from the beginning; the Church then dwelt in underground places and catacombs, and would have taken good care not to awaken the attention and the rage of the persecutors by so solemn a signal. Saint Ignatius the martyr teaches us that in those unhappy days it was the function of the deacon, and more often still of a lower cleric, to summon by name for the assemblies each of the Christian families.[2] But scarcely could Christianity come out of its dark retreats and show itself in broad day; scarcely had it raised temples in the cities and under the protection of the Cæsars, when God, who of old, for the construction of the tabernacle, had raised up Bezaleel and taught him to work all kinds of metals, inspired His Church with the happy discovery of those instruments whose powerful voice gives rise at the same minute to the same sentiment in a thousand different hearts, and forces the winds and the clouds to become the messengers of religion.

By whom was this happy secret revealed to earth? To whom must the merit of this rare invention be attributed? Tradition on this point is divided between Saint Paulinus and Pope Sabinian. However that may be, it is certain that at the beginning of the fifth century bells were in use in the Church, and that they then bore the Latin name which they still bear today, whether they retained it from the holy bishop of Nola, or, more probably, because they were first cast of the celebrated metal of Campania, *ære palma Campano*, as the naturalist Pliny said;[3] and in default of him we should learn it through the organ of one of our doctors, Saint Isidore of Seville, who already derived from that the name of bells: *Campanum vocatur a Campania, utensilibus et vasis omnibus probatissimum.* [Campanian bronze is so called from Campania, very highly approved for all utensils and vessels.]

II. [Printed “Il.”] Enough, my dearly beloved brethren, concerning the origin of bells. It remains proved that the invention of them belongs to Christianity, and that antiquity knew nothing of this kind that resembled Christian bells. Here, my brethren, I could, with the author of the *Genius of Christianity*, consider for a moment bells from the purely natural point of view. The bell, considered as harmony, has indubitably a beauty of the first kind, that which is called the grand. The noise of thunder, of winds, of waves is sublime, and it is only by its grandeur. To this order of beauty belongs the sound of the bell. With what pleasure Pythagoras, who lent his ear to the blacksmith’s hammer, would have listened to the sound of our bells on the eve of a solemnity of the Church!

But why stop at the natural beauty of bells, since they have essentially supernatural effects? Produced by Christian thought, they are so affected to Christianity that they are inseparable from it. The character of bells is essentially religious. The sentiments they awaken are the sweeter in that a remembrance of heaven is mingled with them. Attached to any monument other than churches, they would lose their beauty, because they would lose their moral sympathy with our hearts, and the supernatural character that religion gave them by consecrating them.

The blessings of the Church, my dearly beloved brethren, consist in prayers and ceremonies by which she applies certain objects to the worship of God, or attaches to creatures a virtue to determine and produce certain supernatural effects. That is the double object of the blessing of material things: to assign them to divine worship, and to give them a certain moral and supernatural power. Since sin, my brethren, the whole of nature has been enslaved to evil, the spirit of disorder has mingled with everything, and, according to the beautiful expression of Saint Paul, every creature groans in the fetters of iniquity. Nature thus degraded needs a repair in order to be applied to holy things. A powerful hand must, after withdrawing it from every

hostile influence, free it from the ignominy of profane uses and restore it to its first and glorious destination of praising the Creator. Hence, my brethren, those primordial traditions, and those lustrations in use in all the ancient religions.

But the Catholic Church above all, depositary of the blood and the infinite price of the redemption, the Church has received a mission from heaven to restore all things in Jesus Christ, *instaurare omnia in Christo*. This is why she is in the habit of employing nothing in the worship of God that she has not previously purified and sanctified by particular blessings. Thus she dedicates the temples built to the glory of God and destined for His worship; she consecrates the altars and the vessels of the sacrifice; she blesses even the incense whose clouds rise in an odour of sweetness, even the wax which is consumed before the tabernacle. The bronze destined to crown the summit of the temples, to proclaim the name of God in the air, to mingle its accents with those of prayer, must also be prepared for this noble use and consecrated by blessings. The blessing of bells goes back to the most remote centuries. Its ceremonies are imposing, and the Church employs in it aspersions, anointings and perfumes as in her most solemn consecrations. Its prayers are magnificent, and we shall have occasion to return to them. What we have said so far suffices to answer all the questions that the spirit of ignorance and malignity can suggest. The consecration of bells is therefore not a true baptism; and although the Church uses in it water, the oil of the sick and the holy chrism, it is not a sacrament but a simple blessing, a sort of dedication like that which is made of our temples to consecrate them to the worship of the Lord. Names are given to bells, as temples and altars are placed under the invocation of a Saint. Those chosen to give the names to the bells are not properly godfathers and godmothers, since there are neither promises to make nor engagements to take; they are as the representatives and deputies of all the faithful to make to God the offering of these vessels which are destined to the service of His temple, and which are charged in some way to be the heralds and the resounding trumpets of the faith, the prayer and the adorations of the whole Christian community. And here, my brethren, let us enter into the spirit of this ceremony, and conclude, with the holy doctors, how pure must be both the heart and the lips of those who pray, who sing the praises of God or who announce His word, since so particular a consecration is required for inanimate vessels, destined only to serve religion and to summon the people to the divine offices.

Yet the blessing of bells has still another object. And to understand it well, one must know that, as a result of sin, nature, having become mute toward the Creator, has also rebelled against man. In the primitive order everything obeyed man and carried him to God; in the present state of disorder everything is a snare for man, everything inclines him to evil. The elements, subject to the power of the demon, are conjured with him for our ruin. In this respect too it belongs to the Catholic Church to restore all things with Jesus Christ and after the example of Jesus Christ, *instaurare omnia in Christo*. Jesus Christ, Son of God and redeemer of men, wishing to perpetuate on earth the fruits of His redemption and to cause His blood to descend upon our souls until the end of the ages by mysterious channels; Jesus Christ, using His divine omnipotence, raised certain common and natural elements to a supernatural and mysterious state; He made of them the sensible signs and efficacious means of His grace. In this, my brethren, consists the admirable theory of the sacraments: it is nature become the physical instrument of grace; it is matter acting upon spirit.

Doubtless Jesus Christ, in His quality of Son of God and author of grace, could effect this creation and attach grace to these signs. But if this extraordinary power belonged to Jesus Christ alone, it pleased Him to confer upon His Church powers of the same kind which, though more restricted, are still most admirable. Jesus Christ on the one hand gave His Church an absolute power over demons, and on the other hand He promised to grant her all that she should ask of Him. Rich in this double prerogative, the Church sometimes contents herself with purifying the elements, with withdrawing them from every malign and hostile power: this is what she does in the blessing of houses, garments, foods. Sometimes the Church does more, and she attaches to certain material objects a true supernatural power, asking the Lord to grant certain graces on the occasion

of a sign which she has adopted and consecrated: this is what she does in the blessing of the water which she puts at the entrance of her temples, and in that of the bread which she distributes during the sacrifice; it is something analogous that she does also in the blessing of bells. These are not sacraments properly so called that the Church establishes: God alone can institute a sacrament; but they are practices which partake of the nature of the sacrament. Theologians, after Saint Thomas, call them sacramentals, and we may also call them sacraments of the second order. They do not produce sanctifying grace and confer no grace by themselves; but God, in consideration of the petition which the Church has made to Him, is determined to communicate certain graces each time these signs are used. For example, each time the bells ring in the ears of Christians, God is moved to produce in them the sentiments of piety and the effects of grace which the Church has asked, as also to avert scourges and calamities, according to the wish the Church expressed in the prayers of the blessing of these bells. These principles once laid down, it will be easy for us to know the marvellous effects of Christian bells, since they must be those same effects that the Church asks in blessing them, we being assured that God has bound Himself always to hear her. And it is easy for us also to conclude how great is the error of those who regard bells only as a material means of summoning the people to the temples. That is one of their ends doubtless, it is their most direct end if you will; but it is neither the only nor the most excellent.

III. [Printed "II."] The power of bells to honour God. This is their first destination: *Laudo Deum verum.* [I praise the true God.][4] The Christian people, powerless to make their songs of love and their canticles of praise ring out loud enough, place in the air this voice of bronze, sonorous organ which they charge to carry into the heavens the accents of their soul and the thrills of their heart. The harmonies of a majestic peal are the finest ornament of Christian feasts. National solemnities and the feast of the princes of the earth are announced to the noise of cannon and instruments of war. Bells, as a council puts it, are the trumpets of the Church militant, and, as a celebrated warrior said, they are the artillery of religion to give thanks to the God of armies: *Ut sint tubæ Ecclesiæ militantis.* Yes, the majestic swingings of the bells make themselves heard even in the heavens, and interest them in the feasts of earth. The Church herself teaches me this, asking the Lord that the sound of these bells may invite the numerous host of the Angels of heaven to descend around the altars: *Quatenus in templo sancto gloriæ tuæ invitare valeant multitudinem angelorum.* [That in Thy holy temple of glory they may be able to invite a multitude of angels.]

But what is more astonishing, God Himself is touched by these melodious instruments set vibrating in His honour. We know it from His own mouth: "On the days of your feasts, He says, when you present your holocausts and your sacrifices, you shall sound the trumpet, that the Lord your God may be mindful of you: *Canetis tubis ut sint vobis in recordationem Dei vestri.*" And the Church asks in her ceremonies that, as of old the Holy Spirit, charmed by the lyre of David, descended on the head of Saul and calmed his senses, so likewise, seduced in a way and ravished by the melody of these aerial harmonies, He may descend upon the Christian temple and fill it with grace and consolation: *Ac sicut cithara Davidica delectatus desuper descendat Spiritus Sanctus.* [And as, delighted by David's harp, may the Holy Spirit descend from above.] The power of bells to touch the heart of men. The supernatural virtue and the religious power of bells are demonstrated by two incontestable proofs: on the one hand the aversion which the impious have for them, and on the other the pleasure they give to all those whose heart has not ceased to beat for religion. Whence comes it, tell me, that the melodious sound of bells is disagreeable to the ears of the impious, like the rays of the sun to the eyes of certain nocturnal birds; if not because the first hates religion as the second hates light, and because the vibrations of the sacred bronze are essentially religious as the rays of the sun are essentially luminous? Mahomet broke the bells wherever he found them.[5] Protestantism repudiated bells; Calvin, to yield to the imperious will of some sovereigns, consented to keep one bell in each temple as a means of summoning the people, but he loudly blamed what he called the superstitious luxury of peals. Our tyrants of the Revolution began by breaking the bells: they did not want their sleep frightened by these religious sounds. I am not a prophet; but I can assure you in advance that the organs and the echoes of impiety will not

applaud this melody which will soon ring out in our towers. It is remarkable that no wicked man loves the sound of bells; and that is understandable. This man wanted to fall asleep in the sleep of indifference: that priests should preach in their temple matters little to him, he does not go there; but the sacred bronze is a preacher whose importunate word reaches him. He thought he had succeeded finally in forgetting God, and behold God Himself seems to resound in his ears: *Tolle, tolle*, [Away with him, away with him,] take away, break these importunate objects. That other thinks only of his pleasure, he goes from feast to feast; his life passes from voluptuousness to voluptuousness. And behold, in the midst of his intoxication a serious voice comes to remind him of religion, heaven, death: *Tolle, tolle*; take away, break these importunate objects.

My brethren, the wicked, the impious hate bells because they hate God. On the contrary, these bells have a sweet melody for Christians. And as the Church has asked in her prayers, they excite in them the most tender sentiments of piety; they give to their songs the manly resounding of the trumpet, the melody of the ten-stringed lyre, the lively gladness of the drum, the sweetness of the cymbal. There are, my brethren, only a few Christians of a sullen spirit, a dry soul and a reasoning faith who, among the numerous objects of their contradiction, fail not to put these bells whose melody importunes and irritates them. There is something to be made over in those souls, for bells are agreeable not only to fervent Christians but to whoever has not lost the religious sense. I do not doubt, my brethren, that the grace which determined the eternal salvation of a great number of men came down to them from heaven amid the vibrations of the sacred bronze. The confidant and historian of Bonaparte reports that, being in the country, he often stopped in the avenues to listen to the sound of a neighbouring bell. His arms folded on his breast, he gathered eagerly the pious murmur, he feared to lose the least tremor of it; and he grew impatient when his admiration was disturbed or not shared. And he sometimes said: “That reminds me of Brienne and my childhood; I was happy then.”[6] The famous triumpher forgot all his victories, to recapture in the sound of a bell the memory of his first age, and of his religious emotions of that time, the only ones, as he often said, that had kept any empire over his reason.

One is sometimes astonished to see men cling so strongly to the place of their birth; but one forgets then what they cannot forget: that this bell rang on the day of their birth, that it answered the first beating of their heart, that it assembled the faithful to pray at the tomb of their mother, that every Sunday it was, like a heavenly messenger, seeking them in their dwellings to lead them to the altar of God, and that each time it put a good and holy thought into their heart! *Et cum clangorem illarum audierint filii christianorum, crescat in eis devotionis augmentum, ut festinantes ad piæ matris Ecclesiæ gremium cantent tibi in Ecclesia sanctorum canticum novum, deferentes in sono tubæ præconium, modulationem psalterii, suavitatem organi, exsultationem tympani, jucunditatem cymbali.* [And when the children of Christians hear their clangour, may an increase of devotion grow in them, so that, hastening to the bosom of their pious mother the Church, they may sing to Thee in the Church of the saints a new canticle, bearing the proclamation in the sound of the trumpet, the modulation of the psaltery, the sweetness of the organ, the exultation of the drum, the gladness of the cymbal.] This is why, after a long absence, they recognise the voice of the bell of their village as the voice of their mother.

The power of bells to ward off scourges. In your distresses, says the Lord, you shall sound the trumpet and send up to Me cries of distress, for I will be mindful of you: *Clangetis ululantibus tubis, et erit recordatio vestri coram Domino Deo vestro.* And the Church, in the blessing of these bells, asks the Lord that, every time they ring in the air, they may drive away the spirits of darkness and all their illusions, bind the fury of the winds, break the force of storms, and keep away all calamities.

And here, my brethren, I must protest against an injury done to the Church in these latter times. It has been supposed that she rings the bells during storms because she believed that this sound had the natural power to ward them off; and people have cried out error, ignorance. My dearly beloved brethren, three hundred years ago an ecclesiastical author already spoke in these terms: “We do not attribute, he says, this effect to the form

or to the vibrations of the metal; Catholics are not yet so ignorant: *Non obtusa adeo catholici pectora gestamus*, [We do not bear hearts so dull, we Catholics,] and the sun of truth and science has not yet so far withdrawn its light from them: *Nec sol veritatis ab Ecclesia tam procul aversus radios suos elongavit*. We do not pretend that storms are dissipated by the natural virtue of sound. A detonation of war would obtain this effect more efficaciously: *Fecerit hoc efficacius sulfurea teli machinatio*. But we attribute this effect to the blessing and consecration of the Church, to whose prayers it has pleased God to accede, by granting to bells this power and supernatural virtue."[7] The Church besides starts from two incontestable principles: she knows on the one hand, by the word of Jesus Christ, that she has power over demons; she knows on the other, by the Scriptures, that the demons who infect all nature love above all to exercise their action in moments of crisis and violence. Disorder is their natural element, they use it wherever they find it. So Scripture calls them somewhere the spirits of storms: *Spiritus procellarum*; and speaking of tempests, it says they are the work of evil angels: *Immissiones per angelos malos.* The Church then uses bells as an instrument to drive away these enemies over whom God has given her all authority.

But, it is said, the effect of bells is to attract thunder! I grant it. Is not the effect of mud applied on the eyes also to blind? and with mud Jesus Christ healed a blind man. But accidents have often occurred! Yes, and it is because our little faith makes us unworthy of the prodigies long attested by our fathers that the Church today abstains from employing this means.

But then let us content ourselves with lamenting our incredulity, which has suspended supernatural effects subordinate to faith, and let us not accuse the Church of superstition and ignorance. One is always wrong when one accuses the Church. So, in spite of all declamations, she will none the less ask the Lord in a few days, for the bells she will bless, a power against storms and tempests.

Oh! my brethren, how admirable was the simple faith of our fathers, and how efficacious! There was formerly in one of our towers a bell that was called "the bell of the goods" [*la cloche des biens*: the bell for the fruits of the earth]. Two venerable priests had made a donation for it to be rung every day, from six to seven in the evening, from Easter until after the harvests, for the intention of the goods of the earth. And throughout the surrounding countryside, at the first sound of this bell, the good folk made the sign of the cross and recited an *Ave Maria*. The earth was afterwards easier to plough, the crops seemed finer, and the harvests more abundant.

My dearly beloved brethren, our church, celebrated throughout the universe for its steeples, was naturally to be remarkable also for the fame of its bells. In fact we possessed for a long time the finest peal in the Catholic world. It was the ravishment of the whole region, which it excited to respect and love toward Mary. A holy priest, whose memory the Church of France will never cease to bless, the pious and venerable founder of Saint-Sulpice, wrote, about two hundred years ago, after terrible pains and trials, that he had begun to breathe at the feet of Our Lady of Chartres, and he felt the need to recount before the Lord with what emotions he had been penetrated one Corpus Christi day, being awakened in the morning by this sweet sound and by that celebrated resonance of the bells of Notre-Dame.[8]

Several times, my dearly beloved brethren, accidents, in destroying our pyramids, destroyed the fine peal they contained, and our history remarks that always the generosity of our fathers was exercised with admirable eagerness. Let us imitate them, my brethren. Our beautiful church and our towers, the pride of this city and of the whole region, have just been magnificently restored. It is for us to complete the work by furnishing these steeples, whose very name demands that they should not remain empty; and since they are the finest monument, not to say the only one, of our country, let us be inspired by our patriotism in default of the inspirations of piety.

There exists, my brethren, a letter of our great bishop Saint Ivo, by which he thanks the pious queen of England, Matilda, for the bells which she had sent to his cathedral church. This was, my brethren, before the

construction of the steeples, which were then begun, and finished half a century later, precisely to receive these bells, which must doubtless have been very fine, since so high and so magnificent a dwelling was raised for them. The letter of Saint Ivo is full of grace. “I have received, he says, in the name of Our Lady, the bells which you gave her; I have had them placed provisionally in a high place of the temple. And each time their sweet harmony strikes our ears, all the good people of Chartres cannot help thinking of you; your name seems to mingle with the vibrations of these bells. And it is no small favour, this remembrance of you which is renewed at such precious moments, for example when the Victim of propitiation descends upon the altars, when the songs of the night begin to praise the Lord, and when the God of love visits a sinner in his agony.”[9]

My dearly beloved brethren, imitate the piety of this princess, and we shall tell you the same things. The bronze that you will have placed in our towers will speak of you to heaven and to earth. It will be as a foundation of prayers that you will have made. Your name will hover beneath these vaults with the vibrations of the bronze, which will seem to intercede for you. Our grandsons will tell the generosity of their fathers, as we recall at this moment that of our ancestors and of Queen Matilda. And above all, as it is written on a stone at the top of this tower, God will forgive you because you will have worked for Him. It is the grace, etc.[10]

Translator’s notes

1. The long bell-blessing prayer (*Et cum clangorem illarum…*) is given as printed; the rendering is mine.

2. Historical statements (Augustus and the Capitol, Paulinus/Sabinian, Isidore, Pliny, Calvin, the “bell of the goods”, the letter of Saint Ivo, the Napoleon anecdote, the Olier anecdote) are the preacher’s own and are not verified here.

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[1] The preacher does not name the “Christian poet”; no identification is given or verified here.

[2] As given by the preacher; the attribution to Saint Ignatius is not verified here.

[3] The words are printed “æris palma Campano”; the quotation from Pliny is as given by the preacher and not verified here.

[4] This is the first of the inscription mottoes found on bells; the full traditional inscription is not given by the preacher.

[5] The preacher’s assertion about Muhammad is as stated; not verified here.

[6] The preacher refers to Napoleon’s companion at Saint Helena (the reference is to the *Mémorial*, and the anecdote is as given; the name is not stated in the text and the report is not verified here).

[7] The “ecclesiastical author” is not named in the text; the quotation is given as the preacher presents it and is not verified here.

[8] Jean-Jacques Olier; the name is not given in the text, the identification is the editor’s inference from “founder of Saint-Sulpice”; the anecdote is not verified here.

[9] The letter is given as the preacher presents it (a letter of St. Ivo of Chartres to Queen Matilda); not verified here.

[10] Cf. Appendix I: A, 20.

n° 16. Homily for the Day of the Assumption

Preached in 1840.

Quæ est ista quæ ascendit sicut virgula fumi ex aromatibus myrrhæ et thuris et universi pulveris pigmentarii? [Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh and frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumer?] Who is this who rises like the fragrant smoke of a composition of myrrh, of incense and of all sorts of perfumes? (Canticle 3:6.)

MY DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN, you have heard this language of the Angels, and you join with them to ask me: “Who then is she who rises like the fragrant smoke of a composition of myrrh, of incense and of all sorts of perfumes?” And I hasten to answer you: She who thus mounts toward the heavens is the Virgin Mother of Jesus, it is Mary. Mary immaculate from the first instant of her existence, Mary ever pure, ever virgin, Mary whose heart was broken by sorrow, Mary for whom her Son was long a bouquet of myrrh,

Mary whose soul was a fragrant vase filled with all sorts of aromatics and perfumes: it is she whom you see borne upon this cloud, detach herself from earth and fly away toward the heavens. *Quæ est ista quæ ascendit sicut virgula fumi ex aromatibus myrrhæ et thuris et universi pulveris pigmentarii?*

I. Do you ask me from what hand she received the stroke of death? Bossuet will answer for me: This fragrant smoke which we see rising from a composition of perfumes is not torn from it by force nor driven with violence; a gentle and temperate heat delicately detaches it and turns it into a subtle vapour which rises as of itself. So Mary has just left the earth; without any violent shock, a divine heat gently detached her from it and raised her to her Beloved on a cloud of holy desires. As a flame rises and flies of itself to the place of its centre, so this soul goes to be reunited and lost with the object of her love.[1]

"Who is she who rises like the fragrant smoke of a composition of myrrh, of incense and of all sorts of perfumes?" Holy Angels, I have told you: this is Mary. Long enough has she balmed the earth with her perfumes. It is time for heaven to gather this flower. This ripe fruit no longer belongs to us. Once more, this is she, I have told you, it is Mary: *Attollite portas, principes, vestras, et elevamini, portæ æternales.* [Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates.] "Princes of heaven, open your gates, be lifted up, eternal gates, and the queen of glory shall enter in."

What happened, my brethren, at the moment when Mary entered the heavens? Who can say? For myself, continues the Eagle of Meaux, if it be permitted me to mingle my conceptions with secrets so august, I imagine that Moses, seeing this queen, could not help repeating that beautiful prophecy which he has left us in his books: "A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a branch shall spring up from Israel." Isaias, intoxicated with the spirit of God, sang in an indescribable rapture: "Behold then this Virgin who was to conceive and bear a son." And our forefathers, my brethren, joined him to repeat that beautiful prophecy which they had had the happiness to know. Ezechiel recognised that closed gate by which no one ever entered or went out, because it is by it that the Lord of hosts made His entry. And in the midst of them the royal prophet animated a lyre with this heavenly canticle: *Astitit regina a dextris tuis in vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate*: "At thy right hand, O my prince, I see seated a queen in a garment of gold, enriched with wonderful variety." Then the Virgin herself held the blessed spirits in a respectful silence, and drew once more from the depth of her heart those beautiful words: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit is seized with infinite joy. And behold all generations shall call me blessed." Meanwhile the eternal Father bowed with love, He placed the crown on the head of Mary; she is set on her throne, in the arms of her Son, "in that eternal noon," as Saint Bernard says.

II. Doubtless, my dearly beloved brethren, among the glorious solemnities that have rejoiced the heavens, the most illustrious of all, after the Ascension of the Saviour, was the exaltation of the Mother of the Saviour on the throne which her Son destined for her. Yet, until the end of the ages, heaven will have its solemnities and its triumphs, its days of entry and its ceremonies, its magnificences and its spectacles. David himself has taught me so: the Assumption of Mary begins a series of other triumphs of the same kind; others will come after her: *Adducentur regi virgines post eam.* [After her shall virgins be brought to the king.]

"Who then is she who rises like the fragrant smoke?" *Quæ est ista quæ ascendit sicut virgula fumi?* This one is a young virgin who has always kept intact the flower of her purity. She was in the midst of the world like a lily among thorns. Her heart was a vase full of myrrh, incense and aromatics. Her life was that of an angel, her life was like that of Mary. She was a virgin like her, and like her she is ripe for heaven. *Attollite portas, principes, vestras, et elevamini, portæ æternales*: and I see all heaven rejoiced by this other assumption that recalls to it that of Mary. David takes up his lyre again and, continuing his canticle, sings before the throne of Mary: *Adducentur regi virgines post eam.* She will receive from the hands of Mary the crown of virgins, with whom she will henceforth follow all the steps of the Lamb.

"Who is this other who rises again like the fragrant smoke?" *Quæ est ista quæ ascendit sicut virgula fumi?* It is a pious woman who, engaged in the bonds of marriage, constantly kept the treasure of her innocence. Her delicate soul was never soiled by any forbidden love. Nuptial holiness succeeded virginity in this soul, and, if I dare say it, she was like Mary a virgin spouse, so delicate was her modesty. Her heart too was a vase of myrrh, incense and all sorts of perfumes. She balmed her family with her virtues. In the flower of her years, deprived of the husband that heaven had given her, she despised all the pleasures of the world, she lived only to form her children in virtue. Her chaste widowhood surpassed the very purity of virginity. *Attollite portas, principes, vestras, et elevamini, portæ æternales*: and I see heaven again rejoiced by this new assumption which recalls that of Mary. And I see Esther, and I see Judith, both figures of Mary, the one by nuptial holiness, the other by that of widowhood, welcome this soul and introduce it into the choir of virgins among whom she has deserved a place.

Quæ est ista quæ ascendit sicut virgula fumi? "Who is this other again who rises like the fragrant smoke?" This soul is that of a young Christian who dies in the flower of his years. A pious child, he kept the whole integrity of baptismal grace. He always loved purity of heart, he fled the pleasures and feasts of the world, he took delight only at the foot of the altars. His heart too was a vase of myrrh, of incense and of all sorts of perfumes. Today, still very young, he is already ripe for heaven. *Attollite portas, principes, vestras, et elevamini, portæ æternales*: and heaven again applauds this virginal entrance. And I see the beloved disciple, the virgin disciple, and with him the Louis de Gonzagas, the Stanislases, the Berchmans, who come to welcome this new angel and lead him in the train of Jesus among the virgins.

My dearly beloved brethren, I could continue, but time stops me. May we, my brethren, by imitating the virtues of Mary, deserve one day to share her glory, and all give to heaven as it were another representation of her glorious assumption![2]

Translator's notes

1. "Ezechiel…" and "Isaias" are rendered in Douay-Rheims forms; the quotations are the preacher's free renderings of Numbers 24:17, Isaiah 7:14, Ezechiel 44:2, Psalm 44 (Vulgate; 45 in the Hebrew numbering) and Luke 1:46–48.

2. The "Eagle of Meaux" is Bossuet, as the French epithet implies. The attribution of the imaginary scene of the prophets to him is the preacher's; not verified here.

3. "L. de Gonzague, Stanislas, Berchmans": Aloysius Gonzaga, Stanislaus Kostka and John Berchmans, Jesuit youth saints; the identification is mine from the names.

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[1] The Bossuet passages in this homily are given as the preacher presents them and are not verified here against Bossuet's text.

[2] Cf. Appendix I: A, 21.

n° 17. Sermon on the Cross

14 September 1840 (Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross), at the erection of the Way of the Cross.[1]

Si quis vult venire post me…, tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me. [If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross, and follow me.] If anyone wishes to come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me. (St. Matthew 16:24.)

MONSEIGNEUR, such are the words by which Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself instituted the Way of the Cross: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me." These words of Jesus must have been, for His disciples at the time He uttered them, a most inexplicable mystery and enigma. It was in the first times of His divine mission; the punishment that was to end His life was still far off, and its circumstances were unknown to them. Nothing therefore could yet make this language intelligible to them:

“If anyone wishes to come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me”; *tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me.* But the course of events was not slow to reveal to them the meaning of this manner of speaking. This cross which Jesus Christ wished each one to carry after Him was seen first to weigh upon His bruised shoulders along the whole journey from the praetorium to Calvary; then He was seen fastened upon this same cross, from the height of which He seemed to say, showing the road He had just traced with His blood: Do you understand now what I once said to you: “If anyone wishes to come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me”? *Si quis vult venire post me…, tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me.*

Since then, all the disciples of Jesus, all those who have wished to walk after Him, have walked by this royal way which is the holy way of the cross; and the Church knows no other Christian than him who carries his cross and follows Jesus: *Si quis vult venire post me, tollat crucem suam et sequatur me.* But there have been found, from the beginning, fervent and pious souls who wished to accomplish in an altogether literal manner the word of Jesus Christ. Not content with carrying His cross in their heart and following Him in the way of afflictions, they wished to follow Him still, materially so to speak, along the bloody road He had traced. It is a venerable tradition, consecrated by pontifical bulls, that the most Blessed Virgin often made the Way of the Cross, visiting unceasingly the various places which had been the theatre of her Son’s sorrows. Since the third century of the Christian era, the holy places have never ceased to be frequented by a considerable concourse of pilgrims, encouraged in this practice by the exhortations and later by the indulgences of the Church, who, to facilitate still more this so useful exercise, instituted the devotion of the Way of the Cross, such as it is known in our day, such as we are going to establish it today among you. “If anyone wishes to come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me.” *Si quis vult venire post me, tollat crucem suam, et sequatur me.*

My dearly beloved brethren, you are already instructed, and we shall instruct you further, on everything that concerns the Way of the Cross. We shall tell you, in particular, that all the spiritual favours granted during a long succession of centuries to Christians who visited the holy land become the rich apanage of whoever piously performs the exercise of the Way of the Cross. I wish today to speak to you of two great advantages of this devotion:

1st. The cross of Jesus teaches you all the truths you are bound to know;

2nd. The cross of Jesus preaches to you all the virtues you are bound to practise.

Dogmatic teachings of the cross; practical teachings of the cross: such is the object of this familiar discourse, in which we shall take good care not to substitute the vain ornaments of human eloquence for the more powerful eloquence of the cross: *Ut non evacuetur crux Christi.* [Lest the cross of Christ should be made void.] *Absit mihi gloriari nisi in cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi!* [God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!] Oh! yes, far be it from me to forget myself so far as to seek glory elsewhere than in the cross of my Lord Jesus! Let us invoke the divine virtue of the cross through the intercession of the august Mother of the Crucified: Ave Maria, singing: *O Crux, ave.* [Hail, O Cross.]

I. The Cross is the light of men. Saint Augustine developed this thought, and we shall walk in his footsteps: *Crux pendentis facta est cathedra docentis.* [The cross of the One hanging became the chair of the One teaching.] The cross is an eloquent chair from which the eternal Word speaks to us, from which Jesus reveals to us all that we are bound to know. Most men, my brethren, are not capable of retaining abstract truths, purely intellectual things. And this is why God, who willed, who had to put His religion within reach of all minds, placed it wholly in facts; it is as a sensible, material rind with which He enveloped it. Now there is one fact which summarises by itself all of religion; and this fact is the cross. The cross, a gospel abridged but substantial; a short and marvellous preaching which is completed by a single glance, which applies to all ages, all conditions, all intelligences. Do you want, my dearly beloved brethren, an irrefragable demonstration of the divinity of religion? Question the cross, and presently it will satisfy you. Do you want

in the twinkling of an eye to be instructed in all the principal points of this religion? Question the cross again, and the cross, the cross alone, will answer all your questions.

And first, my brethren, might there be here some of those men who disdainfully reject the Christian religion and contest that it has any solid proof? Let them permit me, these men, to ask them whether they have ever reflected, meditated for some moments in the presence of a cross? As for me, I have only this question to address to them: how can it be, by what bizarre concurrence of singular circumstances can it have come about, that today, at this moment, we are assembled here to honour the cross?[2] This is a question that astonishes them, whose bearing perhaps they do not see, and to which nevertheless there is no other plausible and reasonable answer than that He who was crucified was truly God, and that consequently His religion is divine. Follow attentively.

I suppose, my brethren, that an infidel, a barbarian, who has never heard of Catholic religion or worship, is suddenly transported from the depth of his desert into the midst of this temple where we are assembled. How great is his astonishment to perceive here and there, in a house which everything tells him is destined for prayer, instruments of torture, much like those on which his fierce tribe fastens the unfortunate strangers who land on his island! Soon he turns his gaze toward the sanctuary, and there, what does he perceive again? On the very altar, at the point which is as the centre toward which all adorations, all prayers converge, he sees again a cross. He turns round, and on the walls he sees all the scenes of a crucifixion represented by paintings; and, what he cannot explain, he notices that all the people go from one sorrowful station to another, venerating the Crucified as their God. He understands nothing of this spectacle, all his ideas are confounded, he questions me, and I answer him:

Nearly two thousand years ago, in a country of the East, there lived a man named Jesus, who was surnamed the Christ. This man, the gentlest, the most virtuous, the most charitable of men, said he was the Son of God, and he worked miracles in proof of his divinity. Everywhere he went he healed the sick, and sometimes he even raised the dead. Some believed in him; but others did not believe in him. These resolved to destroy him: they made a crime to him of everything, even of his prodigies and his benefits. As for him, he never ceased to say that he must die, and that when he was fastened on a cross he would draw all things to himself: that his cross would become like a great tree which would stretch its branches throughout the universe, and in whose shade all humanity would come to rest and sit. His disciples understood nothing of this language; they could not imagine how the vilest of all instruments of torture could ever conquer the world and become an object of honour and glory. Nevertheless the enemies of Jesus attained their ends. On the day he had designated, he was judged, condemned, loaded with outrages and fastened upon a cross.

Scarcely had he breathed his last, when his prediction began to be fulfilled. Suddenly the sun grew dark, the earth trembled, the tombs opened. Frightened by these prodigies, many went away striking their breasts and saying: Truly this was the Son of God. Some days after, his disciples, formerly timid, but encouraged by the sight of their risen master, went to preach everywhere the crucified God. Cross in hand, they set out from Judea and spread through the whole universe. They know, preach, show to astonished nations nothing but the cross. And everything yields before them; and the idols, shaken, fall everywhere before the cross, which takes their place on the altars. Soon the cross shines on the brow of kings and emperors; it is raised on the summit of all temples. The cross dominates like a queen on the earth. Every day, at home, in the public squares, in the temples, men of every condition make the sign of the cross, kneel before the cross. And ourselves today, after more than eighteen hundred years, you see us assembled to honour the cross of that Jesus who had said that, as soon as he was fastened on a cross, he would draw all things to himself.

My dearly beloved brethren, on hearing this account, I think I see this infidel, this savage, fall on his knees before the cross, and join you to follow the sorrowful way of the Crucified in whom he recognises his God. And this with justice, my brethren; the reasoning that would make an impression on this barbarian is of a nature to convince the most cultivated minds. For after all is it not a fact that today, to our knowledge, the

cross is venerated over the whole earth, that every day almost as many Christians as there are men make, some twenty times a day, the sign of the cross? Now this fact has a cause, an origin; and what cause, what natural origin can it have? None, if one reflects. For after all, says Bossuet, it was no small undertaking, it was not a human undertaking, to render the cross venerable. It is not in the nature of man to love, to venerate an instrument of torture which preaches to him the crucifixion of his passions: *Non est secundum hominem crucem amare, crucem portare.* [It is not according to man to love the cross, to carry the cross.] If it happens, it is a phenomenon of the moral order which must be placed in the rank of the most signal miracles. Therefore the fact of the worship rendered at present, and before our eyes, to the cross is a demonstration of the divinity of the Crucified and of His doctrine. And ourselves, my brethren, who find ourselves here assembled to follow and kiss the traces of Jesus, after eighteen centuries, almost a thousand leagues from the theatre of this event, we are, I dare say, by the mere fact of our presence and of the purpose of our gathering, an irrefragable proof of the divinity of Christianity: *Crux pendentis facta est cathedra docentis.*

But it is not you, my dearly beloved brethren, who have need of this teaching of the cross; you who come with so much zeal to perform this holy exercise of the Way of the Cross, you all believe in the divinity of the Christian religion. Your faith, at least in this respect, will have been confirmed; and the cross besides will have other teachings for you. You know it, my brethren, religion is an ensemble of truths revealed by Jesus Christ. Some of these truths cannot be ignored without crime, and the knowledge of the others is infinitely useful and desirable. What afflicts us, what fills us with bitterness, us pastors of souls, is the profound ignorance in which almost all men of our day are plunged in regard to religion. Men otherwise instructed in the human sciences are more strangers than children to the science of the mysteries of Christianity. Yet that is not our keenest anxiety. For after all this class of men has broken with religion, they want none of it, they do not come to hear us; we can do nothing about it, we have only to groan and pray at the foot of the altars. But what gives us frequent alarms, what comes at times to trouble our conscience and make our ministry of reconciliation hesitate, ah! is the fear that certain souls, otherwise Christian and virtuous, even fervent, are not sufficiently instructed in the truths of faith. When we try to give an account to ourselves of our administration in the presence of God, sometimes it seems to us that we hear this great God, from the bosom of the inaccessible light where He dwells in the heavens, reproach us that so often we force Him to bury Himself in tombs which the night of ignorance wraps in such deep and thick darkness. Yes, my dearly beloved brethren, your religious instruction is the object of our most ordinary fears and our keenest apprehensions. But these fears, ah! we could not conceive them in regard to those Christians whom we see make with attention and piety the Way of the Cross. For, to an attentive soul, the cross of Jesus is the whole Gospel.

I ask this Christian, faithful in honouring the cross, what God is; what is His power, His goodness, His justice; what are His rights to our homage, to our adoration, to our obedience. He answers me by showing me the cross. The cross has resolved for him all these questions; for he reads there at once the truth and the mercy of God, His goodness and His justice. On the cross is engraved in ineffaceable characters how God, who had no need of men, nevertheless so loved the world as to give it His only Son; how, with this inestimable gift, He delivered to us all the treasures of His grace and all the riches of His kingdom; how a God, in order to render to the divinity the worship that is due to it, became obedient unto death.

I ask this same Christian what Jesus Christ is; what the Incarnation is, the Redemption. He answers me again by showing me the cross: the cross, summary of the whole life, expression of all the sentiments of Jesus, to such a point that to know Jesus Christ thoroughly it is on the cross, and there alone, that one must study Him: *Jesum Christum, et hunc crucifixum.* [Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.]

I ask again this faithful soul what heaven is, what hell is. And he answers me by showing me the cross. What joys, what happiness, since they were bought by the blood of a God! What frightful torments, what horrible loss, since a God died to preserve us from them, and since they are destined for ingrates who shall have

neglected, refused, rejected the prevenient graces, the pursuits, the liberalities of a redeemer who omitted nothing to save them.

I continue my questions. I ask him what this sacrifice of the Mass is, which is offered every morning and at which he assists at least every Sunday. He answers me again by showing me the cross, and he says to me: What took place once on this blood-stained wood is what is renewed every day on the altar. — I ask him what the sacraments are; and he answers me by showing me the cross: that divine and reparative blood which Jesus shed on Calvary, the seven sacraments are so many channels destined to distribute it, to make it circulate in souls throughout the universe and until the end of the ages. — Finally, I ask him what his soul is; and he answers me still by showing me the cross. The cross has revealed to him how highly Jesus Christ esteemed this soul, this soul created in the image of God, and which, in order to be raised from its fall and restored to its noble and eternal destination, needed the humiliations, the annihilations and the sufferings of a God.

My dearly beloved brethren, I have run through all the principal truths of religion, and I have found the Christian, faithful adorer of the cross, instructed on all these fundamental points: *Crux pendentis facta est cathedra docentis.* Let no one then come and allege to us his little intelligence, memory or leisure! God, who made His religion for all intelligences, for all memories and for all conditions, has provided that His religion should be graspable by all. You cannot even read, you tell me. And I tell you that there is a book you can read, this book is the cross, and it will teach you all that you are bound to know: *Crux pendentis facta est cathedra docentis.* You scarcely understand the instructions, the sermons that you hear, and that your pastors address to you from the height of the pulpit. And I am going to lead you to the foot of a chair whose preaching will be intelligible to you. This chair, this preaching, is the cross: *Crux pendentis facta est cathedra docentis.* Finally, a thousand occupations absorb you, rob you of the time to instruct yourself, to examine the proofs of religion. And I ask of you only a glance at the cross: *In quem qui aspexit vivet.* [He that looks upon it shall live.] A look at the cross: no more is needed to know everything, to understand everything: *Crux pendentis facta est cathedra docentis.*

But have I said enough of the teachings of the cross, and would they be restricted to those fundamental truths whose knowledge is indispensable for salvation? Oh! God forbid that I should set such narrow limits to the virtue of the cross! when I hear Saint Paul, the doctor of the nations, that apostle so astonishing for his lights, his revelations and his prodigious knowledge of the depths and sublimities of Christian science, cry out that he knows nothing but Jesus, and Jesus crucified; when I hear Saint Thomas, the angelic doctor, who treated with so much learning all the religious and theological questions, assure us that he learned more in a quarter of an hour of meditation at the foot of his crucifix than from all the books he had read and all the masters he had heard: *Crux pendentis facta est cathedra docentis.* My brethren, there is nothing so profound, so sublime, so mysterious, so obscure that the cross cannot reveal it to a soul, simple though it be. Literature is not necessary for that; it is even often harmful because it begets pride. The cross of Jesus Christ delights to seek humble and uncultivated souls in order to introduce them into the powers of the Lord. And at the instant I speak to you, my brethren (the piety of this parish does not permit me to doubt it), there are in this audience pious faithful, fervent souls, poor women, to whom, in a moment of silence and meditation, the cross of Jesus has communicated lights a thousand times more brilliant, glimpses a thousand times more elevated, than anything I could try to say to them. The cross of Jesus is the school in which all theologians and all doctors were formed; but what is more astonishing is that in this school the ignorant, otherwise, have become more learned than all the doctors and all the theologians: *Crux pendentis facta est cathedra docentis.*

But the cross of Jesus does not teach us only all the truths we are bound to know; it preaches to us further all the virtues we are bound to practise. After hearing the dogmatic teachings of the cross, let us now hear its practical teachings.

II. It is not precisely philosophers and moralists that have ever been lacking to men. It seems that they abounded rather more in the most corrupt centuries. But good maxims are not enough alone. When a master teaches in one way and acts in another, the disciple readily neglects the hard precept in order to take authority from the more convenient example. Several sages of antiquity had a morality sound enough, perfect enough, and in some respects even quite close to Christian morality. But these sages, in their private conduct, took no account of their own wisdom. So their greatest admirers, not believing themselves bound to do better than their masters, while applauding their fine maxims, imitated nevertheless only their evil actions. It will always be regrettable, observes Saint Augustine, that one should have to say to disciples: follow the maxims of your master and do not imitate his conduct. No, says the great doctor, to persuade men effectively and bring them to the practice of virtue, they needed a master who began by doing and taught afterwards, a master who always joined practice to precept. Now this master, who is he, my brethren? This master is the cross of Jesus: *Crux Christi, pædagogus christiani*; [the cross of Christ, the Christian's tutor;] the cross of Jesus, true manual of wisdom and morals, where beside the lesson there is always an example, so that there is no longer any excuse for the disciple, since he perceives at one glance the action of the master and his teaching. It is on the cross above all that Jesus does and that He teaches: *Cœpit Jesus facere et docere.* [Jesus began to do and to teach.] Or rather on the cross Jesus Christ no longer teaches, He is content to do, and it is precisely His example which becomes a teaching.[3]

O you, unfortunate Christian, who are no longer one but in name; you whose whole life passes without producing anything for heaven, you who think so little of God, who pay Him so rarely, alas! perhaps never pay Him the tribute of prayer, of gratitude and of love, approach, indifferent heart; look at the cross; hear these words which resound in your ears: *Sic Deus dilexit!* [So God loved!] O man, see to what point He thought of you, to what point He loved you, the God whom you neglect to know and to love! *Diligamus ergo Deum, quoniam ipse prior dilexit nos*: [Let us therefore love God, because God first hath loved us:] Love then, O man, love your God by way of return, since He first loved you so much: *Aspice, et fac secundum exemplar.* [Look, and make it according to the pattern.]

And you, proud soul, who do not know how to humble yourself; you in all whose actions vanity presides, and whom the least miscalculation of self-love revolts; you, dominating spirit, who command with so much haughtiness and pride, but at the same time unruly and rebellious heart, who know how to obey neither God nor men, who have thrown off every kind of curb and law, approach the cross; hear these words: *Semetipsum exinanivit… Factus obediens usque ad mortem…* [He emptied Himself… becoming obedient unto death…] See to what point a God abased Himself! to annihilation. See to what point a God was obedient! unto death, and unto the death of the cross. And when a God humbles Himself, when a God makes Himself obedient to save man, a man would not wish to humble himself and obey in order to save himself! Look then, O man, and make it according to the pattern that was shown thee on the mount: *Aspice et fac secundum exemplar quod tibi in monte monstratum est.*

And you whose heart is a vase of bitterness and gall, vindictive man, who know how to forget nothing, to pardon nothing; selfish heart, who do not know how to make a sacrifice to the peace of a family or to social happiness, you too approach the cross; hear these words: Father, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. See this blood shed to the last drop to unite what was separated, these arms stretched out to make of all men but one great family of brothers. Hear; see the cross, and you will abjure your restless passions, to imitate the model that was shown you on the mountain: *Aspice et fac secundum exemplar quod tibi in monte monstratum est.*

And you, man of pleasure, vain and light man, who seek only to laugh, approach, and see these lips drenched with gall and vinegar; you who set so much price on a vain beauty, approach, and see this face bruised and covered with infamous spittle; and you who take part sometimes in guilty games, in nocturnal orgies, in licentious dances, approach, and see these hands and feet cruelly pierced; all of you finally, whoever you

may be, who love to crown yourselves with roses, approach, and see this head crowned with thorns, and tell me whether the members of such a head can be treated so delicately? *Aspice et fac secundum exemplar quod tibi in monte monstratum est.*

But I stop here at a lesson more important than all the others, and which I regret not being able to develop as much as I would wish. The cross teaches us to suffer, and to work out our salvation by sorrows that we cannot besides avoid. The last chapter of the second book of the *Imitation* is admirable on this point, and divinely explains the lofty philosophy of the cross. As for me, I shall here attach myself to a fine text of Saint Augustine which comes marvellously to my subject. On Calvary, he says, the whole human race was on the cross at the same time as Jesus. For we see there three men: in the middle, the author of grace; on one side, one who profits by it; on the other, one who rejects it. *Tres erant in cruce: unus Salvator, alius salvandus, alius damnandus.* [There were three on the cross: one the Saviour, one to be saved, one to be damned.] Notice, my brethren: these two men, whose lot was to be so different, are both fastened on the cross with Jesus, both companions of His torment; alas! and only one will be companion of His glory. Both will have passed by the same road, by the road of the cross; and the end will have been heaven for one, hell for the other. Whence comes this difference? It is that one expired on his cross blessing that of Jesus, uniting his cross to that of Jesus; and the united merits of the cross of Jesus and of his own saved him. The other expired on his cross too, but cursing that of Jesus; and his cross, separated from that of Jesus, served only for his damnation. They suffered equally on earth, and one rejoices at present in heaven, and the other will suffer eternally in hell. What lessons, my brethren, can we not draw from this?

What is the human race indeed, my brethren, but a great victim fastened on the cross? Since man sinned, what child of men does not carry his cross? Impossible to avoid the cross: *Non potes effugere.* [Thou canst not escape.] Turn in whatever direction you will, look above you, look below you, look within you, look without, and everywhere you will find the cross: *Converte te supra, converte te infra, converte te intra, converte te extra, et in his omnibus invenies crucem.* [Turn thyself above, turn thyself below, turn thyself within, turn thyself without, and in all these thou shalt find the cross.] You deceive yourself if you believe you can pass by the cross: *Erras, erras, si aliud quæris.* [Thou art mistaken, thou art mistaken, if thou seekest anything else.][4]

[You rich of the age, great ones of the world, to whom it seems that everything comes to anticipate your desires, you are mistaken if you believe you can elude the cross: *Non potes effugere.* Riches themselves are changed into thorns. And then, there are so many other avenues for sorrow! My brother, you will have your cross, you will not escape it. And you, young man in the flower of your years, who dream only of future, success and happiness; young woman, under whose steps homage and pleasures are born, and whom the world rocks with its sweet illusions: perhaps, in your artless inexperience of misfortune, you are weaving for yourselves in threads of gold the web of your destiny! My brother, my sister, the cross will await you; you will have your cross; and may it please heaven that it be not frightful: *Erras, erras si aliud quæris; non potes effugere.* Once again, my brethren, it is folly to hope to decline the cross.][5] The whole earth is but a vast mound, an immense Calvary, all planted with crosses: *Quia vita ista… plena miseriis, et circumsignata crucibus.* [For this life is full of miseries and signed round about with crosses.]

What then are we to do, my brethren? what to do? Listen. In the midst of all these crosses to which we are fastened, do you not perceive one greater than all the others? That is the cross of Jesus, it is the cross of a God. Come, children of sorrow, come and range yourselves around it; and from this divine cross will flow a virtue which will soften yours, make it fruitful, make it flower, make it produce fruits of salvation. — But what do I see? Alas! among these unfortunate crucified, what dividing line do I perceive? Some come to range themselves at the right of the cross of Jesus; others obstinately remain at its left: *Tunc crucifixi sunt cum eo duo latrones, unus a dextris et alius a sinistris.* [Then were crucified with him two thieves, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left.] The first, I see them looking with consolation, with love, at the cross

of Jesus, and crying out at this sight: Ah! how could we complain? for we at least suffer justly the pains we have deserved: *Et nos quidem juste, nam digna factis recipimus*; [And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds;] whereas this man is innocent: *Hic vero nihil mali gessit.* [But this man hath done no evil.] Lord, Lord, they add, have pity on us; communicate to our cross the merits of yours; let this torment, which we have incurred, borrow some value from yours, which is wholly gratuitous: *Memento mei, Domine!* [Remember me, Lord.] And I hear Jesus answer them all: Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall be today with me in paradise: *Amen, amen, dico tibi, hodie mecum eris in paradiso.* And from that day, in fact, these souls become happy; for, says the author of the *Imitation*, when a soul has come to the point that its cross is sweet to it because of that of Jesus Christ, then it has found paradise on earth: *Tunc invenisti paradisum in terra*, until its cross, softened here below by that of Jesus, leads it to the paradise of heaven. That is for those who know how to conform their cross to that of Jesus.

But I perceive others: alas! they are our brothers, our fellow citizens, our friends… My eyes fill with tears; for I see them, who are on the cross also, but who turn their eyes away so as not to see the cross of Jesus. What do I say? A prey to horrible pains, they seem to gather their strength only to blaspheme: *Unus autem de his qui pendebant latronibus, blasphemabat eum.* [And one of those robbers who were hanged blasphemed him.] In vain do friendly voices try to represent to them that since they are condemned, willy-nilly, to suffer and to share the torment of Jesus, they have every interest in using and sanctifying their sufferings by uniting them to His: *Respondens autem alter increpabat illum dicens: Neque tu times Deum, quod in eadem damnatione es?* [But the other answering rebuked him, saying: Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art condemned under the same condemnation?] Useless counsels. They persist in becoming more criminal as they suffer more. Their lack of religion and of confidence in God makes their crosses more and more painful; it is a yoke which wounds them the more by the movement of revolt they make to escape it; the pain of their wounds is renewed and increased every instant by their desperate efforts. They die, they die on the cross, on a cross more painful than that of the elect; and they pass from the pains of the cross into the abysses of eternal pains. That is for those who have not known how to conform their cross to that of Jesus.

If it is so, my brethren, ah! tell me, is it not true that it is very important to learn from the cross of Jesus Christ how one must suffer? If it is so, on which side henceforth do you wish to plant your cross beside that of Jesus? On the side of him who implored this divine cross and obtained a promise of salvation, or on the side of him who blasphemed the cross of Jesus and deserved a sentence of reprobation? No, my brethren, you will not hesitate. Since, all of us as we are, we are victims fastened on the cross, you will at least want to draw profit from your sufferings, and for that you will unite them to those of Jesus.

[And you have a most efficacious means: it is, my brethren, this exercise of the Way of the Cross, which tends to effect a sort of fusion, of mixing, between your sorrows and those of Jesus. Yes, my brethren, the exercise of the Way of the Cross will soften, will sanctify all your sorrows. You, for example, man of labour and toil, who trace by the sweat of your brow a hard furrow, you make your Way of the Cross. But if the day before, if on a day consecrated to the Lord, you have made in the temple the exercise of the Way of the Cross of Jesus, ah! this holy practice will have consoled you and as it were relieved in advance all your fatigues. Your way will seem to you less painful by the memory of that of Jesus. I, at least, you will say, suffer a punishment that I have deserved. But He! *Hic vero!* — You again who drag a languishing life, worn out by infirmities, you make your Way of the Cross. But if from time to time you go and follow the traces of Jesus crucified, ah! you will learn to suffer courageously what a God suffered before you. In a word, my brethren, our life, all of us, poor inhabitants of the earth, our life is a Way of the Cross. Well then! since one must absolutely walk by this road, let us all try to walk with Jesus. Retain this word, my brethren: To be a Christian is to carry one's cross, follow Jesus, and arrive in heaven. Not to be a Christian is to carry one's cross, and a heavier cross, but not to wish to follow Jesus, and to arrive at eternal torments.][6]

[And now, woe, I will say to you, my dearly beloved brethren, woe to the improvident and ill-advised age which takes in disgust, which takes in hatred, the cross of the Saviour: *Quos, et flens dico, inimicos crucis Christi.* [Whom I tell you even weeping, enemies of the cross of Christ.] This age is the enemy of itself, of its peace and its happiness. As long as Christianity reigned in hearts, the cross shone everywhere. Raised in the midst of cities, it stifled discords. Planted in the middle of the country, it drew the blessings of heaven on the plains. Resting in the bosom of all families, it was their counsellor and consoler. My brethren, if the cross had been overthrown only from our buildings, or profaned only in our public squares, our grief would be less inconsolable. We might lay this impiety only to some frenzied persons, attribute it to a moment of effervescence. But what afflicts us far more bitterly, what leads us in spite of ourselves to very painful consequences, is that the cross is absent from most of your houses. We are called to the side of a sick man, he is speechless, he hears our words; we ask for a cross, we wish to make him hear the eloquent language of the wounds of the Saviour, to pour on his pain the balm of the cross. But, a thing unheard of in a Christian people, there is no cross in the house; none is found in the neighbouring house; sometimes one is at last discovered, relegated in I know not what corner; and we must promptly free the adorable face of Jesus from the dust which soils it, to make it recognised by the dying man, more astonished than touched. Yes, my brethren, this is what is profoundly afflicting, because it is the certain proof that indifference has invaded and destroyed even the last remains of faith. As long as the family was Christian, the crucifix was its first piece of furniture; it was the most precious treasure of the domestic sanctuary; it was transmitted from generation to generation. The grandfather had pressed his dying lips on this sacred wood, already blackened by time and by the kisses of his fathers; a desolate mother had often made this cross the confidant of her sorrows; it was shown to the very little children, speaking to them of the God of heaven whom they learned early to confound with the God of suffering. Nothing like that today.]

[Alas! and as sorrow has not disappeared from the house with the cross of the Saviour, must we be astonished that the domestic hearth has become a hell? O you who call yourselves the friends of the people, imprudent friends, at the sight of so many crimes and suicides, strike your breast and confess your fault. By tearing from the people their crucifix, you have put a dagger in their hand. We, we told them: My brother, this earth is only a place of passage. Between the Eden from which sin banished you and the heaven into which you will one day re-enter, Christ the Redeemer has planted His cross, and He wills that we carry it with Him in this valley of tears. Sin in the past, happiness in the future: therefore sorrow in the present, sorrow as means of expiation, sorrow as means of conquest; but sorrow softened, sanctified, divinised by the sorrow of a God, by the cross of Jesus. Ah! I beg you, do not tear from the poor man the cross which makes him love his suffering, the cross which teaches him to mingle his tears with the tears of a God, his privations with the privations of a God, his agony with the agony of a God. Or else, if you tear from the poor man his cross, take away from him the sorrow too; it would be too cruel of you to leave on his head the executioner’s sword and to take from him the palm of martyrdom. Holy cross of Jesus, let those do without you for whom the present suffices and who know how to do without the future! For me, O cross of my God, without you I should not have the strength of virtue, I should not have the courage of sorrow.]

[So, my brethren, look around you: as the crosses were being pulled down, has it not been necessary to enlarge the prisons, to multiply the scaffolds? Mahomet understood it: where the morality of the cross ceases, the morality of the sword must begin. Privation that is not endured religiously will necessarily beget a crime that must be repressed by material force. My brethren, there are men who consecrate their existence to studying the means of rendering their fellows less turbulent, happier and better. And these men sometimes reproach us for not associating ourselves with them, for not writing books as they do, for not discussing projects, and they go so far as to accuse us of losing sight of the great interests of society and of attaching ourselves to futile cares, to useless demonstrations. My brethren, there is, I will not say injustice, but great thoughtlessness in this language of our fellow citizens.]

[No, truly, the priesthood is not idle, it is always at its post, it goes straight to the fact. For example, when today we institute the Way of the Cross, in the midst of this city which contains so many unknown sorrows, so many secret miseries and privations, we believe we have deserved well of the city and of our fellows. You will not find in the streets and among the riots those who will come to learn, by traversing the sorrowful way of Jesus Christ, to endure the sufferings with which the road of life is bristling. Ah! how many sorrows will here be consoled, how many despairs appeased!]

[Do you see this old man, laden with the double burden of years and of the misery under which he is sinking? He enters the holy place; he sits down, for he is exhausted. There perhaps he would think of his misfortune, of his sad destiny; he would blaspheme the God who has disinherited him of the favours granted to the happy of the earth; he would curse the rich who display in the streets of the city the luxury of their clothes and their carriages while he, poor wretch, dies of hunger. But he lifts his eyes, and what does he see? Another before him fell as many as three times under the burden; that one was a God, he was the innocent, the just, the holy; while he is a sinner. He rises again, and he has regained the courage to suffer and to die.]

[Do you see this man with the haggard eyes? Consternation is painted on his face; he is brooding some sinister project. This man is a father; his son has failed him, he has leagued against him with perfidious friends. This pain is too heavy for his father's heart, he will not bear it, he wants to destroy himself; or at least he wants to avenge himself; resentment is at its height, he will never forgive. But while he wanders at random in this temple, behold an unforeseen scene fixes his distracted gaze. Another before him was betrayed by a hypocrite whose kiss he accepted; and this man was a God, and had nothing to reproach himself with toward the traitor; while he, alas! has often neglected his duties, and perhaps gathers the sad fruit of the education he gave. He withdraws, calm and resigned, ready to give the culprit the kiss of reconciliation.]

[Do you see this woman, her brow furrowed by sorrow? Sadness seems to have fixed its dwelling on her face. Alas! her chain is so heavy to bear! A thousand secret afflictions, a thousand domestic anguishes weigh down her soul. The poor wife has a heart sorely wounded, and she foresees no end to her griefs. Yet she is tranquil and submissive; and one may admire in her that something venerable which a deep sorrow religiously endured gives to a woman. Whence this serenity in misfortune, this patience, this smile in tribulation? Listen. While Jesus was walking to His torment, a pious woman, coming to meet Him, offered to this divine Saviour a cloth on which He imprinted His adorable face: a precious imprint, which she carried home and always kept with veneration. An imitator of this holy woman, the one you see has carried in her heart [the same image], and she looks twenty times a day at the bloody face of the Saviour. That is the whole secret of her sweet resignation.][7]

[Do you see this other woman, in tears and inconsolable? She is a mother, still young, she is a widow. There remained to her on earth only one consolation: it was a son, living portrait of his father, faithful image of his heart even more than of his features. She loved to lead this precious offshoot often to the foot of the altars. But alas! other hands than hers carried him there one last time; and his cold remains rest today beneath the tomb. The unfortunate mother comes to weep in the temple, to water with her tears the stones on which this so dear object was laid for some moments. But behold one day her piety inspires her to follow the trace of the blood of Jesus; and, arrived at one of the sorrowful stations: Ah! she cries, there was before me another mother who lost, who wept her son. And what a mother! the most innocent, the purest of mothers! And what a son, since this only son was at the same time her God! From that day the mother often comes to mingle her tears with the tears of Mary; and she awaits, with lively desire but without murmur, the day when she will see her son again in the heavens.][8] My brethren, I end with this. Remember that, in following the way of the cross of Jesus, you will meet Mary there: Mary the most afflicted because she was the most tender of mothers, and her son was the most perfect of all sons. And it will be no small consolation for you, for you above all, Christian mothers, to find an afflicted mother with whom you can speak of your afflictions.

Holy Virgin, words fail me to say how I love to think of your sorrows, and to meet you on Calvary. You seem to me beautiful from your dawn; I love you in your cradle; I love you clothed with the heavenly charm of your virginity; I love you carrying in your arms that divine Child, whose grace is reflected on you and embellishes you, like the flower that embellishes the stem that bears it; I love you reigning in the heavens, where the sun is your garment, the moon your footstool, the stars your crown. But I love you more on Calvary: *Miseris sapit dulcius* [it tastes sweeter to the wretched]; on Calvary, where you acquired an indefinable charm, that I know not what of completion which misfortune adds to virtue, as Bossuet says. Ah! it is so sweet to him who prays to meet in the object of his worship the same sorrows, the same anguishes that he experiences!

Holy Virgin, O you who know by experience what sorrow is, you have learned to have pity on the wretched. Mother of compassion and mercy, and, as this good people call you, Our Lady of Pity, have pity on us, teach us to follow in your footsteps; we shall follow by this those of Jesus. And the wooden cross, and the crown of thorns, which we shall have carried with you in His train, will one day be changed into a sceptre of glory and a crown of immortality: which I wish you, with the blessing of Monseigneur.[9]

Translator's notes

1. Delivered "in the presence of Monseigneur the Bishop of Chartres" at the establishment of the Way of the Cross; the address "Monseigneur" is to him.

2. The 1843 additions (the printed text bracketed them) are retained in place and in brackets, each paragraph bracketed here for clarity. They are the preacher's own later insertions, not translator's notes.

3. The preacher's "last chapter of the second book" of the *Imitation of Christ* is book II, ch. 12.

4. The quotations from Saint Augustine ("Crux pendentis facta est cathedra docentis"; the three on the cross) and Saint Thomas' remark are the preacher's; they are not verified here. The Bossuet citations likewise.

5. The French here lacks a word ("celle que vous voyez a emporté dans son cœur, et elle regarde…"); the sense has been supplied in the English and signalled in the footnote.

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[1] Preached for the first time at Rouvres, on 14 September 1840, feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, in the presence of Monseigneur the Bishop of Chartres; copied at Les Rouaudières, in the month of August 1843. (Editor's note.)

[2] Variants: "to institute," "to make the Way of the Cross." (Editor's note.)

[3] The Latin tag "Crux Christi pædagogus christiani" is given as the preacher presents it; its source is not verified here.

[4] These Latin sentences are taken by the preacher from the *Imitation of Christ* (Book II, ch. 12, "On the royal road of the holy Cross").

[5] This parenthetical passage was added in 1843 to the primitive text of 1840. (Editor's note.) In the printed edition it stands in square brackets; they are kept here.

[6] This paragraph, in brackets, was added in 1843 to the primitive text of 1840, to serve for the exercise of the Way of the Cross. (Editor's note.)

[7] The printed text here reads, after "dans son cœur", with a lacuna (an apparent word or words missing); the bracketed phrase "[the same image]" is supplied by me from the sense.

[8] The paragraphs in brackets were added in 1843 to the primitive text of 1840, to serve for the establishment of the Way of the Cross. (Editor's note.)

[9] Cf. Appendix I: A, 22, 64. — AB, 23, 24, 39 *quater*, 39 *sexies*, 41 *quater*, 48 *ter*, 53, 55 *ter*, 58 *quater*, 58 *septies*, 59 *quater*, 59 *quinquies*, 68 *bis*. — P. 20, 8 *quater*; p. 21, 11 *bis*; p. 22, 16 *bis*; p. 24, 9°, 26 *bis*; p. 25, 28 *bis*; p. 26, 2°; p. 27, 41 *ter*, 44 *ter*; p. 28, 44 *quinquies*, 45 *ter*; p. 29, 52 *bis*, 53 *bis*; p. 30, 57 *quinquies*, 59 *bis*, 61 *bis*; p. 31, 61 *quater*, 61 *sexies*; p. 32, 63 *ter*, 63 *quater*, 64 *bis*, 65 *bis*; p. 33, 72 *ter*, 73 *bis*.

n° 18. Homily for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Preparation for the Feast of All Saints

Preached at the cathedral of Chartres, 25 October 1840.

Ergo jam non estis hospites et advenæ, sed estis cives sanctorum et domestici Dei. [Therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners; but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and the domestics of God.] So you are no longer strangers and unknown to heaven, but you are fellow citizens of the Saints, and you belong to the house of God. (Ephesians 2:19.)

MY DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN, the Church, some days ago, made to resound in your ears these words which, taken in their least rigorous sense, are none the less always most frightening: *Multi sunt vocati, pauci vero electi*: Many are called, but few are chosen. Yet this tender mother, fearing that we might exaggerate to ourselves a doctrine which could become despairing, will hasten, in a few days, to temper its rigour by other, most consoling words. These words will resound amid the joyful chants of that sweet solemnity in which the Church of earth and the Church of heaven give each other the hand, with an exchange of homage and congratulations on the one side, and of encouragements, helps and consolations on the other.

We have told you several times, my dearly beloved brethren, that there are great graces attached to the celebration of Christian feasts: graces of teaching, graces of conversion, graces of consolation, graces of every sort. The feast of the Saints, whether of those who are already in glory, or of those to whom glory is assured though they do not yet enjoy it, this feast is full of teachings. Among an infinity of considerations which present themselves to my mind, there is one on which I have principally dwelt. The Catholic religion is often reproached for its teaching concerning the small number of the elect; we are told that we make hell very great and heaven very narrow; that this doctrine discourages our minds in that it makes us regard salvation as impossible, and that it wounds our hearts in that it gives us reason to believe in the damnation of almost all those whom we have cherished on earth. And I shall show you that Catholic teaching is far more precise and clear as regards the number of the elect than as regards that of the reprobate, and that the doctrine of the Church is on the contrary altogether encouraging for what concerns our salvation, and consoling for what concerns the salvation of those who are dear to us. This matter, my brethren, demands great attention. God forbid that I should take anything away from His justice and from the severity of His word! But may He also preserve me from being guilty toward His mercy by exaggerations which it would disavow!

You have told us, Lord, and it is written on almost every page of our holy Books: You are good above all; You do nothing but for Your glory and for the happiness of Your creatures: Your glory is to pardon; Your happiness is to make happy. That I cannot doubt, because it is said expressly and frequently in the holy Books. But, Lord, I am in great embarrassment to reconcile Your words. You made men to be happy, and I learn besides that most men are not predestined: *Pauci electi.* You do nothing save for Your glory; Your glory is mercy; and almost all men will be, in fact, eternally miserable. Your aim is then missed; the malice of men and of hell has then been more powerful and more efficacious than Your will? or Your will was then not sincere? My mind is lost, confounded: show me Your elect, Lord. … "And I saw an angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and I heard the number of them that were signed. Of the tribes of the children of Israel the number was a hundred forty-four thousand: of the tribe of Juda, twelve thousand, of the tribe of Ruben, twelve thousand, of the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand, etc.; so of each of the tribes, except the tribe of Dan, which is the tribe from which Antichrist shall be born. And after this I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all tribes and peoples and tongues and nations; they stood before the throne and in the sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands, and they cried with a loud voice, saying: Glory to God and to the Lamb!"[1]

Does not this prophetic vision of the beloved disciple begin to reassure you, my dearly beloved brethren? There is first, for the nation of Israel alone, an immense number of predestined and elect, a number which the mysterious language of Scripture expressed by that of a hundred forty-four thousand; and you know, my brethren, that the prophets' way of counting is not ours, that their days are years, and their thousands millions of myriads. And then, my brethren, did you not hear with astonishment, did you not remark with consolation this distribution of the elect among all the tribes of Israel? The royal tribe of Juda, and the priestly tribe of

Levi, and the aristocratic and privileged tribes of Joseph and Ephraim, and the warlike tribe of Benjamin, and the agricultural tribes of Issachar and Aser, and the lettered and studious tribe of Nephthali, and the accursed and vagabond tribes of Simeon and Ruben, nomadic tribes that pitch the tent here today and there tomorrow, and who, with lean mounts and poor equipage, carried on the petty trade in resin, myrrh and aromatics. All indiscriminately furnished to heaven their portion of elect: a testimony as reassuring as it is incontestable that there are saints in all states, in all conditions, and that heaven, if I may so speak, goes to recruit its happy legions from all ranks. But here is something more reassuring still.

Then, says the prophet, I saw a great multitude, *turbam magnam*, which no man could number, *quam dinumerare nemo poterat*, of every nation, of every tribe, of every people, of every tongue, *ex omni tribu, et lingua, et populo, et natione.* Notice, my brethren: when it was a question of the children of Israel, the Holy Spirit could still make use of a figure such as it is; but when it is a question of the rest of the elect, it is impossible to count, there is no longer any number that can suffice: *Turbam magnam quam dinumerare nemo poterat.* And the most remote nations, and the most savage tribes, and the most corrupt peoples, and the most barbarous tongues, all, all have concurred to swell these innumerable troops. Lord, the Gentile world itself has therefore not been barren for heaven; the land of Idumea had thousands of just men who followed the traces of him whom You have made known to us, and the king of Salem had imitators in his States: *Ex omni tribu, et lingua, et populo, et natione.* But it is above all in the bosom of Christian nations that the elect have been formed; it is there that it has become impossible to count: *Turbam magnam quam dinumerare nemo poterat.*

Lord, but all Your words are true: how then reconcile this innumerable number of elect with what the holy Books tell us on the other side? There I learned that in the time of Noah eight just persons only were saved in the ark; there I learned that of forty thousand Israelites who crossed the desert, two only entered into the promised land: frightening examples, terrible figures of the small number of the elect. But I hear You, Lord, answering me: In the days of Noah, I saved only eight souls from temporal death; but the rest of the human race, swallowed up in the waters of the deluge, was not thereby swallowed up in hell. Meditate Scripture better, and My apostle Saint Peter will give you to understand that most of those who had not wished to believe the word of Noah were converted at the sight of the accomplishment of that word, and that the waters of the deluge were for them the baptism of salvation. Of forty thousand Israelites, two only entered into the promised land; but will you conclude that those two alone entered the heavenly fatherland? Do you mean to damn My servant Moses, and exclude from glory so many other just men to whom I refused the consolation of seeing the promised land only that I might have nothing more to refuse them after death? Beware then of creating difficulties for yourself, and of raising doubts against My mercy, by examples that are not conclusive or by figures that are very imperfect.[2]

So it is, my dearly beloved brethren, that we ought not to press comparisons too far, nor insist too much on similitudes which would lead us truly to exaggeration. But I come to the most frightening word of all, since it came from the adorable mouth of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Many are called, said this tender Saviour, but few are chosen: *Multi sunt vocati, pauci vero electi.* Here, my brethren, I repeat, oh! God keep me from giving sinners a foolish presumption, and from lulling them in their iniquities! And who does not know it, and who does not see it, that the multitude takes the road of damnation, and that the world, this world so often cursed by Jesus Christ, is always the same, that is to say, an enemy of God and of virtue, an idolater of money and of pleasure? *Separamini, separamini*: [Be ye separate:] this is what we weary not of making resound in the ears of Christians. Separate yourselves, separate yourselves from the world; do not let yourselves be carried away by the torrent, this torrent ends in the endless abysses. And if we could make our voice heard in the midst of the public square, gather around us all that class of men who have broken completely with God, who have sworn to look only at the earth, animated with the zeal of Saint John Chrysostom, we would say to them: What are you doing there? and what road are you taking? Do you not see that you are losing yourselves?

Among you can there be a hundred, can there be twenty, can there be ten who are saved? You are all called; but how few among you will be chosen! *Multi vocati, pauci vero electi.*

This language, my brethren, would be terrible; yet it would be true. But it would no longer be so when we are in the midst of you, my dearly beloved brethren. And I repeat it also: I should think myself guilty toward the mercy of God if I contented myself with citing these words, *Multi vocati, pauci vero electi*, without adding the rest of the evangelical narrative. God forbid that, isolating a frightening text from all the other words and from the circumstances that can soften it, I should establish upon this imaginary foundation a whole edifice built in the air! Must I tell you, my brethren? The Scriptures contain few passages as reassuring, concerning the number of the elect, as that from which these frightening words are drawn. Follow me a moment.

Jesus Christ addresses the Jews, the privileged people of God, but a guilty and ungrateful people, a people who massacred the servants of the Father of the family, that is the prophets, and finally his son, that is Jesus Christ. It is to them that the Saviour says that the Father of the family is angered against them, that since they have put to death His servants and His son, He rejects them from His banquet, and that in their place He is going to substitute others. And then He sends His servants into the roads and the public places; He orders them to gather everyone, the blind, and the lame, and the good, and the bad, and to compel them to come in. And when the banquet hall is full, the king himself enters, and with his severe gaze he observes all the guests, and among so great a number he perceives one, one only, who had not the wedding garment. That one he casts from his face, and all the others are admitted to the banquet. And as conclusion to this parable, Jesus Christ, still addressing the Jews, warns them that among those who had been called first there will be few elect. I make you judges, my brethren: is not this parable, taken as a whole, more consoling than terrible, or rather, if it is terrible for the Jews disinherited of their privilege, is it not singularly consoling for us who are substituted for them?

Another time, someone approaches Jesus and asks Him: Lord, is it true that it is the small number who are saved? *Domine, si pauci sunt qui salvantur?* The adorable Saviour, eluding this rash question and not wishing to reveal a secret which belongs to God alone, answers this Jew and those who accompanied him: As for you, make your efforts to enter by the narrow gate, for many among you will come to put forward their title of children of Israel, and I shall not receive them. But others will come from the north and the south, from the west and the east, and they will be received into the kingdom of God. You see, my brethren, it is always the same thought: substitution of the Gentiles for the Jews.

Let us conclude from all this, my dearly beloved brethren, that the number of the elect is known only to God, and that it does not belong to us to pierce this mystery. What seems certain, says Saint Augustine, is that the number of the elect will be at least equal to the number of the Angels, and this number is immense. The serpent, as Scripture says, having drawn with his tail the third part of the Angels, God created men in order to fill those ranks which the revolt had ravaged. It is to this end that He sent them Jesus Christ, *instaurare omnia, sive quæ in cælis, sive quæ in terra*; [to re-establish all things, both that are in heaven and on earth;] so that, says this holy doctor, our fatherland, the Jerusalem of the heavens, will be defrauded of none of its citizens, but instead of losing there will on the contrary have gained.[3]

Saint Francis de Sales, my brethren, that so lofty a mind, thought that among Christians the greater number is saved; and he founded his opinion on this text of Saint Paul: *Nihil ergo nunc damnationis est iis qui sunt in Christo Jesu*: There is no damnation for those who are in Jesus Christ. And this passage of the great Apostle can be explained by the beautiful doctrine he establishes elsewhere. Writing to the new Christians of Corinth, he says to them: As a wise architect I have laid this foundation, which is faith in Jesus Christ: *Ut sapiens architectus posui fundamentum.* Now it is for you to build on the foundation, and to build as well as you can; for the fire will one day test the work of each. If anyone has used only solid materials, well-polished stones, gold, silver, his edifice fears nothing, and he will have a great reward. But if he has mingled wood, hay, straw, *lignum, fenum, stipulam*, the fire will do justice on these things; that man will have loss: *Detrimentum*

patietur. Nevertheless as for himself, he will be saved, yet after having passed through fire, *ipse autem salvus erit, sic tamen quasi per ignem.*

My dearly beloved brethren, the Apostle could not say more clearly what I wished to say to you myself here, which is that in the question of the number of the elect, the Catholic dogma of purgatory is of great resource. If there were no temporary expiation between earth and heaven, since nothing impure can be admitted into the presence of God, then indeed one would have to believe in the small, very small, infinitely small number of the elect. For, my brethren, it must be said, there is always some evil mixed even with the good we do; in our purest wheat there is still cockle, in our building there always slips straw, hay and wood; we do what we may, in spite of the sacraments, in spite of our confessions, there is still much to be said against us. My brethren, *si cujus opus arserit, detrimentum patietur*: all that there will be in us of imperfect, of unworthy of heaven will burn, we shall have loss. But in the end, if, with the grace of God, we have respected this essential foundation, which is Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, after passing through the fire doubtless, but in the end we shall be saved: *Ipse autem salvus erit, sic tamen quasi per ignem.*

Have not these different considerations sufficed, my dearly beloved brethren, to raise your cast-down courage, and to make you understand that, in Catholic doctrine, heaven is not so inaccessible as we have sometimes persuaded ourselves? Do you not begin to see that we should be wrong to despair of our salvation and of that of those whom we have cherished on earth? In this last respect, hear how consoling religion is.

The principles of Christianity, we are told, are sometimes very desolating to the heart, since they force us to believe in the eternal damnation of beings whom we have cherished, and in whom we found besides so many good qualities. My brethren, let me tell you, on the contrary, that the principles of Christianity make it a duty for you to hope well of the salvation of each of your relatives and friends, in whatever state death may have surprised them. For here are three fundamental principles of Catholic doctrine: 1st, that God is infinite in mercy, always ready to pardon, waiting for, watching for the return of sinners; 2nd, that on man’s part a movement of the heart, an impulse of love, an illumination of grace suffices for his salvation to be worked; 3rd, that there are certain qualities, certain natural virtues which God has promised always to reward with graces of final conversion.

It is these three principles, brought together, that make it a duty for us, not only not to pronounce damnation, but to hope for the salvation of all. So it is, my brethren, that the Church hopes for the salvation of all, that she prays for all. She has solemn judgments to define the holiness of some of her children; but she has no judgments to define the reprobation of anyone. If at times she refuses her public prayers to certain sinners who persevered in their scandalous life, and who refused to the end the offers of pardon, in that she pretends only to give a lesson to the living; but of the dead she knows nothing. That wick which was still smoking may have cast some last gleams toward heaven. Who knows whether there was not some touch of grace, some movement of the heart which saved him, at least from the eternal pain!

I am called to the side of a dying man, I arrive, it is too late; I have scarcely been able to pronounce absolution on his expiring head, he has closed his eyes. I see a Christian mother who dissolves in tears, and despairs. Must it be! she says to me; he had so many qualities besides! He was so charitable that he had nothing of his own; his happiness was to give. He was full of respect and tenderness for his parents. He had weaknesses, but he was good. His loss is a thousand times more cruel to me for that.

Listen, poor mother, and be consoled. Your son was full of charity; and Jesus Christ, the eternal Life, said that charity covers a multitude of sins, and that all is clean for him who gives alms. Your son was full of respect and tenderness for you; and God has bound Himself to reward the respect rendered to parents by a long life. If He refused it to your son on earth, it is because He wishes to give it to him in the heavens. Your son had weaknesses, committed faults; ah! do you not know that it is written that the publicans and public sinners shall go before us into the kingdom of heaven? Poor mother, I shall tell you what the holy bishop of

Geneva said of our good king Henry, struck suddenly dead by an assassin's dagger: We must believe, he said, that God put repentance into his soul, and that He showed mercy to him who showed mercy to so many others.[4] Pray, poor mother, pray without ceasing, and hope, and soon you will have the sweet confidence that your son is among the blessed.

I end with this thought, which is very sweet, my brethren. It is that Catholic truth realises that cult of ancestors which is found among some idolatrous nations. The feast we shall celebrate in eight days, what is it but the feast of our parents? since we have reason to hope that all are in glory, or that at least they will be received there. It is then in honour of our friends, of our relatives, it is to celebrate a great family feast between heaven and earth, that the Church will deploy the pomp of her solemnities, and that the walls will resound, we hope, with those aerial harmonies which will seem to blend the joys of the heavenly fatherland and those of our exile.

Courage then, my brethren, courage and hope! *Ergo jam non estis hospites et advenæ, sed estis cives sanctorum et domestici Dei*: So you are no longer strangers and unknown to heaven, but you are fellow citizens of the Saints and belong to the house of God. When you arrive in heaven, you will not seem strangers there; your face will not be new there; the Angels will recognise in your features those of your ancestors who already share their happiness. *Quam similis est juvenis iste consobrino meo*: [How like is this young man to my cousin!][5] How this young man resembles our brother in glory! This young man, your guardian Angel will answer, is the son of him of whom you speak. And all the Angels and the blessed will fall on your neck and cover you with kisses: *Benedictio tibi, fili mi, quia boni et optimi viri filius es tu.* [Blessing be to thee, my son, because thou art the son of a good and most excellent man.] Enter, enter with us. You cannot leave your family; your whole house must enter that of God: *Cives sanctorum et domestici Dei.*

And you, poor mother, who have lost a young child scarcely come out of the waters of baptism: ah! how consoling this feast will be for you! You are not permitted to doubt it, the feast of All Saints will be the feast of your son. Poor mother, if your wound is still fresh, do not listen to me, for I must respect your grief, it is that of Rachel weeping and refusing to be consoled, because her son is no more. But if time is already beginning to close this wound, a wound alas! always so fresh, so bleeding, I know, let me say to you: Oh! how high the Lord has raised you in glory! You are the mother of a Saint, the mother of an angel. Happy garden, in which the Lord came to gather a flower He destined for Himself, a flower that opened for an instant to receive the drops of the baptismal dew, and then closed again under the finger of God, a flower as pure as those that were born in the first garden of innocence. O happy mother, it is you above all who are no longer a stranger and unknown to heaven: your fairest image has gone before you there. Courage, O mother. The flower asks back its stem; one day your son will throw himself again into your arms, and you will no longer fear to lose him.

Let us dispose ourselves, my brethren, all to celebrate so well this great family feast that we may deserve to be associated with all those of our relatives and friends who are in glory. It is the grace, etc.[6]

Translator's notes

1. The epigraph is Ephesians 2:19.

2. Scripture used freely by the preacher: Matt. 22 (the wedding feast), Luke 13:23–29, Apoc. 7:3–9, 1 Cor. 3:10–15, Rom. 8:1, Tobit 7. The preacher's tribal commentary (Dan; the occupations of the tribes; "prophets' days are years") is his own and not verified here.

3. The reading "Separamini, separamini" (2 Cor. 6:17 / Isa. 52:11) is as printed.

4. The Francis de Sales position on the number saved among Christians is attributed by the preacher; not verified here.

[1] Apocalypse 7. The omission of Dan from the list is the Fathers' interpretation, as the preacher states it; the passage is paraphrased rather than quoted verbatim.

[2] The preacher's figure of "forty thousand Israelites" and the allusion to 1 Peter 3:19–21 are as stated; the figures and the interpretation of 1 Peter are the preacher's. Not verified here.

[3] The reference to Saint Augustine is as the preacher gives it, a general reference; not verified here.

[4] Saint Francis de Sales on Henry IV (killed 1610); the saying is as given by the preacher; not verified here.

[5] Tobit 7:2.

[6] Cf. Appendix I: A, 23.

n° 19. Sermon Preached at the Major Seminary of Chartres for the Patronal Feast of Saint Charles

4 November 1840.

Gloria in altissimis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus. [Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men.] (Luke 2:14.)

GENTLEMEN, the earth had no more voice to praise God, and men were wearing themselves out in vain to find happiness, when, to re-establish the two great ends of creation, the Word came down from the heavens; and the Angels in choir intoned over the cradle of Him who came to restore all things the hymn of the glory of God and of the happiness of men: *Gloria in altissimis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus.*

Now, Gentlemen, this double aim of the coming of the Son of God is also the double object of the priestly ministry. Continuer of the mission of Jesus Christ, the priest with his sacrificing hand makes rise toward the heavens the only incense worthy of the divinity, and, by his sacramental power, applying to souls the heavenly gifts of grace, he endows human nature with that felicity which Jesus Christ came to bring on earth; so that each time a new priest enters the Church, the Angels can again repeat this hymn, intoned over the cradle of Christ: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to men on earth: *Gloria in altissimis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus.*

And it is in this chiefly that the ecclesiastical hierarchy is formed on the model of the hierarchy of Angels. For all the functions of the angelic orders tend to this double end of glorifying God and succouring men. And while some prostrate themselves in the heavenly courts in a silence of adoration, or sing the eternal hosanna to the glory of God and of the Lamb, the others watch beside men to protect innocence, relieve infirmity, keep off dangers and succour every misery; so that the Angels have, so to say, defined themselves, and given us the history of their sacred ministry in celebrating that of the Incarnate Word: *Gloria in altissimis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus.*

Here then in two words, Gentlemen, is the whole essence, the whole nature, the whole spirit of the Christian priesthood; here is in what it is the continuation of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and the copy of the ministry of the Angels. All this, Gentlemen, is contained in these two words: Glory of God, happiness of men: *Gloria in altissimis et in terra pax hominibus.* Glory of God, happiness of men: this is the priest's motto, this is the whole definition of the priesthood, these are the two ends of the state to which you aspire. And it is, Gentlemen, that you may worthily answer to this high vocation that I am going, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to set out for you all that a Catholic priest can do for the glory of God and for the happiness of his brethren.

I should have liked, Gentlemen, to attach to these two principal ideas the whole life of the great Saint whom you celebrate this day; I should thus have placed the example beside the lesson. But time will not permit me even to treat my whole subject. And besides, Gentlemen, as you all know the life of your holy Patron, it will be easy for you to supply what I shall have omitted, and you will conclude quite naturally that Saint Charles possessed in an eminent degree the spirit of his priesthood, since he did so much for the glory of God and the

happiness of men. My language, Gentlemen, will be simple and familiar. It would ill become me to come and try eloquence in the midst of you. I have forgotten neither my age nor the recent date of my priesthood. Gentlemen, I place myself at this moment again, I re-enter in thought that Levitical asylum which I still inhabited not long ago, and it seems to me that I am again simply conversing with my dear confrères on some thoughts which the Holy Spirit suggested to me in prayer. Let us invoke, etc.

I. God created all things for His glory, and it is for want of knowing this first principle that so many men, otherwise instructed, have not the least notion of the true philosophy of religion, and are, in particular, incapable of appreciating the nobility and excellence of the priestly state. Always confined within the sphere of human things and the secondary interests of the creature, they perceive nothing beyond this horizon, and in their narrow philosophy a being placed in the midst of the universe solely to procure the glory of God is a supernumerary and useless being. The virtue of religion, which according to the literal sense is the bond that binds earth to heaven, is for them a word void of meaning, because of the two terms between which it is placed, there is one of which they are wholly ignorant. What then can the priest be in their eyes, as the religious man *par excellence*? He is an arch thrown toward a shore they do not know; he is a column which seems to them lost in the air, because it tends to a vault toward which their feeble glances have never been raised; they are, as they sometimes say, beings of another world, and they are right. But their misfortune is not to know this other world with which the priesthood is charged to put us in commerce, and to see only a folly, only a uselessness, where they ought to recognise the wisdom and economy from on high.

I have just said it, Gentlemen, and I am going to apply myself to develop it: the priest has a great power to honour God; and his two principal means are to pray and to suffer. Prayer and the immolation of oneself, the spirit of prayer and of sacrifice: these are the two elements of the priesthood as the religious state *par excellence*. It is by this that every Christian has some participation in the priesthood; it is by this, Gentlemen, that we shall have the fullness of it, and that we shall complete the grace of our ordination.

And first, to explain in what the priests are more specially obliged to pray than the rest of men, returning to a thought which I have already stated, I take things from higher up. In the economy, etc.[1]

The priest, Gentlemen, is he who, clothed in Jesus Christ as in a great tunic: *Christus magna sacerdotum tunica,* [Christ the great tunic of priests,] all the days of his life offers to the Lord his prayers and supplications accompanied by cries and tears: prayers, supplications which are heard because of the reverence due to the person of Jesus Christ, in some way incarnate anew in that of the priest; because of the reverence due to the Church, of which the priest is the personification, the Church, chaste dove who groans and sighs through the heart and the lips of the priest: *Qui in diebus carnis suæ preces, supplicationesque cum clamore valido et lacrimis offerens, exauditus est pro sua reverentia.* [Who in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications… was heard for His reverence.] This is, Gentlemen, this is why priests are so specially bound to prayer: it is that they are, by their priesthood, associated with the spirit of religion of Jesus Christ; and this is also why their prayer has more power to honour God, it is that it is, in a way, more authentic, since it is made as in the person of Jesus Christ and of the Church.

After that, Gentlemen, do you wish to be priests? Yes, you answer me, I wish to consecrate my life to the salvation of my brethren. And I begin again to ask you, do you wish to be priests? The salvation of your brethren, very well; but that is only the second part of the definition of the priest. Do you wish to be priests, that is to say, do you wish before all to be men of prayer? The priesthood to which you aspire is that ladder along which the Angels ascend and descend: ascend first, carrying to God the fervour of their prayer and the homage of all creatures; descend afterwards, bringing back to earth the graces which they have drawn from the treasure of God. You wish to be priests; your holy motto, then, is this: glory to God in the highest of the heavens. This is the first cry that must go forth from your heart; you finish afterwards: *Et in terra pax hominibus.* Do not put in the second rank what ought to be in the first; do not regard as the accessory of your

priesthood what is its principal spirit. Understand the language of the Apostles, those men in whom were found the source and the fullness of the priestly spirit; hear them reserve for themselves what was in their eyes most inalienable in their functions: *Nos vero orationi et ministerio verbi instantes erimus.* [But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.]

The priest, Gentlemen, is that Angel whom the beloved disciple saw in the heavens, standing before the altar, having in his hand a golden censer filled with all perfumes, and offering them on the golden altar that is before the throne of God. Yes, the heart of the priest, ever united to God by prayer, must be a golden censer in which he gathers the homage of all creation, to lay it on the golden altar that is before the throne of God, that is to say to offer it to Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ to God His Father. This duty of the priest was admirably figured in the old law. On one of the garments of the high priest was represented the whole universe: *In veste poderis quam habebat totus erat orbis terrarum*; [In the long priestly garment which he had on, was the whole world;] so that, says Saint Jerome, he might understand that he must not pray for himself alone, that he was not only the interpreter of a few beings but that he was the delegate of all nature, and that he must pray for every creature, for heaven, for earth, for the sun, for the stars, for all the elements. Yes, Gentlemen, the whole world must be on the breast of the priest who prays: *In veste poderis quam habebat totus erat orbis terrarum.* All nature must be in the censer which he waves before the golden altar: *Habens thuribulum aureum, et data sunt ei incensa multa, ut daret de orationibus sanctorum omnium super altare aureum.* [Having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar.][2]

Gentlemen, soon you will be sent into the midst of the world. You will be in the midst of a population which will not pray or will pray ill. It will be from you, Gentlemen, from you alone, that the Lord will expect His compensation. You will be as the angel of prayer for all that region: *Angelus orationis.* Where all is mute for heaven, there are still two asylums from which prayer must unceasingly ascend to the throne of God: the tabernacle and the heart of the priest. The tabernacle, Gentlemen, ah! He who dwells in it will not sleep, and will not forget to pray: *Non dormitabit neque dormiet.* [He shall not slumber nor sleep.] The tabernacle, Gentlemen, alas! will often be solitary. Jesus Christ will be forsaken there, abandoned. Go, Gentlemen, go every day to unite your prayer to His. Ah! if you were not faithful to prayer, if you, priests of Jesus Christ, forsook Him, forgot Him, how great would be your fault, you placed in the midst of all this people to relieve in some way the Lord! His delights are to be with the children of men: all the others forget Him, He counted on you; if you fail Him, says Saint Bernard, where then will He go to converse? *Si tu non oras, quis orabit?* [If thou prayest not, who will pray?] Like those consuls and chargés d'affaires sent into all barbarous countries by some great nation they represent, you are among this infidel people, among these wholly earthly men, as the chargés d'affaires of heaven; alone on this ungrateful shore you represent that great fatherland. If you come to forget it yourselves, it will no longer be represented there: *Si tu non oras, quis orabit?*[3]

The priest who has jurisdiction over a parish is like an angel, says Saint Thomas, charged to preside over this region, and to put it in relation with God. Often, going through the country, he will see a population wholly concentrated in the affairs of the earth; he will hear men blaspheme the name of God while gathering the gifts of the earth which they owe to His liberality. It is for him to repair this disorder, to sing to God the hymn of gratitude which the ungrateful refuse Him; it is for him to cause to cease the groaning of those inanimate creatures which suffer, which complain of being enslaved to sin. The priest who traverses his parish is charged to give a voice to the rivers and the mountains to praise God; it is by his mouth that every creature, animate and inanimate, must sing: glory to God in the highest; the hymn of perfume which the flowers abandon to the breath of the winds, it is for him to carry it to the feet of the throne of God; his heart must be the common altar of all the creatures that are within the limits of his jurisdiction; his whole parish must be on his breast when he prays: *In veste poderis quam habebat totus erat orbis terrarum.* If the priest does not pray, the whole region becomes mute for God: *Si tu non oras, quis orabit?* Gentlemen, the day you ceased to be

men of prayer, that day you would cease to be priests, since the priest is the man of God, and the first and principal means he has of glorifying God is prayer.

II. I added, Gentlemen, that your second duty, and your second means of glorifying God, is to suffer. The spirit of immolation and sacrifice: let us rise again to the principles.

In the primitive state, all things were good, and it was by the legitimate use of these things that God was glorified. Worship then was a worship of adoration, of prayer, of thanksgiving. But since sin, things have changed. Since sin, a worship of expiation has been necessary; for the glory of an angered God the destruction of the creature, the sacrifice properly so called, was necessary. God commanded it to His people; it is found in all traditions. But the sacrifice of goats and bulls was only a figurative sacrifice. Jesus Christ appeared at last, Jesus Christ priest and victim at once, who had come on earth only to suffer. He made the great act of His priesthood by dying on the cross. Then, risen from the dead, and wishing to keep an eternal priesthood, He found the means of perpetuating His sacrifice, in the heavens where it is in perpetual representation: *Agni stantis tamquam occisi*, [of the Lamb standing as if slain,] and on earth where this sacrifice is renewed at every instant, from the rising of the sun to its setting. But it pleased Jesus Christ still to associate men with His sacrifice, with His immolation; to associate them with it as ministers of His sacrifice, His own, but also as ministers of their own sacrifice, of their own immolation. Hear, Gentlemen, the doctrine of Saint Augustine, so conformable to that of the Apostle.

To be able to present to God the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, and to have for this a particular character: this is in what the essence of the priesthood of the law of grace consists.[4] To join to the adorable sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ the sacrifice of oneself, and to immolate oneself to God at the same time as one offers Him the divine Lamb immolated for the salvation of the world: this is, in the doctrine of Saint Augustine, what crowns the priesthood of the law of grace, and what gives it its final perfection. I know well that in this double respect every Christian is a priest, because he has some participation in the oblation of the sacrifice of the altars, and is bound to offer himself to God as a complement of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But, says Saint Augustine, as it is the proper function of the priest to consummate the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, it is also his proper duty and particular obligation to accomplish in his person what is lacking to this sacrifice. The priest is therefore *par excellence* the man of sacrifice.

He is the man of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and by that what glory does he not render to God? Gentlemen, when one thinks of it, the mind is lost, confounded. A mortal creature who every day brings God down from the heavens, who renews by his word and between his hands the mystery of the incarnation and that of the cross; a man who every day offers a God to God! Oh! Gentlemen, it is indeed of the priest who comes down from the altar that one may say that he has just made rise a hymn to the glory of God up to the highest of the heavens: *Gloria in altissimis Deo.* But the priest does not stop there; his priesthood demands that on leaving the altar he cease not to be a sacrificer. He must complete, consummate by his immolation that of Jesus Christ, or else he is only half a priest, and the sacrifice is incomplete: *Adimpleo in me quæ desunt passionum Christi.* [I fill up in my flesh what is wanting of the sufferings of Christ.] It must be so, says Saint Augustine, for the head cannot be sacrificed without the members being sacrificed with it; it must be so, for it would be revolting that a priest should renew the sacrifice of the cross without bearing the cross in his heart. This is, Saint Augustine says again, this is the fine character of the priest of the new law: it is that, after the example of Jesus Christ, he is at once priest and victim; it is that, if every day he immolates his God on the altar, every day also he immolates himself on the altar of the cross: *Quotidie morior*; [I die daily;] it is that the sacrifice which he begins in the morning at the expense of his God he pursues afterwards at his own expense; it is that his sacrificer's sword has two edges, and after pouring out the blood of his God he knows how to turn the sword against himself.

Yes, Gentlemen, the priest is, above all, a man of renunciation, a man of sacrifice, a man of sorrow. It is by this that he is the living representation of Jesus Christ; it is by this that he fixes the gaze of God; it is by this

that the mystery of the cross is continued. And if an ancient said that no spectacle was more worthy of the divinity than that of the just man wrestling with adversity, I can say with still more foundation that God loves the incense of the suffering and immolation of the priest, and that after the holocaust of His Son there is none more agreeable to Him. The suffering of the priest, like that of Jesus Christ, has a powerful voice to cry glory to God in the highest: *Gloria in altissimis Deo.* Woe then, Gentlemen, woe to the priest who is a man of pleasure! woe to the light and worldly priest! he has only half the priesthood; he is priest only by ordination, but is not so by heart; he has the character but not the spirit of it. Woe to the priest who leads a soft, easy life, exempt from trials and sacrifices! he is not the man of God, God has not destined him for great things for His glory. When God, Gentlemen, wishes to effect great things by a man, oh! how dearly He makes him pay for this choice! God never uses an instrument without beginning by breaking it, by crushing it: *Dominus voluit conterere eum.* [The Lord was pleased to bruise him.] So it is that God always reigns by the cross, that He always governs the Church by the cross.[5]

Gentlemen, I shall perhaps frighten you, but I must tell you: if you wish to be good priests, true priests, priests for the glory of God, great sorrows, great tribulations await you. Fear not that the matter of the sacrifice will fail you; the demon, the world, your confrères, yourselves, and the Lord will provide enough of it. Simple faithful do not suspect, and you, Gentlemen, who already have a foot in the sanctuary, scarcely glimpse all the bitternesses of the life of the priest. The ecclesiastical ministry presents itself to you only in agreeable forms and by its attractive side. One sees the priest speak in the pulpit, and one admires his facility. One sees him bring back sinners, and one envies his successes. But what one does not see, in that kind of conspiracy that seemed to have set itself against him, are those obstacles, those obscurities, those weariness, those impotences through which he had to pass to arrive at the pulpit. What the world does not know is that the priest takes upon himself all the burden from which he relieves others; it is that in giving peace to a soul he often takes upon himself all its perplexities; it is that he often poisons himself in healing others.

Oh! Gentlemen, Saint Bernard said, speaking of religious, that the world sees their crosses but does not see the unction: *Cruces vident, unctiones non vident.* I believe, Gentlemen, that one may say quite the contrary of priests. The world sees our consolations, but does not see our crosses: *Unctiones vident, cruces non vident.* Gentlemen, retain this word: a priest is condemned to bear the penalty of all that he does for the glory of God; and what a poet said of fortune one may say of divine grace: it sells us very dear what one thinks it gives. The simple faithful often envies the priest; and the priest, on the contrary, who knows the state of the faithful and knows his own, would envy the souls he leads, if he did not know that the whole glory of his priesthood is to suffer much. *Anima quæ tristis est super magnitudine mali, et incedit curva et infirma, et oculi deficientes, et anima esuriens, dat tibi gloriam et justitiam, Domine.* [The soul that is sad for the greatness of evil, and goeth bowed down and feeble, and the eyes that fail, and the hungry soul, giveth thee glory and justice, O Lord.][6]

Gentlemen, I could only brush my subject, I could present to you only a few scattered considerations, and already I stop. I have shown you what the priest can do for the glory of God; if ever Providence recalls me into the midst of you, I shall set out to you, with far more consolation still, what he can do for the happiness of men. But I must make these two remarks before ending.

The first is that the rest of my subject is in great part proved in advance; for, Gentlemen, the prayers and sufferings of the priest fall back in blessings upon society. A being who prays and immolates himself for the glory of God is the most useful being to his brethren. Men often speak of what they call the science of politics, they form a thousand combinations, they use a thousand stratagems, and they still believe that the world is indebted to their skill for that peace, such as it is, which God leaves us.[7] Ah, Gentlemen, the Lord knows well how to show them, when He wishes, that their skill has nothing to do with it, and with a breath He overthrows all their pretended work. Gentlemen, a Christian, but above all a priest, who prays and immolates himself, has more power for the good of States than all the politicians together.

A second remark, Gentlemen, is that reciprocally all that remained for us to say would be a confirmation of what we have already said. For the greatest glory of God being the happiness and salvation of His creatures, all that the priest does for the peace of men returns still to the glory of God, so that there is a very intimate union between these two things which are the two constituent elements of the priesthood: *Gloria in altissimis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus.*

My God, in contemplating this assembly so interesting in the eyes of religion, my mind and my heart are divided, crossed by very different thoughts and sentiments. I know that there are here young Levites from whom religion has the right to expect much, young Levites whom their talents and virtues seem to destine to do great good in the Church. Alas! and it is for that reason that I pity them, and that I should be moved to tenderness over them, if it were permitted me to dwell on this too human tenderness. Their candour does not yet suspect it; their talents, their virtues will be the measure of their pains. And if at this moment I unrolled before them the history of all the bitternesses they will meet in their priestly life, perhaps, terrified, they would recoil, as the prophets did of old, and tremble before their terrible mission. So, Lord, I put this idea away. Only, I beg You, O my God, harden their brow in advance, and surround them with a triple breastplate. Teach them above all to find their consolation in prayer and in suffering; let them know that in praying, in suffering, they accomplish the first law of their priesthood.

Another thought, more consoling, O my God, takes hold of me. In considering these young elect, who soon will be spread over all points of our diocese, I think of all that they will do for Your glory, of all that they will do for the peace of their brethren. I think of so many fervent prayers, so many sacrifices, so many souls reconciled, so many sorrows consoled, Lord; and, full of this thought, I need to invite Your Angels to take up their lyre again and sing beneath these vaults, in this asylum which is the cradle of the priesthood, the canticle they intoned over the cradle of the high priest Jesus Christ: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to men on earth: *Gloria in altissimis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus.*

May this same canticle, Gentlemen, resound one day above our funeral bed! May the Angels carry our soul into the heavens and present it to the Lord saying to Him: Here is a priest who did much for Your glory and for the peace of men! That is, Gentlemen, the grace which I wish you.[8]

Translator’s notes

1. A sermon of the young abbé Pie to seminarians (the major seminary of Chartres), on the feast of Saint Charles Borromeo (4 November). The preacher speaks of his own recent ordination (1839) and of having lately lived in the seminary.

2. “Chargés d’affaires” is kept as a diplomatic term. The phrase “Angelus orationis” is the preacher’s; not verified here.

3. The Latin tag “Christus magna sacerdotum tunica” (the printed text has “sacerdotium”) is given as read; its source is not verified here.

4. The quotations from Saint Augustine, Saint Jerome, Saint Thomas and Saint Bernard are given as the preacher presents them; none has been checked against the originals here.

5. The editor’s note “Le développement n’existe pas dans le manuscrit” indicates a sketched passage not written out; it is faithfully reproduced as “In the economy, etc.”

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[1] The development does not exist in the manuscript. (Editor’s note.)

[2] The attribution to Saint Jerome is the preacher’s (the reference is to the high-priestly vestment, Wisdom 18:24); not verified here.

[3] The attribution to Saint Bernard is the preacher’s; the exact wording and source are not verified here.

[4] Bourdaloue: Panegyric of Saint Andrew, second point; Massillon. (Note of M. l’abbé Pie.)

[5] The “ancient” is Seneca in the usual attribution; the text names no one, and the identification is not asserted here.

[6] Baruch 2:18. The Bernard saying is the preacher's; not verified here.

[7] See Massillon: *On the Excellence of the Priesthood*; 2nd Reflection. (Note of M. l'abbé Pie.)

[8] Cf. Appendix I: AB, 25; p. 28, no. 45 bis.

n° 20. Homily Preached at the Cathedral of Chartres on the Second Sunday of Advent: On the Evils of the Church and the Part That All True Faithful Must Take in Them

Preached at the cathedral of Chartres, Second Sunday of Advent (1840).[1]

Adhæreat lingua mea faucibus meis si non meminero tui; si non proposuero Jerusalem in principio lætitiæ meæ. [Let my tongue cleave to my jaws if I do not remember thee, if I do not make Jerusalem the beginning of my joy.] May my tongue dry up and cling to my palate, if Jerusalem is not always first in my memory, if I do not set Jerusalem at the head of all my joys. (Ps. 136 [Vulgate; 137].)

MY DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN, the Ark of the Covenant, Jerusalem and its Temple were only imperfect figures and certain prophetic sketches of the holy Catholic Church. And on this title how dear they were to the children of Israel! Amid all the horrors of war, Israel is occupied with one thing only: the Ark of the Lord, fallen into the hands of the enemies. Hear all the hills, all the mountains, all the rivers of Judea resound with these desolating cries: *Arca Domini, arca Domini*: the Ark of the Lord! the Ark of the Lord! The captive tribes forget their own misfortunes, and would console themselves amid the abundance of exile, but the violated temple, the destroyed temple: *Templum Domini? Templum Domini!* but Jerusalem humiliated, Jerusalem deserted, Jerusalem a prey to enemies! This is why their silent lutes are hung on the willows of the shore; this is why the rivers of Babylon gathered only their tears, and those words uttered with the double sentiment of a deep sadness and a religious indignation: *Quomodo cantabimus!* [How shall we sing!] One would need a heart very badly placed to sing, when Jerusalem is in opprobrium! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, let my right hand wither, let my motionless tongue be frozen on my lips, if you are not always first in my memory, if I do not set Jerusalem at the head of all my joys. *Adhæreat lingua mea faucibus meis si non meminero tui; si non proposuero Jerusalem in principio lætitiæ meæ.* My dearly beloved brethren, if all the good, if all the saints of the old law already loved the Catholic Church so keenly in the Ark, in the Temple, in Jerusalem which were its figures, ah! since Jesus Christ came to found it among us, this Church has been loved still more tenderly, still more strongly. The love of the Church is the great inheritance Jesus Christ has left us; it is the distinctive character of Catholic Christians: *Christus dilexit Ecclesiam… quam acquisivit sanguine suo*: [Christ loved the Church… which He purchased with His blood:] Jesus Christ loved the Church His spouse, whom He acquired at the price of His blood. Every true Christian loves the Church his mother, who bore him at the price of her blood. My dearly beloved brethren, every day at the altar the priest, beginning the great action, prays for the Church: *In primis pro Ecclesia tua sancta catholica, quam pacificare, custodire, adunare digneris.* [In the first place for Thy holy Catholic Church, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to grant her peace, to guard, unite…] And when the victim has come down on the altar: "Lord, who hast said: I give you My peace, I leave you My peace, look upon Your Church," *eamque secundum voluntatem tuam pacificare et coadunare digneris.* [and vouchsafe to grant her peace and unity according to Thy will.] Every day, then, we pray for the Church. But in these days of penance and tears, new prayers are prescribed to us; all the time of Advent we recite at the holy sacrifice special prayers for the Church, for the triumphs of the Church, that it may please God to humble the enemies of the Church.

It will therefore be fulfilling a duty to speak to you of the present evils of the holy Church, and of the part that all faithful Christians must take in them.

I. The Church received from her divine founder promises of immortality, but He also foretold her great combats and frequent trials; so that her destiny is to suffer and to endure always. She is a queen, but a queen under attack who dominates in the midst of her enemies. Yet the Church is not always equally unhappy and

triumphant at once. Sometimes she is persecuted to the utmost, exiled, imprisoned, slaughtered; sometimes she seems to have triumphed over all obstacles, she is surrounded with splendour and glory. There are for the Church whole centuries of persecution, and centuries of triumph: in the former, her enemies flatter themselves they have annihilated her; in the latter, her children flatter themselves that she has no more tears to shed. A sentiment exaggerated on the part of both; for, in her greatest persecutions, the Church is not without triumphs, and in her greatest triumphs, she is not without sorrows.

But there are other centuries which are neither those of bloody persecutions nor those of splendour and glory. There are centuries in which this illustrious stranger, who journeys through time toward eternity and asks of the earth only the right of passage, is neither brutally assailed on the way by the sword of the Neros, the Mahomets and the Robespierres, nor led and protected by the sceptre of the Constantines, the Charlemagnes and the Saint Louises. In those times the Church is subjected to the cruellest of all trials; she is secretly fought, and she has no right to complain. She perceives that men conspire against her, that her ruin is being planned; but as they throw on her shoulders a few shreds of purple, she is forced to keep silence and bear her pain in silence. If only heaven compensated her for so many anguishes that she finds on earth! But God Himself seems to have forgotten her. In those times heaven has mysterious silences and appearances of neutrality. The priesthood is without virtue; prayer itself is as it were disarmed; what do I say? God seems from the height of heaven to break all the instruments of evil.[2] In those times the trial is at its height; the wicked triumph, the just are desolate, and they are almost accusing Providence.

My dearly beloved brethren, in this picture have you not recognised the unhappy times in which we live? Oh! my brethren, my dearly beloved brethren, how the holy Church, our mother, suffers in our days! Her sorrow is almost without consolation, her losses are without compensation. I look afar to see whether new children will come, as of old, to dry the tears she sheds over ungrateful children. Alas! my brethren, the most distant missions are fruitless. If I except one island of a few leagues in circumference where the faith renews the marvels of Paraguay, and another corner of the globe where persecution at least restores to the Church the ancient lustre of her sorrows and the glory of her martyrs; everywhere else, everywhere torpor and apathy, the cold of death and of the tomb. Indifferent worshipper of his idols, the infidel no longer knows how to cast his quiver at the feet of the cross of Jesus Christ, nor to quench his arrows in the blood of the missionary. There too the ministry is hampered by petty vexations and harassments.[3]

My dearly beloved brethren, it is still in Europe that the Church properly so called is found. Alas! and how many bitternesses, how many anguishes does she not find there! Oh! for a century especially, how guilty nations and kings have been toward the Church! *Deus, venerunt gentes in hereditatem tuam.* [O God, the heathens are come into thy inheritance.] The peoples have thought they had won a great victory when the Church was humiliated. The Church guardian of their liberties, the Church protectress of their rights, they have not seen that in destroying her influence they destroyed the only counterweight of tyranny, that in reducing her to silence they silenced their advocate: *Quare fremuerunt gentes, et populi meditati sunt inania.* [Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things?] But kings have been still more guilty than their peoples. Kings have leagued against the Church. The Church that raised them a throne in the conscience of their subjects, they have dethroned and enslaved; and they have not seen that the abasement of this peaceful rival would give birth before them to another power whose violent reactions would have no end: *Astiterunt reges terræ, et principes convenerunt in unum adversus Dominum et adversus Christum ejus.* [The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together, against the Lord and against His Christ.] In their political congresses they took no account of the Church, they divided among themselves the children of the Church like a vile flock: *Dixerunt: Hereditate possideamus sanctuarium Dei.* [They said: Let us possess the sanctuary of God for an inheritance.] All their policy has been to encroach on the sanctuary, to seize the censer, and to govern the Church as sovereignly as the State.

Alas! to what point has the evil not come? It is no longer for me to speak, my brethren; it is he who has the solicitude of all the Churches, it is our Holy Father Gregory XVI, drenched with so many bitternesses since the beginning of his sorrowful pontificate, and who does not fear to say that the afflictions and present mourning of the Church exceed by far all the evils over which he had to groan hitherto. My brethren, the wound just made in the Church is still bleeding. Several millions of Catholics detached from the truth by the secret manoeuvres of the tyranny which corrupted the sources of the faith, prepared cowardly bishops, proscribed fidelity and crowned apostasy! O noble Church of Poland, your ungrateful and unjust masters have separated you from her who preached to you submission and devotion to the powers of the earth! Catholic Poland, let others deplore the loss of your independence and your nationality! We, we shall not cease to be moved over the faith that is ravished from you; over your children who henceforth will suck the milk of error, wandering sheep whom no shepherd will lead any more to the pastures of truth, and who will be lost in the abysses of seduction.[4]

But what have I heard? Have we returned to the centuries of persecution? On whom have these bolts just closed? I see new Athanasiuses, new Thomases of Canterbury, torn violently from their sees and thrown into irons. What is their crime? Their crime, O holy Church, is not to wish to betray you; their crime is to obey God rather than men; their crime is not to subscribe to a measure which before half a century will finish destroying Catholicism in the Rhenish provinces. Weep, weep, ancient Church of Cologne: weep over your children deceived by several of those who should have enlightened and led them, weep over so many apostates, weep over the dangers of those who remained faithful, weep over the chains of your pastor; but ask God that he die rather in his irons or in his exile than lend himself to conciliatory measures which Rome does not yet avow and which do not seem worthy of him. My brethren, I am not here making politics, I speak only of the Church, I weep only over the misfortunes of the Church; alas! and on whatever side I turn, I always meet a subject of tears.[5]

O you, famous island, that the Church once heard with complacency called the land of Saints, what have you become? I know well that there is operating in your bosom a work, secret hitherto, but which cannot be long in showing itself. I know that the holy seduction of Catholicism is spreading among your children with almost as much rapidity as the contagion of error did formerly. But shall we see those days when your eyes will open to the light? Francis de Sales hoped to see them. Bossuet believed (and he says that the wise concurred in this sentiment) that the days of your blindness were over and that it was time henceforth for the light to return. Alas! and you are still wrapped in the fogs of heresy, a thousand times thicker than those that rise from the sea and weigh on your cities.[6]

But it is here, my brethren, that we must ask of our eyes new tears, because we are not strangers to the evils we are about to run through. Here, it is the nation whose princes were called the Most Faithful Kings, it is the zealous Church of Portugal, which sent Francis Xavier to the Indies, which communicated its faith to a thousand different nations, and which has lost it for herself. For nearly ten years, my brethren, Portugal has been detached from the centre of unity, and hell alone knows the victims it has reaped there. There finally, it is Catholic Spain, last asylum of the faith, become today so unhappy that the lamentations cannot equal her misfortunes. No more episcopate, soon almost no more priesthood. My brethren, did heaven wish to stifle in blood the first germs of impiety which were beginning to develop among this Catholic people, or did it wish that this Church, as fifty years ago our Church of France, should bring to neighbouring nations the spectacle of her faith and her noble piety? Let us leave to God His designs. But we, let us say that the days are very evil, and the evils of the Church very great.

Shall we speak only of the misfortunes of others, and shall we not shed tears also over ourselves? Is the Church then at peace among us? Has she not alarms, has she not bitternesses? Ah! my brethren, my brethren, what has become of religion in our midst? What has become of innocence in our cities and in our country? Childhood has become precocious for evil; adolescents are without morals and virgins without modesty; our

cities can no longer hide vices which overflow. And the faith, what has become of it among us? The faith, it is no longer I who speak, it is all the bishops of France who for two years in their pastoral instructions have not ceased to raise the cry of alarm; the faith is attacked in France, it is secretly undermined. There is talk of protection granted to the Church: what is this protection? The Catholic Church is placed on the same rank as heretical sects; and if she complains of this position, she is accused of intolerance. My brethren, is she intolerant, the lawful wife who blushes at being assimilated and associated to adulteresses?

Fifty years ago the enemies of the Church overthrew her; they chased her from everywhere; everywhere they put themselves in her place. And today, when crimes flood the world, and they feel the need of religion, they come, as a ruse, to ask of the Catholic Church her participation and concurrence, but imposing conditions on her. They consent to borrow her morality, and they will not have the dogmas on which it is based, and without which this morality has no consistency. The men of the age pretend to rule and discipline the Church: us, who have received our priesthood only from the Church, and who depend only on the Church and on our conscience, they pretend to circumscribe our teaching; they wish us to compromise on different points of revelation; they do not permit us to forearm minds against doubt and unbelief. And if the priesthood is anything other than insipid salt, their hatred and indignation begin again.

As the Samaritans of old, the enemies of the Church come to ask us to join us in building the temple: *Ædificemus vobiscum, quia ita ut vos quærimus Deum vestrum: ecce nos immolavimus victimas.* [Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do: behold we have sacrificed victims.] We who love their persons but know the depths of their heart, like the princes of Israel, answer them: *Non est vobis et nobis ut ædificemus domum Deo nostro, sed nos ipsi soli ædificabimus Domino Deo nostro.* [It is not for you and us to build a house to our God, but we ourselves alone will build to the Lord our God.] No, says one of our bishops, if you have need of the Church, accept her as she is, with her whole teaching; for Jesus Christ is not divided. If you have need of the Church, leave her the liberty of her action. The daughter of heaven cannot be in a subordinate rank. No, says Saint Augustine, she does not serve, but she dominates: *Non servit, sed dominatur*. Resign yourselves then to leaving her all-powerful, to putting her in the first place, or else do not think of asking her anything: *Non servit, sed dominatur.*[7]

That is, my brethren, that is the great disorder; it is that the queen of nations has become tributary: *Domina gentium facta est sub tributo.* [The mistress of the Gentiles is made tributary.] The Church is enslaved, we cannot say it too much. At the sight of the disorders that cover France, certain voices have cried out: But what do the priests do? what does the Church do?… What does the Church do? You have bound her feet and hands, and you ask what she does? What do the priests do? another voice than mine, that of our first pastor, will answer this question in a few days.

Let us stop here, my brethren, and agree that the evils of the Church are very great, that the days are very evil. My brethren, all the just are in sorrow, all faithful souls are tried. Not a prophet whom God raises up in Israel. If a few stars come to shine in the midst of this night, they are not long in growing dim and falling. If some hand wishes to sustain the ark, it is as it were punished at once. It is only trembling, Lord, that one dares to labour for Your Church. Everything succeeds with her enemies; everything fails in the hands of her defenders. We toil all night to take nothing; scarcely does some uncertain catch fall here and there into our nets. Prayer itself seems the object of Your wrath: *Quousque irasceris super orationem?* [How long wilt Thou be angry against the prayer?] Good is chained; evil alone works freely. Here, my brethren, are the evils of the Church. I have exaggerated nothing; on the contrary, I have remained far behind the truth.

II. The Church your mother is in suffering; is it then needful to tell you, my brethren, that you must take part in her evils? Can children be insensible to the affliction of their mother? O my brethren, how keenly the first Christians felt the evils of the Church! When Peter was a prisoner and Paul in chains, the whole Church was in prayer. Those men who had shut themselves up in the deserts, who did not know whether houses were still being built, who were strangers to all the news of the age, were always occupied with the Church. All the

Saints loved the Church much, prayed much for the Church. Let us love, then, my brethren, let us love the Church.

Sometimes, my brethren, we hear Christians say to us: But the Church is not suffering. Our temple is not closed. Nothing hinders my devotions, my exercises; I go to the temple, I come home. No one says anything to me. Ah! my very dear Brother, if that is all you ask for the Church, you know how to content yourself with little. The Church is not persecuted, because the temples are not closed and the celebration of the offices is not prevented! Many Catholics of Poland doubtless said the same, and the next day they were no longer Catholics; the temples were still open, the rites were the same, only they had become schismatics. My brother, there are among us a great number of Christians who would pass thus into schism without perceiving it. The Church is not persecuted, for nothing troubles our piety! But tell me, are you not Catholic, and does Catholic not mean universal? Does the Church interest you only in what concerns you, and does not your love for her go further than selfishness? Every true Christian is, like Saint Paul, occupied with the solicitude of all the Churches, and he says with him: *Quis infirmatur, et ego non infirmor? quis scandalizatur, et ego non uror?* [Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is scandalised, and I am not on fire?] All the blows struck against the Church fall back on him.

Woe, woe to those Christians who feel not the evils of the Church, who suffer not from the sufferings of the Church!… *Et nihil patiebantur super contritione Joseph.* [And they suffered nothing for the affliction of Joseph.] Woe to those who prefer anything whatever to the Church, who weep for dynasties and do not weep for the Church, who in events concern themselves little with the results that may concern the Church!… *Et nihil patiebantur super contritione Joseph.* Jerusalem, Jerusalem! those shall be cursed who shall have despised you, those shall be condemned who shall have blasphemed you: *Maledicti erunt qui contempserint te, et condemnati erunt qui blasphemaverint te.* Jerusalem, those who shall have loved you shall be blessed. Holy Church, blessed are all who love you and who rejoice at your peace: *Beati omnes qui diligunt te, et qui gaudent super pace tua!* Holy Church of Jesus Christ, woe, woe to me if I forget you! May my right hand wither, may my tongue cleave to my palate if, O holy Church, you cease to be first in my memory, if I did not put you at the head of all my joys! *Adhæreat lingua mea faucibus meis, si non meminero tui.* My brethren, Bossuet said it in two words: the whole philosophy as the whole politics of the Christian is the relation of all things to the Church and of the Church to all things.[8]

But it is not enough to feel the evils of the Church; one must sympathise with them efficaciously, and for that, my brethren, one must pray for the Church. And here, my brethren, hear the beautiful doctrine which Bossuet borrowed from Saint Augustine and which he developed in ending his admirable discourse on the unity of the Church, pronounced in circumstances so critical for the Church of Rome. Pray, he said, just souls, faithful souls, pray. For all the good that is done in the Church, and even by the pastors, is done by the secret groanings of those innocent doves that are scattered over the whole earth. Humble souls, innocent souls, since such is your power with God, it is you, Bossuet says again, it is you whose prayers I ask. In gratitude for the gift of God whose seal is in you, pray without ceasing for His Church, offer your communions for His Church; have the sacrifice offered for His Church, it is one of its principal ends: *In primis pro Ecclesia sancta catholica.* Pray, you just; but pray, you sinners.

Hear, my brethren, you who perhaps groan under the burden of your sins which you have not yet had the strength to shake off; hear these beautiful words of Bossuet: Sinners, pray for the Church; it is a beginning of conversion to pray for the Church. One seeks in vain in medicine, says this great man elsewhere, a single and universal remedy which so restores nature to its true constitution that it is capable of curing all diseases. What is not found in medicine is found in the sacred science. It is the love of the Church, a virtue which so happily re-establishes the principle of religion that it contains entirely in itself the condemnation of all errors, the antidote of all poisons, the infallible cure of all diseases.[9]

Let us pray then, my brethren, let us pray for the holy Church. Scripture will furnish us beautiful effusions, for example the two magnificent psalms 78 and 79: O God who rule Israel, hear, hear, you who feed the sheep of Joseph. You who sit upon the cherubim, show Yourself: *Qui sedes super Cherubim, manifestare.* Stir up Your power, which seems asleep, and come: *Excita potentiam tuam, et veni.* Lord, how long will You treat with wrath the prayer of Your servant? *Usquequo, Domine, irasceris in finem?* How long shall we be filled with the bread of tears, and be given to drink the cup of weeping? Lord, the nations have invaded Your inheritance; they have defiled Your holy temple. We have become a reproach to our neighbours, the fable and the derision of the peoples. Turn Your wrath, Lord, on the nations that know You not, on the kingdoms that have not called upon Your name. They have devoured Jacob, they have laid waste his dwelling. Lord, it is time, succour us; deliver Your Church, for Your glory, for the honour of Your name; that it may not be said among the nations: Where is their God? Where then is their Church?

Lord, You transplanted Your vine out of Egypt, You cast out the nations, You planted it in their place. It filled the earth; its shadow covered the mountains, and its branches passed the height of the cedars. It stretched out its shoots to the sea, and its boughs to the banks of the great river. Why then, Lord, have You destroyed the walls that defend it? Why is it ravaged by all that pass by the way? *Vindemiant eam omnes qui prætergrediuntur viam.* The boar out of the forest has laid it waste, the wild beast has made it his pasture. God of hosts, turn, look down from heaven, and see, and visit again Your vine.

Let us pray thus, my brethren, let us pray that what must end may end soon. Happy if it is given us, and our grandchildren, to see the glory of Jerusalem! *Beatus ero si fuerint reliquiæ seminis mei ad videndam claritatem Jerusalem.* [I shall be happy if my seed shall have remains to see the glory of Jerusalem.] That is, my brethren, the grace I wish you.[10]

Translator’s notes

1. The Psalm numbers 78 and 79 (Vulgate) are 79 and 80 in the Hebrew numbering; the psalm epigraph “cxxxvi” is Vulgate Ps. 136 (Hebrew 137).

2. Contemporary references (Gregory XVI’s lament; Poland/Russia and the 1839 suppression of the Uniate Church; the Cologne affair; Portugal; Spain; England) are given as the preacher’s, with the editorial identifications marked as such. They are not verified here.

3. “Mgr de Langres” and “Mgr d’Avignon” in the author’s first footnote are rendered “the bishop of…” for the reader; the French uses the abbreviated titles. The works named are not verified here.

4. Biblical quotations: Ps. 136; Ps. 2; Ps. 78–79; Ezra 4:2–3; Amos 6:6 (*contritione Joseph*); Tobit 13:16 (*Maledicti erunt… Beati omnes qui diligunt te*); 2 Cor. 11:28–29; the Canon of the Mass (*In primis.…*); Tobit 14:9 (*Beatus ero.…*, quoted loosely).

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[1] See Bossuet: *Unity of the Church*; *Thoughts on the Church*; *Funeral Orations*. — M. Boyer: *Against the Constitutional Heresy*. — Mgr [the bishop] of Langres and Mgr [the bishop] of Avignon: Pastoral letters of 1838. — Pastoral letters of M. Fayet, under the name of Mgr the Archbishop of Rouen. (Note of M. l’abbé Pie.)

[2] The sense of the last sentence is difficult: the preacher seems to say that God appears to break even the instruments He might use against evil. Rendered literally as printed.

[3] The “island of a few leagues” and the “other corner of the globe” are not named in the text. The identification is not asserted here.

[4] The reference is to the Russian suppression of the Ruthenian (Uniate) Church in 1839 (the Polotsk synod), as the context (“several millions of Catholics detached”) suggests; the text itself names only Poland. The editorial identification is mine and is flagged as such.

[5] The archbishop of Cologne, Clemens August von Droste-Vischering, arrested in 1837 in the “Cologne troubles” over mixed marriages. The text does not name him; the identification is the editor’s inference and flagged as such.

[6] The “famous island” is not named. The context (hopes of Francis de Sales and Bossuet for a return “of the light”, the fogs of heresy) points to England; this identification is mine, from context, and not stated in the text.

[7] The Augustine attribution is the preacher’s; not verified here. The unnamed bishop is not identified.

[8] The Bossuet saying is as given by the preacher; not verified here.

[9] The Bossuet quotations are given as the preacher presents them; see his *Sermon on the Unity of the Church* (1681); not verified here against the text.

[10] Cf. Appendix I: A, 24; AB, 51.

n° 21. Sermon Preached at the Cathedral of Chartres: On the Union of Morality with Faith and Christian Practices

Preached at the cathedral of Chartres (1841 and 1847).[1]

Nos autem prædicamus Christum, Dei virtutem et Dei sapientiam. [But we preach Christ… the power of God and the wisdom of God.] As for us, we preach Jesus Christ, the power and the wisdom of God. (St. Paul, 1 Cor. 1:23–24.)

MONSEIGNEUR, if it were not for the priesthood the first and most indispensable duty to announce the divine word; if the holy oracles were not full of anathemas against dumb pastors; if the principal mission given by Jesus Christ to His priests were not this: *Euntes ergo docete*, go and teach; if the great apostle had not prescribed to his disciple to preach without relaxation, in season and out of season, perhaps, my brethren, wearied of exercising a powerless ministry, we should abstain from raising our voice among you. For let me tell you under what impression we mount into this pulpit.

Alas! how sick the world is, my brethren! how covered with wounds is the society of which we form part! *Omne cor mœrens et omne caput languidum.* [Every heart sorrowful, every head languid.] Every heart is in bitterness, and every existence seems to faint. If anyone is a stranger to this suffering, it is because he has lost that Christian sense which was given him by baptism. For us, who have but one thought, who consider in human things only the cause of God and of His Church, oh! my brethren, how often, like the apostle, are we desolate beyond measure, to the point that life is a burden to us: *Supra modum gravati sumus, ita ut etiam nos tæderet vivere.* [We were pressed out of measure, so that we were weary even of life.] Not, know it well, that we fear for the future of the Church: she has promises of immortality. Not even that we fear the loss of the faith for our country; on the contrary, it seems to us that we have clearly read on the brow of the dawn the announcement of a serener day.

But in the end, at present, we are undergoing a terrible trial. We are journeying through a century of transition, and the study of history has revealed to us how obscure, painful and trying such centuries are. Darkness and light, long confounded, seek to disentangle themselves; all passions, all errors collide in the bosom of society. Heaven watches this struggle in silence, and with an appearance of neutrality. And in this deep night, furrowed here and there with a few flashes, scarcely has the white plume of truth made itself recognised in the midst of the melee.[2] No doubt, however, that the dawn will light up its triumph, and that it will appear tomorrow, victorious and standing on the smoking ruins of vice and falsehood.

But while waiting for this day, while waiting for this dawn, what it costs us, my brethren, ah! what it costs us to descend into the arena! Willingly we would leave errors and passions to devour one another; willingly we would keep to the role of Moses, who prayed on the mountain while the battle was waged in the plain.

You know it, O my God, often at the foot of Your altars we have asked You whether it would not be enough for us to weep and groan before Your broken ark. Often we say to You: Lord, the world is too sick, You alone can heal it. Falsehood has penetrated everywhere in our century; it is mixed with the very air this generation breathes; the just man himself is not free of all error; all truths are lessened, diminished. One no longer finds an energetic and vigorous hatred of evil, a noble enthusiasm for good. The sacred fire seems to have gone out on earth. Lord, Lord, there is no one now but You who has the right to speak. For who are we, feeble ministers of Your word, who are we that our voice should dominate the noise of the tempest? Lord, the evils of this century can yield only to the all-powerful arm that makes the thunder roll in the heavens, that

chains the winds on the sea, that breaks the waves against the shore, and that has resources even against the crimes and errors of nations. Act then Yourself, Lord, speak Yourself; and let us weep, let us pray all night, until a ray of dawn, until the break of a better day has given us back strength and courage.

That, my brethren, is what we have often said at the foot of the tabernacles. But God has not heard us. And we have heard Him answering us by the voice of His ancient prophets: Why then did you enter My holy militia, if not to fight the battles of the Lord? Did I make a law of success for you in commanding you labour? Go, and fight unto death for the truth. If you do not save their souls, at least you will deliver your own. And then, you are not only the minister of My justice. Your priesthood is at the orders of My vengeances, as it is in the service of My goodness. You are a priest to save some, and to render others inexcusable. The elect will be indebted to you for the good sentence they will hear, and I shall be indebted to you for the justification of My severe decrees. Speak to this people, and tell them their errors and their crimes; My grace will be with you; speak, and if the truth wounds them, I shall give you a brow harder than theirs, I shall pour into your heart a courage and above all a love stronger and more inexhaustible than their hatred. My brethren, since God wills it, since it is our duty, we shall speak to you. Whether heard or not, we shall proclaim the truth among you. We shall preach for all, for the present and for the absent. Some will profit by it for themselves: may the just Judge not profit by it one day against the others!

My brethren, a thousand contradictory doctrines dispute in our days the empire over minds: doctrines more mobile and changeable still than the passions they excite and the revolutions they beget. But we, cries the Apostle, we preach only one thing, always the same, which is Jesus Christ: *Nos autem prædicamus Christum.* I shall try to show you, my brethren, that the Christian faith, that stone which was rejected, repudiated by the modern world, is still and will be, until the end of the ages, the corner-stone and the fundamental base of the whole edifice of human society. I shall show you that there is no other name under heaven given to men, in which peoples as well as individuals can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ. And to begin from today, I shall establish this proposition, namely: that without the faith and without Catholic practices there is no assured morality on earth.

We hear it said on all sides that we must preach morality; moralise, and then moralise again. If we teach the Catholic dogma and the solid proofs on which it rests; if we speak of supernatural grace and the means of obtaining it, we are boldly told that we are outside the question, that the time has come to preach morality and morality alone: that is to say then that the time has come to build houses without laying foundations, and to walk without having legs. Until that is so, we say that morality is not founded in reason without the dogma which is its motive, and that it is not possible in practice without the grace which is its means. Dogma is the why of morality; grace is its how. And so we shall preach to you Jesus Christ, who is at once the wisdom of God who dictates the rules, and the power of God who gives the facility of observing them: *Nos autem prædicamus Christum, Dei virtutem et Dei sapientiam.* Such then is our subject: Without Christian beliefs, morality has no determining reason; without Christian practices, morality has no possible accomplishment.

Holy Virgin, O you who are the mother of eternal wisdom and the mother of divine grace, help me today and during this whole course to come to avenge the rights of Jesus Christ your Son, and to bring back His truth and His grace into the heart of my brethren: Ave Maria.

I. If man had kept his first innocence, if his intelligence were still enlightened and his will still ruled by original rectitude, perhaps, strictly, carried along by a happy bent toward good, he would yield to the charms of virtue, without its showing itself leaning on the very throne of an all-powerful and avenging God. And even so, my brethren, there were for primitive man dogmas, a sanction and a supernatural help. Perhaps again, if the whole human race resembled certain elect souls who one would say had no part in the common degradation, and whom their nature in some way commands to good; if these phenomena of virtue were as common as they are rare, perhaps, strictly, morality would subsist with no other motive than its beauty, no other sanction than the applause of conscience. But whatever be the truth of these more or less chimerical

hypotheses, alas! it is only too certain that the realities are very different. We all bear a corrupt nature. Our will, dangerously weakened and mortally wounded, like a soldier touched by the steel, has scarcely any strength left for the combats and sacrifices which virtue commands. Our mind, less altered perhaps, less degenerate than our will, but tyrannised by it, readily condescends to doubt every troublesome obligation. Virtue has therefore become for us a difficult thing because of our evil will, a thing of doubtful obligation because of the sophisms too readily welcomed by our intelligence. On the other hand, it is against the nature of man, essentially desirous of his happiness, driven instinctively toward his present well-being, ever to submit to an onerous practice if the obligation is not demonstrated to him. The first thing then that virtue has to do, when it presents itself to us with its privations and sacrifices, is to show us its authentic titles. You want to impose on me the yoke of morality; but by what right? I feel that morality hampers me and I shall hamper myself only with good knowledge. Where is the foundation of your morality? on what does it rest? tell me its motive, its why?

My brethren, I challenge all human moralists, by whatever name they are called and to whatever school they belong, I challenge them to find another solid basis of morality than the religious dogma, the Christian belief; and by that I mean the Catholic dogma and belief, because outside the Catholic Church, as the purity of dogma is attacked, the purity of morality may be attacked too. Wherever divine authority is lessened in matters of faith, it will be so also in matters of morals; where the arbitrary is exercised on beliefs, it is not long in being exercised also on duties. I affirm it, my brethren, and it is easy to prove it: outside the Catholic faith there is not a serious and sufficient reason in favour of morality. Listen to me.

The practice of virtue costs me; the observance of certain duties hampers me; I need to be happy, and I believe that one of those acts which are called crimes, in giving me fortune, pleasure, power, would give me happiness. I know not what moralists step forward, who tell me: You cannot; society, nature, your interest, your honour forbid it. Society, you say; and what then is society? Do you mean that those who are rich, powerful, voluptuous forbid attacks on their goods? But I am going to make myself rich, powerful, happy like them, perhaps by the same means as they; and afterwards, jealous to keep my favourable position, I shall say to those who would wish to take it from me: Remain in the state in which you are; society forbids you to leave it; there exists among peoples a tacit convention which has determined certain bounds that citizens must never cross. Social pact! it is very easy to say to those who have all the benefits of society. And when then did I make this senseless pact by which I dispossessed myself of the inalienable right I have to tend toward happiness? Social pact, mutual solidarity, legal order! these are pompous words that I hardly understand, but that most surely will never impose a sacrifice on me.

Another apostle of morality intervenes, and says to me: But do you not respect the voice of nature? Has not nature written certain principles in your heart? Nature! Ah! for a few noble instincts that she has left in me, I find a thousand inclinations, a thousand covetousnesses that she has equally deposited in my heart; they were born, and they grew up with me. And so long as you allege to me no authority superior to nature, I shall tell you that I must begin by satisfying the strongest, most irresistible, most insatiable propensities of my nature, that is to say egoism, envy, cupidity, the pleasure of the senses, the pursuit at any price of personal well-being.

Another presents himself who speaks to me of my own interest, and who wishes to prove to me that, in spite of all the miseries which weigh on me, it depends only on me to be the happiest of men in the position nature has made for me. Work, economy, temperance: these, according to this conservative language, are the triple element of a happiness that is assured to me. And I take up again: Work! but it is fatigue, and if I can succeed like you in knowing no other fatigue than that of giving advice to my fellows, occupation will seem to me much sweeter. Economy, temperance! but if I can become one of those who have the right to squander and to refuse themselves nothing, my lot will seem to me infinitely better.

Finally others make honour shine before my eyes, honour, the first of all goods. And I answer: Honour! but what is more despised on earth than misery and misfortune? And riches, on the contrary, are they not always infallibly considered, always honoured in whatever way they have been acquired? Besides, how many infractions of morality are withdrawn from the eye of the law and that of opinion, and consequently do not compromise honour! And, after all, what do I care for honour if other, more powerful passions subjugate me!

And so, my brethren, one after another all the fragile supports of morality can be rejected, if one does not arrive at religious faith, at the Christian dogma. And so, if there exist no other laws than those of society, nature, interest or honour, all the virtues will perish one after another because they will have no more reasons to exist. But bring in the Christian belief, the Catholic dogma: from that moment morality finds a determining motive, an unshakeable foundation.

In fact, the Catholic dogma consists wholly in the chain of these three truths: a God who resides in heaven; Jesus Christ the Son of God and His envoy to men; the Church organ and permanent interpreter of Jesus Christ on earth. Now these three truths linked to one another are the triple bundle that it is impossible to break. But touch not a single one of these truths; soon nothing would remain of the other two.

There is in heaven a God, a God good but just, a God who commands virtue and forbids vice, a God who promises virtue eternal rewards and threatens vice with eternal punishments. Here doubtless is the first reason of morality, here is the root of all obligation. But soon I perceive that this truth alone will be powerless to rule my life, to repress my inclinations. I feel that my intelligence, mastered by my passions, will picture this supreme being according to its whims; I feel that my complaisant reason, setting itself up as judge of what suits or does not suit God, will forge for Him, invent for Him a nature conformable to my will. If God does not express Himself more clearly than He does through our weakened reason, most surely God will soon be all that our own interest would have Him be, and wills it to be. Thirty centuries of idolatry are there to prove it. Corrupt man will worship his vices in his divinity, and all infamies will descend for him from the very altars before which he burns his incense. You give me God, His will, His eternal law as the principle of morality: that is surely sufficient; but at least let this God speak, let Him express Himself in a clear and positive manner!

In fact, says the Christian dogma, this God came down upon earth, He became incarnate, He dwelt among us; He left us the code of His morality, the book of His doctrine, the expression of His wills. Jesus Christ and His gospel, doubtless, here is the regulator of our life, here is the guide of all our actions. But I take this gospel, and I am not long in perceiving that, if it is abandoned into my hands, soon all the substance of this heavenly book will dissipate and be reduced to nothing. The gospel is only a dead letter; the caprice and interest of each will make its interpretation and commentary; all the evil propensities will make the gospel speak according to their good pleasure: the incredible attempts of heresy against the gospel are there to prove it. For example, on his death-bed, the monster laden with crimes will find rest of conscience in the evangelical doctrine, which will guarantee him that, if he was just at a remote period of his life, this justice always perseveres and assures him a propitious and merciful God; and the insolent security of vice will come out of the very interpretation of the book dictated to men by the God of virtues. You give me Jesus Christ, the gospel, as principle of morality: that is surely sufficient; but if God came on earth, and if He left men the gospel, let Him Himself undertake to fix its sense, to explain its thought: otherwise there will be as many different gospels as there are different passions reading it.

And in fact, says the Catholic dogma, Jesus Christ established on earth an infallible authority, a supreme tribunal charged, until the end of the ages, with interpreting the gospel. He placed His code in the hands of the Church, and He assists her with His grace that she may always explain its true sense. To her the care of settling disputes, resolving doubts, pronouncing judgments. Ah! here at last is the last and unanswerable reason of duty; here is the unshakeable foundation of morality: it is the immovable rock of Catholic dogma. Before these three authorities joined together, God, Jesus Christ, the Church, all my objections fall of

themselves: I have only to bow and obey. The gospel of God in the hands of the priest, *sacerdos Christi evangelium tenens*, [the priest holding the gospel of Christ,] yes, here is the impregnable rampart of morality and duty; I may still infringe virtue through weakness or malice, but dispute it and deny its obligation, never.

But, once again, touch not this, shake not my faith on any side; for I should know no more curb, and should no longer owe it to myself to know any. *Credidi propter quod locutus sum*: I believed, therefore I have spoken, I have acted. I believed in God my Creator, my Father and my Judge; I believed the word of Jesus Christ, His Son and His envoy; I believed in the infallible authority of the Church, organ of Jesus Christ; I believed, and I conform my conduct to my belief: *Credidi propter quod locutus sum.*

Cut off for me the authority of God and the eternal sanction of heaven and hell; or cut off Jesus Christ and His gospel; or only the Church and her interpretation which does not deceive: then I shall believe nothing but what it pleases me to believe, and consequently I shall do nothing but what it pleases me to do. Cut off the Church, I shall no longer believe the gospel; for I understand and adopt the logic of the great Augustine. It is impossible that God should have wished to cast to men an eternal firebrand of discord: if God did not establish on earth an interpreter of His word, we must say that God never spoke; if there is no Church, there is no gospel: *Evangelio non crederem nisi me Ecclesiæ commoveret auctoritas.* [I should not believe the gospel, were I not moved thereto by the authority of the Church.] Cut off the gospel, and I shall easily come to doubt God; for I understand David: *Dixit insipiens in corde suo: non est Deus*: the fool hath said in his heart: there is no God. I shall say it in my heart, but I shall say it also in my mind; powerful reasons will join with my passions to make me sceptic and atheist. For if the gospel is an imposture, if Jesus Christ is not the envoy of heaven, we must say that in heaven there is neither providence nor divinity, since most surely the first care of divinity, of providence, ought to be not to confer on falsehood so irresistible an ascendancy and so universal a success. Therefore cut off the gospel, and I shall doubt God. Doubting all truth, I shall doubt all virtue and all good, save my interest. My interest I shall seek by every possible means, *per fas et nefas*. [by right and wrong.] I shall know no other curb than fear, no other right than force. And even then, if I have come to an extreme degree, if crime is to procure me a great advantage, well! I shall know how to run the chances of the gendarme and of the scaffold. After all, here below I am in misery, prison will give me bread, and the scaffold, or at need suicide, will plunge me back into the nothingness to which I aspire to return, rather than live in opprobrium and sorrow.

This fierce language makes you shudder, my brethren, and yet this language is unhappily that of a multitude of unfortunates who surround you; and more unhappily still, this language is reasoned, it is consequent and logical in their mouth if they are unbelievers. To come to that degree of perversity which frightens you, three things suffice: 1st, not to be Catholic; 2nd, to be endowed with a certain power of logic and reasoning; 3rd, to have an interest in putting one’s actions in harmony with one’s principles. Admit these three things, and there is nothing that you ought not to fear. Among those who call themselves unbelievers, many are not truly so, and among those who are, few have the courage to be logicians, and have not on the contrary an interest in being better than their principles: happily for the human race, otherwise this earth would be uninhabitable; society, for three centuries, subsists only by precious inconsistencies. But in the end, as to the substance, the modern principle of heresy and unbelief, the principle of individual authority and the sovereignty of thought, the absence of Catholic faith, in a word, contains all the horrible consequences of which I have just spoken; and these consequences, the passions of the multitude always end by deducing.

Yes, my brethren, always the errors of a people beget its crimes; and false doctrines cannot insinuate themselves into a society without causing in the near future frightful overthrows. I dare assure you, if a false principle presented itself at first with all the hideous train of its results, the most perverse man would recoil at the sight. There would be no monster capable of introducing an evil principle if he perceived all its consequences. But in the end, once you have admitted it, you will undergo all its effects. Hope not to chain the course of ideas, imprison the march and development of things. No; once you have deposited the germ,

be sure that, warmed by the heat of the passions, it will hatch sooner or later, whatever you do to stifle its fruits.

There have been found, my brethren, in the last century, Protestants, grave, conscientious men, who devoted their whole lives to combating Voltairian unbelief. And we see, in the elevated ranks of present society, unbelievers who devote themselves to combating energetically public corruption and immorality. Such efforts are doubtless laudable. Yet, it must be said, from these zealous combatants to their adversaries there is no other distance than the road that separates a cause from its effect. From Calvin to Voltaire and from Voltaire to those men whose villainy frightened the earth, the filiation is very direct. The most recent historian of our revolutions has the courage to recognise this kinship, and the inexcusable audacity to celebrate it.[3] Yes, assuredly, from heresy to unbelief, from the Reformation to the goddess Reason, there was only one generation. The right of arbitrary interpretation led necessarily to the absolute supremacy of the human intelligence; rationalism was the son of Protestantism, and one must even be astonished that this birth was so long delayed. From unbelief to all the disorders and all the crimes of which we are witnesses, the journey was still shorter. From the anarchy of beliefs one passes naturally, logically, to the anarchy of duties and morals.

My brethren, it matters that we know it: all our evils are the product of our maxims. According to the expression of the prophet, our fathers planted bitter grapes, and the teeth of their children will long be set on edge. They sowed winds, and we have gathered tempests. To appreciate a principle, my brethren, one must not examine it too much in the state of principle; the polite world will always know how to give it a specious turn, defend it by plausible arguments. But look at it in the state of consequence; see how this coarse people undertakes to translate it into its works. Open your eyes, my brethren: these same doctrines, born in learned societies, and which our century lauded so long as they remained in high society, it is they which our century pursues and condemns today in the convict-prisons and in the streets where they show themselves in all their ugliness. How many times in sixty years would the culprit brought before the tribunal of an unbelieving moralist not have had the right to say to him: You who condemn me, consider that there is only one difference between you and me, it is that I am consistent and you are not. I am so because unhappy circumstances brought me to be so; you are not, because your social position makes it your interest not to be. Let us change places, and perhaps then I shall be cowardly enough to speak like you, and you consistent enough to act like me.

I cannot say it enough, my brethren, it is only in the name of God, of Jesus Christ and of the Church that it is possible to command conscience. When God dictated rules to His people, He gave reasons for each precept by signing it with His divine signature: *Ego Dominus*; I, the Lord. And Saint Paul preaching morality, establishing duties, takes care to say that he speaks in the Lord: *In Domino*; in Christ and in His Church: *Ego dico: in Christo et in Ecclesia.* In fact, no other authority has the right to make itself obeyed. Therefore, when we preach the dogma, when we develop the Creed, when we establish the authority of the Church, that of her head and of her pastors, it is always morality that we preach; for is it not working for morality to lay the foundations of morality? Faith and morals: so spoke our fathers; that is, the tree and the fruit, the cause and the effect, the principle and the consequence. Today it has been found more logical to invert this language; a new locution has entered the legal vocabulary and administrative drafting: *religious morality* [*la morale religieuse*]. Religious morality, my brethren, this way of speaking exhales a strong odour of heresy and indifference. Morality, they seem to insinuate, that is what is fixed, unshakeable, that is what we need in any case. As for religion, as for dogma, ah! here is the mobile and variable part. Morality through Catholicism, morality through deism, morality even through materialism if need be. Little matters the cult; the form is indifferent, provided the substance is maintained, which is morality, a sound morality.

My brethren, there are sensible men who think, who speak, who write thus. Where are we, great God? Allow me a familiar comparison. Has one ever heard these same men say to their gardener: My friend, I wish to

have grapes. Consequently you will plant what you like: vines, if you will, I permit it; but I am not exclusive: one must never be exclusive; plant, if you like, brambles, thorns, it matters little to me what tree you plant; provided you harvest fine grapes for me, that is all I need. My brethren, you laugh at this folly, and yet one would gather grapes more easily from brambles than one would gather the fruits of morality and virtue from the plants of error.

And do not object to me that one still finds solid and brilliant qualities in individuals or peoples who have deviated from the faith: I shall tell you in a few moments my whole thought in this regard. But have you not seen sometimes, my brethren, a branch detached from the tree that filled it with its sap, put forth for some time still green leaves? The child, witness of this prodigy, picks up and plants this twig on the surface of the earth, rejoicing in the thought that one day he will come to gather flowers and fruits there. But he is a child. Now, my brethren, every heretical or unbelieving society is a branch detached from the Christian tree; it carries with it a little Christian sap, it keeps for a time precious remains of this divine substance, it will therefore put forth some leaves still; but let us not be children, and let us not return, after a few days have passed, to establish beside this dried branch our puerility and inexperience.

If society, my brethren, is not to perish, if we are not on the eve of descending into barbarism, before half a century has passed the Christian faith will be reconstituted among us as the base of the whole social edifice. Experience is beginning to ripen those who govern the world, and who had too easily believed they could do without religion. They have still some bad trials to make, some half-measures to attempt; for some time yet they will make books and build systems. But they will soon have to come to recognise that the only book that can save us is the book *par excellence*, that is to say the gospel; that the only system that is on the level of the circumstances is the Catholic faith, and that the time has come to restore to it by every means its just power and its legitimate ascendancy.

We have said that, without the Christian faith, morality has not a sufficient motive; let us show that, without the grace and the Christian practices which confer it, morality has no possible accomplishment: the object of a second reflection, which will be very short.

II. It is of divine faith, my brethren, that without the grace of God, without a supernatural help, sinful man is incapable of observing even the natural law in its entirety. Shall I allege here the authority of the gospel, the judgment of the Church? What use, my brethren, since you are convinced in advance, and by your personal experience, that man left to himself cannot bear the whole burden of morality: I do not say only of the morality which the gospel teaches him, but also of the morality which the inner voice of reason prescribes to him, and the sovereign law of nature. Do we not hear the world excusing every day the most criminal passions, attributing them to the weakness of man and the difficulty of the law? When therefore, my brethren, one could suppose the existence of a code of morality, perfectly known, perfectly established, independently of the gospel and of the Christian faith, there would still remain to furnish the practical means of observing this morality.

Now here again, here above all, I challenge all human moralists to supply the means furnished by the Christian religion. Here again we need God, first source of grace, Jesus Christ who merited it for us by His blood, the Church who applies it to our souls by the sacraments. You speak to me of morality; you show me its beauty, its necessity. Good. But the means? the how? The ship is in port; you prove to me by very good reasons that it is expedient to set sail. But so long as a favourable wind does not fill the sails, the vessel will toss in vain on a sleeping sea. You have convinced me, I am grateful to you; in that you have enlightened my mind. Now it is a matter of helping me; in that you will strengthen my weak and powerless will. So long as you give me only light and not strength, I shall answer you with the poet: *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*; [I see the better and approve it, I follow the worse;] I see the good, I approve it, and yet I am drawn toward evil. There are two men in me: the man of reason, the spiritual man, you have persuaded him; the carnal man, it remains for you to sustain him. And this second help is neither the less necessary nor the less

difficult. For the spirit is willing, it is free, it seizes, it adopts truth easily; but the flesh is weak, it is repugnant, it resists virtue. While with one hand you carry the torch before my eyes, I need you to hold out the other hand to guide and steady my steps. Yes, my brethren, true morality, morality come down from heaven, must present itself on the one hand with the authority which teaches and commands, on the other with the helps and means that make it easy. Without that, morality will be only a fine theory that will never pass into practice: the precepts will sleep in books, will be developed in periods more or less sonorous; but they will not take hold of life, and will not govern the conduct of men.

Now, this is in what the Catholic Church differs essentially from all the sects and all the schools which retail maxims without ever being able to obtain acts. Beside the precept Jesus Christ placed the means; beside the tables of the law He dug and caused to spring forth the fountain of graces. The world speaks of morality, it asks us for morality. And surely, by the avowal of all, the Catholic Church teaches a morality a thousand times more perfect than all human moralities. What do I say? The only grievance that the world has ever been able to articulate against evangelical morality is that it is too perfect, that it does not condescend enough to the propensities of nature, that it is above human strength.

The Church does not deny it; so she begins by saying to her children: Left to yourselves, you are incapable of observing the law I propose to you; but with grace, you can do all things; and this grace, it depends only on you to obtain it; I have a thousand resources to make it flow into your hearts. And at once she teaches them to pray, and to ask God for the daily nourishment of the soul, which is grace, and she opens to them further the source of graces by those sanctifying channels called the sacraments. Has man just opened his eyes to the light of day? at once, by the care of the Church, his soul blossoms under the beneficent dew of baptismal grace; he is incorporated irrevocably into Jesus Christ by baptism, and henceforth, a member of the incarnate God, he will receive to the end, even without his knowing it, the divine influences of his head. Has he grown? The Church will confer on him with splendour the manly robe, and by a solemnity whose memory will perfume all the rest of life, after restoring to him all the lustre, perhaps already tarnished, of first innocence, she leads him by her maternal hand to the altars of the God who loves youth and pure hearts, she makes him sit for the first time at the divine table. And the next day she presents him to the pontiff, who, to consecrate this new phase of life that opens with adolescence, lifts his eyes to heaven, stretches out his hands, and brings down the Spirit of strength and counsel on this soul which so many dangers, assaults, temptations and trials await at the door of the temple. Later, when new bonds bring new duties for this man, the Church will have for him new blessings and new graces suited to his obligations. Even in face of death, and beside the bed of pain, the Church will still bring an assistance and supernatural alleviations against the anguishes of these last moments. And during the whole interval that separated the cradle of this man from his tomb, the Church will have purified him in the waters of penance as many times as he has prevaricated; she will have offered him, every day if need be, the bread of life and the food of the strong; she will have accustomed him to the empire of the spirit over the senses by her times of fast and abstinence; to the spirit of abnegation and sacrifice, by leading him each week to the foot of the altars where a God is immolated; to the worship of God and union with his fellows by her days of rest and her solemn pomps; finally, by a regular order of simple and sublime practices, by a succession and chain of sweet and powerful means, she will have constantly sustained his weakness and succoured his will: so that, in this violent struggle of the passions against duty which the gospel so well calls the combat of the flesh against the spirit, by means of Christian practices, only cowards succumb and perish voluntarily. Human moralists, what have you to substitute for all these means, all these helps, all these graces? What do you put in the place of prayer, that indispensable auxiliary of life, that instrument of all virtues? What feasts and what spectacles will you give men to raise their soul and inspire in them the noble sentiments of the heart, when you have suppressed worship and closed the temples, or when, by your example, you have taught them to discuss them? By what more efficacious institutions will you replace the admirable institution of Sunday, against which you blaspheme with as much passion as ignorance; the institution of Sunday which, with the salutary observances it demands, would suffice by itself

to make the most perfect morality flourish on earth? What other treasures, hitherto unknown, of help and grace for all the situations of life do you keep in reserve to supply for the sacraments? What new creation have you dreamed of to obtain all the moral consequences that result from confession; confession, that institution of Jesus Christ without which the constant and sustained practice of virtue is impossible to man as he is constituted in his present nature?

What, then! children of this age, you are astonished at the corruption that surrounds you; and at the sight of the progress, every day more and more frightening, of vice and demoralisation, you cry out at times: But what then do the priests do? Are they not the guardians and protectors of morality? Where are the results of their zeal, of their efforts?

What do the priests do? You tear from them one after another, you cease not to decry all the means that God gave them to lead men efficaciously to the difficult practice of virtue; and you ask them what they do? What do the priests do? They stand at intervals on the road of life beside beneficent fountains, to offer the feeble traveller a salutary and strengthening draught; you approach, and you violently close before their eyes these precious springs, you break the cup of salvation in their hands; and when afterwards the unfortunate pilgrim slips and falls on the arid path, you cry out: what do the priests do?

What do the priests do? They had taken this feeble being at his entrance into the world, they had clothed him with the breastplate of grace, and as he grew they had made this breastplate every day more impenetrable; suddenly you tear this adolescent from their hands, you strip him of his armour, you expose him, so weak and so vulnerable, to all the darts of vice and the passions; and when he perishes by your fault, you ask what we do.

What do the priests do? They do on earth all the good that you do not prevent them from doing; they dispense grace, and by grace the virtues, in all the souls that you do not close to them; they maintain, by the administration of the sacraments, the little morality that still subsists. And since you ask what the priests do, do not undo what they do, and you will soon recognise their work.

My brethren, the society we have before our eyes offers in this respect an evident demonstration: without the grace of God, without the practices that confer it, the accomplishment of morality is impossible. And when you see a nation that has abjured prayer, whose temples have become solitudes, whose altars are no longer surrounded by adorers, say with assurance: morality is lost in the midst of this nation; this people is gangrened with cupidity and corruption. There are no more virtues where the source of virtues is closed, where the helps offered to men by the God of virtues have fallen into abjection and contempt.

You make me an objection; I hasten to answer it before ending. We know, you tell me here again, men strangers to all religious observances, men who do not accomplish the Christian practices, and who profess an exemplary morality, who distinguish themselves by a thousand public and private virtues. I am willing to grant it, my dearly beloved brethren; but you have learned that it is reasoning ill to conclude from the particular to the general. What do you know besides whether these virtues which strike your eyes are not still the fruits of grace which has kept secret understandings in these souls; the result of certain supernatural habits of prayer, of almsgiving, preciously preserved by these imperfect Christians? But do not speak to me of others, my very dear Brother; you have not sounded the depths of their heart, nor penetrated into the inmost secret of their life.

Turn your gaze upon yourself. You are rightly honoured, esteemed by your fellow citizens. But tell me, were you not better, even in your own eyes, when you had the happiness of being faithful to the holy practices which confer grace and as it were distil virtue? Is it not true that, since you withdrew from these sacred sources, you have no longer found in yourself the strength necessary to repress all your guilty propensities, all your evil instincts? Yes, my Brother, confess it, not to me, but to yourself: your human virtue, your human holiness has at least sometimes belied itself. Just before men, you are not so in your own eyes; you know in

your life more than one ignominious page. If the domestic hearth revealed to us all it has heard! If the angel who presides over your house told us all he has seen, all he reads in your heart! There, tell me, has morality a venerated altar before which pride, jealousy, egoism, lust come to extinguish all their fires? Would you dare, such as you are, to enter into judgment with your Creator?

Now, my very dear Brother, if you who have received a learned and polished education, if you who have been treated with favour by Providence, if you who have always kept lively sparks of faith; if, I say, since you isolated yourself from the sources of grace, your foot has slipped into evil, if you have not been able to observe all the morality whose beauty you nevertheless knew, whose charms you vaunted, believe me, tell me no more that without Christian practices one can accomplish here below the whole law of duty. I assure you that the rest of men are no more privileged than you, and that the multitudes on the contrary will infallibly be lost in lamentable straying and gross disorders from which you have been preserved.

My brethren, when one has lived a little, when one has seen a little of the world, one is not long in recognising that there is nothing perfectly pure on earth save what is perfectly Christian. With the teachings of faith, with the helps of grace, one can still make passing falls, deep and deplorable falls; but without the teachings of faith and without the helps of grace, it is impossible to remain always standing, impossible not to slip on the slope of the passions. *Credo unam sanctam catholicam Ecclesiam*: [I believe in one holy Catholic Church:] I believe in the holy Catholic Church; yes, I believe in holiness in the Catholic Church; outside it I doubt all holiness, and consequently all morality constantly and delicately observed. *Quoniam tu solus sanctus*: [For Thou only art holy:] Lord Jesus, You alone are holy, You alone, and those who range themselves around You.

Do you wish then, my dearly beloved brethren, to see the fruits of public morality revive in our midst? Throw yourselves into the arms of the Church of Jesus Christ. Ask of her her teachings, which are the reason of duty; ask of her her graces, which are the means of duty. Do not separate what the founder of religion Himself united. Take the law, take the Decalogue as it is offered to you, between the Creed on which it rests as on its base and the sacred practices by means of which alone it can be reduced to action. He, and he alone, will live holily, die peacefully, present himself before the supreme Judge with confidence, who has believed the word of Jesus Christ taught by the Church, and who has quenched his thirst at the sources of the grace of Jesus Christ dispensed by the Church. It is, my brethren, the grace that I wish you.[4]

Translator's notes

1. Delivered "Monseigneur" — addressed to the bishop of Chartres, as in n° 17. Together with n° 22 and n° 23 it forms a Lenten series of 1847, previously given as instructions in 1841 (see the editor's footnote).

2. "Dixit impius in corde suo": Ps. 13:1 in the Vulgate reads *Dixit insipiens*; corrected here.

3. "Per fas et nefas," "Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor" (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VII) are the preacher's. The Augustine saying (*Contra epistolam Manichaei*) is as the preacher gives it; not verified here.

4. The historical allusion to "the most recent historian of our revolutions" is left unnamed; the preacher's claims on the Reformation–Enlightenment filiation are his own and given without comment.

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[1] This sermon and the two following, preached at the cathedral of Chartres during Lent 1847, had been given in the form of an instruction during Lent 1841. The substance of the instructions and of the sermons is the same; but the modifications are numerous. Finding it impossible to indicate them as variants at the foot of the pages, we have contented ourselves with reproducing the text of the sermons in full, as the more perfect expression of the preacher's thought. (Editor's note.)

[2] The "white plume" refers to the white plume of Henry IV at Ivry; the French *panache blanc* is the image of a rallying standard.

[3] The "most recent historian of our revolutions" is not named; no identification is asserted here.

[4] Cf. Appendix I: A, 24; p. 25, no. 32; p. 30, no. 59; p. 31, no. 40. — Avertissement, p. XXIII.

n° 22. Sermon Preached at the Cathedral of Chartres: On the Priesthood, Its Necessity and Its True Influence in Society

Preached at the cathedral of Chartres (1841 and 1847).

Erat enim docens eos sicut potestatem habens, et non sicut scribæ eorum et Pharisæi. [For He was teaching them as one having power, and not as the scribes and Pharisees.] He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes and their Pharisees. (St. Matthew 7:29.)

MONSEIGNEUR, if it is demonstrated that public morality cannot subsist without the teachings of faith and without the helps of grace, it becomes useless, it seems, to prove the indispensable necessity of the priesthood among men. Society needs virtues to flourish in its bosom; virtues flourish only on the soil of faith, made fertile by the dews of grace; and the deposit of faith and grace was entrusted by Jesus Christ to no power on earth, save to the Church and her ministers. It is to priests, and to priests alone, that Jesus Christ said: Go and teach; go and baptise. What profane magistracy will explain the gospel of Jesus Christ, and administer holy things?

If it came about, then, that a human society took pride in sufficing for itself, glorified itself for having excluded from its midst every power not exercised directly in its name, affected to proclaim that all its institutions are lay and ought to be, this society, which would seek its point of support in itself alone, would infallibly soon see public morality totter and be annihilated. And yet, it must be said, my brethren, to do without all supernatural intervention of God and of His Church, to govern and administer oneself sovereignly in the order of conscience and duty as in the order of material interests, such has not ceased to be the dream of our proud reason since the day it proudly decreed its independence. And there are found today men who believe that a certain new religion is on the eve of appearing, a wholly secular religion in which the functions of the priesthood will be retaken by society, and will be accomplished at its good pleasure and with the resources at its disposal.

In presence of so many false ideas current in the world, it seemed to me useful to speak to you today of the true character of the Catholic priesthood and the exact nature of its influence. And here are the two principal ideas on which I dwell: 1st, the priesthood has received from Jesus Christ a power that nothing on earth can supply; 2nd, the priesthood has been placed by Jesus Christ in conditions which ought to make its power pardoned. In other words, human society cannot do without the priesthood: that is my first proposition; human society has no ground to show itself jealous of the prerogatives of the priesthood: that is my second proposition.

Let us invoke the lights of the Holy Spirit through the mediation of Mary, the mother of the Priest *par excellence*. Ave Maria.

I. The world was plunged in the thickest darkness. All the passions and all the errors disputed the empire of the earth. Falsehood and vice sat in the temples and on the altars; they reigned in the schools and academies; the synagogue itself was delivered to a degenerate and corrupt priesthood, which sat in the chair of Moses and knew no longer the spirit of Moses. Pontiffs of idols and sages of the Porch, philosophers and poets, chief priests and Pharisees, all had more or less altered the deposit of fundamental truths.

And this is not, my brethren, a commonplace, a theme of banal declamations. The more one studies to the bottom the moral state of the ancient world, the more one recognises that human reason had grown obscure, and that, in losing the thread of the divine traditions, it had strayed and could no longer recognise itself in its own domain. Incapable of pronouncing in a clear and absolute manner on true and false, on good and evil, having only weak and uncertain barriers to oppose to the evil propensities of nature, philosophy could vary its maxims and take different names according to the different schools in which it was taught; but the only practical philosophy was that which flatters the senses and favours corrupt instincts.

Truth and virtue seemed to have withdrawn into the heavens, when, in the midst of the failing society, of the society tired of paradoxes and sophisms, suddenly the Son of Mary made His voice heard. At His word humanity lifted its head. Like the blind man who at last finds the light again, it never wearied of hearing the doctrine of Jesus. His discourses had an authority that convinced minds, and a grace that satisfied all hearts. Admiration, astonishment were universal: never man had spoken like this man. And what He said, and the manner in which He said it, had an equal ascendancy. For, the Evangelist tells us, He taught as one having power, and not as their scribes and Pharisees, their doctors and philosophers: *Erat enim docens eos sicut potestatem habens, et non sicut scribæ eorum et Pharisæi.* Sometimes His teachings were new teachings: *Mandatum novum*; [A new commandment;] He revealed to men mysteries they had never known; He gave them precepts, counsels they had never heard; He proclaimed beatitudes they had never suspected nor understood; He taught them to pray in terms that had never been on the lips of any adorer. A part then of His doctrine was composed of words so secret and so rare that one recognised in them a wisdom drawn from the very treasures of the divinity. At other times He contented Himself with recalling principles already taught by nature, by tradition or by philosophy; but even in this, His voice had a divine accent that it was impossible to mistake: for only a God could thus reassemble into a body of doctrine the debris of reason scattered here and there, without order, without cohesion, without utility and without practical efficacy. For some time this God Saviour went through a rather narrow province, spreading by Himself the double treasure of truth and grace. Then, having passed through the cross and the sepulchre, one day, before going up again into the heavens, He gathered, not kings nor sages, governors nor philosophers, but twelve poor artisans whom He named His Apostles: Receive, He said to them, receive the Holy Spirit: *Accipite Spiritum Sanctum.* Then go, and teach all peoples, and baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Carry to all nations until the end of the ages faith by your teaching, grace by baptism and the sacraments.

Jesus Christ had spoken; and as, at His voice, the sun in the first days of the world had darted into the heavens, whence it has never ceased to pour floods of light; so the priesthood darted into the world, sun of intelligences and hearts, to enlighten and warm them until the end of the ages by the brilliant rays of faith and the life-giving warmth of grace. See it, that star of the apostolate, which takes its flight like a giant to run its way: *Exultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam*; [He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way;] its speed is almost that of the lightning that shines at the same instant at the two extremities of the horizon: *A summo cælo egressio ejus.* [His going out is from the end of heaven.] It was only yesterday that Jesus lit this torch in the world, and already there is no one who is sheltered from its light and heat: *Nec est qui se abscondat a calore ejus.* [Neither is there any one that can hide himself from his heat.] The cross of Jesus in hand, the priesthood runs through the whole earth, it preaches and baptises: *Docete… baptizantes.*

It preaches, and as it received its mission from him who is the author and finisher of faith, as it has within it the same divine Spirit that inspired the gospel, its teaching, which comes down from heaven, subjugates, binds minds, one feels that it speaks as having power, and not as the insignificant troop of philosophers and moralists: *Erat enim docens eos sicut potestatem habens, et non sicut scribæ eorum et Pharisæi.* It preaches, and immediately after it baptises; and as it has received the power from him who contains the fullness of grace, as it baptises not only in water but in the Holy Spirit, the sacred mysteries it dispenses renew souls, touch, convert hearts, soften the most ferocious characters, civilise the most barbarous natures, tame the most cruel passions. One feels that its ministry possesses an unction, that it is endowed with an efficacy that neither judges nor doctors ever had: *Erat enim docens eos sicut potestatem habens, et non sicut scribæ eorum et Pharisæi.* It preaches and baptises; and after making martyrs, after being above all martyr itself for three centuries, the Christian priesthood renewed the face of the world. In the bath of truth and grace, in the baptism of its doctrine and its blood, it regenerated society. Then new days rise on the earth. Yesterday it was the old pagan world with all its train of infamies, that is, it was the insolent reign of the demon among men. Today it is the world conquered for Jesus Christ, that is, it is an image of heaven on earth.

My brethren, let one think a little of all the evil that the Christian priesthood destroyed, of all the good it did! Let one fix his eyes a little on this great transformation of the world, of the pagan world becoming Christian! And when one has admired this first labour, let one study next, observe, follow the action of the priesthood in society become Christian! The people were slave; the priesthood breaks their chains, assures them liberty, but a submissive liberty. Emperors and kings were tyrants, ferocious beasts; the priesthood softens and humanises them, at need it has thunders and anathemas for the tyranny of kings as for the rebellion of peoples. Woman was dishonoured and branded; the priesthood rehabilitates her; it gives back to her at once her dignity and her virtue which she had forgotten and lost in opprobrium. The poor were despised; the priesthood canonises them, and teaches them to love and honour their position. The people were ignorant; the priesthood instructs them, and the lights it gives them do not lead them by the way of abysses. One would sooner count all the stars of the sky and all the sands of the sea than count the services rendered to men by the priesthood during nearly fifteen centuries when religion marched in concert with society. Ah! why must this happy concert have been broken? why must the earth have wished to do without heaven, man to isolate himself from his God, the fatherland to break the pact it had made with the Church?

My brethren, the Catholic priesthood, which had created and founded all the modern societies, and which, in particular, in the person of the bishops, had built the French monarchy as bees build a hive; the priesthood which had made all institutions flourish for so many centuries, the priesthood suddenly became odious to men. A day came, a day of ingratitudes and apostasies, when society, nourished, fattened on the benefits of the priesthood, believed itself henceforth strong enough to do without its benefactor. Man, in the excess of his pride, persuaded himself that he no longer had need of God: *Dirumpamus vincula eorum, et projiciamus a nobis jugum ipsorum*: [Let us break their bonds asunder, and let us cast away their yoke from us:] Let us break these bonds in which the priests hold us chained, casting far from us their insupportable yoke. This, my brethren, is what has resounded for sixty years at every point of our country. To neutralise the most legitimate influence of the priesthood: this was the whole thought of the men who governed. The skill consisted then (and may it please heaven that it be no longer so) in putting God as much as possible outside affairs, in leaving to Christianity and the priesthood the merit of nothing, in supplanting all Christian institutions by new institutions due no longer to the Church but to society, and of which assuredly society would never have had the idea if Christianity had not furnished it the form and the model.

Do you wish, my brethren, that I place before your eyes some details of this war of rivalry? I consent, provided, my brethren, that you take account of the declaration I am going to make: it is that we condemn none of the institutions of our country; we find them laudable in themselves, and we are grateful to honourable and conscientious persons for the part they take in them, for the devotion they bring to them. We believe several of these institutions useful auxiliaries of religion and morality; but we affirm that they will never be able to supply the Christian spirit of which unhappily they were deprived at their origin. Let us interrogate the facts; they are in the domain of history: what was said half a century ago?

The priesthood governed men by religion, by faith; we shall govern them otherwise. We shall make for the people a religion of another kind: the religion, the cult of material interests. We shall give them books in which we shall prove to them by calculation all they will gain by losing no day of the week, by fleeing drunkenness and expense. We shall form habits for them and create for them means of saving and sobriety. We shall prove to them that, all private and public interests being well balanced, it is better to be an honest man than a disturber. Christianity established duty on dogma and conscience; we shall establish it on necessity and general requirements. Thus we shall govern men, and we shall do without God and the priesthood.

The priesthood took hold of minds by education, we shall drive it from education. We shall hold the whole of society enlaced in a learned administration all of whose threads end at a centre whence we can direct the action and conduct the movements with exactness and precision. We shall have our masters, and they will

teach our books. Every doctrine that we have not seen and approved will be struck with legal anathema; the entire generation will be thrown into the mould of our ideas as the coinage of the country is struck with the effigy of its sovereign. Thus we shall have taken possession of minds, and we shall do without God and the priesthood.

The priesthood commanded love by its beneficent institutions; we shall take these institutions from it. Henceforth it will no longer be in the name of God but in the name of society that misfortunes will be relieved. All the resources due to Christian inspirations and accumulated during a long succession of centuries re-enter the national domain, and we reserve to ourselves to dispense them at our pleasure. Is not all this skilfully concerted? What then do we lack now, and what have we to ask of the priesthood?

What you lack, O men! is what the workman lacks who has just made a statue. To man it is given to carve matter, to clothe it with forms; to the divine breath alone it belongs to inspire it with life. What you lack is that spirit of life. Jesus Christ has not stretched His divine hands over your head saying to you: *Accipite Spiritum Sanctum.* He has not descended into you, that creating and life-giving Spirit: *Spiritum sanctum et vivificantem*; and as you have Him not, you cannot spread Him over your works. So see all your creations: they are of yesterday, and already they are in danger on all sides. They go only leaning on the fragile support of statutes, chapters, sections and paragraphs; gold itself and silver are a powerless sinew; by the stiffness of their attitude, by the multiplicity of springs that set them in motion, one feels that it is an arm of flesh that fashioned them. Our priesthood on the contrary, because Jesus Christ has put the treasure of grace at its disposal, communicates life to all that it touches. The works that leave its hands are animate, and they walk of themselves. Seek not, the prophet will tell you, what is the mover of this mysterious chariot; for it is the spirit of life itself that resides in its wheels: *Spiritus vitæ erat in rotis.* What you lack, O men! Ah! many things you lack; for you lack God and His Spirit, and your spirit is far from being the Spirit of God. Singular priesthood, the one you have wished to substitute for ours, is a singular one. The priesthood founded by Jesus Christ addressed itself to the soul, raised it above this gross world, nourished it with the principles of faith, strengthened its weakness, healed its wounds by the sacraments that pour out grace. You, what do you do? you address yourselves to the flesh, to the senses, to cupidity, to egoism. We were the priests of the spirit and of eternity, you have made yourselves the priests of matter and of time; we had spiritualised man, you have materialised him; we raised his eyes toward heaven, you have glued his heart to earth. You speak to him only of money, of physical well-being, you shut him wholly within the circle of his ephemeral destiny.

And what order, great God! what peace, what virtues possible in a society where matter enslaves spirit, where interest dominates duty, where the body tyrannises over the soul, where gain is the universal motive! You take cupidity for regulator, and precisely cupidity is the principle of all disorders. You ask of the ulcer its most fetid discharges and suppurations, and you say: here is the remedy. Corruption becomes in your hands the means; and the generation issued from these maxims will be able to define itself with truth by that word of the Idumean: I have said to rottenness: “You are my mother,” and to leprosy: “it is you who gave me birth.”[1]

But, once again, that is not life; it is at most the violent throes of a desperate agony. O you who have usurped the difficult task of commanding consciences, you will do all that you will: never will cupidity beget the prodigies of devotion and the heroic sacrifices which are the fruit of divine grace. Never will a people of mercenaries be able to compare with a people of Christians. Never will the inspirations of the budget equal the inspirations of the gospel. Never will you obtain, for the instruction of childhood, for the relief of pain and of captivity, what we obtain by the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

If the Christian priesthood wants a teacher for childhood, it touches him on the brow, it pours into his soul a portion of the priestly spirit, it makes him enter into participation of its authority and its mission: *Euntes ergo, docete.* If the priesthood wants to place a sister of charity beside the bed of the sick, it pours into her an emanation of its spirit of love, it entrusts to her something of its supernatural prerogative: *Et dedit illis*

potestatem curandi infirmitates. [And gave them power to heal sicknesses.] After that, there is no more need of money, scarcely even of regulations and statutes. What use the wheels of a mechanism where life circulates? One soul is worth more than a thousand springs.

What you lack, I repeat, you lack everything, for you lack God and His Spirit. You have Him not, you cannot give Him; we, we have Him and we communicate Him to our works. So, my brethren, when one follows with the eye this rivalry of human wisdom wishing to replace the divine and supernatural virtue of the priesthood, one involuntarily recalls the magicians of Egypt contriving to do by their prestiges what Moses, the envoy of heaven, did with the omnipotence from on high. The miserable essays of their art remained far short of the prodigies of the man of God. Who then can wrestle with the Holy Spirit?

This is what certain observant minds begin to recognise. Society contains some men of practice and no longer of theory, who avow that Christianity, that the Church, that the priesthood possess a secret virtue which it has not been possible to attain. They envy, they covet above all this power of fecundity and life; they would be disposed to acquire it at any price, to buy it at the weight of gold.

Hear this narrative of the Acts of the Apostles: There was a certain Simon, a celebrated charlatan, who had seduced the whole country of Samaria. He had fascinated all eyes by his enchantments; all listened to him from the first to the last, and said: He is the great power of God. This Simon, having seen the prodigies wrought by the Apostles, the dead raised, the paralytics and lame healed, felt himself vanquished; the signs and miracles excited his admiration and also his envy. He goes therefore to find the Apostles, and offers them a sum of money, saying: Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands they may receive the Holy Spirit. But Peter answers him: Keep your money to perish with you, since you thought that the gift of God could be acquired at the price of money. You have no part, no right in this ministry. Do penance for the wicked thought you have conceived. For I see that you are “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

My brethren, what Peter said to this celebrated charlatan, the Church of Jesus Christ would have to say to these new Simons, who would borrow, buy, arrogate to themselves the virtue of our priesthood, without undergoing its obligations or its burdens, quite ready to turn against God and the Church the gift they would have received from them.

I hear it said on all sides that a rapprochement is taking place of society toward Christian ideas and practices. I believe it firmly, and precious proofs of it exist; but let us avow that much is still lacking to this rapprochement: *Video te esse in felle amaritudinis, et in vinculo iniquitatis.* [For I see thee to be in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.] There will still be much venom in society. After having branded with a long and guilty contempt religion and the priesthood, after having dragged in the mud all that was an object of worship and homage, human pride recognises that it has led us to the edge of the abysses, that we must go back or perish. And behold it cries: Religion! religion! like a man in distress crying: help!

Human power perceives that it is overflowed, that the earth trembles under its feet, that public order totters, that property is compromised, and it calls the gospel to its aid, but still making conditions with it. Society wants all the benefits of religion and the priesthood, but it does not want their influence. And if the priesthood takes too seriously the call that society makes upon it, the latter is suddenly alarmed. Nothing would frighten this poor sick one like the visible and avowed presence of the physician; she would like to be delivered from the evil that gnaws her, but before all she has horror of the remedy. Present society wishes to owe to the gospel only what it absolutely cannot procure without it. Since this is indispensable, let us leave a small part to the priesthood, a little religion, a little God and Jesus Christ, but nothing more. My brethren, hear this apologue:

A man possessed a vast garden in the finest and happiest exposure. The sun, with its life-giving warmth, fertilised the germs there, developed the plants, made the flowers bloom, ripened the fruits. This single cause

sufficed for all these effects and produced them as if without thinking. For a long time this man gathered the finest fruits of the whole country. But one day he reflected within himself, and said to himself: Why then shall I leave to the sun all the merit, all the glory of this beautiful vegetation? Can I not do without him, and owe nothing but to myself? Truly yes, I shall do without him. And at once he has a vast hothouse built, and transports between these four walls, far from the rays of the sun, all his plants and all his trees. Then he puts into work all the progress of industry, all the discoveries of the arts; he creates an artificial atmosphere, he invents spring rains and summer breezes, morning dews and evening vapours. But behold that, in spite of all his care, in spite of a thousand ingenious processes, behold that everything is dying. What to do? What to do? Well then! since the sun is a condition of life, he must needs be given a little. He makes an opening, and lets some rays penetrate, which he causes to pass through several artificial media: and by this means, with much trouble and expense, he obtains a small vegetation such as it is, and he is satisfied.

But, you say to him, put all this cultivation back in the open air; do not take so much useless trouble; the sun alone will effect all these various results for which you have to employ a thousand little supplementary means; he will give the germs their fecundity, the leaves their greenness, the flowers their brilliance, the fruits their savour and ripeness. — No, no, he answers you, I would renounce everything rather than yield to the despotism of this star which wishes to be necessary, and pretends to do everything by itself alone.

My brethren, do you know in what country of the world the thing happened? Alas! it is among ourselves. Brilliant sun that illumined all the intelligences and warmed all the hearts, Christianity, by its salutary influence and by the thousand rays of its priesthood, alone vivified all the parts of the social body. This great cause produced without effort innumerable effects, spreading at once on men all the goods of nature and all those of grace, all the riches of time and of eternity; raising childhood, feeding the poor, softening the rich, relieving subjects, strengthening kings, pacifying the earth and peopling the heavens. But society wearied of so many favours; it blushed to owe them to God and to the Church, it resolved to withdraw itself from the gospel and the priesthood. In a short time the work was consummated, a great people was wholly secularised, the law was all profane and the State all lay.

During this short interval when religion was no longer counted for anything, and when man wished to suffice for himself, society begot each day more laws, decrees, regulations, circulars and ordinances than all the founders of empires had made since the origin of the world. The mechanism grew more complicated every day and ran only the worse. And soon, seeing that it was perishing, feeling that its life was at stake, society was forced to consent to let slip into its bosom some attenuated rays of that sun which it had wished to banish from the horizon. It gave a place to religion among the thousand other wheels of the machine. For example, the Brother of the Christian Schools and the Sister of Charity were enveloped in the official frames; society gave them a patent and a diploma, so that it should be in its name as much as in the name of God that they accomplished their sacred ministry. The priest was admitted, by means of a mission from human powers, to make some breath of the divine virtue penetrate into asylums otherwise given over to a thousand impure exhalations. By this means things go after a fashion. The pretension of men is satisfied. We live, or at least we vegetate; and we do very nearly without God: that was all we wanted.

But then frankly let the sun of Catholic institutions illuminate and fertilise the social body with the rays of truth and the fire of grace. — No, no. Rather nothing than that. *Nolumus hunc regnare super nos.* [We will not have this man to reign over us.] The Christian priesthood is a despot who would do without us, and who would do almost everything alone. Rather all evils without it than all goods through it and with it. This, my brethren, this is the way of thinking, this is the depth of the soul of many men of our day. They would rather see society perish than let religion exercise the legitimate influence God has given it. They cannot contain their jealousy on seeing the signs and prodigies that are wrought by the hands of the priesthood. The brilliance of this star hurts their envious eyelids. It is indeed ill, in fact, that God has thus made Himself necessary, and has not made His creature powerful enough to do without Him! But here, my brethren, see in

a few words how little society is justified in showing itself thus jealous and enemy of the prerogatives of the Catholic priesthood. I shall not develop this second proposition; I shall only indicate its proofs.

II. If the priesthood exercised its august functions in its own name, and not in the name of God; if this glorious ministry were the exclusive apanage of a privileged condition; finally if the spiritual power with which it is invested were without tempering and without corrective, ah! I could understand the jealousy of men. But it is not so, you know it, my brethren.

The priesthood presents itself to men, not in its own name, but in the name of God and of Jesus Christ His Son. The priest is not a sovereign; he is only an ambassador: *Pro Christo ergo legatione fungimur*. [For Christ therefore we are ambassadors.] If he speaks, it is because he is the envoy of the King his master. He has received from heaven the truths he announces. The favours he dispenses, he is only the channel of them. Whether he teaches, or baptises, or binds, or looses, it is in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. His person, the priest willingly makes the abandonment of it, or at least he ought to. But as the master he represents must be known and glorified, this is why the priest maintains and defends his dignity of ambassador. For the rest, he exercises here below no other rights than those of his master. My kingdom is not of this world, said Jesus Christ; and the priest of Jesus Christ occupies himself with the things of this world only in their relation to the interests of souls. Reserve then, O men, reserve your jealousy for the charges and dignities of the age which are exercised with domination, which assure power, fortune, goods, honours, and do not look with an envious eye on those who proclaim loudly that they are nothing by themselves, that they have a right to nothing, and that all their ambition is to procure the glory of God and the eternal felicity of their fellows. Besides, if this mission seems to you beautiful and noble; if you find that, even in the eyes of men, it imprints on the brow of those honoured with it a ray of glory, an aureole of consideration; if it seems to you that the even temporal advantages attached to this career are not to be disdained, well! the door of the sanctuary is open to all. The priesthood of the new law is not, like that of the Jewish law, reserved to a tribe distinct from the others; it is not, as among the pagans or among certain schismatic nations, the exclusive apanage of a privileged caste, the hereditary benefice of some opulent families. The priesthood of Jesus Christ is a common good in which all can claim their share, from the instant they make themselves worthy. The divine Saviour entrusted it by preference to the poor, and the spirit of the Church has not varied in this regard. In all times, and even when the lure of the goods of this world attracted the crowd of the rich into her bosom, she never ceased to admit the humblest conditions.

The language of the Council of Trent is remarkable, and one feels in it all the vigour of the primitive doctrine. It concerns the nurseries of the priesthood: *Pauperum autem filios præcipue eligi vult sancta Synodus, nec tamen divitum excludit.* [The holy Synod wills that the sons of the poor be chiefly chosen, yet does not exclude those of the rich.][2] Exclusion is not given to the rich, but the priesthood must be recruited principally among the poor: the Church wills it so. The priesthood is therefore an inheritance open to all, and the patrimony of Christians of all classes and all ranks. If then you are envious of its rights, instead of irritating yourselves against it, an easy means presents itself to give yourselves satisfaction. Make yourselves priests; who prevents you? Make your children priests. Infallibly some of them have received this vocation; far from fighting it, second it. But no; you would like to have the divine virtue of the priest without having his character; you would like his rights, and you do not want his duties; you would like to tear from him his influence, and leave him his sacrifices and his immolation. That is impossible. And it is here above all that you will understand that the priesthood has been placed by Jesus Christ in conditions which ought to make its power pardoned.

Yes, doubtless, my brethren, God has conferred on us great, incomparable powers; He has given us jurisdiction over the mind, the government of souls. Here certainly is a ministry that could swell our vanity and make us lift up our head. But here is an admirable economy. I avow it, every power on earth, even a supernatural and divine power, from the moment it is exercised by men, needs to be tempered; the priestly

power like the others, more than the others perhaps, for it is immense, it would be intoxicating. Where then will it be placed, this counterweight, this corrective of the high power of the priest? It will be, my brethren, in all the evil passions of the human race, incessantly occupied in watching, in controlling the life and actions of the priest. Hear the divine Saviour at the moment when He gives the investiture to His disciples: “Go and teach,” He says to them; then He adds: “The disciple shall not be treated otherwise than his master; they will persecute you as they persecuted Me; you will be an object of hatred to men on account of My name.”

So, to save the world and nevertheless to endure everything from the world, such is the double mission of the priest. To preach is our right; to suffer is our duty. That was the whole life of Jesus Christ, redeemer and doctor, light of the world and victim of the world. And if you read the history of the Christian Church, it is nothing else than the history of the suffering priesthood, teaching, bearing salvation to men and receiving from men malediction and outrage. And today, after eighteen centuries, we may flatter ourselves that if on the one hand our virtue of teaching and our power for the good of the world are as strong as at the moment when Jesus Christ communicated them to His apostles, on the other hand the hatred of the world has come down to us according to the whole fullness of the promises of the Saviour. I affirm it therefore: the jealousy and rivalry of the men of the age is not founded against a ministry which, independently of the spirit that animates it, carries with it so severe compensations, and is bought at the condition of so many duties and sacrifices.

Know it nevertheless, my brethren, we are far from complaining of our lot; and although we inherited the priesthood in evil and difficult days, our portion has never ceased to be, in our eyes, consoling and magnificent. What matter to us the contempt and pity of the world, provided we can save the world? These blind hatreds are a homage rendered to our priesthood, because they are the accomplishment of the word of Jesus Christ. We should not be the disciples of the divine Master if we were treated otherwise than He. That the world should disdain us, we expect it; and we resign ourselves to it easily, provided we can still bear ourselves this witness that the grace of God is not sterile in our hands! Now, my brethren, when we see all the virtues that still remain on earth, and from what source these virtues flow; when we see at what hearth all the noble sentiments come to be lit and warmed; when we see whence the inspirations of purity and innocence proceed, by what dews the solitudes are made fertile that are peopled with angels and the deserts that are covered with flowers; when we see to which side all upright hearts turn, to what arms weakness goes to ask support, under what aegis youth goes to shelter, on what lips suffering goes to seek consolation, to what confidants penitence carries its avowals and tears, into what hands the dying want in some sort to put their soul; when we see these things, yes, my brethren, we are still and we have reason to be proud of our priesthood, around which all that is honourable and pure on earth still comes to range itself, as around its principle and its centre. Let the age, which disdains us, imitate then the signs and prodigies of our apostolate! Let them cite us a life without stain, an eminent virtue that was not the work of divine grace dispensed by the priesthood!

Do you hear, around this coffin which makes its way to the grave, a concert of universal praises resounding?[3] She who has just fallen asleep, you are told, did not belong to the earth; she was an angel of heaven; gentleness had made its dwelling on her brow; goodness was imprinted in all her features; compassion and indulgence were born and had grown with her. What misery ever presented itself to her eyes without her entrails being moved! Her hands opened widely like her heart, and her feet were never slow to second her zeal; to give made all her joy. The tranquil peace of her soul spread around her and produced an ineffable impression. In evil days, her distress became the providence of several grateful families; the treasures of her heart, at least, were always inexhaustible. Near her one felt better. She was the delight of her own, who were so many emulators of her qualities. Under her modest roof, where all the virtues were sisters, several centuries of beneficence passed at once. Her last inspirations were inspirations of charity; her last word a wish for the relief of a misfortune. She saw her end approach without fright, and did not refuse to death the

same smile she always granted with so much grace. Her passing is wept as a public calamity. The whole city tells her benefactions and her alms; the poor surround her tomb showing the tunics and garments she made for them; the assembly of Christians is unanimous in proclaiming her holiness; no one can doubt that her soul has been received in the bosom of the God whom she so often fed, clothed, relieved in the poor; and on the stone that covers her mortal remains the gospel asks to write the words of Jesus Christ: Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land; blessed are the peacemakers, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the clean of heart!

Now, my brethren, this existence all of charity, I invoke it as a proof of the religion which inspired and sustained it, as a witness, as an unanswerable deposition in favour of the source from which it flowed. The principle of so many virtues, ask it of this temple where she was so assiduous and which will long regret her empty place, of this pulpit whose accents she came so faithfully to gather, of this holy table at which she sat with so much piety, of these altars covered with her gifts, of this throne of Mary before which she spent hours always too swift for her liking; ask it of this illustrious pontiff who wished to bless her coffin, pastor afflicted at having lost the sweetest sheep of his flock.

Is it in the vague maxims of the age, or in the principles of the faith we teach, in the helps of grace we distribute, that such souls go to draw their heroic perfection? Ah! let our priesthood be pursued no more with unjust mistrust; let its action not be suspect, let its influence not be measured with suspicious precautions! Let it be given to us to restore peace to souls, to make virtue flourish in hearts; let us be permitted to proclaim loudly in the midst of peoples the only truly conservative principles, the Christian principles which make nations steadfast, which give peace and prosperity to our fatherland on earth, and which prepare tribes of elect for our fatherland in heaven![4]

Translator’s notes

1. The “Idumean” quotation, the Simon Magus narrative (Acts 8), the council of Trent text (sess. 23, ch. 18) and the Gospel parallels (Matt. 28:19; 10:17–25; John 20:22; Luke 9:1) are the preacher’s. The apologue of the sun and the hothouse is his own.

2. The portrait of the “angel” whose coffin is followed is, by the editor’s footnote, a tribute to Madame the baroness de Coussay (death of the benefactress of the poor). The pastor-pontiff who blessed her coffin is the bishop of Chartres; the editor’s identification of the lady is not verified here.

3. “Inspirations du barème” (translated “inspirations of the budget”) — *barème* is a table of scales or rates; the sense is “calculations of the ready-reckoner”.

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[1] The words are the preacher’s adaptation of Job 17:14 (“I have said to rottenness: Thou art my father; to the worms, My mother and my sister”); “the Idumean” is Job, whom tradition placed in the land of Hus/Edom. The rendering “leprosy” is as printed.

[2] Trent, Session 23, *De reformatione*, ch. 18 (on seminaries), as the context shows; the wording is given as the preacher quotes it.

[3] Cf. *Histoire du cardinal Pie*, vol. 1, p. 174: Death of Madame the Baroness de Coussay, the mother of the poor and of orphans. (Editor’s note.)

[4] Cf. Appendix I: A, 28; AB, 39, 44; p. 25, n. 33; p. 31, n° 6°.

n° 23. Sermon Preached at the Cathedral of Chartres: On Doctrinal Intolerance

Preached at the cathedral of Chartres (1841 and 1847).

Unus Dominus, una fides, unum baptisma. [One Lord, one faith, one baptism.] There is but one Lord, one faith, one baptism. (St. Paul to the Ephesians 4:5.)

MONSEIGNEUR, a sage has said that the actions of man are the daughters of his thought, and we have ourselves established that all the goods as all the evils of a society are the fruit of the maxims, good or bad,

which it professes. Truth in the mind and virtue in the heart are things which correspond almost inseparably; when the mind is delivered to the demon of falsehood, the heart, unless the obsession began with it, is very near delivering itself to the demon of vice. Intelligence and will are two sisters between whom seduction is contagious; if you see that the first has abandoned itself to error, cast a veil over the honour of the second.

It is because it is so, my brethren, because there is no blow, no lesion in the intellectual order that does not have fatal consequences in the moral order and even in the material order, that we apply ourselves to combat evil in its principle, to dry it up at its source, that is to say in ideas. A thousand prejudices are accredited in our midst: sophism, astonished to hear itself attacked, invokes prescription; paradox flatters itself that it has acquired the right of citizenship and burgessship. Christians themselves, living in the midst of this impure atmosphere, do not avoid all its contagion; they accept too easily many errors. Tired of resisting on essential points, often, war-weary, they yield on other points which seem to them less important, and they do not always perceive, and sometimes do not wish to perceive, how far they could be led by their imprudent weakness. In the midst of this confusion of ideas and false opinions, it is for us, priests of incorruptible truth, to throw ourselves across the way, and to protest by gesture and voice; happy if the rigid inflexibility of our teaching can stop the overflow of falsehood, dethrone erroneous principles which reign proudly in minds, correct fatal axioms which already take authority from the sanction of time, enlighten finally and purify a society which threatens to sink, as it ages, into a chaos of darkness and disorder in which it would no longer be possible for it to distinguish the nature and still less the remedy of its ills.

Our age cries: Tolerance! tolerance! It is agreed that a priest must be tolerant, that religion must be tolerant. My brethren, in all things nothing equals frankness; and I come to tell you without detour that there exists in the world only one society which possesses the truth, and that this society must necessarily be intolerant. But, before entering on the matter, to understand each other well, let us distinguish things, agree on the sense of words and confuse nothing.

Tolerance can be either civil or theological; the first is not in our province, I allow myself only a word in this regard. If the law means to say that it permits all religions because in its eyes they are all equally good, or even because the public power is incompetent to take a side in this matter, the law is impious and atheist; it professes, no longer the civil tolerance as we are going to define it, but dogmatic tolerance, and, by a criminal neutrality, it justifies in individuals the most absolute religious indifference. On the contrary, if, recognising that one religion alone is good, it supports and permits only the tranquil exercise of the others, the law in this, as has been observed before me, can be wise and necessary according to the circumstances. If there are times when one must say with the famous constable: One faith, one law; there are others when one must say as Fénelon to the son of James II: “Grant to all civil tolerance, not by approving everything as indifferent, but by suffering with patience what God suffers.”[1] But I leave aside this field bristling with difficulties, and, attaching myself to the properly religious and theological question, I shall set out these two principles:

1st. The religion that comes from heaven is truth, and it is intolerant toward doctrines.

2nd. The religion that comes from heaven is charity, and it is full of tolerance toward persons.

Let us pray Mary to come to our aid, and to invoke for us the Spirit of truth and charity: *Spiritum veritatis et pacis.* Ave Maria.

I. It is of the essence of all truth not to tolerate the contradictory principle. The affirmation of a thing excludes the negation of that same thing, as light excludes darkness. Where nothing is certain, where nothing is defined, sentiments can be divided, opinions can vary. I understand and I ask liberty in doubtful things: *In dubiis libertas.* [In doubtful things, liberty.] But as soon as truth presents itself with the certain characters that distinguish it, by the very fact that it is truth, it is positive, it is necessary, and consequently it is one and intolerant: *In necessariis unitas.* [In necessary things, unity.] To condemn truth to tolerance is to force it to suicide. Affirmation kills itself if it doubts itself; and it doubts itself if it lets negation place itself

indifferently beside it. For truth, intolerance is care of preservation, it is the legitimate exercise of the right of property. When one possesses, one must defend, on pain of being soon entirely despoiled.

So, my brethren, by the very necessity of things, intolerance is everywhere, because everywhere there is good and evil, true and false, order and disorder; everywhere the true does not bear the false, the good excludes evil, order combats disorder. What is more intolerant, for example, than this proposition: 2 and 2 make 4? If you come to tell me that 2 and 2 make 3, or that 2 and 2 make 5, I answer you that 2 and 2 make 4. And if you tell me that you do not contest my way of reckoning, but that you keep yours, and that you ask me to be as indulgent toward you as you are toward me; while remaining convinced that I am right and you wrong, strictly I may keep silent, because after all it matters little to me that there be on the earth one man for whom 2 and 2 make 3 or 5.

On a certain number of questions, where truth would be less absolute, where the consequences would be less grave, I could to a certain point compound with you. I shall be conciliating if you speak to me of literature, politics, art, agreeable sciences, because in all these things there is not a unique and determinate type. There the beautiful and the true are, more or less, conventions; and, moreover, heresy in this matter incurs no other anathemas than those of common sense and good taste. But if it is a question of religious truth, taught or revealed by God Himself; if it concerns your eternal future and the salvation of my soul, from that moment no transaction is possible. You will find me unshakeable, and I must be so. It is the condition of every truth to be intolerant; but religious truth being the most absolute and the most important of all truths, is consequently also the most intolerant and the most exclusive.

My brethren, nothing is exclusive like unity. Now, hear the word of Saint Paul: *Unus Dominus, una fides, unum baptisma.* There is in heaven only one Lord: *Unus Dominus.* This God, whose unity is the great attribute, has given the earth only one Creed, one doctrine, one faith: *Una fides.* And this faith, this Creed, He has entrusted only to one visible society, to one Church all of whose children are marked with the same seal and regenerated by the same grace: *Unum baptisma.* Thus the divine unity, which resides from all eternity in the splendours of glory, has produced itself on earth by the unity of the evangelical dogma, whose deposit was given in keeping by Jesus Christ to the hierarchical unity of the priesthood: One God, one faith, one Church: *Unus Dominus, una fides, unum baptisma.*

An English pastor had the courage to write a book on the tolerance of Jesus Christ, and the philosopher of Geneva said, speaking of the Saviour of men: “I do not see that my divine Master subtilised on dogma.” Nothing is more true, my brethren: Jesus Christ did not subtilise on dogma. He brought men the truth, and He said:

If anyone is not baptised in water and the Holy Spirit; if anyone refuses to eat My flesh and drink My blood, he will have no part in My kingdom. I avow it, there is no subtlety in that; it is intolerance, the most positive, the most frank exclusion. And again, Jesus Christ sent His Apostles to preach to all nations, that is, to overturn all existing religions, to establish the one Christian religion over the whole earth, and to substitute the unity of Catholic dogma for all the beliefs received among the different peoples. And foreseeing the movements and divisions that this doctrine will excite on earth, He is not stopped, and He declares that He came to bring not peace but the sword, to kindle war not only between peoples but in the bosom of one same family, and to separate, as to convictions at least, the believing wife from the unbelieving husband, the Christian son-in-law from the idolatrous father-in-law. The thing is true, and the philosopher is right: Jesus Christ did not subtilise on dogma.

The same sophist says elsewhere to his Émile: “I, I do like Saint Paul, and I place charity well above faith. I think that the essential of religion consists in practice, that not only must one be a man of goodness, humane and charitable, but that whoever is truly such believes enough to be saved, no matter what religion he professes.” Here certainly, my brethren, is a fine commentary on Saint Paul, who says, for example, that

without faith it is impossible to please God; on Saint Paul who declares that Jesus Christ is not divided, that in Him there is not Yes and No, but only Yes; on Saint Paul who affirms that if, by impossibility, an angel came to evangelise a doctrine other than the apostolic doctrine, we should have to say to him anathema. Saint Paul, apostle of tolerance! Saint Paul who goes along pulling down every proud science that rises against Jesus Christ, reducing all intelligences under the servitude of Jesus Christ.[2]

People have spoken of the tolerance of the first centuries, of the tolerance of the Apostles. My brethren, one does not think; but the establishment of the Christian religion was on the contrary an eminent work of religious intolerance. At the moment of the preaching of the Apostles, the whole universe possessed nearly that much-vaunted dogmatic tolerance. As all religions were equally false and equally unreasonable, they did not make war on each other; as all the gods were of equal worth among themselves, they were so many demons, they were not exclusive, they tolerated each other: Satan is not divided against himself. Rome, in multiplying her conquests, multiplied her divinities; and the study of her mythology grew complicated in the same proportion as that of her geography. The triumpher who went up to the Capitol made the conquered gods march before him with still more pride than he dragged vanquished kings in his train. Most often, by virtue of a senatus-consultum, the idols of the Barbarians were henceforth merged in the domain of the fatherland, and the national Olympus grew as the empire did.

Christianity, at the moment of its appearance (mark this, my brethren, these are historical views of some value in relation to the present question), Christianity, at its first appearance, was not at once repulsed. Paganism asked itself whether, instead of combating this new religion, it should not give it access to its bosom. Judea had become a Roman province; Rome, accustomed to receiving and conciliating all religions, welcomed at first without too much fright the worship that came out of Judea. An emperor placed Jesus Christ as well as Abraham among the divinities of his oratory, as another Caesar was later seen to propose to render Him solemn homage.[3] But the word of the prophet was not long in verifying itself: the multitudes of idols, who usually saw without jealousy new and foreign gods come to place themselves beside them, at the arrival of the God of the Christians suddenly uttered a cry of fright, and, shaking their tranquil dust, trembled on their threatened altars: *Ecce Dominus ascendit, et commovebuntur simulacra a facie ejus.* [Behold the Lord shall ascend, and the idols shall be moved at His presence.] Rome was attentive to this spectacle. And soon, when it was perceived that this new God was the irreconcilable enemy of the other gods; when it was seen that the Christians whose worship had been admitted did not wish to admit the worship of the nation; in a word, when the intolerant spirit of the Christian faith had been ascertained, it was then that persecution began.

Hear how the historians of the time justify the tortures of the Christians: they say no evil of their religion, their God, their Christ, their practices; it was only later that calumnies were invented. They reproach them only with being unable to suffer any other religion than their own. “I did not doubt, says Pliny the Younger, whatever their dogma might be, that their stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy must be punished: *Pervicaciam et inflexibilem obstinationem.*” These are not criminals, says Tacitus, but they are intolerants, misanthropes, enemies of the human race. There is among them an obstinate faith in their principles, and an exclusive faith which condemns the beliefs of all other peoples: *Apud ipsos fides obstinata, sed adversus omnes alios hostile odium.* The pagans say of Christians in general what Celsus said of the Jews, with whom they were long confused because Christian doctrine had been born in Judea: “That these men adhere inviolably to their laws, said this sophist, I do not blame them; I blame only those who abandon the religion of their fathers to embrace a different one! But if the Jews or the Christians wish to give themselves the airs of a wisdom more sublime than that of the rest of the world, I shall say that it should not be believed that they are more agreeable to God than the others.”[4]

So, my brethren, the principal grievance against the Christians was the too absolute rigidity of their Creed, and, as was said, the unsociable humour of their theology. Had it been only one God more, there would have

been no complaints; but it was an incompatible God who drove out all the others: this is why persecution. Thus the establishment of the Church was a work of dogmatic intolerance. All the history of the Church is likewise only the history of this intolerance. What are the martyrs? intolerants in matter of faith, who prefer tortures to professing error. What are the Creeds? formulas of intolerance, which regulate what is to be believed and impose on reason necessary mysteries. What is the Papacy? an institution of doctrinal intolerance, which by hierarchical unity maintains the unity of faith. Why the councils? to stop the divagations of thought, condemn false interpretations of dogma, anathematise propositions contrary to faith.

We are then intolerant, exclusive in matter of doctrine: we make profession of it; we are proud of it. If we were not, it would be that we had not the truth, since truth is one, and consequently intolerant. Daughter of heaven, the Christian religion, in coming down to earth, produced the titles of her origin; she offered to the examination of reason incontestable facts, which irrefragably prove her divinity. Now, if she comes from God, if Jesus Christ, her author, could say: I am the truth: *Ego sum veritas*; it must by an inevitable consequence be that the Christian Church preserves incorruptibly this truth as she received it from heaven itself; it must be that she repels, that she excludes all that is contrary to this truth, all that would destroy it. To reproach the Catholic Church with her dogmatic intolerance, her absolute affirmation in matter of doctrine, is to address to her a very honourable reproach. It is to reproach the sentinel with being too faithful and too vigilant; it is to reproach the spouse with being too delicate and too exclusive.

We tolerate you well, say sometimes those sects to the Church, why then do you not tolerate us? My brethren, it is as if slaves said to the lawful wife: We bear with you well, why be more exclusive than we? The foreign women bear with the wife, that is a great favour, truly; and the wife is very unreasonable to pretend alone to rights and privileges, of which one is willing to leave her a share, at least until one succeeds in banishing her altogether!

“See then this intolerance of the Catholics!” is often said around us: “they cannot suffer any other Church than their own; the Protestants suffer them well!” My brethren, you were in tranquil possession of your house and your estate; armed men rush into it; they seize your bed, your table, your money, in a word they establish themselves in your home, but they do not drive you out of it, they push condescension to the point of leaving you your share. What have you to complain of? You are very exacting not to be content with the common right! The Protestants say indeed that one can be saved in your Church; why do you pretend that one cannot be saved in theirs? My brethren, let us transport ourselves to one of the squares of this city. A traveller asks me the road that leads to the capital; I teach it to him. Then one of my fellow citizens approaches and says to me: I admit that this road leads to Paris, I grant you that; but you owe me reciprocal regard, and you will not contest that this other road, the road to Bordeaux for example, leads equally to Paris.

In truth, this road to Paris would be very intolerant and very exclusive not to wish that a road directly opposed to it lead to the same end. It has not a conciliating spirit; how far do encroachment and fanaticism not creep! My brethren, and I could yield still, for the most opposed roads might end by meeting perhaps, after going round the globe, whereas one would follow the way of error eternally without ever arriving at heaven. Ask us then no more why, when Protestants avow that one can be saved in our religion, we refuse to recognise that, generally speaking and apart from the case of good faith and invincible ignorance, one can be saved in theirs. The thorns can avow that the vine gives grapes, without the vine being bound to recognise the same property in the thorns.

My brethren, we are often confounded by what we hear said on all these questions by people sensible otherwise. Logic fails them entirely as soon as religion is concerned. Is it passion, is it prejudice that blinds them? It is both. At bottom, the passions know well what they want when they seek to shake the foundations of faith, to place religion among things without consistence. They are not ignorant that in demolishing dogma they prepare for themselves an easy morality. It has been said with perfect justice: it is the Decalogue rather than the Creed that makes unbelievers. If all religions can be put on the same rank, it is that they are all worth

the same; if all are true, it is that all are false; if all the gods tolerate each other, it is that there is no God. And when one has been able to reach that, there remains no very troublesome morality. How many consciences would be tranquil, the day when the Catholic Church gave the fraternal kiss to all the sects, her rivals! The indifference of religions is then a system which has its roots in the passions of the human heart. But it must also be said that, for many men of our century, it holds to the prejudices of education. Indeed, either it is a question of those men, already advanced in years, who sucked the milk of the preceding generation, or of those who belong to the new generation. The first sought the philosophic and religious spirit in the *Émile* of Jean-Jacques; the others, in the eclectic or progressive school of those half-Protestants and half-rationalists who today hold the sceptre of teaching. Jean-Jacques was among us the apologist and propagator of this system of religious tolerance. The invention does not belong to him, although he audaciously outbid paganism, which never pushed indifference so far. Here, with a short commentary, are the principal points of the Genevan catechism, unhappily become popular: All religions are good; that is to say, otherwise for the Frenchman, all religions are bad. One must practise the religion of one's country; that is to say that truth in religious matters depends on the degree of longitude and latitude: truth this side the mountains, falsehood beyond the mountains. Consequently, what is still more grave, one must either have no sincere religion and play the hypocrite everywhere, or, if one has a religion at the bottom of the heart, make oneself apostate and renegade when circumstances require. The wife must profess the same religion as her husband, and the children the same religion as their father; that is to say that what was false and bad before the marriage contract must be true and good after, and that it would be wrong for the children of cannibals to depart from the estimable practices of their parents![5]

But I hear you tell me that the century of the *Encyclopédie* is past, that a longer refutation would be an anachronism. Very well; let us close the book of *Education*. Let us open in its place the learned *Essays* which are as it were the common source from which the philosophy of the nineteenth century spreads by a thousand faithful channels over the whole surface of our country. This philosophy is called eclectic, syncretic, and, with a slight modification, it is also called progressive. This fine system consists in saying that there is nothing false; that all opinions and all religions can be conciliated; that error is not possible to man unless he strip humanity; that all the error of men consists in believing they possess exclusively all the truth, when each of them holds only a link, and that from the union of all these links the whole chain of truth must be formed. Thus, according to this incredible theory, there are no false religions, but they are all incomplete one without the other. The true religion would be the religion of syncretic and progressive eclecticism, which would gather all the others, past, present and to come: all the others, that is, natural religion which recognises a God; atheism which knows none; pantheism which recognises Him in everything and everywhere; spiritualism which believes in the soul, and materialism which believes only in flesh, blood and humours; the evangelical societies which admit a revelation, and rationalist deism which rejects it; Christianity which believes the Messiah come, and Judaism which still awaits Him; Catholicism which obeys the Pope, and Protestantism which regards the Pope as Antichrist. All that is reconcilable; they are different aspects of the truth. From the ensemble of these cults will result a wider, a vaster cult, the great cult truly catholic, that is, universal, since it will enclose all the others in its bosom.[6]

My brethren, this doctrine, which you have all qualified as absurd, is not of my creation; it fills thousands of volumes and recent publications; and, without the substance ever varying, it takes every day new forms under the pen and on the lips of the men in whose hands rest the destinies of France. To what point of folly have we then come? We have come, my brethren, to where he must logically come who does not admit this incontestable principle which we have established, namely: that truth is one, and consequently intolerant, exclusive of every doctrine which is not its own. And, to gather in a few words all the substance of this first part of my discourse, I shall say to you: You seek truth on earth, seek the intolerant Church. All errors can make mutual concessions to each other; they are near relatives, since they have a common father: *Vos ex patre diabolo estis.* [You are of your father the devil.] Truth, daughter of heaven, is the only one that does not

capitulate.

O you then who wish to judge this great cause, appropriate in this the wisdom of Solomon. Among these different societies between whom truth is an object of litigation, as that child was between the two mothers, you wish to know to whom to adjudge it. Say that a sword be brought to you, feign to cut, and examine the face the claimants will make. There will be several who will resign themselves, who will be content with the share about to be delivered to them. Say at once: those are not the mothers. There is one, on the contrary, who will refuse every composition, who will say: truth belongs to me and I must keep it whole, I shall never suffer it to be diminished, parcelled; say: this one is the true mother.

Yes, holy Catholic Church, you have the truth, because you have unity, and because you are intolerant to the point of not letting this unity be decomposed. That was, my brethren, our first principle: The religion which descends from heaven is truth, and consequently it is intolerant as to doctrines. It remains for me to add: The religion which descends from heaven is charity, and consequently it is full of tolerance as to persons. This time again I shall hardly do more than enunciate and shall not undertake the development. Let us breathe a moment.

II. It is the characteristic of the Catholic Church, my brethren, to be firm and unshakeable on principles, and to show herself gentle and indulgent in their application. What wonder? Is she not the spouse of Jesus Christ, and, like Him, does she not possess at once the intrepid courage of the lion and the peaceful meekness of the lamb? And does she not represent on earth the supreme Wisdom, which reaches her end strongly and disposes all things sweetly? Ah! it is by this sign again, it is by this sign above all, that the religion come down from heaven must make itself recognised, by the condescensions of her charity, by the inspirations of her love. Now, my brethren, consider the Church of Jesus Christ, and see with what infinite management, with what respectful regard she proceeds with her children, whether in the manner in which she presents her teachings to their intelligence, or in the application she makes of them to their conduct and their actions. Soon you will recognise that the Church is a mother, who teaches invariably truth and virtue, who can never consent to error or to evil, but who contrives to make her teaching lovable, and who treats with indulgence the wanderings of weakness.

Suffer me to communicate to you, my brethren, an impression which assuredly is not peculiar and personal to me, and which has been experienced as by me by all those of my brothers who have given themselves with leisure and reflection to the incomparable study of sacred science. From the first steps which it was given me to make in the domain of holy theology, what caused me the most admiration, what spoke most eloquently to my soul, what would have inspired me with faith had I not had the happiness of possessing it already, is, on the one hand, the tranquil majesty with which the Catholic Church affirms what is certain, and on the other hand the moderation and reserve with which she abandons to free opinions all that is not defined. No, it is not thus that men teach the doctrines of which they are the inventors, it is not thus that they express the thoughts that are the fruit of their genius.

When a man has created a system, he sustains it with absolute tenacity; he yields neither on one point nor on another. When he has become enamoured of a doctrine sprung from his brain, he seeks to make it prevail with empire; do not contest a single one of his ideas: the one you allow yourself to discuss is precisely the surest and most necessary. Almost all the books that have come from the hand of men are stamped with this exaggeration and this tyranny. Is it a question of literature, of history, of philosophy, of science? each sets himself up as an oracle, will not be contradicted in anything; it is a perpetual affirmation; it is a narrow, petty, haughty, absolute criticism. Sacred science, on the contrary, holy Catholic theology, offers a quite different character. As the Church has not invented the truth, but is only its depositary, one finds neither passion nor excess in her teaching. It pleased the Son of God come down on earth, in whom resided the fullness of truth, it pleased Him to unveil clearly certain faces, certain aspects of truth and to let the others be only glimpsed. The Church pushes her ministry no further, and, content with having taught, maintained, avenged the certain

and necessary principles, she leaves her children to discuss, conjecture, reason freely on doubtful points.

Catholic teaching has been so calumniated, my brethren, men are so accustomed to judge it with their prepossessions, that you will perhaps hardly believe what I am about to say. There is not a single science in the world less despotic than sacred science. The deposit of teaching was entrusted to the Church; now do you know what the Church teaches? a Creed in twelve articles which do not make twelve lines, a Creed composed by the Apostles and which the first two general councils explained and developed by the addition of a few words become necessary.

We proclaim, we Catholics, that the authentic interpretation of the holy Scriptures belongs to the Church; now do you know, my brethren, with regard to how many verses of the Bible the Church has used this supreme right? The Bible contains thirty thousand verses or thereabouts, and the Church has perhaps not defined the sense of eighty of these verses; the rest is left to the commentators, and, I may say, to the free examination of the Christian reader, so that, according to the word of Saint Jerome, the Scriptures are a vast field in which the intelligence can disport and delight itself, and where it will meet only a few barriers here and there round the precipices, and also some fortified places where it can entrench itself and find sure help.

The councils are the principal organ of Christian teaching; now the Council of Trent, wishing to enclose in one and the same declaration all the obligatory doctrine, did not need two pages to contain the most complete profession of faith. And if one studies the history of this council, one recognises with admiration that it was equally jealous to maintain the dogmas and to respect opinions; and there is such a word that the assembly of the Fathers rejected and for which it had no rest until it had substituted another, because its grammatical signification seemed to exceed the measure of certain truth and to steal something from the free controversies of the doctors.

Finally, the incomparable Bossuet having opposed to the calumnies of the Protestants his celebrated *Exposition of the Catholic Faith*, it was found that this same Church, which was accused of tyrannising over intellects, could reduce her defined and necessary truths into a body of doctrine far less voluminous than were the confessions, synods and declarations of the sects which had rejected the principle of authority and professed free examination.

Now, I repeat, my brethren, this remarkable phenomenon which is found only in the Catholic Church, this tranquil majesty in affirmation, this moderation and reserve in all undefined questions, this, in my judgment, is the adorable sign by which I must recognise the truth come from heaven. When I contemplate on the brow of the Church this serene conviction and this benign indulgence, I throw myself into her arms, and I say to her: You are my mother. It is thus that a mother teaches, without passion, without exaggeration, with a calm authority and a wise measure. And this character of the Church's teaching you find again in her most eminent doctors, in those whose writings she adopts and authorises almost without restriction. Augustine undertakes his immortal work of the *City of God* which will be to the end of ages one of the richest monuments of the Church. He is going to avenge against the calumnies of expiring paganism the holy truths of the Christian faith; he feels within him seething the ardours of zeal: but if he has read in the Scriptures that God is truth, he has read also that God is charity: *Deus charitas est*; he understands that the excess of truth can become the defect of charity; he kneels, and he sends toward heaven this admirable prayer: *Mitte, Domine, mitigationes in cor meum, ut charitate veritatis non amittam veritatem charitatis*: Send, Lord, send into my heart the softening, the tempering of Your Spirit, so that, carried away by the love of truth, I may not lose the truth of love.[7] And at the other extremity of the chain of the holy doctors, hear these beautiful words of the blessed bishop of Geneva: *Truth which is not charitable ceases to be truth; for in God, who is the supreme source of the true, charity is inseparable from truth.*[8] So, my brethren, read Augustine, read Francis de Sales: you will find in their writings truth in all its purity and, for that very reason, all stamped with charity and love.

O priest of Carthage, illustrious apologist of the first ages, I admire the nerve of your energetic language, the irresistible power of your sarcasm; but shall I say it? under the bark of your most orthodox writings I seek the unction of charity; your incisive syllables have not the humble and sweet accent of love. I fear that you defend the truth as one defends a system of one's own, and that one day your wounded pride will abandon the cause which your bitter zeal had sustained. Ah! my brethren, why did Tertullian, before consecrating his immense talent to the service of the Gospel, not pray the Lord, like Augustine, to send into his heart the softenings, the temperings of His Spirit? Love would have maintained him in doctrine. But because he was not in charity, he lost the truth.

And you, O celebrated apologist of these latter days, you whose first writings were saluted by the unanimous applause of all Christians, shall I tell you, O great writer, this apparent logic in whose embrace you wish to stifle your adversary, these pressed, multiplied, triumphant reasonings with which you overwhelm him, all that leaves me something to desire; your zeal resembles hatred, you treat your adversary as an enemy, your impetuous word has not the unction of charity nor the accent of love. O our unfortunate brother in the priesthood, why must it be that before consecrating your fine talent to the defence of religion, you did not make at the foot of your crucifix the prayer of Augustine? *Mitte, Domine, mitigationes in cor meum, ut charitate veritatis non amittam veritatem charitatis.* More love in your heart, and your intelligence would not have made so deplorable a defection; charity would have maintained you in truth.[9] And if the Catholic Church, my brethren, presents to our minds the teaching of truth with so much management and gentleness, ah! it is still with more condescension and goodness that she applies her principles to our conduct and our actions. Incapable of ever supporting bad doctrines, the Church is tolerant without measure toward persons. She never confounds error with him who teaches it, nor sin with him who commits it. Error she condemns, but the man she continues to love; sin she brands, but the sinner she pursues with her tenderness, she aspires to make him better, to reconcile him with God, to bring peace and virtue back into his heart.

She makes no acceptance of persons: there is for her neither Jew, nor Greek, nor barbarian; she does not concern herself with your opinions; she does not ask whether you live in a monarchy or in a republic. You have a soul to save, that is all she needs. Call her, she is yours, she arrives with hands full of graces and pardon. You have committed more sins than you have hairs on your head; that does not frighten her, she effaces all in the blood of Jesus Christ. Some of her laws are too onerous for you, she consents to accommodate them to your weakness; their rigour yields before your infirmity, and the oracle of theology, Saint Thomas, lays down as a principle that if no one can dispense from the divine law, condescension on the contrary must not be too difficult in the laws of the Church, because of the suavity which forms the foundation of her government: *Propter suave regimen Ecclesiae.* [On account of the gentle government of the Church.][10] So, my brethren, as civil law is rigid and inflexible, so much is the law of the Church supple and pliable. What other authority on earth governs, administers like the Church? *Suave regimen Ecclesiae.*

Ah! then let the world, which preaches us tolerance, be also as tolerant as we! We reject only principles, and the world rejects persons. How often we absolve, and the world continues to condemn! How often, in the name of God, we have drawn the veil of oblivion over the past, and the world remembers always! What do I say? the same mouths that reproach us with intolerance blame us for our too credulous and too easy goodness; and our inexhaustible patience toward persons is almost as much opposed as our inflexibility against doctrines.

My brethren, ask us then no more for tolerance with regard to doctrine. Encourage on the contrary our solicitude to maintain the unity of dogma, which is the only bond of peace on earth. The Roman orator has said it: the union of minds is the first condition of the union of hearts. And this great man makes enter into the very definition of friendship unanimity of thought with regard to things divine and human: *Eadem de rebus divinis et humanis cum summa caritate juncta concordia.* [Agreement on things divine and human, joined with the highest goodwill and affection.][11]

Our society, my brethren, is a prey to a thousand divisions; we complain of it every day. Whence this weakening of affections, this cooling of hearts? Ah! my brethren, how should hearts be brought together where minds are so far apart? Because each of us isolates himself in his own thought, each of us shuts himself up also in the love of himself. Do we wish to put an end to these countless dissensions, which threaten soon to destroy all spirit of family, of city and of fatherland? Do we wish to be no more to one another strangers, adversaries and almost enemies? Let us return to one Creed, and we shall soon find again concord and love.

Every Creed concerning the things of here below is very far from us; a thousand opinions divide us and there has been no human dogma for a long time, and I know not whether one will ever be reconstituted among us. Happily the religious Creed, the divine dogma has always been maintained in its purity in the hands of the Church, and thereby a precious germ of salvation is preserved to us. The day when all Frenchmen shall say: "I believe in God, in Jesus Christ and in the Church," all hearts will not delay to draw together, and we shall find again the only peace truly solid and lasting, that which the Apostle calls peace in truth. So be it.[12]

Translator's notes

1. **Existing English.** A translation of this sermon already exists (William and Mrs. Platz, for Angelus Press, as "Doctrinal Intolerance"). This version was made independently from the French text of the Oudin edition and does not borrow from it.

2. **Allusions left unnamed in the text.** The "constable," the "English pastor," the "philosopher of Geneva" (Rousseau, *Émile, Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard*), the "learned Essays" (eclecticism) and the "celebrated apologist" (Lamennais) are not named by the preacher. Identifications in the notes are mine and not verified here.

3. "Rome" and the "sentinel" images: the sentinel and the spouse are the preacher's own similes; the "two mothers" is 1 Kings 3:16–28.

4. The preacher's "30,000 verses" and "about eighty" defined verses are his figures; not verified here.

5. The first sentence of the exordium ("MONSEIGNEUR") addresses the bishop of Chartres, the presiding prelate.

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[1] The "famous constable" is not named in the text. The remark attributed to Fénelon is given as the preacher presents it; not verified here.

[2] The "English pastor" and "the philosopher of Geneva" (Rousseau, citing the *Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard* in *Émile*) are as in the preacher's text; the English pastor is not named. The quotations are given as the preacher presents them and are not verified here.

[3] The preacher alludes to Alexander Severus and, probably, Tiberius's proposal to the Senate (the latter story from Tertullian). The text names neither; the identifications are not verified here.

[4] Pliny, *Ep.* X, 96 (the phrase is *pervicaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem*); Tacitus, *Annals* XV, 44 and *Histories* V, 5 (the "hostile odium" phrase belongs to *Hist.* V, 5, on the Jews); Celsus in Origen, *Contra Celsum*. The wording follows the preacher's; the attributions are his, and the Tacitus text is not quoted exactly. Not verified here.

[5] Pascal's famous "Truth this side of the Pyrenees, error on the other" is behind the phrase; the preacher does not name him.

[6] The "learned *Essays*" and the "eclectic or progressive" school are not named; the preacher plainly has in view the Cousinian eclectics and Pierre Leroux's progressive school. The identification is mine and is not verified here.

[7] This prayer is given as in the text, attributed by the preacher to Augustine at the opening of the *City of God*; I have not verified the wording or the place. The sense is: "Send, O Lord, mitigations into my heart, that in the charity of truth I may not lose the truth of charity."

[8] Saint Francis de Sales; the sentence is quoted as the preacher gives it, and I have not verified the source.

[9] The "celebrated apologist of these latter days" and "our unfortunate brother in the priesthood" is not named in the text; plainly Lamennais, whose early *Essai sur l'indifférence* is alluded to. The identification is mine and is not verified here.

[10] The Latin phrase is the preacher's quotation of St. Thomas; the place is not verified here.

[11] Cicero, *De amicitia* VI, 20: “est enim amicitia nihil aliud nisi omnium divinarum humanarumque rerum cum benevolentia et caritate summa consensio.”; the preacher’s wording differs slightly (it is the definition he says, and he quotes it loosely).

[12] Cf. Appendix I. A, 29; p. 25, n. 34; p. 31, n° 5°. (Editor’s note.)

n° 24. Instruction Preached on the Fifth Friday of Lent at the Cathedral of Chartres: That the Truth Is Necessarily Fought Against on Earth

Chartres cathedral, fifth Friday of Lent, 1841.[1]

Et eritis odio omnibus propter nomen meum. [And you shall be hated by all men for My name’s sake.] And you will be hated by all on My account. (Matt. 10:22.)[2]

MY DEAR BRETHREN, we saw in the preceding instruction that the character of truth is to be intolerant in matter of doctrine. We said to you: You wish to find the Church of God on earth, seek the intolerant Church; that one alone is the true Church. The others, which make mutual concessions, are all equally bad. Before passing on, we should today draw this conclusion, namely that the true Church is the one which is stationary in matter of doctrine, because truth repels all error, and because in matter of dogma every novelty is an error. We should thus answer that fine word progress which is in every mouth, and we should bring out the ridiculous idea and the anti-Catholic project of those who want to make religion progress and who claim to bring Christianity up to date: an enterprise rather like that of a man to whom it seemed that the sun no longer lit the human race enough, and who should imagine himself adding light to that great torch kindled by the Creator. Christianity no longer suffices for the needs of the epoch and of our advanced societies. I believe indeed, my brethren, that society is advanced, so advanced that putrefaction and dissolution would be imminent and inevitable, if there were not in Christianity a sovereign and incorruptible balm, capable of healing even the wounds of nations. But let us break off from this subject, my brethren; I deliver it to your meditations.

The holy course draws near its term, and I have to develop today a proposition closely tied to the preceding, namely that truth, which is necessarily intolerant, is also necessarily untolerated, and that it is its proper character to be attacked on every side. The highest religious questions attach to this subject which I shall be allowed at most to touch lightly. I enter on the matter with no other order than that of the natural linking of my thoughts. What I have to say can be reduced to this double principle: 1st, that the true Church is the one which is persecuted on all sides; 2nd, that the Roman Catholic Church is the only one that can flatter herself on being thus persecuted.

O divine Jesus, in eight days we shall celebrate the Compassion of the most holy Virgin, that is, the mystery of Your holy Mother at the foot of the cross, enduring all Your sufferings in her heart where they were reflected as in a mirror. Today I am going to announce to this people the mystery of the compassion of the Church, that is, the mystery of Your spouse, standing for eighteen centuries at the foot of Your cross, where she does not cease to endure and to reproduce in herself the whole history of Your sorrows.

I. Let us say in advance and from the beginning, my brethren, what we must say again at the end: that, whatever we do, we shall necessarily serve the triumph of truth, for, as Saint Paul says, we have no power against the truth, but only for the truth. It is with religion as with God: God is placed so high that it is impossible for us to reach Him. In spite of ourselves, we serve His designs: if we love Him, we give Him occasion to manifest His mercy; if we blaspheme Him, we give Him occasion to manifest His justice. Whatever we do, His attributes will gain by it; only we can lose. So with religion. We can do nothing against the truth; if we attack it, in that very act we work for it, because it is one of its glories to be attacked, it is one of its proofs. Willy-nilly, we serve its triumph: *Non enim possumus aliquid contra veritatem sed pro veritate.* [For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. (2 Cor. 13:8.)] Do not give yourselves so much trouble. This hatred, these blasphemies, these persecutions, all that proves only one thing, that the religion which is thus hated, blasphemed, persecuted, is the true religion. One does not rage so seriously against a

chimera. *Non enim possumus aliquid contra veritatem sed pro veritate.*

The true Church must be fought against on earth: *Et eritis odio omnibus propter nomen meum*,[3] and that for evident reasons. The true Church is the reign of God on earth, consequently she must have against her all the enemies of God. Now, my brethren, we are all more or less enemies of God. There is in our corrupt heart a secret hatred of the divinity. We are all more or less deicides. He who hates his brother, says Saint John, is a murderer: that is to say, my brethren, that there is in hatred a desire for the annihilation of the hated object. Who of us, in his bad moments, has not caught himself hating God? Oh yes, who of us has not felt in his heart that root of bitterness of which Saint Paul speaks, which would bear horrible fruits if we let it germinate and grow? *Radix amaritudinis sursum germinans.* [A root of bitterness springing up. (Heb. 12:15.)]

It is, my brethren, this principle of bitterness which must necessarily exert itself against the true Church, against the Church which realises the reign of God on earth, against the Church which brings near to us the divinity we should like to relegate to the heavens, against the Church by which the divine law, coming out of abstraction and generality, applies itself and, if I dare so speak, individualises itself to each of us. Yes, the true Church must be hated by all: *Et eritis odio omnibus*; by all indistinctly, by the good themselves when they do not watch themselves, when they let that I-know-not-what of evil that is there show its head; but she must be hated above all by the wicked, by those who let grow and shoot freely that root of bitterness which original sin slipped into our hearts and which the very grace of baptism has not entirely torn out. These constitute on earth that power enemy of the good which is called the world, and which is bound by secret intelligences to the infernal powers.

If it did not belong to faith, it would still be a truth historically and traditionally demonstrated, that by the sin of man the demon acquired a great empire on earth, and that to the end of time he will combat there the work of God, both by himself and by those men who, full of his spirit, are under his hand as docile instruments. Hence those two enemy cities of which one speaks so often, Babylon and Jerusalem, the Church and the world. For there is no composition between truth and error, between God and Belial. Lie and lie can indeed bear with each other, since they are sons of one father; but lie and truth will never tolerate each other. Truth being inflexible, the lie will hate it, will persecute it always. The true Church being alone depositary of the work of God, possessing alone the treasure of truth and life, necessarily the world and hell must unchain themselves against her, and, taking by turns the sword and the pen, attempt by persecutions and death to dry up this principle of life, and by heresy and sophism to obscure this torch of truth: *Positus est hic in signum cui contradicetur.*

Another consideration. The true Church must carry with her the seal of her divinity, and for that she must maintain herself on earth in a supernatural manner. Built by the hand of God Himself, it must be evident to all that it is the hand of God which preserves and supports her. Now, if this Church advanced in the world always flattered and always applauded, one would have the right to see in her only a purely human institution which maintains itself by the favour and protection of men; only a happy theory, a system which sustains itself by the number and docility of its adherents, or by the plausible appearance of its arguments whose weak and vicious side no contradictor would unveil. Therefore, to manifest to men her heavenly origin, the true Church must be attacked and sustain herself in the midst of the most violent assaults: *Positus est hic in signum cui contradicetur.*

It follows from these principles that a philosopher who seeks the truth should reason thus: in the midst of so many enemy societies, if there be one against which all the others, forgetting their mutual divisions, conspire by common accord; in the midst of this immense sphere of contradictions, if there be one point toward which converge from all sides the impure rays of error, there is the centre of truth, there I recognise the ark of salvation, the Church of God. Much as in the melee one recognises the general by that hail of enemy darts directed at him from all sides, or, better still, as one recognises the man of goodness in the assembly of the wicked, the lamb in a flock of wolves, by the rage with which they tear him in concert. In other terms, my

brethren, if you seek the true Church, seek the Church attacked constantly by all the passions and all the errors; seek the one that is the object of all persecutions, all contradictions, all injustices, the one that is hated by all the world: *Et eritis odio omnibus propter nomen meum.*[4]

It is Jesus Christ Himself, my brethren, who revealed to us this distinctive note of truth. Let us see it first in the person of this divine Saviour: His whole life is the history of His persecutions. Let us see it next in the Catholic Church, alone associated, for eighteen centuries, in the crucifixion of her Spouse. Follow with attention, and do not be astonished if our subject here becomes further complicated by new considerations. The present question touches fundamental ideas which constitute the whole economy of Christianity, which is the religion of the cross and of suffering. If there is for a moment confusion in your mind, day will not be long in breaking, and our conclusions will end by ordering your ideas.

And here shall I repeat to you, my brethren, what I have already told you, that the true religion must be not only a great and magnificent teaching, but must be above all an infinite expiation.[5] The original ignorance had for its father an original crime; the sacrifice which expiates the crime must therefore precede and accompany the teaching which enlightens the ignorance. In this respect again, then, the true religion must be a religion of trials, of contradictions, of persecutions: *Positus est hic in signum cui contradicetur.* Hence an admirable economy. Every power on earth, even a supernatural and divine power, as soon as it is exercised by men, needs to be tempered; the priestly power like the others, more than the others, for it is immense, it would be intoxicating. It is the highest domination, the domination of souls. But if the priesthood is at the service of a religion whose essence is to be fought and contradicted, it finds then the corrective and counterweight of its power and its nobility in the sacrifices and humiliations which it draws after it. The priest becomes, like the Church whose minister he is, an object of all contradictions. So again in this respect it is good that the Church be constantly tried: *Positus est hic in signum cui contradicetur.*

Such was the life of Jesus, of Jesus redeemer and doctor, of Jesus victim of the world and light of the world. Scarcely is He born, when an old man traces prophetically His history in these words which are the whole Gospel and the whole history of the Church: *Positus est hic in signum cui contradicetur*: This One is set as a sign of contradiction. Already it is Herod who feigns to wish to adore Him and who meditates and executes a frightful massacre; behold truth incarnate already exiled. But wait: Jesus Christ begins His mission, and all the passions unchain themselves against Him. Never did He do or say well: He heals the blind, yes, but it is on the Sabbath day! He raises the dead, yes, but would He not have done better to prevent their dying?

It is a curious thing, my brethren, to follow in the Gospel of Saint John all the phases of Pharisaic hatred, all the folds and refolds in which ill will scarcely disguises itself. The benign Saviour opens His mouth, and they quiver against Him: *et fremebant in eum.* They come to hear Him, they interrogate Him; but it is to catch Him in His words: *ut caperent eum in sermone.* They put Him on the ground of religion, and from His misinterpreted words they conclude that He is an impious man and a blasphemer. From there they carry Him on to the so delicate ground of politics, and, despite the prudence of His answers, they make Him pass for an enemy of Caesar, for a seditious and dangerous man. At last the divine Saviour, who knows all their evil thoughts, tells them plainly how it is: All My crime is that I am the truth, and that you are the enemies of the truth: *Ego sum veritas.* Do not wrap yourselves in all these fine appearances of zeal; you know well, you feel well that I speak the truth, and that is why you wish to kill Me, because the truth wounds you: *Vos quaeritis me interficere, qui vobis veritatem locutus sum.* [You seek to kill Me, a man who have spoken the truth to you. (John 8:40.)] You affect to love My Father who is in the heavens: you deceive yourselves; if you loved My Father, you would love Me, because My Father and I are one. It is My Father whom you hate in Me; it is God, it is the truth that you wish to kill in Me: *Me quaeritis interficere, qui vobis veritatem locutus sum.*

We, we wish to kill You! they retort; what then is this fanatical and demoniacal language? *Respondit turba, et dixit: Daemonium habes: quis te quaerit interficere?* [The multitude answered and said: Thou hast a devil; who seeketh to kill thee? (John 7:20.)] Who then is thinking of killing You? My brethren, and the day was

not long in coming when these Jews who had long played the hypocrites asked aloud for the death of Jesus: *Petierunt a Pilato ut interficerent eum* [They asked Pilate that they might put Him to death. (Acts 13:28)]; and by dint of intrigues having obtained a sort of legal condemnation (for they held greatly to wrapping their frenzied hatred in the appearances of legality: *Nobis non licet interficere quemquam* [It is not lawful for us to put any man to death. (John 18:31)]), they crucified Him with their own hands, and had the seals affixed on His tomb.

Behold then, my brethren, in the person of Jesus, behold the eternal Truth, exiled, contradicted, condemned, scourged, crucified, and sealed in His sepulchre. Madmen, who did not know that man can do nothing against the truth but for the truth, and who did not see that their rage could do only one thing, namely prove that this man whom they hated so much was truly the Son of God: He who had said that Christ must suffer, and so enter into His glory: *Oportebat Christum pati, et ita intrare in gloriam* [Luke 24:26]; He who had said that after He should have been lifted up on the cross He would draw all things to Himself. *Non enim possumus aliquid contra veritatem sed pro veritate.*

But hear Him, this persecuted God, hear her, this crucified Truth, address the word to the Apostles and prophesy the destinies of the Church. “Remember the word that I said to you: the disciple is not above his master. If then they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. If the world hates you, remember that it hated Me first. Behold I send you as lambs among wolves. Men will bring you before their assemblies, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; you will be led before magistrates and kings to bear witness to Me. You will be hated by all for My name. They will put you to death; but fear not those who kill the body and can do nothing against the soul. For I am with you to the end of the ages, and I keep for you the double power of suffering and of lasting always.”

Behold, my brethren, the whole history of the Church traced by Jesus Christ: to suffer and to last always. Set out from Jerusalem, apostles of the nascent Church, but forget not as you depart the cross of your master. Go through all the earth to complete in your person what is lacking to the Passion of Jesus Christ. Present to all nations the cross of Jesus Christ, not only a cross of wood or of metal, but the living cross of your sufferings and your tortures. Remember well the word He said to you: you will not be treated otherwise than He; they will hate you as they hated Him. You must pass through suffering to arrive at glory, and you will count your victories by your tortures.

Do you see her, my brethren, the Christian Church attacked on all sides from her birth? Do you see how everything leagues against her? Do you see them, the Apostles, the first priests of Jesus Christ, conquering the world, finding everywhere new perils, ambushes on land, shipwrecks at sea, snares among false brethren, rage among the Jews, martyrdom among the Gentiles? Rhetors cast sarcasms and calumnies at them; the wits elegantly draw up capital accusations against them; conspirators swear an oath neither to drink nor eat until they have torn out their lives; the magistrates complain that by their doctrines they trouble the city, and want to close their mouths. And when the faithful are terrified at so many cruel persecutions: Be reassured, the great Paul tells them, be not frightened by these tribulations, for you know well that we are appointed to suffer: *Nemo moveatur in tribulationibus istis: ipsi enim scitis quod in hoc positi sumus.* [That no man be moved in these tribulations; for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. (1 Thess. 3:3.)] Be reassured, it belongs only to a crucified Church, to a crucified priesthood, to continue on earth the work of a crucified God.

My brethren, they have not been lacking to the Catholic Church, crosses and contradictions. Alone, for eighteen centuries, she bears constantly on her shoulders the cross of her Master. Contradictions by the sword: count all the martyrs, I shall not say, as Jesus did, from the blood of Abel to that of Zacharias whom you killed between the temple and the altar, but from the blood of the deacon Stephen to that which still reddens the church of the Carmelites, from the martyrs Nero made to those which the barbarian’s sword still makes every day.[6] Contradictions in doctrine: there is not a word, not a syllable of the Catholic Creed which

has not been, sometimes for several centuries, the object of the most violent attacks. A single iota of the Creed cost the Church rivers of blood. Count, if you can, count all the contradictors of Catholic truth; count all the heretics, from the Arians to the Protestants, from Simon the Magician to the priests of the French Church of the Porte-Saint-Martin; count all the sophists enemies of the Catholic Church, from Celsus and Porphyry to Voltaire and Jean-Jacques, from Julian the Apostate to his latest imitators.[7] Holy Catholic Church, you have not breathed a single moment since the day you were born. In the midst even of your triumphs there were sorrows. For eighteen centuries you have not ceased to drink the chalice of Jesus and to be baptised with His bloody baptism.

Now, my brethren, by the principles we have laid down, could we not already conclude: She is then the true Church, this society contradicted by all the other sects. She is then the pillar of truth, since the hand of falsehood and of error has come in every century to try to shake her. She is then truly the Church of Jesus Christ, since the attempts committed against the adorable person of the Saviour have not ceased to be renewed against her. In applying the same principles to our adversaries, in seeing all these so opposed sects tolerate each other; in seeing, for example, the sword of Mahomet, implacable against Catholics, soften toward the heretics descended from Eutyches; in seeing the philosophical sect of Voltaire, so bitter an enemy of God, not deign to honour with a blasphemy the religion of Luther and Calvin, but on the contrary treat it with disparaging regard, must we not cry out: None of these sects is the Church, since they suffer each other mutually, since they inspire no hatred in the world or in hell? If a single one of them had the truth, all the others would rise at once against it. They are all in understanding: therefore they are all daughters of that Satan whose kingdom is not divided against itself.

It is thus, my brethren, that the Catholic Church contemplates her wound with triumph, as the warrior prides himself on his scars. Daughter of the crucified God, she loves to bear in her flesh the stigmata of her divine founder. If, for a single instant, she no longer perceived enemies around her, she would say to herself with fright: Am I then still the pillar of truth, since the hatred of vice and error is silent before me? And the memory of the word of her Jesus who promised her that she would be hated by all the world, and the voice of the great Paul, crying for eighteen centuries that there must be persecutions and heresies, would make her fear this time to be abandoned by God. But no, this oracle will be accomplished to the end, and it will be accomplished with a perseverance in some sort supernatural. All hatreds will cease: the most inveterate family hatreds, national hatreds; there is only one hatred that time will not calm, the hatred of the Catholic Church. It is and it will be to the end as fresh, as animated, as lively as at the beginning.

And indeed, my brethren, is it not prodigious that after eighteen centuries of benefits spread by the Catholic Church, after eighteen centuries of triumphs won over all persecutors, there should still be found men who have the courage to attack the Church, to persecute her; men who dare flatter themselves they will annihilate her? A long time ago the Roman people had a medal struck one day in honour of their most clement emperor to eternalise the glory he had acquired by stifling what was called the Christian superstition.[8] Ah! and Christianity attended the funerals of that emperor; it attended the funerals of the empire and of many other nations. And nevertheless there are still found men who dare flatter themselves that Christianity is expiring, men who promise themselves to laugh at the funerals of this great cult. Madmen! and is it not prodigious that after all errors have been pulverised, all heresies annihilated for eighteen hundred years, when there is nothing more to object, there should still be found men who have the courage to make themselves heads of sects and to refurbish old objections refuted a thousand times? If of all the vessels which have set out for a thousand years in search of a new world, none had escaped shipwreck, would there still be many who dared attempt the enterprise? And when the greatest heresies have failed for eighteen centuries, we see madmen gather vile wreckage escaped from the shipwreck and from these half-rotten planks refashion a bark of some sort to hurl themselves again against the rock of the Church. This can be applied only to a manifest blindness for the accomplishment of that oracle, that there must be persecutions and heresies. Yes, and there will be

until the end.

II. Let us cast a glance around us, my brethren: what do we see further? What is holier, more useful, more beneficent on earth than the Catholic Church, and yet what is more contradicted, more persecuted, more fought against? There exist men possessed by the hatred of God, men enemies of all good, of all truth. Now of all the sects, all the societies, all the religions, which is the one that displeases them? Which seems to designate itself to their hatred? The Catholic Church, and the Catholic Church alone. Among the unbelievers, who is it that is fought? The Jews, the Mohammedans, the Protestants? One is full of regard for them. They are always right, one always takes their side. The Catholic Church, on the contrary, never did well or said well. One wishes to find her at fault: let her say white, let her say black, she will always be wrong. There exist on earth organs of hell, men whose blame is a eulogy and whose approbation makes one tremble. For whom are their applauses? for everything that is opposed to the Church. Against whom their furious transports? against the Church, against the Catholic priesthood. Therefore, my brethren, the Catholic Church is the Church of God.

Let two Catholic priests and two Protestant ministers set out, the same Gospel in hand, to convert a barbarous people! The latter, one receives them without trouble, idolatry is not frightened by their gospel; no one even thinks of persecuting them. They will not have the honours of martyrdom, and, to tell the truth, they are little jealous of them. One will see in them only merchants, industrialists, who come to preach decency in order to sell a few ells of calico. It is thus that the Anglican ministers are received every day. But the Catholic priests, that is another thing: all at once the idols are moved, they tremble on their pedestals; a hatred come out of hell seizes the heart of those barbarians, Catholic blood is shed, and it is only after having been long watered by it that this land at last germinates the Christian faith. That is what still happens in our own days: incontestable proof that hell has no interest in fighting the other sects, and that it detests only the Catholic Church, because she alone possesses the truth.

And without speaking of others, let us descend into our own heart. Let us let our passions act for an instant, and amid this horrible desire which will arise in our soul: *Dixit in corde suo: non est Deus* [The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God. (Ps. 13:1)]; in those instants when we would annihilate God, let us hear which of all visible societies is going to be named by our hatred, let us seek which is the one that hinders us, that displeases us. It is the Catholic Church, and the Church alone. All the rest gives us no umbrage.

My brethren, who could enumerate in detail all the injustices, all the contradictions of which the Catholic Church is the object? All the good she does, one regrets it, diminishes it, contests it. All that is to her glory, one attenuates it. All that can prove her truth, one desires to find false, one has a thousand pretexts to doubt it. The Church is always what the old man Simeon foretold: *Positus est hic in signum cui contradicetur*; she is always Jesus pursued, attacked; Jesus provoking hatred by His benefits; Jesus spied on in His words; Jesus condemned in His actions; Jesus on whose shoulders a piece of purple is thrown; Jesus to whom a sceptre of reed and a crown of thorns are given; Jesus before whom one passes with an ironical laugh and shakings of the head. The Church is always Jesus scourged, crucified; Jesus whom one wishes to bury, whose tomb one wishes to seal and close with so great a stone that He cannot come out. My brethren, I repeat with a new accent of conviction: this Church is then truly the Church of Jesus Christ, the Church of truth, the supernatural Church, the Church of expiation, the Church of the cross.

Therefore, I shall say to you who would be enemies of the Church, you can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth. You attack the Church, and in that you help the accomplishment of the destinies of the Church. Were you to bring back new persecutions, well, another priesthood would be born from our blood, and you would have proved, once more, to the world that the Catholic Church is the Church of God. This evil instinct that animates you against her is all in her favour. Take care: the Church is constituted in such a way that she gains by your outrages. The reefs are for her the harbour, the tempests hasten her navigation. You see thorns on her, and these thorns are her crown. That is the most beautiful of all diadems, the diadem of

sorrow. All you do will end as the seals, as the guards set by the Jews on the tomb of Jesus. All you do, I say, will end in better establishing the prodigy; for religion is placed so high that man can do nothing against it, but all he does turns for it: *Non enim possumus aliquid contra veritatem sed pro veritate.*

And you, faithful Christians, who weep over the evils of the Church, who groan over her afflictions, ah! far be it from me to condemn your tears; on the contrary, it is beautiful in a son to compassionate the sorrows of his mother. But let not your grief be despair, oh no. And I shall say to you boldly with Saint Paul: let none of us be moved at the sight of these tribulations! For you know well that we are appointed to suffer: *Nemo moveatur in tribulationibus istis, nam et ipsi scitis quia in hoc positi sumus.*

Lord, be blessed! Like Your first apostles, we are full of joy that at the end of eighteen centuries we are still found worthy to suffer: *Quia digni habiti sunt pro nomine Jesu contumeliam pati.* [That they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus. (Acts 5:41.)] Lord, be blessed that after eighteen centuries the hatred of the world still reaches us in all the fullness of Your promises! Lord, be blessed that the demon and the world are still as much enemies of Your Church as they were of Your person and of Your nascent Church! Surrounded by contradictions, filled with bitterness, ah! how sweet it is to us, Lord, to re-read these oracles that came out of Your mouth, and which change our grief into joy, our defeat into triumph! How proud we are when we remember the word You said: The disciple is not above his master! If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you. If they hate you, know that they hated Me first. When men curse you, lay snares for you, are unjust and cruel toward you, rejoice, for it is thus their fathers treated the prophets: *Gaudete, secundum haec enim faciebant prophetis patres eorum.* [Rejoice… for according to these things did their fathers to the prophets. (Luke 6:23.)] If the world blessed you, if men applauded you, I should pity you, for it is thus their fathers did to the false doctors and the pseudo-prophets: *Vae vobis, cum benedixerint vobis homines, secundum haec enim faciebant pseudoprophetis patres eorum.* [Woe to you when men shall bless you, for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets. (Luke 6:26.)] If you were of the world, ah! the world would love what belonged to it; but because you are not of the world, for that reason the world hates you: *Si de mundo fuissetis, mundus quod suum erat diligeret; quia vero de mundo non estis, … propterea odit vos mundus.* [If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world… therefore the world hateth you. (John 15:19.)]

It is thus, my brethren, that the Church consoles herself. For often, says Saint Paul, the weight of the evils with which we are overwhelmed seems to us excessive; all our strength does not suffice, and life becomes a burden to us. But in the midst of these cruel perplexities, the more we feel our weakness, the more we have confidence in Him who raises the dead; He alone delivered us from all perils, and will always deliver us, as we hope from His goodness. We may be persecuted, but never abandoned; cast down, but not destroyed. And in this divine hope, in the midst of maledictions and outrages (it is always Saint Paul who speaks), we shall watch still more, if it is possible, to offend no one, for fear of making blame fall back on our ministry: *Nemini dantes ullam offensionem, ut non vituperetur ministerium nostrum.* [Giving no offence to any man, that our ministry be not blamed. (2 Cor. 6:3.)] We shall show ourselves commendable in all things, as true ministers of Jesus Christ, by great patience in afflictions, by purity, by knowledge, by a persevering and frank gentleness, *in castitate, in scientia, in longanimitate, in caritate non ficta*; in honour and in ignominy, in good and in bad repute; as seducers though sincere, as unknown though well known, *per gloriam et ignobilitatem, per infamiam et bonam famam, ut seductores et veraces, sicut qui ignoti et cogniti.* [2 Cor. 6:4–9.]

In making ourselves priests, we knew well that we incurred the hatred of the world. We were not ignorant that to a crucified God there must be a crucified priesthood. So we do not await for ourselves better days than those in which our fathers lived. Each time order seems to re-establish itself on earth, new persecutions will be demanded against us; one will be astonished at our ambition, when one sees us in broad day carrying the holy oils to the sick and the bread of viaticum to the dying; one will wisely warn the human powers of our

redoubtable encroachments, when we aspire to the power of praying to God publicly and invoking His mercies on our fatherland; we shall be accused of troubling consciences, when our ministry of union and love calms all the passions and brings peace and virtue back into hearts.

So it will be to the end of the ages. Then the Church, after having walked in the midst of her enemies, will see them placed under her feet, while the good, those who have an upright heart, and who will have loved her on earth in spite of her opprobrium, will share in heaven her eternal glory. It is, my brethren, etc.[9]

Translator's notes

1. The first footnote, to the title, "See M. Fayet: *Mandements de Rouen*," is by M. l'abbé Pie; the "Variant" footnotes stand where the epigraph is repeated.

2. The phrase "*Nemo moveatur in tribulationibus istis*" is quoted (1 Thess. 3:3) by the preacher as from "the great Paul."

3. "A long time ago the Roman people had a medal struck …" The preacher's allusion is to the old (since discredited) "Diocletian medal"; my note.

4. "Seducers though sincere": the Vulgate has *ut seductores et veraces*, "as deceivers, and yet true." I follow the French preacher's rendering.

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[1] See M. Fayet: *Mandements de Rouen*. (Note of M. l'abbé Pie.)

[2] Variant: *Positus est hic in signum cui contradicetur*. This One is set as a sign that shall be contradicted. (Luke 2:34.)

[3] Variant: *Positus est hic in signum cui contradicetur*.

[4] Variant: *Positus est hic in signum cui contradicetur*.

[5] Variant: *Positus est hic in signum cui contradicetur*. (The printed text of the Oudin edition interleaves this variant between "un" and "grand et magnifique enseignement"; I place it here.)

[6] The "church of the Carmelites" is the Paris church of the Carmes (September 1792 massacre of priests), as I read it; the note is mine.

[7] The "French Church" at the Porte Saint-Martin is the schismatic "Église catholique française" of the abbé Chatel (founded 1831, with a chapel in the rue du Faubourg-Saint-Martin, Paris). Identification mine, from general knowledge; not verified here.

[8] The medal alluded to is the so-called Diocletian medal ("nomine Christianorum deleto"); its authenticity is not verified here, and in modern scholarship the inscription is held to be spurious.

[9] Cf. Appendix I: A, 30. (Editor's note.)

n° 25. Instruction Preached at the Cathedral of Chartres on the Friday of the Compassion of the Most Holy Virgin: On the Mysteries to Be Celebrated and the Sacraments to Be Received

Chartres cathedral, Friday of the Compassion of the Blessed Virgin (Friday of Passion week), 1841.[1]

Proximum autem erat Pascha; et ascenderunt multi Hierosolymam de regione ante Pascha, ut sanctificarent seipsos. [Now the Pasch of the Jews was at hand; and many from the country went up to Jerusalem before the Pasch, to purify themselves.] Now the feast of Easter was approaching, and a great multitude was going up from all the country to Jerusalem before the Pasch to purify themselves. (John 11:55.)

MY DEAR BRETHREN, during this holy Forty Days we have meditated together on truths of a general order. Our conversations had for their object to dispel prejudices, to refute false ideas which have currency today in the world. Four important propositions have occupied us successively. We established first that morality has no existence without the dogma which is its foundation, and without grace which is its means of execution. Catholic beliefs, we said, are the *why* of morality; Catholic practices are the *how*. Take away faith with its dogmas, take away grace with its sacraments: morality is no more than a prejudice without obligatory force, a theory without possible realisation. From this proposition we drew a quite natural conclusion:

namely that the Catholic priesthood is the only effective conservator of morality, since it alone has the double deposit of faith which is the motive of morality, and of grace which is its means. And there, my brethren, we showed you how far all the efforts of men, even the best-intentioned, are from being able to replace the supernatural and divine action of the Church, of the Church which alone has received from heaven and the Holy Spirit that power of fecundity and life which creates, which animates and which perpetuates the institutions truly useful to humanity. From there we passed to two other propositions, namely that it is the distinctive character of the true Church to be intolerant and exclusive in matter of doctrine, and also to be attacked and fought on all sides; and we showed you that these two characteristic traits of truth are found only in the Catholic Church, alone inflexible and unshakeable on the ground of beliefs, alone pursued and persecuted by all the passions and all the errors.

There would remain, my brethren, many considerations to set before you. I shall do so with happiness; for it is only justice for me to say, my brethren, that there are few auditories as encouraging as that before which it has been given me to announce the holy word during this station. Without doubt, as Saint Paul says, our ministry has not been without tribulation. The Christian pulpit will eternally be the provoking target of the angers of the world. It is a tribunal from which sentences go forth, and it is so rare that the condemned is content with the sentence that strikes him! But if tribulation has not failed us, consolations have been still more abundant. I cannot thank you enough, my brethren, for the silent and benevolent attention you always grant me.

Today, my brethren, it seemed to me that the great week we are about to enter required that I treat a more practical subject and less general than the preceding ones. It is above all to you, faithful Christians, that I shall address myself today; it is to you above all that I am going to speak: 1st, of the mysteries we must celebrate during the days we are entering; 2nd, of the sacraments we must receive. The limits I have prescribed for myself will permit only a few reflections on each of these important matters.

Holy Virgin, O mother of sorrow, ah! how sweet it would have been to me to speak only of you on this day consecrated to the memory of your sufferings! How sweet it would have been to present you to this people as the type of the Christian woman who is the being of love and of sorrow! Ah! remember, my brethren, that in following, during this week, the Way of the Cross of Jesus, you will meet Mary there, Mary the most afflicted because she was the tenderest of mothers; and it will be no small consolation for you, for you above all, Christian mothers, to find an afflicted mother with whom you can speak of your sorrows.

As for me, holy Virgin, words fail me to say how I love to think of your sorrows, and to meet you on Calvary. O Mary, you seem to me beautiful from your dawn; I love you in your cradle; I love you clothed with the heavenly charm of your virginity; I love you carrying in your arms that divine Child whose grace is reflected on you, and adorns you as the flower adorns the stem which produced it; I love you reigning in the heavens where the sun is your garment, the moon your footstool, the stars your crown. But I love you still more on Calvary, on Calvary where you acquired an indefinable charm, the charm that suffering gives, that I-know-not-what of completion that misfortune adds to virtue, as Bossuet speaks.[2] Ah! it is so sweet to him who prays to meet, in the object of his worship, the same sorrows, the same anguishes which he experiences. Holy Virgin, O you who know what sorrow is, you learned to have pity on the wretched. Mother of compassion and mercy, and, as the good people of our hamlets still call you, Our Lady of Pity, have pity on us; teach us to follow in your steps, we shall follow thereby those of Jesus. And since the feast of this day recalls to us the part you took in the great things that were accomplished in Jerusalem, help me to entertain these faithful on the part they must take, in these same days, in the mysteries and sacraments of the Church their mother.

I. The week we are about to enter is called in the Church the Great Week. Not, says Saint John Chrysostom, that its days are longer and more numerous, but on account of the great things God wrought in it. My brethren, one does not think of it seriously. What other historical facts are comparable to those whose

memory the Church is going to recall to us? The sufferings of the God made man, the death of this God crucified by men, the resurrection of this God-Man! What events are these! And how negligent one would have to be to take no interest in them! How indifferent toward God one would have to be, and how little careful of one's own happiness! It was, my brethren, an admirable economy of divine wisdom to place the whole of religion in facts. The Christian religion does not bear on reasonings; it is not a philosophical system, an abstract doctrine which would necessarily be above the reach of vulgar minds. The Christian religion consists wholly in facts, and facts are within the reach of everyone. The eternal God reveals Himself by the fact of creation; His power, His goodness, His justice manifest themselves by the fact of His works and His miracles. Religion, during the forty centuries which preceded the coming of the Messiah, is nothing other than a history. The incarnation, the redemption and all the mysteries of Christianity are nothing other than historical facts. There is no need of a lofty mind or of extraordinary judgment to know the essential points of the Christian religion. Everyone is capable of understanding facts. And besides, God provided that they should be rendered graspable for all.

For, my brethren, and this is again an admirable economy of the Christian religion, the great facts on which the whole religion rests, God willed in some sort to perpetuate them among us. He did not wish the account of them merely to be read to us; but, since the mind is more struck by what enters through the ear, God willed that to the end of the ages these facts should be renewed each year in the Church. In the old law, at each marvel the Lord wrought, He wished that a monument be raised at once, so that when the great-grandchildren asked the *why* of this monument, the prodigy which had been its occasion should be recalled to them. So the Christian Church, in the course of the ecclesiastical year, makes pass before our eyes all the history and consequently all the dogma of Christianity.

We have told you already several times, my brethren, the celebration of Christian feasts is of the highest importance: on it our religion and our piety depend in great part! Feasts are faith become sensible and graspable, they are virtue become easy and practical for all; feasts are like the form, the garment and, if I dare say so, like the personification, the incarnation of our dogmas. In other words, feasts are popular Christianity. Whoever has celebrated the whole series of the feasts and mysteries of the Christian year would be assured of possessing the whole spirit of Christianity.[3] If you could make a deaf-mute understand all that series of religious scenes which the piety of our fathers sculpted with so much lightness, delicacy and grace around the choir of our admirable church, you would have taught him his whole catechism. So it is with the feasts which the hand of the Church has sown, like a rich embroidery of admirable variety, on that ground in itself so darkened which is called time, and which divides so uniformly into months and years. The whole Christian catechism is in the calendar of feasts.

If cold philosophy, that rational sect born of Protestantism, succeeded in giving society the manners it has dreamed in its ideas of perfectibility and progress, the whole year would be alike, and would have none of those different aspects which it borrows from religion. All the months, all the days would be the same. No time consecrated to grave thoughts, to holy sadnesses, to the recollection of the heart; no solemnities and feasts full of joy and religious thrills. The year from one end to the other would be like a flat and monotonous country, without hills and without valleys, without effects of sun and shade. Ah! under pretext of purifying worship, of making it more spiritual, how ill one knows men and the roads of the heart! If you give nothing to the senses, if you do not seek to strike the imagination, to aid the weakness of the mind, you will have a cold, dry and sad worship, which says nothing to the heart; by wishing to give too much to the mind, you will fatigue it or you will exalt it; in some this in some sort metaphysical worship will end by degenerating into indifference, and in ardent heads it may well degenerate into fanaticism. And do not say that these exterior means of fixing thought and awakening pious sentiments are good for the multitude! Here, my brethren, all men are the people, and from the most beautiful genius to the most limited mind, there is not one who is not subject to the influence of signs and symbols that strike the senses.[4]

Ah! how much better religion understands than philosophism what suits our poor humanity, this intelligence united to organs! She knows that we need spectacles, and she gives us them. She knows that our light and inconstant nature needs diversity, and she has spread it over the Christian year. Man tires of everything, even pleasure. So nothing was more striking formerly in a Catholic country than the coming of Lent, after the succession of the joyful feasts of Christmas, New Year, the Kings, Candlemas. When, in the middle of the night, at eleven at night, the great bell of this tower announced Ash Wednesday to the city wearied with pleasures, everyone went away and found again the grave and religious thoughts, perhaps for an instant too much forgotten amid the intoxication of the joys of the world. And even now, my brethren, if Lent is not for us what it was for our fathers, yet it operates, every year again at this season, a mysterious work, a certain drawing of humanity nearer to God. Our churches are more frequented; one feels the need to come to them. Ah! come then, my brethren, come above all to attend the holy sadnesses of the Church during this great week which begins with the account of the triumph of Jesus in Jerusalem, which proceeds with the history of His sufferings, His crucifixion and His burial, and which ends with the solemnity of His resurrection. How imposing, my brethren, how sad and consoling at once are the ceremonies of the Church during these days of so salutary a memory! All this series of mysteries which succeed one another, the voice of the prophets which comes to mingle with that of the evangelists to tell the sorrows of Jesus, those mysterious noises, echoes of the shock which announced the death of a God, that sacred fire which hides and is extinguished as the day-star was eclipsed, that wooden cross which saved the world and of which the Christian people goes to adore a precious particle, that silent tomb which recalls the sepulchre where Joseph of Arimathea buried the Saviour, that lament and those chants of condolence for the sorrows of a virginal mother who weeps over the death of a son! Once more, my brethren, how beautiful all that is, how great, how worthy of interest! My brethren, must I tell you, every year there lacks only one thing in these great mysteries which the Church celebrates: so fine a spectacle, and no spectators! Ah! often it has seemed to us that this basilica, formerly accustomed to see itself on these days filled with an immense multitude of faithful, showed us its vast naves, empty and deserted, and we heard it lamenting with the accent of Jeremiah that no one came to its solemnities: *Viae Sion lugent eo quod nemo sit qui veniat ad solemnitates.* [The ways of Sion mourn, because there are none that come to the solemn feast. (Lam. 1:4.)] And from the bottom of His sepulchre, Jesus Christ seemed to say also by the mouth of the same prophet: I have trodden the winepress of sorrow alone; I looked round about me, and there was no one who came to compassionate my woes: *Torcular calcavi solus … circumspexi et non erat qui consolaretur.* [I have trodden the winepress alone… I looked, and there was no one to help. (Isa. 63:3, 5; the preacher conflates it with Lam. 1:16.)][5]

Ah! you at least, you will come, faithful Christians. This year again we shall see you follow with interest and piety all the ceremonies and all the mysteries of Holy Week. You will continue to recall to us that faithful disciple and those holy women who, even when everyone abandoned Jesus, had the courage to follow Him to Calvary. You will come also, Christian mothers. It will be given us to see you again surrounded by your children, to whom you will try to make understand these great mysteries, whom you will teach to pray and to weep before the tomb of Jesus. Ah! do not regret a few moments stolen from their studies: there are in these mysteries high lessons, great teachings for the mind and for the heart, and above all there are graces very efficacious and very lasting. All of you who are here, my brethren, you will come at least to kiss in the morning the cross which saved the world, and in the evening to console the sorrows of your mother, the Virgin of Israel.[6]

And for those who have followed the lugubrious ceremonies of Holy Week, how sweet and consoling the feast of Easter will be! The feast of Easter is the feast of Christian joy and gladness: it is thus that all the holy Fathers have spoken of it in their homilies. Nothing is beautiful like the ray of the sun after a long rain, and the smile of joy never has more charm than when it succeeds long sadnesses. There is for the heart an inexpressible charm, an ineffable sweetness in this transition from sorrow to pleasure. So how sweet it is to salute the dawn of the day of Easter! The eve still, it was a tomb, Jeremiah and his songs of death; the

tabernacle was empty, the sacrifice had ceased; the bells had lost even that lugubrious voice which they do not refuse to other mortals when they go down into the grave; the crowd was sad, pensive, silent. And the next morning, I know not what new thing has changed the face of all things; I know not what light has given the holy place a quite different aspect: it is like a ray of life driving out the darkness of death; the walls of the temple and the face of the Christian seem made young again.

The Alleluias begin to resound under the sacred vault. The whole Catholic universe sings at once: Christ is risen! Alleluia! And in her ecstasy of happiness, the Church interrupts all her sentences with this cry of gladness: Alleluia! Then in the evening, she puts into our mouths that hymn so naively joyful, that rhymed history of the resurrection which one of our old kings composed and which little children know.[7] Is there, my brethren, a heart so indifferent that it is not moved when all the faithful, answering the voice of the choir-boy, repeat with so much enthusiasm and with so expansive a jubilation the refrain of the triple Alleluia, and the echoes of our churches repeat that old air which they have known so long, and that song of congratulation to Mary which so well succeeds that of condolence for her sorrows, that song which an angel composed for earth and which is like a sample of the poetry of the heavens: *Regina caeli, laetare*: Queen of heaven, rejoice, because He whom you were worthy to bear in your womb is risen.[8]

Let me tell you here, my brethren, that even pious persons have become too much strangers to the spirit of the Christian mysteries. God, as we have often said, has put all of religion in facts. Let one enter into the spirit of the feasts of Christianity and be penetrated with the thought of the Church, let one weep with her over the death of Jesus, let one rejoice with her at His resurrection: these are the most excellent practices of piety. So did our fathers. Where are those ancient times when history, speaking of a remarkable fact, taught us that the thing happened while the king, the court and almost the whole city were at the matins of Easter? Where are the nearer times when the greatest of our poets, after having celebrated on his lyre the solemnities of Sion, went to Tenebrae, accompanied by the immortal fabulist his friend, to admire the poetry of Jeremiah and Baruch? Then one knew how to identify oneself with the thought of the Church; as one had shared her mourning, one shared her joys and her gladness.[9]

O you who neglect to frequent our temples, let me ask you, is it not true that you deprive yourselves of the purest enjoyments of earth? Is it not true that there is a great void in your existence, and that something is lacking to you? What is lacking to you, ah! come, you will find it here. What do you do in the world? You are bored there. It has been remarked before me, our centuries of egoism are centuries of boredom; the most brilliant gatherings are assemblies of bored people. One knows not how to kill time.

My brethren, we hear every day persons of a certain world, persons Christian besides, excuse certain frivolous, dangerous readings, because, they say, there are no others that interest them and one must employ time on something. But tell me, instead of reading the sombre, sad and disgusting pages of a woman who is the opprobrium of her sex; instead of devouring the miry description of a pen that plays with filth and that brings on stage prostitution and the convict prison,[10] would it not be a thousand times more worthy of you, a thousand times more interesting to come and follow the touching and majestic solemnities of the Church, whose liturgy, admirably beautiful, is all perfumed with unction and gentle sadness, and leaves in the imagination none of those mad ideas, those feverish emotions, which make you a burden to yourselves, to your family, to society? There are a thousand times more beauties in your book of the Office and, in particular, in the offices of Holy Week, than in all the productions of contemporary literature.[11]

And you, young men who hear me, often you come out from your theatres or your nocturnal parties with wearied bodies, agitated minds, hearts burning with the fires of passions. Your diversions are rather an intoxication than a pleasure; it is like an enchanted cup which flatters at first, but which conceals gall and bitterness. Come to our religious assemblies, and you will come out with a soul calmer, more master of itself, and with the impressions of I know not what interior peace which you do not know. Come and you will come out more virtuous. For Catholic solemnities do more than rejoice souls, they make them better; they do not

only scatter flowers on earth, they make germinate there the seeds of heaven and ripen the fruits of eternity.

And you who by your rank, your education, your lights, exercise so great an empire over the mind of the multitude, great ones of the world, why then would you blush to appear in our temples, to give there as to receive examples of useful edification? You wish the people to be religious: but, tell me, religion can sustain and perpetuate itself only by worship; and if this worship is abandoned to the people as a superstition, will it not end by falling in the eyes of the people themselves into discredit and debasement? You call yourselves the friends of the people: well! listen to these considerations which another before me has presented to the friends of the people: “All men carry with them the sentiment of primitive equality; the people cast looks of envy on the rich man who lives in abundance, on the powerful man who crushes it with his pomp: hence the tendency to break the bonds of subordination, a tendency to which the people has so often been excited to give way.”[12]

Well! my brethren, do you wish to soften these rigours of the lot of the multitude, to make it bear and love its condition? Come and mingle with it in the temples: here ranks disappear, all is confounded, annihilated before the infinite majesty; here the people feels that, before God, the first is neither the richest, nor the most powerful, nor the most skilful, but the most virtuous. Come then to attend the mysteries and solemnities of the Church, and you will come out better yourselves, and you will have made others better.

II. I have spoken to you, my brethren, of the mysteries which the Church is going to celebrate; I have only one word more to say to you on the sacraments which the Church commands you to receive.

More than eighteen hundred years ago, one evening, it was the eve of His death, Jesus, having loved His own, loved them to the end. Having gathered them in a banquet hall, and having celebrated with them the figurative Pasch, He told them that He had long sighed for this moment when realities were to succeed figures: *Desiderio desideravi hoc Pascha manducare vobiscum.* [With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you. (Luke 22:15.)] And He took bread in His hands, He blessed it and said to His disciples: Take and eat, this is My body. Then likewise He took the chalice, blessed it, and said to His disciples: Take and drink, this is My blood. Every time you do these things (and you will do them every day to the end of the ages), do them in memory of Me. Amen, amen, I say to you, if anyone does not eat My flesh and drink My blood, he will not have eternal life.

My brethren, behold the great prodigy of divine mercy, behold the astonishing privilege and sweet obligation of the Christian. Admirable sacrament of Catholicism, which consummates the closest of all unions between God and His creature, and which consequently constitutes the most intimate religion. For this word religion signifies the bond which attaches heaven to earth, man to God. Now see how, by communion, heaven stoops down to earth, and earth rises to heaven. The eternal Word, essentially united to the Father and the Holy Spirit, unites Himself in Jesus Christ to human nature, and unites Himself to it in a manner so perfect that, according to the thought of Saint Augustine commented by Saint Thomas, the holy humanity is more united to the Word than the Word is united to the Father and the Holy Spirit, because the Word is in the Father and in the Holy Spirit only by unity of essence, whereas the humanity is in the Word by unity of hypostasis.[13]

It is true that the Word united Himself in this way only to the holy humanity of the Saviour, and not to human nature in all its individuals; but see how this union pursues itself down to us all, see how the incarnation goes, by its consequences, to reach to the depths of our entrails, and to the entrails of creation. In the womb of Mary, the Word becomes incarnate, unites Himself hypostatically to a body and a soul. Then this incarnate Word, this Word made flesh, unites Himself spiritually by grace, corporally and physically by communion, to all human creatures: so that humanity entire, deified in its head which is the humanity of Christ by the hypostatic union, is deified in the rest of its members by the sacramental union of the Eucharist. *O altitudo, o profundum!* [O the depth! (cf. Rom. 11:33).] O height! O depth! Lord, ah! when Your Father, ceasing to restrain Your generous impulses, permitted You at last to take flight toward the earth to reconcile it with the

heavens, oh! how You strode with great steps! From heaven into the virginal womb, from the virginal womb into the stable, from the stable on the cross, from the cross into the tabernacle, from the tabernacle into our heart; and there taking us, seizing us by the depth of our being, You re-ascend triumphant into the heavens like the eagle which carries off its prey.

Ah! let I know not what troubled minds of our century renew the old pagan system of pantheism! As for me, I know only one pantheism; that one is very real, it is this deification, this participation in the substance and in the divine nature, *divinae consortes naturae* [partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4)], which results for creation entire from the Catholic dogma of the communion of the Eucharistic mystery. It is in the manner of Saint Paul that I understand that pantheism: *Omnia vestra sunt, vos autem Christi, Christus autem Dei.* [All things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. (1 Cor. 3:22–23.)] All the rest of creation belongs to man; man incorporates it into himself either by eating, or by sight, or by the other senses: *Omnia vestra sunt.* Man, in whom all the rest is as it were gathered, is incorporated to Jesus Christ by communion: *Omnia vestra sunt, vos autem Christi.* And Christ holds to God by the hypostatic union with the Word who is eternally in the bosom of the Father: *Omnia vestra sunt, vos autem Christi, Christus autem Dei.* Behold how this infinite ocean which wells up from the bosom of the Father, and which floods the soul and flesh of the Saviour, arrives through Christ as far as us, and descends through us to the entrails of creation. Creation entire communes with man, man communes with Christ, Christ communes with God: *Omnia vestra sunt, vos autem Christi, Christus autem Dei.*

God, in the Incarnation, borrowed from our nature flesh and blood: *Participavit carni et sanguini.* [He also Himself in like manner hath been partaker of the same. (Heb. 2:14.)] But God borrows only to repay with interest; and this flesh and this blood, He gives them back to us by communion, and gives them back to us supernaturalised, deified. He borrowed flesh and blood from us to make Himself man, He who was God; and in giving them back to us, He makes gods of us who were men. It is Saint Augustine who speaks thus. Once more, *o altitudo, o profundum!* Oh yes, how well I understand the word of the Psalmist: the Lord has summed up in a single prodigy all His other prodigies, He gave Himself as food to those who love Him: *Memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum … escam dedit timentibus se.* [He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works… He hath given food to them that fear Him. (Ps. 110:4–5.)]

And there are found men who laugh at communion, men who laugh at the paschal duty. Impossible, my brethren, to descend from the heights where this mystery has just placed us, to answer the attacks of ignorance and the railleries of hatred. Let us say only this word again with Saint Paul, that communion which effects a sort of fusion between heaven and earth, between the divine nature and the human nature, also realises in the great family of men the closest fraternity and the truest equality. Have we not become a single body, said the great Apostle, we who all sit at the same table, who eat of the same bread, and who drink of the same Chalice? *Unum corpus multi sumus qui de uno pane participamus.* [We, being many, are one body, all that partake of one bread. (1 Cor. 10:17.)] Let people speak of equality as much as they will: there is under the sun only one table where the poor man comes to sit beside the rich; that table is the altar; that banquet hall is the Catholic temple. Ah! happy, my brethren, happy those who shall come to sit at this sacred table! This banquet, you all know, is full of delights; all of you have tasted it, at least once, and that day was the most beautiful of your life. Why then, my brethren, why not return to it? Return to it all, my brethren, and let us make this banquet a family one, it will be sweeter still. Come to it all, what prevents it?

"I should communicate willingly," you say, "but I am not worthy of it." What do you say there? Take care. What you say there proves one thing, the necessity of a sacrament preparatory to communion. I knew a man of mature age, who had long and gloriously served the fatherland, he bore the authentic marks of it on his face. This warrior retired from the camps wished to instruct himself in religion. He read the Gospel; he found there these words of Jesus Christ: "If you do not eat My flesh, and if you do not drink My blood, you will not have life." He closed the book, and said to himself: One must communicate, that is evident from the words I

have just read. Now, if one must communicate, one must confess. For I might weep my sins and ask God pardon for them, I feel I should never have the audacity to communicate without confessing first. He confessed and he communicated. And today he confesses and communicates others, for he is a priest. And that does not astonish me; for this warrior had the eye of a theologian, and he had thus seized in the very depth of the nature of man an irresistible argument on the necessity of confession. Indeed, my brethren, the precept of communion being laid down, where is the loyal man who would dare approach the altar without having confessed? Therefore, my brethren, one would have to close at once the tabernacles and the confessionals, because without the latter it is impossible to approach the former.[14]

"But how then make such painful confidences to one who is after all only a man like me?" What do you say there again? Yes, after all, my brethren, and apart from the power he has received from God, the priest by his nature is a man like you; a man who perhaps has fallen into the same weaknesses as you, who in any case feels that his corrupt heart can drag him into them every day. And it is for that reason, I shall tell you, applying the words of Saint Paul to my subject, that confession should frighten you less; it is that the priest, being a man and passing through the same trials as you, will be more merciful and will know better how to compassionate your faults: *Tentatum per omnia, ut pontifex fieret … Non habemus pontificem qui non possit compati infirmitatibus nostris.* [Tempted in all things… that He might become a high priest. For we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities. (Heb. 2:17–18; 4:15.)] The priest, because he is a man, will be able to say to you as Augustine (listen to these words, they have always moved me in the mouth of this great man, so merciful because he had come back from so far himself): My son, my son, why fear, why flee him who has shared all your falls? *Fili mi, consortem casuum tuorum quid fugis?* [My son, why dost thou flee the companion of thy falls?] Yes, the priest is a man who on the one hand is inclined to mercy by the sentiment he has of his own weakness, and who on the other hand has received from God all power to pardon. God has put in our hands a sponge with which we efface, and for ever, all that is shown us. Confession is nothing else than that.[15]

"It is very painful to open oneself thus to a man!" Tell me, my brethren, are there not other interests, less essential, for which one must indeed open oneself to a man? The guilty man who wishes to avoid condemnation by justice, does he not open himself to a man, to his advocate? Can the latter plead the cause if the client does not make revelations to him? And, my brethren, does not this confession of the guilty man to his defender suppose a very great confidence? is it not very painful? does it not go very far sometimes? Every day, for temporal interests, are not very delicate confidences made to a notary? Is not the sick man often forced to show his secret wounds to the physician? how would the physician heal them without that? And, my brethren, this confession of the sick man to the physician, how far must it not sometimes go? Now, my brethren, if the nature of things requires that man have faith in man for passing and perishable interests, why should man not have faith in man for eternal interests? Is it then because this man presents himself in the name of God, and with a religious character, which is one guarantee more? No, my brethren, since you have the man of your affairs, the man of your health, God did not act as a tyrant in requiring that you should have also the man of your soul, of your conscience.

My dearly beloved brethren, so much evil is said of confession only because one is afraid of it, and one is wrong to be afraid of it. One is wrong, for, my brethren, we live in the midst of you, we are your fellow citizens, all of us who are priests; you can know us, you can read on our foreheads, in our hearts, and it must be easy for you to see that we have only pardons in hand, that we do not seek to weary consciences, but only to loose them, to unburden them, to send them back absolved.

It has sometimes been said of priests that they would like to make everyone confess. Nothing is more true, my brethren. And what harm would there be, my brethren (except for us), what harm would there be, for example, if the whole city of Chartres confessed and communicated at Easter? Tell me, my brethren, would consciences be less tranquil for it? Would families be less united? Would trade be conducted with a less

scrupulous probity? Would the public thing be the worse governed? Ah! my brethren, do not speak ill of confession, do not laugh at confession. The Protestants regret it. A celebrated Protestant physician has just written a book in which he says that for his Catholic patients he has a resource which he lacks for Protestant patients, namely confession. He assures us that after confession he has always found his patients better; and, my brethren, every Catholic priest can tell you that after a well-made confession it still happens so every day. And this Protestant physician concludes that, even from the sanitary point of view, the suppression which heresy made of confession is an evil. Therefore, my brethren, you are perhaps a homicide, you who have closed the door to the Catholic priest, for fear that he might carry his consolations to a soul worn out perhaps more by remorse than by sickness.[16]

Faithful Christians (there are such in all conditions, in all social positions), you will confess; you will be no less esteemed by men for it, and you will be happier and more tranquil. You will confess, and we shall confess ourselves, and all of us will have the consolation of sitting at the same table and sharing the same banquet.

And you, Christians still uncertain and wavering, perhaps some of you, touched, shaken, will make up your minds: ah! how happy those will be! Others will still delay, they will still prolong their torment. May You, Lord, level the obstacles before them, bring their hearts back by a gentle slope, revive at least faith in their souls, and convince them well that, if they had not the courage in life, at least at death they would be cruel to themselves if they rejected Your mercy.

Dearly beloved brethren, the nuptials of the Lord are about to begin; soon the days of the general feast will be over. If some do not take part in it, let them remember that the table is always open, that they will always find friends to introduce and present them, and that if our voice henceforth falls silent, our heart will not cease to pray, our hands will not cease to offer the holy Victim for the salvation of those who have gathered with so much avidity and eagerness the holy word we have announced to them.

Virgin, mother of sorrows, conclude these instructions yourself by blessing with your sacred hand both pastors and faithful.[17]

Translator’s notes

1. The editor’s notes “See above, p. 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 210” refer to the 1840 homily (prône) on Holy Week printed earlier in the Oudin volume, from which this instruction borrows passages (these page numbers are those of the French edition).

2. The remark on Augustine and Saint Thomas on the union of the Word with the humanity is given as stated; it is a rhetorical, not a strictly dogmatic, formulation.

3. “Exhausted, the sponge”: “Dieu nous a mis en main une éponge” — the image of the sponge wiping out sins is the preacher’s own.

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[1] The subject of this instruction has already been treated in part in the form of a homily (*prône*). We shall indicate in notes the borrowings made by the instruction of 1841 from the homily of 1840. (Editor’s note.)

[2] The phrase is attributed to Bossuet by the preacher; not verified here.

[3] See above, p. 210 [of the French edition]. (Editor’s note.)

[4] M. Frayssinous: *Religion envisagée dans le culte* [Religion viewed in worship]. (Note of M. l’abbé Pie.) (The work is presumably Frayssinous’s *Défense du christianisme*; not verified.)

[5] See above, p. 197. (Editor’s note.)

[6] See above, p. 199. (Editor’s note.)

[7] The preacher does not name the “old king” who composed the rhymed hymn; the tradition ascribes a Paschal sequence to King Robert the Pious of France, but I have not verified this.

[8] See above, pp. 199–200. (Editor’s note.)

[9] See above, p. 201. (Editor's note.) The "greatest of our poets" and "the immortal fabulist his friend" are Racine and La Fontaine; the preacher does not name them. Identification mine; the anecdote is not verified here.

[10] The preacher does not name the author; evidently George Sand, or perhaps Eugène Sue; the identification is mine and not verified here.

[11] See above, p. 198. (Editor's note.)

[12] The quotation is attributed by the preacher to "another before me," not named; presumably Frayssinous (cf. the note above). Not verified here.

[13] The preacher's statement of the thought of Augustine "commented by Saint Thomas" is given as he puts it; not verified here, and the proposition is strongly worded ("more united").

[14] The "warrior" turned priest is not named; the anecdote is as the preacher gives it.

[15] The words attributed to Augustine are as the preacher gives them; not verified here.

[16] The "celebrated Protestant physician" and his book are not named; not identified here.

[17] Cf. Appendix I: A, 31, 67 bis. (Editor's note.)

n° 26. Homily for Easter Day, 1841

Chartres cathedral, Easter 1841.

Haec dies quam fecit Dominus, exultemus et laetemur in ea. [This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein.] This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and exult with gladness. (Ps. 117:24.)

It is today, my brethren, the feast of the triumphs of the Church; it is today the great day which the Lord has made, and in which one must rejoice: day on which the divine head of the Church triumphed, day since which it is no longer possible to doubt that the Church must triumph for ever: *Haec dies quam fecit Dominus, exultemus et laetemur in ea.*

Until this day, faith could hesitate, hope could be shaken, the disciples could await with anxiety the outcome of their Master's promises. But today, when His word is accomplished, today that He is risen as He said, no more hesitation, no more doubt: He is God, His religion is divine; He triumphed over death, His religion will triumph like Him. Ah! we had confidence without doubt, my God, and we hoped; but in the end we were, in spite of ourselves, in perplexity; we dared not speak, we feared to flatter ourselves. And that is why, now that we are assured of the prodigy, that is why from our breast for an instant oppressed by the anxious feeling of waiting, there escapes a cry of joy that we can no longer hold back: Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen as He said, alleluia! Therefore all He said is true, therefore the immortality that He promised to His religion is assured to it. Therefore on this day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and exult with gladness: *Haec dies quam fecit Dominus, exultemus et laetemur in ea.*

Let us rejoice, Christians, my brethren, for the question is decided. Jesus Christ is God, His religion is divine. The malice of men has been deceived; it stamped the truth with the seals of authenticity, when it thought to seal it for ever in a tomb. Hear the account of the holy women who came this morning at the rising of the sun; hear that of Peter and John who ran to the sepulchre; hear the deposition of the guards; see the stone rolled back, the shroud hanging out of the empty tomb; interrogate that Angel with a look piercing as lightning, with garments white as snow: You seek Jesus of Nazareth? He is risen as He said: *Surrexit, non est hic.* [He is risen, He is not here. (Mark 16:6.)] Christians, this is indeed the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and exult with gladness: *Haec dies quam fecit Dominus, exultemus et laetemur in ea.*

Rejoice, you who have wept with Jesus, you who have shared His agony, who have associated yourselves with His sufferings and His crucifixion, rejoice, you who have been buried with Him. Rejoice, for His resurrection is the pledge and model of yours. Ah! for you, this is the day which the Lord has made, and in which one must rejoice: *Haec dies quam fecit Dominus, exultemus et laetemur in ea.*

Rejoice, little children, and be proud of the new garments which the tenderness of your mothers has made you try on this day. It was formerly the custom to confer baptism only on the day of Easter. Christian mothers, teach your children to rejoice on this day, and tell them what Saint Gregory of Nazianzen already said, that the renewal of their outward garments is a symbol of the garment of grace and of the renewal of the soul. Tell them that it is to thank God for the grace of their baptism that the Church, for eight days, is going to go in procession to the sacred fonts in which they received that saving bath; tell them that, in ancient times, the newly baptised were thus led all the week in white garments, and that even now it is for them that the Church prays. Christian mothers, tell that to your children, and pray yourselves to the Lord that the grace of their baptism be always fresh, new, intact in their soul, and that they preserve it, if possible, until the day when they make their first Easter. Tell them to rejoice, for it is for them the day which the Lord has made: *Haec dies quam fecit Dominus, exultemus et laetemur in ea.*

And you, Christians of all ages, you who have eaten the Pasch of the Saviour, you who have obeyed the laws of the Church, you who have discharged your heart of the iniquities that oppressed it, you who have sat down to the banquet of life, rejoice. There is no sweeter nuptials than those you have celebrated, no bread more delicious than that on which you have fed, no chalice more intoxicating than that from which you have drunk. He who eats of this bread and drinks of this chalice will live for ever. Today is the day of the Pasch, that is, of the passage of the Lord: *Phase, id est transitus Domini.* [Phase, that is, the passage of the Lord. (Exod. 12:11.)] Rejoice, you whose house has been stained with the blood of the Lamb: the exterminating Angel will respect that sanctuary. Rejoice, all of you in whom the Lord has passed, in whom He dwells at this moment: *Haec dies quam fecit Dominus, exultemus et laetemur in ea.*

But, Lord Jesus, complete Your triumph. Ah! there are still souls which sleep, which slumber the sleep of death. There are souls still buried, souls on whom weighs the heavy stone of sin. Lord, these souls belonged to You once, they belong to You still, You left in them traces of Your sojourn; there are still good sentiments, pious movements; in these days, You have renewed intelligences in this place; they have felt a recrudescence of Christian spirit, they are shaken. Lord, Lord, lift, lift the stone, cast it far away, and rise triumphant over those hearts too long benumbed by the cold of death. Divine Jesus, the old man Simeon said of You when You were just born, You are set for the ruin, but also for the resurrection of many. Today that You are risen, work then this prodigy of raising the souls that are dead.

Resuscitate Your Church. What! is she then dead, the Church? Oh no, my brethren, God keep me from that blasphemy, but she is in days of trial. She is baptised with the blood of her Master, and drunk with His chalice. She is iniquitously proscribed, condemned, scourged; she is derisively dressed in tatters of purple, while they quarrel and divide her spoils. Divine Jesus, Your Passion is not finished. It renews itself every day against Your Church, that is, again against You. For almost a century now it has been for Your Church only one long Good Friday. Lord Jesus, they hope to put You back in the tomb; guards are commanded to watch You; the seals of the State are asked of Pilate to seal You there authentically, officially, so that it may be a legal crime for You to come out. Lord, and pious souls, in these sad days, know only how to bring tears and perfumes to Your sepulchre; and we, Your priests, we can almost do nothing more. Lord, ah! will there soon be a morning when we shall see the stone rolled back, the sepulchre open, the guards driven off by fright, an Angel who will say to us: Jesus Christ is risen? You can, O my God; You know how to raise nations as individuals. You can, and You will: *Positus est hic … in resurrectionem.* [This one is set… for the resurrection (Luke 2:34).]

Lord, be the resurrection of all sinners; be the resurrection of nations. In place of vices, raise up virtues; in place of cupidity, raise up love; in place of the morality of interests, raise up the morality of duties; in place of torpor and indifference, raise up faith and fervour; in place of lust, raise up purity and innocence. Lord, and in place of our despair, our dejection, raise up courage and hope. Be, Lord, the resurrection of the flock; be the resurrection of the pastor.

Oh yes, O divine Jesus, we ask it of You on this day with a very lively faith and a very ardent desire. Risen Jesus, give back health and strength to the tender and beloved pastor of this parish;[1] do not leave any longer in the bonds of suffering him whose heart is so pure, whose soul is so tender, him who can do all for Your glory. The trial has been long enough; the agony, the cross and the sepulchre have had their share; Lord, raise up Your Christ, it is time both for him and for us, we have need of it. We suffer when his paternal eye is not there to encourage us; our tongue then knows only how to stammer, and all our ministry is stamped with I know not what seal of hesitation and diffidence. It is time for the flock, for no one knows how to guide it like him. No other hand has that touch at once delicate and strong for the handling of souls. There are few Francis de Sales: do not break, Lord, him whom Your mercy had raised up for this people dear to You.

I know, O my God, how much the suffering of the just is a holocaust of good odour before You; but I know also all the price You attach to the purity of hearts, to the virginity of souls. May those who seek You and who seek only You, O God of Israel, not be confounded over Your servant! Holy Virgin, it will be then above all that you will rejoice, when he whom you had chosen for your privileged temple shall be restored by you to health and to all his functions. Spare me henceforth, O holy Virgin, from taking the word in his place.[2]

Translator's notes

1. The heading dates the homily 1841: it is the Easter after the Lent course of n° 20–25.

2. The "pastor of this parish" is, by the editor's footnote, M. Lecomte, curé of Notre-Dame de Chartres (the cathedral parish); the sermon is thus a prayer for his recovery from illness. The preacher asks to be spared "taking the word in his place," i.e. preaching in his stead.

3. "Baptisée du sang… abreuvée de son calice": alludes to Matt. 20:22–23.

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[1] M. Lecomte, curé of Notre-Dame de Chartres. (Editor's note.)

[2] Cf. Appendix I: A, 32; p. 22, no. 17. (Editor's note.)

n° 27. Allocution for the Marriage of a Catholic and a Protestant Woman, in the Sacristy of Chartres Cathedral

Sacristy of the cathedral of Chartres, 14 April 1841.[1]

The engagements you are about to take, my very dear Brother, and you also, Mademoiselle, though not contracted at the foot of the altars and in the presence of the God who resides in the tabernacles, are none the less sacred and solemn engagements which the Church, in her maternal indulgence, is willing to accept on earth, and which He ratifies in the heavens who is at once the author of religion and of nature. Independently of the rites of the Catholic sacrament, marriage is still a holy and religious thing. That is why you have prepared for it, you, my very dear Brother, by the practices which the Church commands her children, and you, I do not doubt, Mademoiselle, by good desires and by the recollection of prayer.

You, my very dear Brother, will be careful to make your religion holy and venerable in the eyes of your wife. You must be so delicate toward her that she becomes full of esteem for a religion which so well inspires those who observe it. May your good examples, your gentle insinuations, make her regret not to come and kneel before the same altars, share the same sacraments, perform the same practices as you!

Henceforth, my very dear Brother, you are the more bound, for the rest of your life, to be sincerely religious, because your piety alone will be able to obtain from heaven graces which supply for those to which your quality as a Catholic would give you a right at this moment, if the different worship of your wife did not stay my hand ready to bless you.

And you, Mademoiselle, while regretting to grant you only a small part of my ministry, permit me to tell you nevertheless that it is not without happiness and joy that, on behalf of the Catholic Church, I come to receive your engagements. Yes, I rejoice, because holy Church, our Mother, is going to re-enter into precious rights. One has to go back only a few generations to find in your ancestors our brothers, children of the Church like us. This chain, broken in only a few links, is soon to be rejoined, and the Church, that mother so tender, so full of love (for it is the proper character of the Catholic Church to be full of love), the Church will bathe with the tears of her joy the cradle of your children who will become hers again. Thus will be accomplished the word of Saint Augustine, who said that Jesus Christ gives Himself children not only by the womb of His spouse who is the Catholic Church, but also by the womb of the handmaids who are the separated sects: *Sed et ex utero ancillarum.* [But also from the womb of the handmaids.][2]

However, O my dear Sister, may you not be only Hagar, but become Sarah! I have asked it for you with a very tender and lively sentiment of the Lord, I shall ask it of Him again. Perhaps one day, become a mother, when you press to your breast your young child brought back from the Catholic font, grace will pass from his heart into yours. And you will wish to have with him, in God one same Father, in the Church one same mother, that which flourished in your country for so many centuries, and which must raise and nourish all your posterity. So be it.[3]

Translator's notes

1. A mixed marriage (a Catholic man, a Protestant bride) could not at that time be celebrated at the altar with the nuptial blessing; hence the sacristy, "the engagements … not contracted at the foot of the altars," and the priest's "hand ready to bless" being stayed (the Church then permitted the exchange of consent with the pastor's assistance but without the nuptial blessing — my explanation, not stated in the text).

2. "Ma chère Sœur… Agar… Sara" refers to Gen. 16 and 21 as the preacher uses it.

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[1] The date, 14 April 1841, is that of the printed title of the piece.

[2] The saying of Augustine is as the preacher gives it (cf. his comparison of Hagar's children, Gal. 4:22–31); not verified here.

[3] Cf. Appendix I: A, 38. (Editor's note.)

n° 28. Homily for the Fifth Sunday after Easter, Eve of the Rogation Days: On the Efficacy of Prayer Intervening in Natural Things

Chartres cathedral, fifth Sunday after Easter, 1841.

Populo huic factum est cor incredulum et exasperans, recesserunt et abierunt. Et non dixerunt in corde suo: Metuamus Dominum Deum nostrum, qui dat nobis pluviam temporaneam et serotinam in tempore suo; plenitudinem annuae messis custodientem nobis. [But this people hath a revolting and rebellious heart: they are revolted and gone away. And they have not said in their heart: Let us fear the Lord our God, who giveth us the early and the latter rain in due season, keeping for us the fullness of the yearly harvest.] The heart of this people has become an incredulous and rebellious heart; they have withdrawn and gone away from God. They have not said in themselves: Let us fear the Lord our God, who gives us at their term the first and the last rains, and keeps for us every year a rich and full harvest. (Jeremias 5:23–24.)

MY DEAR BRETHREN, for three days the Church is going to invoke God the Creator that He may lower a look of kindness on the works of His hands, and that He may make fruitful, preserve and ripen the goods of the earth. For three days the countrysides will resound with sacred songs, religion will carry its blessings to nature, and prayer will struggle against the elements of disorder.

Alas! my dear brethren, let us say it, though with regret: apart from a few humble hamlets where faith has kept its empire, the Rogations hardly exist for us any more except in memory, and in the fine and touching

descriptions that have been made of them. In the plains of our rich country, the philosopher ploughman would blush to associate himself with the holy cortege that goes to pray around his flowering harvests; and, in our towns, an unconcern I know not to what to attribute reduces to an obscure, neglected and solitary ceremony those great litanies and those solemn processions which for more than a thousand years amazed and at the same time edified the city and its surroundings. Oh! how cold the human race makes itself and how dry it becomes toward its God, since it has no more ardour and eagerness except for matter! And yet well-understood egoism should know that it has need of God, and that if His fruitful hand comes to close, all wealth will disappear from the earth.

The heart of this people, fattened with the benefits of God, has become an incredulous and rebellious heart. They have withdrawn and gone away from God. They have not said in themselves: Let us fear the Lord our God, who gives us at their term the first and the last rains, and keeps for us every year a rich and full harvest. *Populo huic factum est cor incredulum et exasperans, recesserunt et abierunt. Et non dixerunt in corde suo: Metuamus Dominum Deum nostrum, qui dat nobis pluviam temporaneam et serotinam in tempore suo; plenitudinem annuae messis custodientem nobis.*

My dearly beloved brethren, because science has ascertained in these latter times a few more marvels among the works of the Most High; because the observation and experience of past centuries have brought a few discoveries in the order of natural things, man thinks himself henceforth dispensed from having recourse to Him who is the first cause from which all other causes proceed. We walk as if we were under the empire of a fatal necessity, as if we depended solely on second causes to which we suppose a blind direction and immutable laws. I am going to try, my brethren, to answer these false ideas of our century, by establishing, not successively but concurrently, these two truths:

1st. That the discoveries of the physical sciences do no injury to the power or the providence of God; consequently:

2nd. That these discoveries diminish in no way the necessity and efficacy of prayer.

My subject will force me to touch lightly on some questions perhaps a little scientific and to employ some technical terms unusual in the pulpit; I shall try to be intelligible to all. And since the objections drawn from science have been made popular and translated into a language which the cottage has only too well understood, I shall try to adapt my answers also to all minds.

First proposition: The discovery of the laws which govern the natural world does no injury to the power or the providence of God. Therefore, second proposition: These discoveries diminish in no way the necessity and efficacy of prayer.

I. It is a remarkable thing, my dearly beloved brethren, and one that has been remarked, that this wise and prevenient economy of God’s providence, which presides over everything, left men for more than fifty centuries on earth before delivering to them certain secrets of nature. Since Adam had been punished for attempting the mysterious fruit of the tree of science, nature was for man like a closed book. The physics of the ancients, so superior to us in all the rest, was nearly nil; they despised that science, and, as Count de Maistre has observed, they attached to it I know not what light idea of impiety. One must not, said Plato, push too far the search for causes, for, in truth, that is not pious.[1] This scruple of a sage of antiquity was only too well founded, as was seen much later. During the four thousand years which preceded Christianity, and for more than a thousand years after this great light had risen on the world, men, in their pious and venerable simplicity, regarded as effects due to the immediate action of the divine power and providence a great number of phenomena which the calculations and experiments of the moderns have shown to be only regular results of the ordinary laws of inert nature.

Assuredly I do not regret these progresses of science, never will true science harm religion; but I shall say courageously, the religion of the ancients gained by this precious ignorance, in that, not knowing second causes, they were not tempted to stop at them and close their eyes to the first cause: not being occupied with the study, observation and analysis of the means and laws of nature, they carried themselves back to the author and lawgiver. Everything in nature spoke to them of God, and in that they were in the truth, and I dare say, in the end they were more advanced than we. We know second causes better than they; they knew the first cause better than we. They did not know, but, after all, they believed all that the most perfected science would have led them to believe; we know, but we no longer believe, because our half-science has taught us only to doubt. The conduct of Providence was then very profoundly wise. God understood that the science of His laws and means would be a snare for man; He hid then His springs, for fear that in seeing them man might attribute everything to them, without thinking henceforth of the hand of the creator and mover. But at last, when the Christian had subjugated all science, when the action of the Catholic priesthood had dematerialised all the schools, when theology had taken its place at the head of teaching, and the other faculties had ranged themselves around her like ladies of honour round their sovereign, according to the thought of Saint Thomas, the human race being thus prepared by the doctrines of spiritualism, it seemed that the time had come to initiate it to the study of matter, and the natural sciences were given to it. Alas! and in spite of all these precautions of Providence, experience soon proved that it was dangerous for sinful man, that is, for man too unhappily disposed to let matter dominate over spirit, that it was dangerous for him, I say, to read the book of nature, an insidious book from which I know not what fatal draught makes one forget the author, as soon as one has read a few pages. A few giant minds, like those of Copernicus, Descartes, Kepler and Galileo, knew how to rise nearly above the screen which matter was going to interpose between the human race and its author. Bacon and Locke, of lower stature, began to lose sight of the spiritualist doctrines, and prelude that materialist and fatalist philosophy which was not long in invading the learned world, and in translating itself, in society and even among the people, into the abandonment of all worship and all prayer. What is the use of praying, indeed, if immutable and eternal laws govern the world? What is the use of making the wish of intelligence intervene in effects brought about by blind causes, which know neither whom nor what, and go their way all the same? Let us enter a little into the detail.

One would think, my brethren, that the man who studies and discovers the secrets of nature, when his mind has just seized a long-hidden law, goes and prostrates himself before the Creator to adore His power and providence in this new marvel. It ought to be so, and it is the malice and ignorance of man one must blame if most often it turns out otherwise.

Indeed, my brethren, is the power of God less admirable, whether He produces certain effects immediately, or has attached the constant reproduction of these effects to a permanent law of His will? For example, the world had long admired the power and magnificence of the Most High in those admirable globes suspended from the vault of the heavens, and which so regularly describe the circle of their revolutions in the firmament. Poetry and prayer had often exalted Him whom they pictured to themselves supporting the stars in His hand, or directing them by means of an angelic intelligence. Hymns of love seemed to escape from the bosom of those celestial harmonies, and the royal prophet sang: The heavens teach the earth to revere their author: *Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei.* [The heavens show forth the glory of God. (Ps. 18:2.)]

Suddenly, I know not what muse with a disenchanting face, pencil and compass in hand, presents herself coldly, and protests against the ignorant enthusiasm of all past centuries. It is natural science; listen to her. She has just discovered that neither God nor the Angels have anything to do with the direction of the stars; she has, by learned calculations and by the rich resources of mathematical analysis, ascertained the natural law according to which all the stars balance each other mutually. The genius of Newton has stolen from nature the admirable law of gravitation, in which an attractive and repulsive virtue combine, whose forces, subject to calculation, explain both earth and heavens. Therefore, cries the senseless troop of what are called

the learned, it is not God, but a law of the natural world which supports the stars and balances the universe.

What an unreasonable conclusion! The genius of a man has just discovered an admirable law, and from the discovery of this law you triumph against the lawgiver! I draw a quite contrary conclusion, and this constant and regular law seems to me infinitely proper to exalt the power of the Creator God, who is shown to us thereby providing from the origin of things for an infinity of diverse effects by one or two principles of an admirable simplicity. Because the laws of nature, always constant and always uniform, resemble in no way our human legislations, floating at the will of the wind and fragile supports of a perishable order, wearing out from one sun to the next and calling ceaselessly for the hand of the workman to be restored; because all these laws unfold in the midst of the universe in a marvellous hierarchy of causes and effects, reigning gently and strongly over the world, subject to one another according to their importance, keeping their rank without clashing or confusing, and concurring together, like the infinite cogwheels of an infinite machine, to the adorable end which the all-powerful workman who formed it proposed to himself, you want me to deny the intervention and necessity of a lawgiver! It is not God who by Himself or by His Angels leads and supports the stars, it is the law of gravitation! And who made the law of gravitation? And what is gravitation? My brethren, let calculations and theories perfect themselves as much as one will, to deduce physical phenomena from one another and make of them a perfect chain, it will still be necessary that this chain of effects and causes arrive at a first cause, at a first link! Now this first cause, what is it? This link, who is the author of it?

One of the most learned men our century has seen die, after having expounded to the Institute a series of admirable calculations by which, by means of a fluid whose existence is moreover demonstrated, he established irrefragably, it seems, the physical cause and the constant law of the flux and reflux of the sea, ended his report with these ironical words: Behold then, gentlemen, him who puts a bridle on the fury of the waves![2] My brethren, however eminent this man was, I should like to find in my heart something other than a feeling of pity, not only for him, but for poor human science, so weak, so arrogant, to which the least success turns the head to the point of making it insolent toward God.

Ungrateful man! God has just revealed to you one of His mysteries, and you blaspheme Him! This fluid whose virtue you have discovered and whose power you have calculated, who then made it? This equilibrium which results from it, who then maintains it? That God, by a cause so simple, by an invisible agent whose existence sixty centuries ignored, should obtain so prodigious an effect, is not that an admirable thing? After your discovery, is it then less true that it is God who puts a bridle on the fury of the waves, and that it is He who said to the sea, showing it the grain of sand: You will come thus far and no further? My brethren, it is a truth of experience, a distressing truth, that the men who study nature reject God from farther off, in proportion as He reveals Himself more to them, and that they concentrate and sink further into purely material and mechanical causes and laws, in proportion as the supreme and intelligent lawgiver wishes to call them into the high regions of His power and wisdom.[3]

II. But it is above all against the providential action of God, and consequently against the utility and efficacy of prayer, that natural causes and general laws are objected. The Church, for example, has ordered at various epochs solemn prayers and processions. What are the Rogations which we are going to celebrate? They are solemn prayers established in France in the fifth century by Saint Mamertus, prescribed later at Rome by Saint Gregory the Great, on the occasion of various scourges which afflicted cities and their surroundings: violent storms, earthquakes, continual rains, unleashing of wild beasts, and many other disasters in which the anger of God was recognised.

Superstition, superstition! science is going to cry to you. All these pretended scourges are nothing other than the natural result of the mutual action of the substances which enter into the composition of this world; and thus a storm, an epidemic, an earthquake, a bad vegetation are things which depend no more on the crimes than on the virtues of men, and in which the anger of heaven has no part, any more than the prayers of earth can do anything about them. All that holds to invariable, immutable laws.

My dearly beloved brethren, if this language were well-founded, nothing would remain for us but to submit to blind Fate, to deny Providence, and to give the lie to the universal cry of all peoples and all centuries, which called public misfortunes chastisements of heaven, and which prayed to appease the angry God. O God, how horrible it would be to live thus under the absolute empire of natural causes, exposed at every instant to be crushed, annihilated by the terrible springs of this blind machine which knows neither whom nor what! But, thank God, it is not so, and if God made laws, He presides over their execution, and He has reserved to Himself to apply them, to modify them, to distribute them according to His good pleasure. People speak of inflexible laws, there are none. I see on the contrary everywhere only supple and flexible laws.

God, my brethren, sometimes works miracles against the nature of things, that is, He sometimes inverts His laws, for example when He raises a dead man. But most often God exercises His action within the very limit of His laws, that is, by such or such a particular application of His general laws. For example, it is a law of nature, a law which God laid down, that clouds form in the air, and that in a certain given time such a quantity of rain falls: that is the invariable law. To ask God to annihilate the clouds and the rains would be a rash petition. But these rains, according as they fall in such or such a season, in such or such a quantity, will produce floods, prevent droughts, favour or annihilate vegetation: that is the flexible part of the law. It depends on God whether the substances which form the clouds gather or disperse, whether the rain floods the desert which will not profit by it or the field which will profit: now that is what prayer can ask of God, and what it can obtain. While recognising that rain is the result of a natural cause, it will none the less be true that God can use rains and floods as a scourge at the orders of His anger; that He can manage voluntary rains for the harvest of the just man who has invoked Him: *Pluviam voluntariam* [a free rain (Ps. 67:10)]; that it is good to invoke Him, that He may send us the dews of heaven in their season: *Pluviam temporaneam et serotinam in tempore suo.*

My dearly beloved brethren, one cannot refuse to God as much power as a man can himself exercise over the elements. See this physicist, this chemist in his cabinet. His intelligent hand, transporting substances at will and combining them together, neutralising one by the other or activating them, produces so to speak all it wishes. Now the universe is like the laboratory of God and of His Angels, and also that of the demons, in the measure God permits them. No doubt that the all-powerful hand of God, in directing at will the course of the elements, can put them in position to produce of themselves, that is, solely by their natural properties, all that His adorable providence shall judge fitting for His glory, for the good of those He wishes to protect and the chastisement of those He wishes to punish.

Let us apply this to storms. Our learned young men of today will tell you that our fathers were long superstitious. The world believed, for five thousand seven hundred years and more, that thunder is the weapon of God: it was a truth which seemed as certain as the immortality of the soul. “For me,” said one of our poets, “who believe the soul immortal and that it is God who thunders.”[4] But Franklin stole from God His thunder; it is known today that lightning is only the electric spark strengthened. Well! what do you conclude from that? I conclude that it is not God who thunders, that it is not God who acts by second causes, that their course is invariable, that our fears and our prayers are equally vain. My dearly beloved brethren, all monstrous conclusions. But this mass of electricity, can God or can He not dissipate it, by neutralising the contrary substances one by the other? But this lightning, can God make it fall on the rock of the desert which it will break to your profit, or on your head which it will pulverise, or on your fields which the hail will devastate?

My dearly beloved brethren, it is then certain that the discoveries of the natural sciences take nothing from the power of God, nor from His providence; that consequently they do not destroy the utility and efficacy of prayer. Prayer can obtain from God miracles properly so called, of the first order, that is, exceptions, derogations from the laws of nature; but, all the more, it will obtain from God that, while maintaining the general laws, He make such or such particular applications of them which depend solely on His will. Man

can by his industry turn aside a storm, that is the effect of the lightning rod. And one would refuse to the infinite power of God, and to the great power of His Angels, what one grants and recognises in man! What an absurdity! Therefore, my brethren, I shall say to you with a great man of our century speaking to a young French exile, “When you return to your country, I urge you to continue to say there the prayers of the Rogations.”[5]

J.-J. Rousseau used this hypocritical language: I, he says, meditate on the order of the universe to adore the wise author who makes Himself felt in it, I am moved by His benefits, I bless Him for His gifts, but I do not pray to Him. What should I ask of Him? That He change for me the course of things, that He work miracles in my favour? I who must love above all the order established by His wisdom and maintained by His providence, should I wish this order to be troubled for me? No, this rash wish would deserve to be punished rather than granted.[6]

My brethren, what I have said shows all the sophisms enclosed in this tirade. And besides, here is another thought which I can only present: that prayer, instead of contradicting Providence, enters into its designs, and that it is one of the second causes. You tell me that the world is ruled by second causes, I grant it; but I say, on my side, with the learned Suarez, that prayer is one of these second causes, and that it walks beside all the others. Understand me.

To this man who is scandalised to see me employ prayer to avoid lightning, I ask: And you, why do you employ lightning rods? why do you employ pumps in fires and remedies in sicknesses? Do you not oppose, like me, eternal laws and necessary effects? “Oh!” one answers me, “that is quite different, for if it is a law that fire burns, it is one too that water puts out fire.” And I shall answer: That is precisely what I say on my side; for if it is a law that lightning produces such or such a ravage, it is a law also that prayer, poured out in time on the fire of heaven, puts it out or turns it aside. It is by this law that the prayer of Moses bound the anger of God determined to destroy His idolatrous and rebellious people. It is by this law that the prayer of the Ninivites drove back a scourge about to fall on them.

And be assured, my brethren, that no objection will be made to me that I do not retort with the same advantage. God foresees our prayers, and He wills them; as He foresaw and willed the discovery of lightning rods and that of quinine. Who would dare say that in fighting fever with quinine one fights natural laws? One must have neither philosophy nor observation not to know that there are in nature only supple springs, such as they must be to lend themselves to the action of free beings, which combines frequently on earth with the material laws of nature and with the very action of God.

Let us recognise then, my dearly beloved brethren, that religion is wrong in none of its institutions; let us recognise that all Catholic worship is admirable, that everything in it holds to the highest and most solid ideas. The Rogations are the expression of a dogma which has been believed, and of a practice which has been universally observed: the dogma of the intervention of God in natural things, the practice of praying to God to avoid scourges and to obtain even temporal goods. Alas! my brethren, is our country less unhappy than in the time of Saint Mamertus? Is French soil less agitated? Are there not monsters with human faces more horrible than wild beasts, which ravage the morals of our cities and our countrysides? Is there not a plague worse than all epidemics, the plague of impiety and impurity?

Oh! let us pray, my brethren, let us celebrate the Rogations. If we cannot attend the ceremony of the Church, let us try to supply for it in our dwellings, by taking part in these prayers, these great litanies, as the Church calls them. May we, my brethren, obtain more tranquil days on earth, and arrive one day in that heavenly fatherland where we shall see Jesus Christ ascend in a few days. It is, etc.[7]

Translator’s notes

1. The scientific allusions (Newton and gravitation; Franklin and the lightning rod; the tides; quinine) are the preacher's, delivered in the language of 1841. The unnamed savant of the Institute and the "great man" speaking to the young exile are not identified here.

2. The edition prints "la prière de Marie" for the intercession that stayed God's wrath against his idolatrous people; this is Moses (Exod. 32:11–14), and I have so rendered it.

3. "Suarez": Francisco Suárez, S.J.; the reference is generic, not a citation to a place.

4. Hard idiom: "qui ne connaît qui ni quoi" = "which knows neither whom nor what", i.e. blind.

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[1] The remark of Joseph de Maistre is as the preacher gives it; the Plato saying is quoted loosely. Neither is verified here.

[2] The preacher does not name the "learned man"; the words are a play on Job 38:11 / Ps. 88:10 as the preacher cites them. The allusion is to a savant of the Institute; the identification (Laplace?) is not verified here.

[3] Mgr Fayet: *Mandement sur la prière*, 1837. (Note of M. l'abbé Pie.)

[4] The poet is not named; not identified here.

[5] The "great man of our century" and the "young French exile" are not named; the saying is not identified here.

[6] From the *Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard* in *Émile*, as the preacher quotes it (loosely; not verified here).

[7] Cf. Appendix I: A, 35, 66. (Editor's note.)

n° 29. Exhortation for the Consecration to the Most Holy Virgin, Preached on the Day of First Communion at the Cathedral of Chartres

Chartres cathedral, day of first communion, 30 June 1841.[1]

Ecce ego et pueri mei quos dedit mihi Dominus. [Behold I and my children whom the Lord hath given me.] Here am I, and my children whom the Lord has given me. (Isaias 8:18.)

MY DEAR CHILDREN, ever since the most holy Virgin Mary has fixed, in some sort, her dwelling in this city; in this magnificent temple which she herself built, and from this throne where she resides, she has seen the most illustrious heads bow before her venerated image, she has seen at her feet the Fulberts and the Ivos, the Thomases of Canterbury and the Bernards of Clairvaux, the Francises de Sales and the Vincents de Paul. Great kings and noble queens have come there in all the pomp of courts, and from Clovis to Henry the Great and to his latest descendants, she has received the homage of all the noble generation of France!

Yes, my dear children, there have been in all centuries, there have been, for this beautiful temple, the glory of the universe, days of solemnity when this magnificent edifice seemed to become animated and take on an aspect of life, days when Mary seemed to have come down under these vaults with all her heavenly magnificence. We have seen some of those days when floods of faithful inundated both the porches and the porticoes of the virginal temple. Yet, my dear children, on no day has this temple seemed to us more animated, on no day has Mary seemed to us to thrill upon her throne as on this day, as at this instant which repeats itself every year, when all the young generation of the city runs to the feet of its Mother; when Mary, stretching out her arms to clasp in a maternal embrace all this innocent family, cries out with transport, presenting herself to her Son: Here am I, and my children whom the Lord has given me: *Ecce ego et pueri mei quos dedit mihi Dominus.*

Oh yes, my dear children, how Mary's heart has thrilled on this day! for you are her children; you were thrown into her arms from your mothers' wombs. Young still, and quite frightened at the duties and dangers of motherhood, your mothers came to the feet of this holy Virgin to make vows, to consecrate you already to her love, when your eyes had not yet seen the light. Soon after, it was here, under the eyes of Mary, that you were regenerated. As soon as your mother could, she brought you before the altars of Mary, and this Virgin took pleasure in contemplating you as a flower borne on its stem, a flower adorned with all the freshness of morning, and whose calyx still held the drops, the pearls of the baptismal dew. Which of you, my children,

among his first and most precious memories of childhood, does not count some very sweet moments when he came to lay at the foot of this statue of Mary some flowers of the fields with the first-fruits of his prayer? Which of you does not remember with delight having come, very young, quite small still, to press his pure and virginal lips on the venerated pillar which forms the throne of Mary? And it was not a mere childish game; already Mary was revealing herself to your heart by secret charms.

For some months, since you were preparing to receive Jesus, often you came to throw yourselves at the feet of your Mother who is His, praying her to prepare you herself to receive Him whom she gave us, Him who is the fruit of her womb, Him who in His sacrament is called the true body born of the blessed Virgin Mary. This morning, my dear children, ah! this morning, Mary had her eyes turned to that side where so sweet a prodigy was being worked; a little while ago she had an attentive ear to the words you pronounced, to the engagements you made, and now that you are all at her feet, now that you come to renew to her your oaths of love, ah! I hear her: *Ecce ego et pueri mei quos dedit mihi Dominus.* Here it is then, this moment when I have near me my children whom the Lord has given me.

My dear children, all there has been of purity, innocence and happiness in your childhood, it is to Mary that you owe it. But behold you are going to grow up; behold you are going to leave the knees of religion your mother, who rocked you with so much tenderness! How will you persevere? Adolescence is so exposed! The world is so perfidious! My dear children, you will persevere only through Mary. Mary is the necessary means, but also the assured means of perseverance. Let one cite me a young man, let one cite me a Christian virgin who does not love Mary! He is very near to slipping into evil who begins to forget Mary. He is on the way to return to virtue who finds again, only once, the road to her altars.

Yes, Mary is for youth a necessary pledge, but an assured pledge of innocence. She is that tower of David from which hang a thousand bucklers and all the armour of the brave. With her there are only victories; without her there are only defeats. Examples abound.

Ask that young girl, once so pure, so delicate, who lately adorned the holy place by her piety, how she came to the point of saddening and withering her family, how her virginal crown fell from her head, how that beauty, that serenity which shone from the soul, vanished from her brow, to make place for a sombre reverie or a seal of ignominy: she will tell you that she was unfaithful to virtue because she was unfaithful to Mary. Ask that young count of Aquino, who was later the great Saint Thomas, how at the age of eighteen he drove away with a burning brand the crime which came to solicit him: he will tell you that he had been vowed to Mary from his mother's womb, that he had never ceased to love Mary, and that when the image of the Mother of God had been presented to him for the first time, he had carried it to his mouth and kissed it so avidly that it could not be torn from him.[2]

My dear children, will you persevere? You tell me: I do not know. I change my question, and I ask you: Will you always love Mary? You tell me yes, and I answer you: You will persevere. I do not say you will not fall, but you will rise again. You are going soon to escape us; our voice will hardly be heard any more. You are going to climb aboard a ship which soon will sail on the open sea of the world. At your departure, what will be our last word? It will be the last word of the dying Jesus: *Ecce Mater tua.* [Behold thy mother. (John 19:27.)] Our testament for you will be that of Jesus, it will be that of that patriarch of the old law: My son, remember your mother, all the days of your life.[3]

Yes, my dear children, all the days of your life, remember your mother, your mother who is on earth without doubt, but also your mother who is in the heavens, your mother who chose this city and this temple for her dwelling on earth. All the days of your life, pray to Mary; all the days of your life, if it is possible, come to salute Mary, give her your embraces and receive hers. The children of Chartres are children of Mary. For a child of Chartres, to be unfaithful to Mary is to be an apostate from his country.

Dear little children, be the children of Mary, and you will always be pure, for the Virgin wishes her city to be peopled with virgins, she takes pleasure only among the lilies. Dear children, in whatever position you find yourselves, confidence, confidence in Mary, in the Lady of Chartres! And if thousands of others, who will not have been marked on the forehead like you with the seal of Mary, who will not have engraved the name of Mary on the sail of their ship, make before your eyes sad shipwrecks, no matter! your own bark, guided by the arm of Mary, will arrive happily at the port of salvation. No one has hoped in Mary and been confounded. Be faithful to the oath you are going to make, heaven will not fail you; for one is the child of heaven when one is the child of Mary.[4]

Translator's notes

1. "The Lady of Chartres": *la Dame de Chartres*, the title of Our Lady of Chartres; the "pillar" is the venerated statue (Notre-Dame du Pilier) in the cathedral.

2. "Fulberts and Ivos": Bishops Fulbert and Ivo of Chartres. "Henry the Great": Henry IV. "Thomas of Canterbury", "Bernard of Clairvaux", "Francis de Sales" and "Vincent de Paul" are named by the preacher as pilgrims to Chartres; the historical claims are his and not verified here.

3. "No one has hoped in Mary and been confounded" echoes the *Memorare* tradition.

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[1] The printed heading reads "30 juin 1811", a misprint for 1841.

[2] The incidents (the burning brand against the temptress, the image kissed in infancy) are traditional hagiographic episodes as the preacher relays them; not verified here.

[3] Cf. Tobias 4:3 ("Honour thy mother all the days of thy life"); the preacher's wording is his own.

[4] Cf. Appendix I: A, 39. (Editor's note.)

n° 30. Homily for the Feast of the Assumption

Chartres cathedral, 15 August 1841.[1]

Et factum est, dum benediceret illis, recessit ab eis, et ferebatur in caelum. [And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up to heaven.] And behold, while He was blessing them, He moved away from them and was lifted up toward heaven. (Luke 24:51.)

MY DEAR BRETHREN, when Jesus Christ had completed on earth His long and painful mission, when He had run His sorrowful course; on the day when He re-ascended triumphant into the heavens, escorted by all the angelic court and amid the acclamations of all the holy multitude which He had attached to His triumphal chariot; on that day, at that instant He still gave the earth a very sweet consolation, and a very touching guarantee of His persevering love for men.

Do not go and believe, my brethren, that absorbed wholly in Himself, and as if intoxicated by this magnificent ovation, He outstripped by the avidity of His gaze the end of His course. Do not go and believe that His arms, raised toward the heavens, sought to hasten the eternal embrace in which the Father and the Holy Spirit were going to clasp Him with so much love. That is what the brush of men has often traced; but no, that was not the attitude of Jesus. Hear the sacred text: And having lifted up His hands, He blessed His disciples. And behold, while He was blessing them, *dum benediceret illis,* His body was lifted up into the air, and He re-ascended into the heavens: *Et factum est, dum benediceret illis, recessit ab eis, et ferebatur in caelum.*

Observe, my brethren: it is not after having blessed men, it is while blessing them that Jesus Christ re-ascended into glory. His disciples followed Him with their eyes, as He crossed the spaces, and always to the end they saw His hands outstretched and blessing: *Et factum est, dum benediceret illis, recessit ab eis, et ferebatur in caelum.*

Ah! holy evangelist, I understand well that you neglected all the other circumstances of this magnificent triumph. All the rest was for the inhabitants of glory, and was to be written only in the annals of the heavens: the description of that apparatus would be for us a subject of envy and sadness. But what was for us in this triumph, what the gospel of earth had to record, was this blessing attitude which the triumpher still kept, even as He disappeared in glory; it was His hands which seemed to say: I am going to the place prepared for Me, but My heart and My eyes will always be turned toward this earth: *Et factum est, dum benediceret illis, recessit ab eis, et ferebatur in caelum.*

My dearly beloved brethren, what the gospel tells us of the triumph of Jesus, have we not some reason to believe of the triumph of Mary? And were tradition mute in this regard, could we not supply for it without fear of being mistaken? What! Jesus who belonged to us only by the less noble half of His being, Jesus who had our nature only by loan, who was our brother only by adoption, heavenly pilgrim who inhabited the earth only in passing and whose eternal homeland and as it were native soil was the bosom of the Father, Jesus leaves the dwelling of man as with regret, and to the end blessing His brothers, gives them a guarantee of the eternal love with which He will burn for them. And after that I should believe that Mary, Mary who belongs to us wholly, Mary who in every point is our sister, Mary who is the fruit of the earth, its native fatherland, and who is pure of divinity, as Saint Bernard speaks; I should believe that Mary, on the day of her triumph, leaving disdainfully beneath her the valley she watered with her tears, darts toward her throne, without casting a last look at earth, without addressing a last sign of interest to her brothers, to her children! Oh no, great artists, allow me to tell you, your brushes, your chisel are at fault: you forgot to translate, in the attitude of triumphant Mary, what the sacred text teaches you of that of Jesus. Truth required that these looks, that these arms be at least shared between the heaven they aspire to, and the earth they regret and which they testify they must love and protect always: *Et factum est, dum benediceret illis, recessit ab eis, et ferebatur in caelum.* You made your picture as if it were to be seen only by the heavens, and you forgot that you were working for the earth.

Come, come, Christians: let us associate ourselves with the Apostles, Mary, asleep a few days, comes out of her tomb. She stretches out her hands, it is a Father of the first centuries who tells us so.[2] Bow, O holy Apostles, bow your foreheads without fear of derogating from your sacred character; for, besides that divine maternity implies a preeminent priesthood, it will always be permitted to receive the blessing of a mother. But lift your heads, and follow Mary losing herself in the spaces; see her hands extended to the end. They will teach you what Mary in the heavens is going to do with her hands, what she is going to do with her power.

Indeed, my dearly beloved brethren, I shall tell you with Saint Bernard, earth lost nothing on this day, since it is for us, far more than for herself, that Mary triumphs. All the riches, all the treasures of the divinity are going to be at her disposal, and her hands, stretched toward you to the end, have taught you the use she will make of those treasures. This other Esther knows well that it is not so much for herself as for her people that she is raised today to this degree of glory: *Non enim pro te, sed pro populo.* [For this law is not made for thee, but for all. (Esther 15:13, Vulgate.)]

Children, do not weep for Mary leaving this earth today; it is a mother whom you will henceforth have in the heavens.

Young virgins, do not weep for Mary taken up today into glory: her triumph prepares yours, and she leaves you her virginal mantle, under whose shelter generations of virgins will germinate.

Women, do not weep for Mary, the honour of your sex. Her glorification today will reflect on you, and society will henceforth understand that when a woman is seated at the right hand of Christ in the heavens, woman cannot be in slavery and in humiliation on earth. From the Assumption of Mary into the heavens will date the social assumption of woman among Catholic nations.

Sinners, do not weep for Mary: it is an advocate whom you will henceforth have in the heavens; a mediatrix who will not weary of pleading your interests and who will often disarm the angry judge, ready to overwhelm you with his blows.

O holy Virgin, when has the world had more need of you than in our unhappy days? Tender Mother, we celebrate today your feast, it is the great solemnity of this Church of Chartres. On the day of their feasts, sovereigns make themselves prodigal of liberalities. Cast on this day, O tender Mother, cast a look of love, stretch out your blessing hand over the Church, so deeply saddened; over France, the country of your predilection, which her kings consecrated to you; bless above all this city which is yours, whose lady and mistress you are. O holy Virgin, may Chartres never cease to be worthy of you, that is, to be a virginal city! Bring us out, O holy Virgin, from this lethargic languor in which we are plunged; tear us from the matter to which we are glued; teach this people, bent wholly toward the earth, to lift its eyes to heaven; revive in us faith, as in ancient times.

Each time, O holy Virgin, that I contemplate this magnificent edifice, cast in the midst of the country, and these two towers which lose themselves in the cloud, like two arms going to seek the heavens, I seem to see, in this work of the Catholic centuries, humanity making an effort to detach itself from earth and dart into the heavens, thought lifting itself, tearing itself from matter to soar in the regions of spirit; it is like an assumption of nature into the arms of faith. Ah! holy Virgin, bring them back to us, those days of noble enthusiasm. The faith of our fathers knew how to animate stone, and our unbelief has hardened our hearts. May your temple, O Mary, not be an anachronism in the midst of us; and may we not deserve to be dispossessed of it by a just judgment of God!

Bless your city of Chartres, O Mary; bless this little faithful flock, so worthy of your love, these hearts in which piety has taken refuge. You know, O Mary, many virtues still come to make your cortege; in the evening, in silence, very pure souls come to converge with you. Bless also the pastor, O holy Virgin, the pastor so pure and so tender; he whom your virginal and maternal hand has itself chosen; he in whom so long a mystery of expiation and suffering is consummated. Better than anyone, I know that when suffering is united to innocence and virtue, one must bow before it as before the cross of the Saviour; but yet let me be permitted to ask you, O holy Virgin, hasten those better days when heaven will no longer itself chain the zeal of its ministers, when God will no longer break the arrows of His quiver, when it will no longer be trembling that one approaches the hand to support the holy ark.[3]

O holy Mother, pray for the city and for ourselves before the Lord, that He may deal with us according to His great mercy, that He may give us gladness and delight of heart, and that He may establish among us peace and charity! So be it.[4]

Translator’s notes

1. The date, 15 August 1841, is inferred from the feast and from the year of the surrounding pieces; the printed heading gives only “(1841)”.

2. “Marie… pure de divinité”: the preacher says “pure of divinity,” apparently in the sense that she is purely a creature (Saint Bernard’s thought is cited generally; not verified here).

3. “Triomphateur” is rendered “triumpher” (the one who triumphs in procession).

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[1] This homily was preached in the form of a *homélie* in 1872. (Editor’s note.)

[2] The Father is not named in the text; not identified here.

[3] The pastor is presumably the same M. Lecomte of n° 26 (the ailing curé of the cathedral); the text does not name him here. The identification is mine.

[4] Cf. Appendix I: A, 40. (Editor’s note.)

n° 31. Homily for the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost: On the Holy Guardian Angels

Chartres cathedral, 1841.[1]

Amen, amen, dico vobis, videbitis caelum apertum et angelos Dei ascendentes et descendentes. [Amen, amen, I say to you, you shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending.] Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see heaven open and the Angels of God ascending and descending. (John 1:51.)

MY DEAR BRETHREN, yesterday the Church celebrated the feast of the holy Guardian Angels: a sweet solemnity which recalls to us one of the most consoling dogmas of our beautiful religion; a dogma which in some sort confounds heaven with earth, which brings our valley of exile near to the fatherland of happiness, and which introduces us into a holy society with the inhabitants of glory. It is a certain and incontestable truth, as much by the holy Books as by the universal belief of centuries and peoples, that heavenly spirits intervene among the things of this world; and the Catholic faith does not permit doubt that Christians in particular have already in the Church of earth the Angels of heaven for brothers and fellow citizens.

The father of that ancient people which represented the Church here below before Jesus Christ had seen in a dream a miraculous ladder, set on the one side on the soil of Israel and resting on the other in the heavens, along which Angels ascended and descended. And the divine Saviour, from the first days of His mission (it is related in the first chapter of Saint John), said to the Israelite Nathanael, in introducing him into the Church of the new law, that he would see heaven open and the Angels of God ascending and descending. And Saint Paul, addressing these same Israelites become Christians, said to them, speaking of the Church of Jesus Christ into which they had just entered: You have approached the mountain of Sion, that Jerusalem already heavenly, since it is continually inhabited by innumerable thousands of Angels: *Accessistis ad Sion montem, Jerusalem caelestem, et multorum millium angelorum frequentiam.* [You are come to Mount Sion, and to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels. (Heb. 12:22.)]

So, my dearest brethren, you are mistaken if you think that on earth, if you think that in the Church of Jesus Christ, you dwell only among men. Be undeceived; there is among you an invisible people which is united to you by the bonds of the most intimate charity. You live among the Angels. One of their blessed company is attached specially to your guidance, and all take part in your interests.

My brethren, how abundant this subject would be! I keep to my text, that is, to the words of Jesus Christ commented by Saint Bernard: Truly you shall see heaven open, and the Angels of God ascending and descending: *Amen, amen, dico vobis, videbitis caelum apertum et angelos Dei ascendentes et descendentes.* What a marvel! cries the holy abbot of Clairvaux. The Angels are the ambassadors of God to us, they descend from heaven to us, they descend from heaven to earth: *Descendentes*; but also, a thing incredible! they are the envoys of earth to the heavens; they descend, but also they ascend: *Ascendentes.* So that, cries this great man, so that the royal prophet said only half the truth: *Qui facit angelos suos spiritus* [Who maketh His angels spirits (Ps. 103:4)], since these blessed spirits are not only the Angels, that is, the envoys of God, but also the Angels, the envoys of men: *Hos utique spiritus tam felices, et tuos ad nos, et nostros ad te angelos facis.* [These spirits so blessed, You make both Your angels to us, and our angels to You.][2]

These are, my brethren, the two thoughts of which we are going to speak. We shall see how the Angels descend to us to assist us, bringing us the gifts of heaven; and we shall see afterwards how the Angels re-ascend to God to appease Him, carrying back our wishes and our merits.

I. *Mira dignatio, et vere magna dilectio caritatis!* [O wonderful condescension, and truly great love of charity!] O astonishing condescension, and truly great tenderness of love! cries Saint Bernard. For, my brethren, who could believe, if faith did not offer us the guarantee, that these sublime intelligences do not

disdain poor mortals; that, being in the abode of felicity and at the centre of repose, they are willing to mingle in our continual agitations, and put themselves in so intimate a commerce with creatures so weak and so disproportioned to their natural grandeur? For after all, asks the great Bossuet, what can this ungrateful earth produce that is capable of attracting those glorious citizens of paradise? What work so important can be the object of their ministry here below? Let us answer these two questions, my brethren, and say why and how the Angels descend to us, entering into commerce with us.

Saint Bernard gives in three words three great reasons whose development is going to introduce us into a beautiful theology. Behold, he says, the triple cord by which the Angels are torn from their lofty dwelling and drawn toward men: it is on account of God, on account of themselves, on account of us: *Hic est funiculus triplex quo de excelso habitaculo suo ad nos attrahitur supereminens caritas angelorum, propter Deum, propter seipsos et propter nos.* [This is the threefold cord by which the surpassing charity of the angels is drawn from their lofty dwelling to us: on account of God, on account of themselves, and on account of us.]

God has ordered the Angels to occupy themselves with men: *Angelis suis mandavit de te* [He hath given His angels charge over thee (Ps. 90:11)]; God ordered it, and that alone would suffice, for the will of God is the sole reason for such faithful ministers. God ordered the Angels. Listen, cries Saint Bernard. The great King takes the tone of command, He assembles the Angels who are His courtiers, the officers of His house, the lieutenants of His crown, and, dispossessing Himself in some sort of their services in our favour, He says to them: A truce, a truce for an instant to your homages, to your adorations; there are in My kingdom poor and unhappy subjects; leave for a time these palaces, these panelled halls; go, penetrate into the cottages of these unfortunates, bear them My largesses and your consolations, transport upon them those cares which their weakness needs and in which I shall rejoice more than if they were rendered to Myself: *Angelis suis mandavit de te.* At these words, the Angels, those spirits always supple and submissive to the sovereign will of God, rush toward earth, happy to acquire, by the mercy they are going to exercise, a perfection which was lacking to them in the heavens and which will render them more conformable henceforth to the divinity.

Hear, my brethren, this beautiful doctrine of Bossuet. As the Angels contemplate the divinity face to face and uncovered, they see that the very essence of God is His infinite goodness; they see those bowels of mercy and that paternal love by which He embraces His creatures; they see that among His attributes the one of which He glories most and which He places at the head of all His titles is that of good, charitable, merciful; they see that all the joy of God is to pardon, that, being unable to rise, since nothing is above Him, He puts His glory in descending and exercising His mercy. The Angels see that, and they understand that under so good a God, whose mercy shines above all His works, there is nothing greater and more illustrious than to succour the wretched.

To have this conformity with God, what will they do? what will they undertake? Around them they see no mercy to exercise, since there is no misery: *Ibi nulla miseria est in qua fiat misericordia.* [There is no misery there in which mercy might be done.] O admirable beauty of charity and works of mercy! There lacks, it seems, something to heaven because they cannot be practised there. Although God there inebriates the heavenly spirits with the torrent of His delights, yet their felicity is not complete, and perceiving in our valley of exile what they do not find in glory, they press the heavens to open, they descend in crowds from heaven to earth: *Caelos apertos, et angelos Dei descendentes*; happy, I repeat, while obeying God, the will of God, to imitate His sublime inclination to charity and mercy. First reason which makes the Angels descend to us: *Propter Deum.*

Second reason, on account of themselves: *Propter seipsos*; that is, my brethren, that it is in the interest of the Angels to watch over men. Here is how, according to Saint Augustine: it is that if the happiness of the Angels in heaven is perfect, it is yet not complete. I explain myself. The rebellion of the third part of the Angels hurled into the abyss left in heaven vacant places which the elect are called to fill. Now the Angels have an interest in seeing this disorder repaired; they aspire to see this void filled. For indeed, O citizens of heaven,

cries Saint Bernard again, we hardly think that you see with pleasure your city in ruins and its walls half fallen. Without any doubt, calling with your wishes for this restoration, you do not cease to pray the Lord that in His good and merciful will He may finish the rebuilding of the walls of Sion: *Benigne fac, Domine, in bona voluntate tua Sion, ut aedificentur muri Jerusalem.* [Deal favourably, O Lord, in Thy good will with Sion, that the walls of Jerusalem may be built up. (Ps. 50:20.)] And if it is so, you yourselves, O heavenly spirits, set to work; come and prepare among us those living and intelligent stones which must be put in the place of those which rolled from the vaults of Jerusalem into the eternal precipices; come and work yourselves at the recruits for your dismembered legions, gathering among us that new militia which must fill up your ranks again.

It is thus that the Angels have a personal interest in taking care of men, since in working for our salvation and in swelling the number of the elect, they can hasten the final advent of the reign of God and the perfect consummation of glory and happiness which is the object of all desires.

Third reason, on account of us: *Propter nos*; for after all, my dearest brethren, our nature, however debased by sin, is not yet so contemptible, and, on more than one side, it well deserves some regard. And if you ask me how it can be, without disorder, that the Angels, that is, pure intelligences, are at the service of carnal and gross men, I shall tell you first that the Angels can well do, without dishonouring themselves, what God Himself did not disdain to do. Now, have you not read it in your Creed, my brethren: *Qui propter nos descendit de caelis?* [Who for us came down from heaven.] Then I shall tell you with Saint Augustine that we have, like the Angels, a soul which lives with the life of intelligence and love, and that on this side human nature is a near relative of angelic nature. I shall tell you that man has the same supernatural destination as the Angel, that he is called to the same glory, that he is led to it by the same grace; that they have the same God for principle and end, the same Jesus Christ for mediator.

And if you insist on that other gross portion of our humanity which bends us toward the earth, I shall tell you that on that side again man is respectable to the Angel; what do I say, that on that side, the less noble in appearance, he is superior to the Angel: *Sic qua parte minor, vos supereminet* [thus, in the part in which he is less, he stands above] (the line is given as the preacher quotes it; I have not identified its source); for indeed: *Nusquam angelos apprehendit, sed semen Abrahae.* [For nowhere doth He take hold of the angels, but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold. (Heb. 2:16.)] You speak of carnal man, but did not the Word become flesh? It is not the pure intelligence of the Angel; it is humanity, body and soul, which was hypostatically united to the divinity. It is therefore carnal man who can say to Jesus God-man: You are my brother, and who in Jesus is son of God and can say to God: You are my father: *In quo clamamus: Abba, Pater.* [In whom we cry: Abba, Father. (Rom. 8:15.)] It is therefore carnal man who, in one of those days whose date no one knows, when God by a prelude, and as a trial of the future, introduced His first-born Son into the great scene of the worlds, it is, I say, man, body and soul, who was presented to the adoration of the Angels: *Et cum introducit primogenitum in orbem terrae, dicit: Et adorent eum omnes angeli ejus.* [And again, when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith: And let all the angels of God adore Him. (Heb. 1:6.)] It is therefore our humanity which, in the person of Jesus Christ, is seated at the right hand of God the Father, and before whom every knee bends in heaven, on earth and in hell. Now, if our humanity, in its least noble portion even, is glorified and as it were divinised in the person of Jesus in the heavens, is it to be wondered at that on earth, and in us, brothers of Jesus, it be the object of the charitable cares and respectful services of the Angels? The Angels love Jesus so tenderly! Is it to be wondered at that they love those who are the brothers of Jesus, what do I say! those who by grace and the sacraments, and above all by Eucharistic communion, become other Jesuses and have heaven entire in their hearts?

Behold then, my brethren, behold the great motives for which the Angels deign to descend to us. But in what does the commerce of the Angels with men consist? What kinds of services do they render us? My brethren, here the detail would be immense, and a whole particular discourse would be needed for this point. The

chancellor Gerson wrote a magnificent treatise on this subject.[3] Let it suffice me to tell you today that the Angels have received order from God to guard us in all our ways, in all the positions of life: *Angelis suis mandavit de te, ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis.* [He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. (Ps. 90:11.)] Fervent and indefatigable guardian, sentinel who never sleeps and who watches around us night and day, the Angel takes interest in all our needs, feels all our necessities. He watches near the cradle, keeping with jealous care in the soul of the regenerated child that freshness and that lustre of innocence in which he contemplates himself as in a faithful mirror. He follows the young man, the young virgin, amid the dangers of adolescence, striving to direct all the movements of the heart, to dominate the work of imagination and senses, to draw good from evil itself, and to turn to profit even the falls and the almost necessary forgetfulnesses of that age of passions. He assists the age of manhood amid the embarrassments of business and cares of fortune, seeking to raise from time to time toward the heavens this soul too concentrated on matter. He stands beside the old man's bed, detaching his heart from earth, softening the rigours of death, and preparing him to penetrate into the heavens: *Angelis suis mandavit de te, ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis.*

Not content with taking care of our soul, he is interested even in our temporal needs, in our health: see the archangel Raphael deliver Tobias near being devoured by a monster, and restore sight to his father by a specific known to him; he is interested in our fortune, in our establishment: see the same angel go to recover for Tobias a sum at the house of Gabelus, and ask for him the faithful Sara. In a word, says Bossuet, we should never have done, if we undertook to recount all that we owe to those heavenly spirits.

But we have seen them long enough descend from heaven to earth, from God toward man; let us see them re-ascend from earth to the heavens, from man toward God.

II. Since the Angels of heaven, my dearest brethren, deign to take interest in us, to make themselves our ministers and almost our servants from our birth to our death, without any doubt we have duties to fulfil toward them. Duties of respect, never doing anything that could offend their eyes; duties of confidence, addressing ourselves often to them in our needs and our difficulties; duties of gratitude, thanking them for their cares, and rewarding them for them by an affection and a holy intimacy and familiarity quite full of love. But, says Bossuet, there is a means by which it is easy to content the Angels. Do you know, asks this great man, what they claim above all of you? It is that they may not have come down from heaven uselessly, and that you may not dishonour them by sending them back empty-handed. They come to you, full of the heavenly gifts with which they have enriched your souls; they ask as a reward that you charge them with your prayers, and that they may present to God some fruit of the graces distributed through their mediation. Disinterested friends, convenient and obliging messengers, who think themselves paid for their benefits if one gives them new subjects for exercising their mercy.

And when we say, my brethren, that the Angels descend from heaven and re-ascend to it, do not go and believe that they cease for an instant to be in glory or to watch near us. The stars, remaining in their order, fought for us against Sisara, said the heroine Deborah in her admirable canticle: *Stellae manentes in ordine suo adversus Sisaram pugnaverunt.* [The stars remaining in their order and courses fought against Sisara. (Judges 5:20.)] That is, the Angels, who are the stars of the heaven of glory, in advancing to succour us, remain nevertheless in their order; they do not leave the place their merits have acquired for them. And as they bring, on coming to earth, the glory they enjoy in heaven, they carry with them with them also, in returning to heaven, the same cares they have on earth.

The Angels carry to heaven: 1st, our prayers. And so that you may understand the utility of their mediation in this regard, I shall tell you with Bossuet that although prayers are of such a nature that they rise straight to heaven, like an agreeable incense which the fire of love makes ascend on high, nevertheless the weight of our mortal and gross body brings them much delay. My brethren, I appeal to your experience. When you offer your prayers to God, how many distractions, how many languors, how many heavinesses come to throw

themselves across to interrupt their course! Now these languishing prayers, which had difficulty in coming out of your hearts, how believe that they will have the strength to pierce the clouds and penetrate to the height of the heavens? Evidently they would fall back by their own weight toward earth, if this Angel whom Saint John and Tertullian call the angel of prayer were not beside us as formerly beside Tobias: *Obtuli orationem tuam Domino.* [I offered thy prayer to the Lord. (Tob. 12:12.)] So, my brethren, there is beside you an Angel who gathers your prayer, and who puts it in a golden censer which he will then swing before the throne of God.[4]

2nd, the Angels carry to heaven our good works, our alms, our virtues, our merits. That is again taught by Scripture: when you prayed with tears, when you buried the dead, when you left your meal to come to the help of the poor man, I offered all that to God: *Quando mortuos sepeliebas, quando et derelinquebas prandium, ego obtuli orationem tuam Domino.* [When thou didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner… I offered thy prayer to the Lord. (Tob. 12:12; cf. 2:4.)] My brethren, all the good we do, an Angel is going to register it in the annals of the heavens. These blessed spirits are continually occupied in gathering in the garden of pure hearts the lilies of innocence, the roses of love, the fragrant flowers of all virtues, to carry them to heaven, throw them under the feet of the Lamb and present them to God. Christian virgins so pure, so innocent, Christian women so modest, so delicate, an Angel is beside you, who gathers your prayers; and they ascend, says Saint John, from the hand of that Angel to the throne of God.

3rd, the Angels carry to heaven the tears of our penance. Ah! my brethren, without doubt the Angels are happy to be the messengers of innocent souls; but perfect innocence is so rare on earth! Who could, who could express the happiness of the Angels, when they have to present to God the tears of repentance and the sighs of penance? Oh! what esteem they make of so beautiful a present! As they know that the conversion of a sinner is a feast for the heavenly spirits, they assemble their holy companions; they recount the happy successes of their cares and counsels: At last this soul, long chained by sin, has freed itself from its bonds; it has thrown itself with love into the arms of God: here are its tears, its sighs, which we bring! And then a cry of gladness rises among the blessed spirits, and heaven resounds with the admirable canticle by which they glorify God in the conversion of sinners.

Finally, my brethren, the Angels carry to heaven another perfume still very agreeable to God: it is the perfume of suffering, of sorrow endured with patience and resignation. Listen, it is the admirable Bossuet who speaks:

My dear brother, my dear sister, I wish to tell you this to console you: when you suffer so cruelly either in your body or in your heart, there is an Angel near you who takes account of your suffering, who regards the sorrows with respect, with jealousy, as sacred characters which make you like a suffering God. Yes, my brethren, with a sort of jealousy; for this body, which overwhelms us with evils, gives us nevertheless this advantage over the Angels, to be able to suffer for the love of God, and to represent in us the cross of the Saviour: *Ut vita Jesu manifestetur in carne nostra mortali.* [That the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh. (2 Cor. 4:11.)] These immortal spirits can be companions of His glory, they cannot be of His sufferings. Yes, if charity permitted it, they would see in us with jealousy those scars which will shine like precious stones through all eternities. But at last, being unable to have the honour of bearing the cross themselves, of offering to God their own sufferings, oh! how happy they are to borrow ours and to make themselves before God the messengers of those who suffer. See them render account to God with eagerness of the patience and resignation of Job! How delighted they are to have to entertain the Lord with a just man who suffers while blessing with love the hand that strikes him.[5]

My brother, my brother, whoever you are, who are oppressed by sorrow; my sister, whoever you are, virgin or Christian woman, overwhelmed by a weight of bitterness: courage! courage! your abandonments, your alarms, your keen sorrows, all that is counted. An Angel watches at your side, who gathers all your sighs and all your tears, who puts them in the censer before the throne of God.

I end, my brethren. Love then, love to our holy Angels! Love toward the God who gave us Angels! After having assisted us during all our life, after having carried to heaven our prayers, our virtues, our penance, our sorrows; a day will come when, it is again Scripture which teaches us, these same Angels will carry ourselves into the bosom of glory. It is the grace, etc.[6]

Translator's notes

1. The long quoted passages attributed to Saint Bernard and Bossuet are given as the preacher gives them; none is verified here.

2. "Lange de la prière" (the angel of prayer) alludes to Rev. 8 and Tobias 12; "Obtuli orationem tuam" is Raphael's word (Tob. 12:12).

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[1] The heading reads "XVIIIe dimanche après la Pentecôte": in 1841 that Sunday fell on 3 October, the day after the feast of the Guardian Angels (2 October) mentioned in the text ("Yesterday the Church celebrated…").

[2] The words are given as the preacher quotes Saint Bernard; the place (probably the sermons on Psalm 90, *Qui habitat*) is not given and not verified here.

[3] Jean Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris (the preacher does not name the treatise; not identified here).

[4] Rev. 8:3–4 (Saint John); the "angel of prayer" in Tertullian (*De oratione*) is the preacher's allusion; not verified here.

[5] This passage, indented in the printed text, is given there as a quotation of Bossuet (probably a free reproduction of his sermon on the Angels Guardian); I have not verified it.

[6] Cf. Appendix I: A, 41; AB, 39 *quinquies*. (Editor's note.)

n° 32. Sermon for the Translation of the Relics of Saint Prest and His Companion Martyrs

17 October 1841.[1]

Sit memoria illorum in benedictione et ossa eorum pullulent de loco suo. [May their memory be in blessing, and may their bones spring up out of their place.] May their memory be blessed for ever, and may their bones germinate and flourish in their tombs. (Ecclesiasticus 46:14.)

MY DEAR BRETHREN, if the feast we celebrate on this day is for you every year a precious and solemn feast, new motives must this time render it dearer and more precious still. The sepulchral dwelling of the holy martyrs lately restored by your care, the rich and venerable deposit which heaven entrusted to you more than twelve centuries ago, recognised as authentic by all the surest signs, and brought back today safe and intact into your temple; I know not what of that ancient gladness which descended from on high on the Christian multitudes in these ceremonies equally dear to heaven and to earth, and which seems today to have reproduced itself among you: all, my brethren, all concurs to make for you of this day a day of happiness and joy, one of those days for ever memorable which old men congratulate themselves on having seen shine before going down into the tomb, and of which little children will one day speak to their great-nephews.

Yes, my brethren, your parish, formerly illustrious by its piety and celebrated by its precious relics, has found today its ancient glory of which the most beautiful rays have come to be reflected on it. At the name of Saint Prest a thousand times repeated in your chants, the soil you tread thrilled, your ancestors who sleep in the field of death revived for an instant in their tombs, the guardian angels of this church and of this country mingled their voices with yours, the heavens applauded, and the holy martyrs smiled at this spectacle from the bosom of glory, while their bones rejoiced on their bed of triumph: *Exultabunt sancti in gloria, laetabuntur in cubilibus suis.* [The saints shall rejoice in glory, they shall be joyful in their beds. (Ps. 149:5.)]

What words shall I then mingle with a ceremony so eloquent? When everything speaks around you, what accents shall I make you hear? My brethren, the days in which we live are so bad, minds are so prejudiced against the Church of Jesus Christ, that she needs to justify all she does and to have recourse to reasoning

even in those circumstances where our predecessors, happier, had only to address hearts. What is the use, certain minds do not fail to say, what is the use of this worship rendered to lifeless remains? Is that not a superstition, or at least is it not a detail of worship quite useless for the moral good of the people? And I shall try to show that the cult of the Saints and of their relics is established on the highest and soundest philosophy, since on the one hand it rests on the most solid foundations, and on the other it tends to produce the happiest results.

In two words, motives and advantages of the cult of holy relics: that is the object of this short talk and the justification of the ceremony of this day.

I. To show that the cult of holy relics is legitimate, I have two kinds of proofs of which one is peremptory for whoever is a child of the Catholic Church, and the other cannot be refused by anyone: the first is a proof of authority, and every Christian must admit it; the second is a proof of reason, and one would have to strip off one's nature as man not to recognise it.

Saint Augustine laid down this principle: What has been practised always and everywhere in the Church of Jesus must be retained as a practice going back to the time of Jesus Christ or of the Apostles.[2] Now, my brethren, such is the cult of relics, and, to find its origin, one must go back to Joseph of Arimathea wrapping in a white linen and enclosing in a virgin sepulchre the precious body of the Saviour, to the holy women buying perfumes to come and embalm this adorable body.

Read the history of the Church: you will see that since that time there has been no interruption; even profane history will attest it to you. The persecutors of the first centuries have the remains of their victims thrown carefully into the Tiber or into the sewers of Rome, to withdraw them from the veneration of their brethren. Courageous Christians go, at the risk of their lives, even under the axe of the executioner, to snatch the bodies of the holy martyrs to gather them in the catacombs, where the memory of their bloody immolation mingled daily with the unbloody immolation of the sacrifice of the altars; they are seen dipping, on the very place of the carnage, linens in the blood of the martyrs, buying at the price of gold their sacred remains, etc. They place them under their altars; Saint John himself attests it. When peace is restored to the Church, they build temples in their honour; the earth was already covered with them in the third century.

Read the homilies of the Fathers: you will see their discourses on the days of the invention or translation of the Saints. I regret that I cannot cite some fragments of them; you would hear the golden mouth of the patriarch of Constantinople speak of the bodies of Peter and Paul, that double citadel of Rome, more reassuring than her Capitol disarmed of thunder. Saint Ambrose would recount to you the miracles worked under his eyes at the invention and translation of Saints Gervasius and Protasius. The great Augustine would entertain you with the miracles worked by the relics of Saint Stephen, and you would see him recommend to one of his brethren, a bishop of Africa, an illustrious traveller, less in consideration of his great virtues and his illustrious birth than because he carries on him relics of that prince of martyrs. Then, following the ages, you will see the peoples dispute a precious treasure. The presence of the relics of a Saint will attract Christians from all points of the world; the passage of a venerated shrine will shake a whole province, a whole empire, will cover the roads with an eager and enraptured crowd, and will present the image of a triumph. Kings and pontiffs will be proud to carry this glorious burden, the multitude will apply its respectful lips to the ground.

That is what has happened for more than sixteen centuries.

Some impious men have tried to brand this cult, but hear Saint Jerome combat the heretic Vigilantius with the same arms we employ against the impious. And when Protestantism, the last of all heresies, comes to attack this point of Catholic worship, see the whole Church crush it with the weight of her anathemas, and declare by the organ of the holy council of Trent that the bodies of the martyrs and other Saints, having entered into participation in the glorious life of Jesus Christ, are worthy of the respect and veneration of the

faithful. And the reason given by this council is that these bodies were the living members of Jesus Christ, the temples of the Holy Spirit; it is that God must raise them one day and endow them with eternal glory, and that through them it pleases the divine goodness to grant men many favours.

Therefore, my brethren, one must separate oneself from all centuries, from all peoples, from the whole Catholic Church, if one does not admit the cult of the Saints and of their sacred remains; one must tear up all tradition; one must tear up Scripture, for there it is said that the touch of the bones of Elisha raised a dead man, that the simple touch of the garment of the Saviour healed an infirm woman, that the shadow of Peter, that linens carried by the great Apostle produced miraculous cures. But one must also break with reason and with the sentiments most deeply engraved in nature; and here it is not only to the Christian but to whoever is a father that I address myself.

Tell me, does not nature alone make dear and sacred to us the objects which recall to us the memory of the beings we have loved? Have we not all our family relics, which never present themselves to our eyes without surprising us with tears and without awakening our love? Does not the sentiment of country make us esteem and seek with passion the least vestiges of the great citizens who honoured it by their virtues, saved it by their courage? One wants to possess their portrait, one is jealous to see, to salute all they have touched. And religion would command us no duty toward the remains of those martyrs, of those blessed who glorified and bore God in their body and represented in their flesh the mortification of Jesus Christ; toward those sacred bones which cast an odour of life and breathe like a perfume of virtue; toward that illustrious dust where the Eternal has deposited a germ of resurrection and a seed of incorruptible glory! What! there is a domestic cult for the memories of the family; there is a civil cult for the earthly envelope of great men, of benefactors of humanity. And one would not admit a religious cult for the holy remains of our fathers in the faith, of those who instructed us by their examples, and whose lifeless remains still transmit to us lessons of virtue and courage! And what would be, in any other cause, propriety, duty, justice, would become here error, vain observance, crime and impiety! Ah! the whole soul rises and revolts at such a proposition.

So, my brethren, how easy it would be for us to get the better of the proud disdains and cold jests of the adepts of a philosophy without heart and without conscience! Lately still one heard them, on the occasion of a holy pomp decreed for the translation of the body of a glorious martyr, exhaust that repertory of hypocritical declamations and ignoble facetiae which the last century bequeathed to them. What do they want of us, said eloquently one of our most illustrious bishops, what do they want of us, those chagrined or mocking censors of our sacred rites, our legitimate practices? What argument can they oppose to us that we cannot retort with more advantage against themselves? Has impiety not also its cult and its relics, and has not the most abject superstition come to replace in minds the sound ideas and religious notions they have abjured?[3]

And without evoking too bitter memories, without speaking of those new saints, those gods of flesh and those idols of voluptuousness which philosophy substituted for our venerable Saints, has one not seen such a one who smiled with pity at the sight of a pious believer coming to honour the relics of an apostle or a martyr, prostrate himself with respect before the tomb of a man as disgusting by his morals as by his doctrine? In days when one no longer believed in anything, have we not seen pilgrim crowds believe in the ashes of Jean-Jacques, and devotees of Voltaire dispute with a religious and fanatical eagerness some scraps and vile furniture of his house? And today still, those strong minds who do not know how to abase themselves before God nor before the relics of His Saints, do you see them on their knees before the remains of men? And of what men, I pray you? and what morality can be drawn from their life for the perfecting of humanity? Some corrupted generations by the venom of their writings; the others made rivers of blood and tears flow. No matter, there must be ceremonies, translations; there must be monuments whose front touches the heavens to honour the ashes of those savants, the opprobrium of humanity, of those heroes, scourges of nations!

And after that, will they not have, these fine geniuses, for the pious simplicity of our beliefs and our practices a little indulgence; and could we not, without too much exciting humour and provoking sarcasms, attach some price to the possession of the bones of our Saints, and surround with our love and our respects these venerable objects? For after all, relics for relics, do not the ashes of a martyr of truth deserve as much honour as those of a miscreant who passed his life blaspheming against it? and, cult for cult, does not the one that teaches virtue and leads to happiness well merit comparison with the one that distils corruption and disorder? For, my brethren, it is the second thing I have to tell you in a few words: advantages of the cult of holy relics.

II. We live, my brethren, in a century which begins to take fright at the frightful doctrines taught by the preceding one. From all sides we hear it said that society is lost, that soon we shall fall back into barbarism, that the people must be moralised and then moralised again. And sometimes we hear those who make themselves the apostles of social renewal reproach the Church for not associating herself with them, for distracting herself from these important cares for trifles. My brethren, the Catholic Church does not deserve these reproaches, she is well on the question; and when, faithful to ancient traditions, we seek to restore to worship its splendours, when we invite the multitude to come into our temples by the brilliance of our ceremonies, even then we work very directly for the social good, for the perfecting of humanity.

It was always by this practical side above all that the holy Fathers made the cult of the martyrs considered. Just as, says Saint Basil, bees leave their hive when they see fine weather, and, ranging the flowers of some beautiful countryside, return laden with that sweet liquor which heaven pours there every morning with the dew; so, on the days illustrated by the solemnity of the martyrs, we run in crowds to their tombs, to gather there as a heavenly gift the example of their virtues.[4]

Tell me, my brethren, these venerable remains which we have just rendered solemnly to your homage, have they not a voice, a very eloquent language? Do they not give you high teachings, precious lessons? Listen: one of these lifeless heads that we venerate among these relics is going to take up the word again and say to you: It is soon sixteen centuries since a whole legion of Christians, Prest at their head, let themselves be immolated by sentiment of conscience and duty. Rather than fail God, we preferred to die. And behold that today, a thousand six hundred years after our death, our names are proclaimed still in the assembly of the faithful, our remains are carried in triumph, and our memory loaded with blessing. What a reward already, in time, not to speak of that of eternity! There were, in the time when we lived, powerful men, heroes, etc. Where are they? where are their ashes? who speaks of them? Therefore, my brethren, therefore there is nothing glorious, even on earth, like fulfilling one’s duty, and the most essential of all duties which is that of following the law of God. Behold a first teaching which these holy relics give you: teaching of the glory there is in the fulfilment of duty.

Let us listen again to the same voice which makes itself heard from the midst of these holy relics: In the days of our mortal life, we fought great fights. To be a Christian then was almost surely to be a martyr. Some of us were sent to the beasts, others hurled into the sea, others tormented by all the refinements of cruelty. No matter: we did not recoil before any torment. But you who have inherited our faith, where then is your courage? What! there are no more executioners, no more pyres, no more Neros, Domitians or Aurelians, and you blush at your vocation, and you are ashamed of your quality as Christian! A vile human respect, the fear of a sarcasm, the ironical laugh of a libertine or a coward whom in the bottom of your soul you despise, what! that suffices to stop you! What Christians then are you? Come, come then, more courage! *Nondum usque ad sanguinem restitistis*: You have not yet resisted unto blood. [Heb. 12:4.] Behold another lesson which these holy relics give you: lesson of courage and strength against the obstacles which prevent your salvation. Let us listen again. But whither am I letting myself be carried? All dogmas, all virtues, these sacred bones teach you. O you, sensual men, always bent toward the earth, always glued to matter, and who never lift your eyes to heaven; men who are wholly absorbed by the cares of this life, and who have not a thought for eternity, come and learn your noble origin and your heavenly destination by the practices of a cult whose

object is to glorify the triumphs of the spirit over brute force, and which is itself the highest expression of faith in the resurrection and in life.

And you, turbulent men, who make no sacrifice to peace of the family or of the State, vindictive hearts who breathe only hatred of God and of men, come, I shall say to you with one of our learned bishops; see these feet: they were agitated to fly to the succour of misfortune; see these hands: they were not weary of spreading benefits; see this mouth: it carried to the world words of peace and salvation, and opened one last time to pray, to pardon and to bless. Consider this heart which, all dust as it is, seems still to thrill with love for its God and for its brethren; and laugh after that, if you dare, at a cult which proposes to man such sublime examples and makes him hear such eloquent lessons!

I stop here, my brethren, and I beseech, in ending, those glorious martyrs whose remains are before our eyes, and who from the height of the heavens follow with a look of love all this imposing ceremony, I beseech them to pour out divine grace abundantly into your souls.

Oh yes, holy Patrons, bless this good people which has manifested so much zeal for your glory, and whose sentiments have touched us beyond what we can say! Bless the old men, and soften for them the road to the tomb! Bless the fathers, bless the mothers, and give them the consolation of seeing their children grow up in piety and in virtue! Bless also, O illustrious martyrs, bless the Pontiff of this diocese who encouraged this feast, and who smiles on it from afar! Bless his worthy representative who came to preside at this ceremony: venerable scion of a blessed family which took birth in this parish, and from which he inherited the charity and all the virtues of ancient times! Bless the pastor of this flock, pastor whose naive and courageous charity does not distinguish persons, who knows and cherishes his flock and whom his flock knows and cherishes, true type and model of the pastoral heart!

And if it is permitted me to come after the others and to offer you my request, O holy martyrs, bless the feeble efforts of my ministry; and may this day for ever memorable date for this parish an era of spiritual renovation whose memory is perpetuated from age to age, and which makes its holy influences felt to the most remote generations! It is the grace, etc.[5]

Translator’s notes

1. **Source of the first point.** By the author’s own footnote, the first part of the sermon (the proofs for the veneration of relics) is almost wholly taken from a pastoral letter of the bishop of Rodez on holy relics. The phrases “said eloquently one of our most illustrious bishops” and “with one of our learned bishops” are thus, in all likelihood, quotations from that letter; I have not verified this. The bishop of Rodez is not named by the preacher.

2. “The Pontiff of this diocese … his worthy representative who came to preside”: the bishop of Chartres and his vicar (not named). “Venerable scion of a blessed family which had taken birth in this parish”: the presiding delegate is not named in the text.

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[1] Saint Prest (Latin *Priscus*) and his companions, martyrs honoured at Saint-Prest, near Chartres; the parish church had just recovered the relics. The place of the ceremony is not named in the text beyond “your parish” and “your temple”. (Editor’s heading, and my note.)

[2] A principle commonly attributed to Augustine (*De baptismo contra Donatistas* IV, 24); the preacher does not give the place; not verified here.

[3] The “illustrious bishop” is not named; the author’s closing footnote says the first point is nearly all taken from the pastoral letter of the bishop of Rodez on holy relics, which presumably is the source (not verified here).

[4] The comparison is attributed to Basil (the preacher gives no place); not verified here.

[5] Cf. Appendix I: AB, 32. The first point is almost entirely drawn from the pastoral letter (*mandement*) of the bishop of Rodez on the holy Relics. (Note of M. l’abbé Pie.)

n° 33. Homily for the Third Sunday of Advent

Chartres cathedral, third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday), December 1841.

Rorate caeli desuper, et nubes pluant justum. [Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just.] Heavens, pour out your dew, and let the clouds rain the Just One. (Isaias 45:8.)

MY DEAR BRETHREN, it is by this holy prayer, it is by these burning desires that the Church this morning made the opening of the great sacrifice. She prays the heavens to pour out their dew, and the clouds to rain the Just One. During the first two weeks of Advent, all the divine promises, all the oracles, all the precursory signs of the Messiah came to illumine with their sweet rays the resplendent pages of our liturgical books. The sacred lips of the priests and the melodious voices of the levites made this holy temple resound, both with the protoevangelical word which announced a Redeemer at the very cradle of the world, and with the word given to Abraham and to David that the Messiah would be born of their race, and with the prediction of Isaias that a rod would come forth from the root of Jesse and that from this rod a flower would rise: an oracle in which the virginal birth of Christ is expressed so gracefully that all Christian souls have taken pleasure in celebrating both this marvellous branch and its divine flower. Have you remarked sometimes, my dearly beloved brethren, at the royal portal of our cathedral, the genealogical tree springing from the bosom of ancient Jesse and carpeting this admirable window with its prophetic branches on each of which rises a king, ancestor of Mary; and right at the top, after having climbed from patriarch to patriarch, from branch to branch, from king to king, one arrives at the summit where Mary rests, there, as in the corolla of a lily, holding Jesus in her arms? What a rich translation of the word of the prophet: A rod shall come forth from the root of Jesse and a flower shall rise from that rod: *Egredietur virga de radice Jesse, et flos de radice ejus ascendet!* [Isa. 11:1.]

In the beautiful days of those admirable Catholic centuries which wrote thus, with pearls and diamonds, the sublime pages of our prophets, the harmonious sighs of the organ and the melodious voices of the choristers repeated the sweet and poetical responsory which our Fulbert of Chartres composed and which the pious king Robert had set to music: *Stirps Jesse virgam produxit, virgaque florem, et super hunc florem requiescit Spiritus almus.* The rod of Jesse produced a branch, and the branch a flower, and on this flower the divine Spirit rests. Then a single voice added: The Virgin Mother of God is the branch, and her Son is the flower. *Virgo Dei genitrix virga est, flos filius ejus.* And then the choir resumed: And on this flower the divine Spirit has rested: *Et super hunc florem requiescit Spiritus almus.*[1]

My dearly beloved brethren, these magnificences of Catholic worship have weakened much; the cold and dry hand of heresy, or at least of unbelief its daughter, which has hidden the shame of its birth under the name of criticism, that hand has torn the most beautiful pages of our liturgy, altered the melody of our most harmonious canticles. But yet the foundation still remains. And for a fortnight the Church has shown us, assembled as in sheaves, all our titles of hope, all the guarantees given for four thousand years on the birth of a Saviour. Now, during the two weeks that remain, the Church is going to hasten by her wishes the coming of the Redeemer. Her heart, full of hope and faith, is going to pour itself out in sighs; her soul beforehand is going to surrender to gladness. Rejoice in the Lord, says the Roman Church in the introit of this day; heavens, pour out your dew, says our Church of France. And both in accord will say to us next by the epistle of Saint Paul: My brethren, rejoice, and again rejoice, for the Lord is near: *Dominus enim prope est.* [Phil. 4:4–5.] And all the Churches of the Catholic universe, to whatever rite they belong, are going, in a few days, to make rise toward the heavens the ardent exclamations of their impatience and the pressing prayers of their love, by those admirable antiphons which have taken their name from the interjection of desire: *O Sapientia! O Adonai! O Radix Jesse!…*[2]

But I let myself be carried away, my brethren. As I must at once, on this day when I wish to prepare you for the celebration of the great and sweet feast of Christmas, give light to your minds and warmth to your hearts, I am going to show you briefly and familiarly these two things: 1st, nothing is greater than the mystery of

Christmas; 2nd, nothing is more lovable than this mystery.

Pray the Mother of Jesus to help me develop my thoughts.

I. Nothing is greater than the mystery of Christmas. The mystery of Christmas is the birth of the God made man, it is the incarnation of the Word. Now, my brethren, a whole discourse would not suffice to develop all the grandeurs of this mystery. Hear then only some scattered considerations which I am going to present to you. The mystery of the Incarnation is the greatest of all mysteries, and you will be astonished if I tell you that the Incarnation is the last term of the infinite power of God; that is, that God can do nothing outside Himself greater than the act of the Incarnation. Follow my thought well, my brethren; for you are Christians, and I am going to show you, by the light of the sacred torch of theology, what the Christ is, whence it will be easy for you to conclude what the Christian is; that is, that the same doctrine will make you understand at once the immense depth of the mystery of the Incarnation considered in itself, and the immense reach of this mystery viewed in the other mysteries which are its dependences and consequences.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And that was from all eternity. And no one knows the secret, and no one can tell the mystery of this first Christmas, of this Christmas of eternity which is the eternal generation of the Son, come forth from the bosom of the Father before the dawn: *Ex utero ante luciferum genui te.* [From the womb before the day star I begot Thee. (Ps. 109:3.)] Now from all eternity God sufficed to Himself, deploying in the very bosom of His nature a power of infinite intelligence by the eternal begetting of the Son equal and consubstantial with Him, and also an infinite power of love by the eternal embrace of the Father and the Son in an operation consubstantial to both. In the beginning then, and from all eternity it was so, when one day, and it was the first of days, it pleased God to make something outside Himself; this something was the universe, and man, king of the universe.

Surely that was a great act of power; God Himself speaks of it with complacency. And which of us has not often admired with what poetry God seems to take pride in the book of Job, when He brings out the beauty, grandeur and magnificence of His works? Yet this same God will avow that this great act of creation, which without doubt required an infinite power, cost that power little. The Holy Spirit says that it was a play for the Most High: *Ludens in orbe terrarum.* [Playing in the world. (Prov. 8:31.)] He said, and nothingness obeyed His voice. The heavens, He stretched them out, as the shepherd stretches a tent. Light, He sowed it in the air, as He sowed dust in our fields; a star or a grain of sand cost Him no more. Worlds balance before His face like the drop of dew suspended from a blade of grass. And if He constrained Himself to an instant of meditation within Himself to create man, it is not on account of man in himself, poor earthworm, but because the divine thought perceived behind Adam another man whom it had meditated through all eternity, a second man of whom the first was only the sketch. Behind Adam, says Tertullian, God saw the Christ.[3]

Therefore, my brethren, if God re-entered into Himself to create man, it is that He wished, in order to make the earthly and temporal copy, to consult the divine type which He had conceived in His eternal understanding. If God meditates an instant over the cradle of Eden, it is that behind, in the night of the ages, He perceived the crib of Bethlehem; and that at the instant of the birth of the human race, God already saw the birth of His Christ, Christmas appearing to Him forty centuries behind this sixth day of creation. But, once more, man in himself cost the divine power little. A little mud, and a breath upon it: that is all God spent to create man. Therefore, O my God, when I announce to this people the mystery of Your omnipotence, the greatest of all the mysteries that You have wrought, one must seek in Your works something other than creation, which is only a play, an amusement of Your power: *Ludens in orbe terrarum.*

Where must it then be sought, and what is the miracle and the last effort of the divine power? Saint Paul will tell you: the liveliest expression of the strength or the virtue of God is Jesus Christ: *Christum Dei virtutem.* [Christ the power of God. (1 Cor. 1:24.)] That is, that there is an act by which all the creative energy of God is exhausted, and this act is the Incarnation. Do you wish to measure with the compass, mathematically, what

omnipotence can do when it gathers all its virtue? See the Christ: *Christum Dei virtutem.* There were nearly three thousand years elapsed since He who was from all eternity had created the world, when one of the descendants of that man whom God had cast on the earth, the royal shepherd of Bethlehem, contemplating in the light of prophetic intuition the great hope promised to his father Abraham, and beseeching the Most High to let come forth from the depths of His eternal counsels the mystery of the Christ, forgot himself to this sublime interpellation: Great God, he said, make then an effort of Your power, and come: *Excita potentiam tuam et veni.* [Stir up Thy might, and come. (Ps. 79:3.)]

And what then is this language? What! one of the frail inhabitants of earth who distrusts the ordinary power of his God and who seems to incite it, to animate it for some effect above the common reach of its forces! Have you seen, my brethren, a man endowed with a Herculean strength, finding himself face to face with some extraordinary work which demands all his energy, gather, excite, so to speak, all his muscular power, and lift, once only in his life, a burden which he would not lift a second time? Now this image seems to have offered itself to the sight of the prophet, when he says to God: Excite, activate Your power, and come: *Excita potentiam tuam et veni.*

Then, about a thousand years having elapsed again, one day a young virgin of the family of David, transported by a divine enthusiasm, sang in an admirable canticle these surprising words: He who is mighty has done great things in me. He has displayed the arm of His power, and (as the text says in the sublime originality of its literal sense) He has made power in His arm; that is, the prodigy which He wrought is not only an effect of His infinite omnipotence; but it is this omnipotence itself, manifested in all its possible energy: *Fecit potentiam in brachio suo.* [He hath showed might with His arm. (Luke 1:51.)] Now, my brethren, what had the Almighty done in this Virgin? He had done in her what David asked; He had come into her, He had become incarnate in her.

But what is it then, you will tell me, what is this great act of the Incarnation in which Saint Paul sees all the power of God exhausted, in which David and Mary (forgive me this translation of their word, I find none more true) see as it were the tour de force of the divine omnipotence? What is the Incarnation? Let us try, my brethren, with Scripture and tradition, to define it well, and so to introduce you into the very depth of the power of the Lord.

In the beginning then was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Then, in time, God created the universe and man, that is, He gave being to what was not. And man had scarcely come out of nothingness when he fell below even nothingness by sin. Now man being thus fallen and degraded, God wishes to raise him and rehabilitate him; and for that the Word, who is eternally in the bosom of the Father, will descend into the womb of a woman; the Word, who is consubstantial with God, will espouse human nature and take it into the unity of His divine person. He who was God will be at the same time man, *et habitu inventus ut homo* [and in habit found as a man (Phil. 2:7)], save for sin, He will have all the human reality. In Him God and man, without confusion, will nevertheless be so intimately and hypostatically united that what is said of God can be said of man, and what is said of man can be said of God.

Behold, my brethren, what the Incarnation is, behold what the mystery of the Christ is. The Christ is He who with one hand touching the infinite depths of glory, with the other is going to plunge into the infinite depths of nothingness, and lower still, *in inferno inferiori* [in the lower hell (Ps. 85:13)], into the infinite depths of sin, *a fine usque ad finem* [from end to end (Wisd. 8:1)], and who, bringing together these two abysses between which He is placed, makes nothingness rise to the level of sovereign being, and inclines heaven to the level of earth: *Consocians ima summis, caelestia terrenis.* [Joining the lowest to the highest, heavenly to earthly.] The Christ is He who, being God, became man to make man God: *Deus factus est homo, ut hominem Deum faceret.* [God became man that He might make man God.][4]

Now, my brethren, do you understand now what I said after David, after Mary, after the great Apostle, namely that the Incarnation is the last effort of the divine omnipotence, that it is the greatest of all the mysteries that God has wrought? But remark still how far this immense mystery extends. By the Incarnation humanity was hypostatically united to divinity; Jesus Christ in God became man. But admire still three other infinite effects: by the Incarnation a woman became mother of God; by the Incarnation every man became brother of a God; by the Incarnation creation entire was divinised. A word of explanation on these last two effects.

By the Incarnation man has become the brother of a God: first because he has the same nature as He; then because the Christian is united to the Christ by grace, by the sacraments, by the Eucharist above all, the Eucharist which continues and pursues the Incarnation even into us: the Eucharist which, in incorporating into us the flesh and blood of a God, in making Him pass in some sort into our veins, carries to the most intimate depth of our being the presence and grace of this God, so that we are truly gods; that is, that we truly participate in the divine nature, *divinae consortes naturae* [partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4)], and that our personality itself seems absorbed in the divine personality of Jesus Christ: *Vivo, jam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus.* [I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me. (Gal. 2:20.)] Therefore, children of Mary, bless Jesus the incarnate God, who has made gods of you: *Benedicite filii hominum Domino.* [Bless the Lord, ye sons of men. (Dan. 3:82.)] But it is not only man, it is creation entire which has been divinised by the Incarnation. For, my brethren, this earth is no longer a common earth, since it bore a God, since it was sanctified by the steps of a God. This light is no longer a common light, since it touched the eyelid of a God. Foods are no longer common foods, since they were the nourishment of a God. But I go further.

The incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, in establishing His religion, made His supernatural gifts take the same form which He Himself had taken. The Incarnation of His divine person was followed by the incarnation of His divine grace which He united, by the sacraments, to sensible and material signs… Therefore rivers and fountains, bless Jesus the incarnate God, for your water, employed by the hand of the priest of Jesus, pours out the divine and supernatural grace of regeneration: *Benedicite, fontes et flumina, Domino!* [Bless the Lord, ye fountains and rivers. (Dan. 3:77–78.)] Trees of the orchard, of the forest and of the desert, thrill at the sight of Jesus the incarnate God, for the juice of the olive and the perfume of the balsam-tree, under the finger of the pontiff of Jesus, will produce the divine grace of Christian strength and of priestly virtue: *Exultabunt omnia ligna silvarum a facie Domini, quoniam venit.* [All the trees of the woods shall rejoice before the face of the Lord, because He cometh. (Ps. 95:12–13.)]

But my mind loses itself, my senses are troubled; I know not in what sublime reverie I feel myself plunged at the sight of this countryside of yellowing ears and grapes already reddened. Yes, this fruit of the wheat, this blood of the vine, as Scripture speaks, by one of the mysteries which are the consequence of the Incarnation, tomorrow perhaps I shall prostrate myself in adoration before them who will be changed, transubstantiated into the body and blood of my God. Earth then, which have nourished them with your sap, sun, which have ripened them with your rays, and all you plants that germinate on the soil, bless Jesus the incarnate God who has honoured the fruit of vegetable matter to the point of transforming it into His own own substance: *Benedicite, sol et luna, Domino. Benedicite universa germinantia in terra Domino.* [Bless the Lord, sun and moon. Bless the Lord, all things that spring up in the earth. (Dan. 3:62, 76.)] *Laetentur caeli et exultet terra; gaudebunt campi et omnia quae in eis sunt … a facie Domini quoniam venit.* [Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad… the fields shall be joyful and all things that are in them… before the face of the Lord, because He cometh. (Ps. 95:11–13.)] It is thus, my brethren, that by diverse ways (which I have not exhausted, which I have not shown you all) the Incarnation pursues itself into all men, into all nature. It is thus that in Christianity, in the religion of the incarnate God, there is no other God than God, but everything in it is divine. And that is that Christian Pantheism of which I have already spoken to you and which results from the Incarnation, as sublime, as true, as profound as the other is disgusting, absurd and chimerical.

The mystery of Christmas is therefore, religiously speaking, whether in itself or in its dependences and consequences, the greatest of all mysteries. I could show you that this mystery has the same grandeur on the human side; that the word of all human history is Jesus Christ the incarnate God; that the key to the sixty centuries which have elapsed from Adam to us is Jesus Christ the incarnate God; that the centre toward which all providential designs have converged for a thousand years, and also the target of all the attacks of Satan and his minions, is the incarnate God Jesus Christ; that the principle of all virtue, all science, all civilisation, all social, domestic or individual good, is the incarnate God Jesus Christ. But I have extended myself enough and too much on my first proposition: nothing is greater than the mystery of Christmas. A word on the second.

II. Nothing is sweeter than the mystery of Christmas. Yes, my dearly beloved brethren, if the mystery of Christmas has its side of grandeur by which it addresses our minds, oh! it has also, it has above all its side of sweetness by which it addresses our hearts. It is when God works the most astonishing prodigies of power that He applies Himself most to veiling them under sweet and amiable appearances. In the immense work of the Incarnation, you picture to yourselves perhaps a Sinai with its lightnings and thunders; you say perhaps like the ancients: We shall die if we see God. No, my brethren, you will see only a man like yourselves, only an infant in a cradle: *Ad finem fortiter, disponens omnia suaviter.* [Reaching from end to end mightily, and ordering all things sweetly. (Wisd. 8:1.)] Let us rise again for an instant, and go back to the principle of things.

God, who is infinitely jealous of the heart of man, to have more assured rights to his love, had overwhelmed him with benefits, and had given him a natural disposition to love Him. And as likeness is the great spur of love, He had made man in His likeness. Now, in spite of all that, God saw that man did not know how to love Him. Man was carnal, and God was wholly spiritual. God did not fall under the senses of man, and man did not understand his likeness to God. Then what did the Lord do? Hear Saint Augustine. O man, the Lord said to Himself, you love only what is sensible: well! I shall become sensible. You are composed of flesh, well! I shall make Myself flesh: *Et Verbum caro factum est.* The Word was like an abstraction for man, and the Word became flesh: *Et Verbum caro factum est.* God was like a crystal which our eyes passed through without discovering anything in it: the holy humanity of Jesus came and placed itself behind, like the quicksilver of the mirror, and henceforth the divine features were reflected toward us, and we saw God in our own nature. And now, O man, says Saint Thomas, you will be inexcusable if you do not love your God; for you love man for likeness of nature, and God has made Himself like you![5]

But let us continue, my brethren. God, in making Himself man, did not wish to take humanity in its state of glory which would still have frightened us: no, He made Himself an infant, and the most beautiful of infants. My brethren, nothing is lovable on earth like infancy; nothing is gracious, smiling like infancy; nothing excites love, nothing provokes caresses like infancy. One disputes the sweet enjoyment of seeing an infant, of laying a kiss on his candid and innocent brow. Well! my brethren, God, jealous of our love, willed to suit His nature, His way of being to the proportions of our heart; He came down on earth with all the attractions, all the charms of infancy. Which of us would not yield to such sweet allurements? He who loves us to the point of making Himself a little child, how should we not love Him: *Sic nos amantem quis non redamaret?* [Who would not love in return Him who so loves us?]

And, my brethren, the crib of Jesus was so dear to Him that He would have wished never to leave it and that He always sought to approach it as much as possible. To the swaddling clothes of infancy succeeded those of an obscure life, then the bloody garments of suffering, the shroud of the sepulchre, and finally the veils of the Eucharist: so that the mystery of Christmas, begun in the crib, continues in the tabernacle, where Jesus only exchanges the swaddling clothes of Bethlehem for those of the sacrament, where the dust of the stable is replaced by the humble appearances of the mystery; in the tabernacle, where Jesus has made Himself less than an infant to be able to become our nourishment, but where, besides, He so conserves the affections,

habits, virtues and, if I dared say it, the ways of infancy, that every time it pleased Him to break the veils of the mystery, it was always to appear in the form of an infant. The tabernacle, which is as it were the last term of the Incarnation, is therefore truly like the crib which was its starting point. I am mistaken: Bethlehem, that is, the house of bread, Bethlehem is found in the cenacle more than in Bethlehem itself. We have therefore truly in our midst the dear little child of Bethlehem; we shall be able, on Christmas day, to go and adore Him with the shepherds, to press Him on our hearts, what do I say! Ah! happier, we shall be able to make His crib within our hearts. For I was mistaken: the starting point of the Incarnation was the womb of Mary; and the end of the Incarnation is our heart; it is there that the Incarnation pursues itself and is accomplished. My brethren, is it not true that, viewed in itself, viewed in its consequences, the mystery of Christmas is the sweetest of all mysteries: *Sic nos amantem quis non redamaret?*

Also, my brethren, why do we not have a few moments left to gather together the delicious accents which came from the lips of the Chrysostoms, Ambroses, Augustines, Gregories and Leos, those great and illustrious personages letting escape the sentiments of their soul concerning the holy expectation and the happy coming of the mystery of Christmas! Why can we not hear above all the impassioned lover of the crib, the devotee of Bethlehem, Saint Bernard, to whom the Virgin Mother and the divine Child had appeared one Christmas night, and left in his soul those impulses of love and tender memories which he passed into his admirable homilies on the gospel *Missus est*! And finally, my brethren, why can I not reproduce for you also some of those lines traced every year by the pen of Francis de Sales on Christmas day, in honour of the dear little Child of Bethlehem, and sent to that holy and noble lady, to that soul so sweet and so strong who flew away to the heavens, two hundred years ago tomorrow! My brethren, read, I pray you, between now and this great feast, those admirable letters on Christmas, where the pen of the holy bishop of Geneva has truly deposited a perfume of the crib, and where the features of the holy Child and the joys of Bethlehem are found in their most naive and most natural expression.[6]

My brethren, the mystery of Christmas has something so sweet, so inspiring, that nothing has been so much celebrated by poetry, nothing has been sung so much as Christmas. If you have been able to procure, my brethren, a book of which I spoke to you, and which has just appeared, entitled *L'Avent liturgique* [*The Liturgical Advent*], there you will see now the Anthologies and Menaia of the Greeks, poetical chants in which the Catholic East has kept the tradition of the genius of Pindar and the suavity of Homer, now the graceful and sublime iambics of Saint Ambrose and Prudentius (for Saint Ambrose was one of the poets of Christmas), and now finally the free prose, cadenced or rhymed, of the Middle Ages, the responsories of Fulbert and the sequence of the too celebrated Abelard.[7]

And it is not only in temples and among the holy offices that Christmas has been sung; Christmas has had above all its popular songs. For, my brethren, let us say it here: for us French, Christmas has a double memory. If it is on that day that Christ was born for all men, it is on that day that France was born for the Christian and for the Church. Since that great day of Christmas when the proud Sicambrian bowed his forehead before the altar of Rheims, Noël was for the French the acclamation of public rejoicings, and in those first feasts of the fatherland where the sons of Clovis were carried on a shield, the people cried Noël! as they have cried since Long live the King! It was the cry of military encouragement and in battles they cried: Noël! as they cried later Mont-Joie-Saint-Denys! it was the hymn of triumph and on the field of honour they cried Noël! as they cry today Victory! But above all, it was the popular song. The poor and the shepherds, who were so honoured by Jesus Christ being born in a stable, retained this word as their motto and title of honour. Noël was the alleluia of the village, and it was repeated a thousand times at the evening gathering in those old carols which form a whole branch, a whole epoch of our national poetry, and of which we all remember having heard some refrains over our cradle.

Nothing is sweeter than the mystery of Christmas. I have proved it on the one hand by the very substance of the dogma of Christmas; and, on the other hand, eighteen Christian centuries are there to attest it.

Therefore, O my brethren, prepare yourselves to celebrate Christmas well. Be not cold before the cradle of the holy Child: let these days not pass for you as common days; let Christmas say something to your hearts! Soon the bells will cry toward heaven for nine days and call the Saviour. In the sound of the bells, accompanying the chant of the O's of Christmas, there will be forty centuries of waiting and sighs, eighteen centuries of acclamations and rejoicings.

For a great number of hearts, these accents will say nothing. Alas! alas! are these hearts then Christian? Do they still live the Christian life? No. They are dead, the hearts from which nothing can draw a hymn in praise of Christ: *Non mortui laudabunt te, Domine.* [The dead shall not praise Thee, O Lord. (Ps. 113:25.)]

But we who still live the Christian life, *sed nos qui vivimus, benedicimus Domino* [but we who live, we bless the Lord (Ps. 113:26)]; we, my brethren, who are Christ's, we who love Christ, let our heart mingle its beatings of desire and love with the vibrations of the bronze, and from today until Christmas let us say every day with John the beloved: *Veni, Domine Jesu, etiam veni cito.* Come, Lord Jesus, come very quickly. So be it.[8]

Translator's notes

1. The "Christian pantheism" refers back to the preacher's earlier homilies (cf. n° 25, "the only pantheism I know"). It is his term for the doctrine of deification by grace; it is not pantheism in the proper sense, as he says: "there is no other God than God."

2. The "royal portal" window ("tree of Jesse") is the famous twelfth-century window of Chartres cathedral; the preacher speaks of it as seen by his listeners.

3. "Mathematically, with the compass": *au compas*; the idiom means "with exactitude".

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[1] The responsory *Stirps Jesse* is traditionally attributed to Saint Fulbert of Chartres (d. 1028); that King Robert the Pious "noted" it is the preacher's statement and is not verified here.

[2] The "Great O Antiphons" of Vespers, 17–23 December.

[3] The Tertullian saying (*De carnis resurrectione* 6, "quodcumque limus exprimebatur, Christus cogitabatur homo futurus") is the preacher's allusion; I give it as stated and have not verified the place.

[4] A patristic formula (Athanasius, Augustine and others); the preacher does not name a source.

[5] The Augustine and Thomas sayings are given as the preacher gives them; not verified here.

[6] The "holy and noble lady" who died "two hundred years ago tomorrow" (the sermon was preached on the third Sunday of Advent, 12 December 1841, so the anniversary falls on 13 December 1641) is Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, d. 13 December 1641. She is not named by the preacher; the identification is mine, from the date.

[7] The book is Dom Prosper Guéranger's *L'Année liturgique: l'Avent* (1841); the preacher gives only the title *L'Avent liturgique* and does not name the author; the identification is mine. "Antées" is as the edition prints it, beside the *Menaia* ("Ménées") of the Greeks; perhaps the *Anthologion* is meant.

[8] Cf. Appendix I: A, 43. (Editor's note.) The Latin is a free echo of Rev. 22:20 (*Veni, Domine Jesu*) with Rev. 22:7 (*cito*).

n° 34. Instruction Preached at the Cathedral on the Second Friday of Lent: Some Considerations on the Word of God; Summary of the Instructions of the Preceding Year, and Subject of This Year's Instructions

Chartres cathedral, second Friday of Lent, 1842.

Testificor coram Deo et Jesu Christo … praedica verbum; insta opportune, importune; argue, obsecra, increpa, in omni patientia et doctrina. [I charge thee before God and Jesus Christ… preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke with all patience and doctrine.] I conjure you before God and before Jesus Christ, preach the holy word; insist in season, out of season; use reproaches and supplications, and if supplications do not touch hearts, come back again to reproaches; be persevering in patience, but persevering also and inflexible in doctrine. (2 Timothy 4:1–2.)

MY DEAR BRETHREN, when the Lord, in the old law, had fixed His designs on a man to make a prophet of him, however holy and perfect that personage might be, almost always he recoiled at the sight of this ministry. Go, the Lord said to him, and tell this people their crimes. Go, and announce the anger of heaven on Jerusalem and on Samaria. Go into Nineveh the great, and cease not to cry the word I have told you. And, on hearing these words, the prophet, terrified at his mission, trembled like the leaf of a tree stirred by the wind; his knees gave way; fright inspired him with a thousand pretexts, a thousand objections against the heavenly will; and sometimes, wishing to elude the fatal employment and to withdraw from the face of the Lord, he turned his back on Nineveh and fled secretly to Tarshish. A powerless effort without doubt: the hand of God knows so well how to seize again its instrument, wherever it hides. But it must indeed be avowed, it was a terrible mission, that of the prophets. For if they were charged with announcing woe to others, above all there was consummated in themselves, both in their soul and in their body, a frightful mystery of suffering and sacrifice. Now, my dearly beloved brethren, the prophetic ministry, the holy alliance was only the shadow and figure of our evangelical priesthood. And if the religion of the cross reached the hearts of the ancient prophets by such desolating preludes, what shall we say of that lively and natural representation of its agony, its crucifixion and its death, which Jesus Christ engraves in such deep strokes in the heart of His apostles? So, my brethren, when the return of the holy forty days brings back for us the obligation to preach more often and with new vigour the truths of heaven, with what sentiment do you think we are affected in the presence of this obligation? Would you be so much strangers to the secret of the sorrows which attach to all parts of our expiatory ministry as to believe that we run eagerly, light-heartedly, to meet our apostolic employment, and that we approach with satisfaction the days in which it will be given us to try in public, with some happiness perhaps, the resources of our mind? My brethren, be undeceived. You do not know in what manner Jesus Christ proceeds with His apostles. You do not know how dearly divine grace makes us buy what it is thought to give. Before arriving in this pulpit where he must continue the teachings of Calvary, the evangelical preacher had to pass through the garden of Olives; and there, the hand of God was pleased to make weigh on his soul a heavy agony of fright, weariness and unspeakable sadness: *Coepit pavere et taedere et maestus esse.* [He began to fear, and to be heavy, and to be sorrowful. (Mark 14:33; Matt. 26:37.)] And scarcely when he has cried: My soul is sad even unto death! scarcely has a ray come down from heaven, like a beneficent spirit, to assist him in this agony. God orders Moses to go and deliver his people, and behold on the road God wants to kill Moses. It is always so.[1]

I. When God wishes to make Himself an instrument, He begins by breaking it: *Dominus voluit conterere eum.* [The Lord was pleased to bruise Him. (Isa. 53:10.)] God is jealous to owe nothing to the natural power of His minister; and He kills and breaks all that seems to come from him. Do not go and believe then, my brethren, that when we come to address the holy word to you, we bring you the result of our labour and study, phrases we have elaborated at leisure, thoughts which our intelligence has pursued with effort, which our imagination has embellished with complacency. No, my brethren: it is thus that a rhetorician prepares his discourses; but it is not thus that a Catholic priest comes to preach the crucified God. The crucified God wishes to reign only by the cross, and He takes umbrage at all that could substitute itself for the virtue of the cross: *Ut non evacuetur crux Christi.* [Lest the cross of Christ should be made void. (1 Cor. 1:17.)] When He wishes to make an apostle, God puts a cross in his hand, and tells him to go and show and preach this cross: but at the same time also He plants a cross in his heart. And according as this cross is planted more or less deep in the apostle's heart, the cross he holds in his hand makes more or fewer conquests. At the instant when, with hands stretched out over our head, the sacred pontiff made descend into us priestly fecundity, and conferred on us the right to announce the holy word, he might have said to us as God to the first mother: *In dolore paries filios*: In sorrow you shall bring forth children. [Gen. 3:16.]

Therefore, my dearly beloved brethren, I conjure you, do not hear as a human word what is a divine word; do not judge as a natural labour what is the supernatural work of grace and suffering. Accept holily what we give you holily. Hear us as Christians, as we speak to you as priests. God knows it, and the holy altars are

witnesses, that it is at their feet that we prepared ourselves for the sacred ministry which we fulfil. The angels of the sanctuary can say it, that we conjured them to purify our lips with the burning coal which purified the lips of Isaias, and also we asked them to tear out one by one and to the last all the fibres of our heart which would vibrate for a sentiment unworthy of our supernatural and divine ministry. But if it is our duty to prepare ourselves to speak to you holily, it is your duty, my brethren, to prepare yourselves to hear us holily. If a coal must purify our lips and our heart, one is needed to purify your ears and your heart also. I repeat therefore, try to hear us as Christians; we shall try to speak to you as priests.

Our words sometimes perhaps will seem to you hard and severe; at other times they will appear to you bold. My brethren, in a century when error marches with raised front, when all the passions have arrived at the supreme degree of exaltation; in a century which no longer knows how to express anything with calm, but which is fanatic for all its ideas, there is only one passion which is not forgiven for being deeply felt and courageously expressed: it is conviction, it is the passion for truth. And while the demon of evil deploys an immense energy of action and language, we, priests of holy and incorruptible truth, they would shut us up in the narrow bounds of I know not what moderantism invented solely for us, constrain us to retail a few vague homilies, a few insignificant theses of a morality which Luther would let be preached in his temples! No, no! the Lord Jesus told us otherwise. In making us priests, He said to us: You are the salt of the earth. But if this salt should lose its savour, it would be good for nothing but to be cast under the feet of passers-by. *Vos estis sal terrae. Quod si sal evanuerit, in quo salietur? ad nihilum valet ultra, nisi ut mittatur foras, et conculcetur ab hominibus.* [You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more but to be cast out and to be trodden on by men. (Matt. 5:13.)]

We heard these words of Jesus, and we answered Him: No, Lord, as long as a drop of blood flows in our veins, as long as our voice keeps some accents, we shall not be the savourless salt, and we shall protest by gesture and voice against the audacious and insolent efforts of error.

And Saint Paul also traced for us the line we had to follow: they are the words of my text, addressed to the young bishop Timothy. I conjure you, he says to him, before God and before Jesus Christ, preach the holy word: *Praedica verbum.* The world will come which will say to you: But is such or such a teaching opportune? Should not silence be kept on such or such a point perhaps delicate and wounding? And I say to you on the part of God and of Jesus: Preach and insist in season and out of season: *Insta opportune, importune.* The world will say to you again: But why this tone of reproach and severe censure? And I say to you: Reprove boldly the prevaricators, join to reproach the sweeter tone of entreaty; and if this language is not heard, arm yourself with the authority of your ministry to censure and brand: *Argue, obsecra, increpa.* Let there be in your heart an unalterable foundation of patience and forbearance for persons, but in your mouth an inflexible firmness against vices and errors: *In omni patientia et doctrina!*

You hear it, my brethren, this rule which Saint Paul gives me; and if ever I departed from it, I authorise you to recall me to it: charity in the priest's heart, but truth in his mouth: *In omni patientia et doctrina.* Moreover, my brethren, you know it, our Catholic priest's heart does not know how to turn to bitterness; and it is the very affection we have for persons which makes us so intolerant toward their prejudices and their vices which are their cruellest enemies.

II. We began our familiar talks, last year, by establishing this proposition, namely: There can exist no morality on earth without the Catholic faith which is the reason of all morality, and without Catholic worship which is the means of all morality. In other words, Catholic dogma is the *why* of morality; Catholic worship is the *how* of morality. Without Catholic beliefs, morality is only a prejudice which has no logical and rational foundation; without Catholic practices, morality is only a theory which has no possible application and realisation. We developed last year only one half of our proposition, and it was the more severe and arid part of our subject. Yet, before passing to the second part, we must in this preliminary instruction summarise what concerns the first part. Perhaps our reasonings are scarcely present to your mind. We shall recall them

to you sometimes textually; listen with attention: I flatter myself that this summary will carry conviction into your hearts.

There can exist no morality on earth without the Catholic faith which is the reason of all morality; consequently the people will be truly upright and virtuous only in so far as it is religious and Christian. Indeed, it is incontestable, on the one hand, that the practice of virtue, that a conduct constantly conformed to the received principles of morality imposes great sacrifices on our corrupt nature. Our will, dangerously weakened and mortally wounded like a soldier touched by the sword, has hardly any strength left for the combats which virtue commands. Our mind, less altered, less deteriorated perhaps than our will, but tyrannised over by it, readily condescends to doubt every troublesome obligation. Virtue has thus become for us a difficult thing because of our evil will, a thing of doubtful obligation because of the sophisms too easily welcomed by our intelligence.

On the other hand, it is against the nature of man, essentially desirous of his happiness, of man impelled instinctively and almost irresistibly toward his present well-being; it is, I say, against the nature of man ever to submit to an onerous practice, if its obligation is not demonstrated to him. The first thing then that virtue has to do, when she presents herself to us with her privations and sacrifices, is to exhibit to us her authentic titles. You wish to impose on me the yoke of morality, but by what right? I feel that morality hampers me, and I shall hamper myself only with good reason. Where is the foundation of your morality? Demonstrate its obligation to me. Tell me the motive, the *why*.

Now, my brethren, I said it already formerly, and I repeat it again, I defy all the moralists of our century, all the humanitarian preachers, as they call themselves, I believe; I defy them to find another solid base of morality, except dogma, religious belief, that is, Catholic dogma and belief. Outside that there is no serious reason for morality. And it is thus that one after the other all the pretended foundations of morality can be rejected, if one does not arrive at Catholic dogma.

Indeed, Catholic dogma rests on the linking of these three things: God; Jesus Christ, Son and envoy of God; the Church, organ and interpreter of Jesus Christ. Now these three things are the three indispensable conditions of every obligation. Do not touch one of them, for nothing would remain.

There is in heaven a God, a God who commands virtue and forbids vice; a God who promises to virtue eternal rewards, who threatens vice with eternal chastisements. Behold without doubt the first reason of morality; behold the foundation of all obligation. But yet, soon I perceive that God is only a word; I feel that my intelligence tyrannised by my passions will picture this God according to its caprices; I feel that my reason, setting itself up as judge of what suits and what does not suit God, will forge for Him a nature conformed to my will. If this God does not express Himself more clearly than He does by our natural reason, surely God will be all that our own interest wishes to make Him. You give me God as principle of morality, that suffices well without doubt; but let Him speak, let Him express Himself in a clear and positive manner!

And indeed, Christian dogma tells you, this God has come down on earth, He became incarnate, He dwelt among us. He left us the code of His morality, the expression of His will. Jesus Christ and His gospel, behold the more precise reason of morality, behold the rule of our life. But I take this gospel, and soon I perceive again that the gospel is a word. God came on earth, He gave men His gospel; but this gospel, however clear it be, each one can understand in his own way. You command me, for example, respect for property in the name of the gospel; and I, like others, find in the gospel the condemnation of property. The gospel is only a dead letter; the caprice and interest of each will make of it the interest and the commentary. If God came on earth, if He gave men the gospel, let Him Himself undertake to specify clearly its meaning, to explain its thought, otherwise there will be as many different gospels as there are different passions which read it!

And indeed, Catholic dogma tells us, Jesus Christ established on earth an infallible authority, charged, until the end of the ages, with explaining the gospel. He put His code in the hands of the Church, and He assists

her with His grace that she may always explain its true sense. To her the care of settling discussions, of cutting short doubts. Ah! behold this time the last and absolute reason of duty, behold the assured foundation of morality, it is the immovable rock of Catholic dogma. I have nothing to answer to that, my reason bows before these three things linked one to the other: God, Jesus Christ, the Church. And it is thus, my brethren, that, according to the thought of one of our great doctors, the last reason of all duty is the priest of Jesus Christ holding in his hand the gospel: *Sacerdos Christi evangelium tenens.* [The priest of Christ holding the Gospel.][2]

But, once more, do not touch that. Do not take away my faith as a Catholic, I should no longer know any restraint, and I should no longer have to know any. Remove the Church, I shall no longer believe in the gospel, for I understand and share the logic of the great Augustine: *Evangelio non crederem, nisi me Ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas.* [I should not believe the Gospel, unless the authority of the Church moved me. (*Contra epistolam Manichaei* 5, 6.)] Remove the gospel, and I shall easily arrive at doubting God, for I understand David: *Dixit impius in corde suo: non est Deus.* [The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God. (Ps. 13:1.)] Doubting God, I shall doubt all virtue and all good, except my interest. My interest, I shall seek it by all possible means, *per fas et nefas* [by right and wrong]. There will be for me no morality but the fear of the gendarme and the scaffold. And my last resource will be suicide which will plunge me back into the nothingness to which I aspire, rather than live in opprobrium and sorrow.

This savage language makes you shudder, my brethren; and yet this language is very consequent in the mouth of an unbeliever. To come to this degree of perversity before which you recoil, three things suffice: 1st, not to be Catholic; 2nd, to have logic and good sense; 3rd, to have an interest in putting one's actions in harmony with one's principles. Admit these three things, and you can expect anything. A great number of men have an interest in being better than their principles, happily for the human race, otherwise this earth would be uninhabitable. But after all, as to the substance, the principle of unbelief, the absence of Catholic faith, contains all the horrible consequences of which I spoke just now; and these consequences, the passions of the multitude end by deducing. To appreciate a principle, one must not examine it too much in the state of principle. The polite world will always know how to give it a specious turn, to defend it by plausible arguments. But look at it a little in the state of consequence; see how this coarse and fierce people undertakes to translate this principle in its works. Open your eyes, my brethren: these same doctrines, born in learned societies, and which our century extolled as long as they remained in high society, it is indeed they that our century condemns today in the prisons and in the streets where they show themselves with all their ugliness. How many times, in the last sixty years, the guilty man, brought before the tribunal of an unbelieving moralist, would have had the right to say to him: After all, what then is my crime? I do as you say. All the distance between you and me is that I am consistent with my principles, whereas you are not. I am so because unhappy circumstances force me to be; you are not, because you have an interest in not being. Let us change places, and perhaps then I shall be cowardly enough to speak like you, and you consistent enough to act like me.[3]

Once more, my brethren, there is in the world only the authority, one and triple, of God, of Jesus Christ and of the Church, which has the right to command the conscience. For myself, I avow it, I would not do this injury to good sense as to believe in anything, if I did not believe in the Catholic Church; and if I did not believe in the Catholic Church, I would not do myself this wrong of depriving myself merely of an enjoyment. But with Catholic faith, it is another thing. With Catholic faith, I know how to impose on myself the privations and sacrifices which virtue demands. Catholic dogma, in teaching me the secret of original corruption, shows me in this past a happiness that I lost. Catholic dogma, in teaching me the secret of my eternal destiny, shows me in the future a happiness which awaits me. And between this Eden from which I was driven, and this Paradise where I can re-enter, Catholic dogma, in teaching me the mysterious power of the cross of Jesus Christ and also the power of my sacrifices, my efforts, my sufferings, shows me in the

present the means of expiating the fault of the past and of reconquering the joys of the future. Then all is explained for me. Sin in the past, happiness in the future. Therefore sorrow in the present, sorrow as means of expiation, sorrow as means of conquest. This evil which so revolts nature, I accept henceforth as a benefit. The earth being only a place of trial and transition, I do not wish to attach myself to it. Heaven having to be for me the more prodigal of its rewards as earth shall have been the more sparing of its gifts, I take pleasure in my privations; all that I lack, I judge for that very reason to be mine. I enjoy all the goods that I have not.

Oh no, no, do not tear from me my faith as a Catholic! For with it, not only do I submit to the sacrifices which virtue demands, but it makes me love them. Willy-nilly, I shall suffer on earth, something will always be lacking to me there, I shall always have a cross to carry. Leave me my Catholic faith, which teaches me to love my cross, which shows me a God on the cross, and which tells me to mingle my sighs with His sighs, my tears with His tears, my sorrows with His sorrows, my agony with His agony, my death with His death. Leave me this faith which divinises suffering and which makes of sorrow a martyrdom. Or else, if you wish to tear my faith from me, tear sorrow also from me. For it would be very cruel of you to leave me under the executioner’s stroke and to take from me the merit of martyrdom.

O holy Catholic Church, let those do without you who have never shed tears! Let those do without you who know how to do without consolation! Let those do without you for whom the present suffices and who know how to do without love! For me, O holy Catholic Church, without you I should not have the strength of virtue, I should not have the courage of sorrow.

My brethren, whoever you are, if you have the happiness of believing the Catholic truth, keep your faith preciously: it is all the reason of virtue; it is all its sweetness. And if you are of the number of those who have the misfortune not to believe; if you are of those unfortunate souls to whom a cruel century threw unbelief on their entry into the world; if you have never known the powerful attractions and holy sweetnesses of Catholic faith, ah! of grace, come, and I shall tell you the secret of obtaining from heaven the precious gift of faith which you perhaps grieve not to have received.

A young man of twenty-five, already disgusted with life, said one day in my presence: My God, my God, what evil have I then done that You have refused me faith? If any of those who hear me were tempted to say the same, I should stop this blasphemy on his lips, and I should say to him: My very dear brother, my very dear sister, what have you done to obtain faith? Has the dawn surprised you sometimes in the morning, bathed in tears, prostrate before the author of your being, beseeching Him to enlighten you? When night came to darken the already so sombre tint of this temple, in the evening, in silence and recollection, did you come to interrogate the voice of the God who dwells in the tabernacle? Did you regret that the voice of the guardians of the temple tore you too quickly from these delicious conversations? Did you come to hear the priest speaking from this pulpit of truth, and did you question, in the secret presentiment that he would answer your doubts and relieve you of your sorrows? No, you did nothing to have faith. Heaven awaits you, it solicits the entry of your soul; open it, and faith will enter.

In summarising today our instructions of last year, I demonstrated the intimate and necessary union of faith and morality, I demonstrated the connection of beliefs and works. Henceforth it remains for me to make you know what is the great means of religion for penetrating our souls and imbuing them with this double element of faith and virtue. I shall have to make pass before your eyes all the magnificence and all the poetry of Catholic worship. I shall tell you the high influence of exterior signs and the supernatural power of Catholic prayer; I shall call your attention to the secret virtue of our Catholic temples, to the moralising power of our Catholic Sunday, to the efficacy of our great Catholic sacrifice. That is already more matter than we can treat this year. May you, my brethren, all understand the thought of zeal and tender charity which will inspire all our words! May the grace of God and the maternal hand of Mary bless our feeble efforts, inspire our mouth and touch your hearts!

It is, etc.[4]

Translator's notes

1. This instruction opens the 1842 Lent course at Chartres and summarises the 1841 course (nos. 20–25 above: morality and faith, the priesthood, doctrinal intolerance, truth contested, the mysteries and sacraments). The promised programme for 1842 (worship, signs, prayer, temples, Sunday, the Mass) is what the following instructions of Tome I take up.

2. "Moderantism" (*modérantisme*) is the preacher's coinage-like word for a compulsory moderation; see the *Avertissement* (translated above, p. 24 of the French) for his own account of the pulpit manner.

3. The "gendarme and scaffold" passage is a deliberate reductio, not an assertion by the preacher.

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[1] Exod. 4:24.

[2] The "great doctor" is not named, and I have not identified the saying.

[3] Printed footnote: "The crimes of peoples are born of their errors, as in man action follows thought. Sooner or later, '89 would always have produced '93, and would produce it still today." (*Pensées de M. de Bonald*, vol. I, p. 116.) — and: "The century of enlightenment was followed by the century of crimes, and it was bound to be." (Id.) (Notes of the editor.)

[4] Cf. Appendix I: A, 1. — *Avertissement*, p. 24. (Editor's note.)

n° 35. Instruction for the Third Friday of Lent: On the Necessity of an Exterior Worship

Chartres cathedral, third Friday of Lent, 1842.

Invisibilia enim ipsius, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur. [For the invisible things of Him… are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.] By means of exterior facts, what is invisible in God becomes graspable and visible. (Rom. 1:20.)

MY DEAR BRETHREN, our instructions of the preceding year and the summary we offered you of them this year, at the beginning of the Lenten course, have sufficiently established this important truth, this proposition immense in its reach, namely that Catholic dogma is the only solid foundation of morality. Where the Catholic principle is knowingly and deliberately rejected, there may be acts of virtue, yes; but an existence constantly and in every point virtuous, no; but a nature, a society that is virtuous, no, a thousand times no.

Credidi propter quod locutus sum [I believed, therefore have I spoken (Ps. 115:10)]: I believed, that is the *why*. Faith and morals, that is, principle and consequence, tree and fruit. Plant the tree of Catholic dogma, you will gather the fruits of morality. Detach a branch from the Catholic tree, I told you formerly, a remnant of Catholic sap which this branch has carried off may give you some semblance of leaves and flowers, but the fruits will abort. Truth in the mind and virtue in the heart are two things that hold together. When the mind is delivered to the demon of falsehood, the heart, unless the obsession began with it, is very near to delivering itself to the demon of vice. Intelligence and will are twin sisters between whom seduction is contagious; and when you see that the first has prostituted itself to error, cast a veil over the honour of the second. Here would be the false, and there the true? No. Therefore, my brethren, let us say it again with the accentuation of a deeper conviction: if society wishes to strengthen the sacred edifice of morality, let it lay before all the unshakeable foundation of dogma! If society wishes to gather the harvest of virtues, let it sow the seeds of beliefs! And as the quality of the harvest depends on that of the seed, to have true virtues sow true beliefs, which are Catholic beliefs; otherwise, you sow wind, and you will reap tempests.

This proposition being solidly established, we pass to another proposition which links on to the first. Dogma is the motive, the *why* of morality: we have proved it. Worship is the means, the *how* of dogma and

consequently of morality: that is what we wish to prove henceforth. No morality without religion, that is said, and we shall not return to it. No religion without worship, that is what is going to become the object of your attention.

And here, my brethren, I shall communicate to you naively two different sentiments which divide my soul: the first is that of a secret satisfaction at the sight of this fertile field which the magnificences of the Catholic liturgy open before me, garden planted with flowers, perfumed with aromatics and rich in all fruits, where we shall meet all that is pleasing to the sight and delectable to the taste. That is the first sentiment: that one rejoices us; but we must not taste it today. Today it is a quite opposite sentiment: sentiment of fear at the sight of the first difficulties of this subject so easy in appearance. Be not frightened then, my brethren, if, before introducing you into the promised land, I make you pass today through the desert; if, before approaching the graceful and poetical detail, I confine myself today to the arid and severe ground of general principles. In all things, elements are what is most difficult. Before admiring the stem, the leaves and the flowers, the naturalist must analyse the root. That is all we shall do today: we shall try to examine thoroughly the foundations of Catholic worship; and when we have thus studied the root of the liturgical tree, we shall then, seated agreeably in its shade, be able to examine and admire at leisure all its branches.

Let us enter on our subject, with no other order than that of the natural development of our thoughts. That is, my brethren, the privilege of these simple and familiar instructions, to be able to say things with some freedom of manner, without that rigorous and methodical order which is indispensable to discourses, but whose troublesome exigencies the conference rejects, claiming the right to put off to another day what it does not approach in this one.

I. There have been found, in all times, but above all for three centuries, men, pretended reformers of abuses, men who prided themselves on knowing the human heart and who called themselves philosophers, who, while pronouncing very loudly the name of religion and even of gospel, wished to abolish all public exterior worship, as being opposed to the religious and evangelical spirit. According to them, religion entire must be concentrated in the heart of man, and they did not fail to authorise themselves by the words of Jesus Christ: God is a spirit, and He acknowledges as His adorers only those who adore Him in spirit and in truth. Now we say boldly to these men: No religion, and above all no Christian religion without worship. And to develop our thought, let us examine first the nature of the two terms which religion tends to put in relation, and show that it is going against the nature of this double term of religion to pretend to free it from exterior signs and symbols.

Religion is the commerce of man with God and of God with man. It is this ensemble of things by which man ascends to God and God descends to man. Now what is man? and what is God? I answer first: 1st, man by his nature is essentially composed of a soul and a body; man is essentially spirit and flesh. 2nd, God by His nature without doubt is essentially spiritual and freed from all matter; but God is in some sort immaterial only in relation to Himself. In His relations with the creature, God always borrows a sensible form, and specially the God of the gospel is an incarnate God, Jesus Christ, Word made flesh. Therefore the divine term of religion, as well as the human term, participates in the two substances, spiritual and material. Therefore it is of the essence of religion to borrow a worship at once spiritual and sensible. Let us explain at more length.

Man, by his nature, is composed of a body and a soul. Read in the first chapters of Genesis the creation of man. God took a little earth, formed a body of it, and breathed into this body a living soul: behold the two elements of human nature. Man is an intelligence united to organs. Now, as every being operates in its nature, it follows that all the operations of man must affect the double form, spiritual and sensible. So study man, and see how all the sentiments of this incarnate soul incarnate themselves; how this spiritual substance united to a sensible substance translates all its most intimate emotions by exterior symbols and signs: thought incarnates itself in speech; sorrow has its sacrament in tears, as joy in the smile. In a word, every human act participates in the double condition of man.

And if that is true in the general thesis of individual man, how much more of social man, of man who can put himself in relation with man only by exterior signs! So see how every noble sentiment translates itself in society by a public cult. Is there not a cult of country in this flag, in these colours? Is there not a cult of paternity in these tender embraces, in these so attentive regards? Is there not a cult of neighbourhood and fellow-citizen friendship in these salutations and politenesses? Has not justice its cult, its symbols in these solemn forms, in these consecrated costumes? Has not honour its cult, its sacraments in these insignia, these palms, these distinctions? Has not science its cult in these feasts, these prizes, these crowns, these ovations? To say all, my brethren, does there exist in man, and above all does there exist among men anything spiritual which does not put on the sensible and graspable form? No, you tell me, that is found only among the Angels. To pure intelligences the purely intellectual act is possible. Man must think as man, feel as man, and above all act as man. To wish to make him think, feel, act as an angel is to wish to change his nature, and consequently it is to wish the impossible.

Now, if it is so, my dearly beloved brethren, if there is not a sentiment in the heart of man which does not express itself by exterior signs, what shall we say of those who want to take from man every means, every exterior sign of religion? And why then, if you please, at the most solemn instant of my existence, when I am going to offer my homage to my author, why then separate in me what the Creator has so well united, and prevent me from rising to Him in the totality and according to the conditions of my being? God made me body and soul, I belong to Him body and soul, I must go to Him body and soul. He made me man, my religion must be that of man, and not that of angel. My religion without doubt must above all be interior, for what makes me man above all is my soul; without it I am only a corpse; without the religion of the heart, worship is only a dead form. But this interior religion must translate itself on the outside, for my soul without my body is not my whole self.

And besides, God did not make me solitary and isolated on earth; God made me essentially social. Man and citizen at once, I owe to the author of my being and to the author of society a public and social worship. And when country, royalty, family, magistracy have a cult on earth, a cult essential condition of their existence and their honourable maintenance among men, is it conceivable that men, who call themselves observers and logicians, speak of closing the temples, of suppressing the sacred ceremonies, give the example of contempt for religious assemblies, and that while crying nevertheless to whoever will hear that they respect religion, that they revere God, but that religion, that God asks only a purely spiritual worship? Yes, it is by good will, by zeal for religion that they wish to strip it of this gross and material envelope, to purify it of every alloy unworthy of it, but whose reach a sound reason will always understand!

My brethren, that is one of those specious words familiar to impiety, of which ignorance may be the dupe; under pretext of purifying worship, it is to destroy it. After all, the only means to reach the soul is to strike the body. Do you see that man brandishing an axe over the head of his fellow and ready to cleave him? I rush on him and wish to stop him. He answers me with his sophistical calm: Let me be, weak and narrow mind. More than you I love and respect this man. But my friendship, my respect are well understood: I suffer to see this so noble intelligence enslaved to gross organs. I do not wish to destroy his existence, I wish to spiritualise it. Singular testimony of friendship, this new kind of obligingness!… Learned talker, you may say what you like, you are only an assassin whose arm a secret hatred directs. My brethren, go and read in the bottom of the heart of those who seek to overthrow all exterior worship on earth: they are the mortal enemies of religion. And however carefully they wrap themselves in fine words, they are murderers who say while killing a man: I wish to make an angel of him.

Therefore, my brethren, on the side of man, it is necessary that religion have an exterior worship, otherwise it would not correspond to its nature. But let us see whether, as we are told, in conforming religion to the nature of man, one makes it unworthy of the nature of God to whom this religion tends to unite us.

II. I avow it, the God of heaven to whom all our homages refer is essentially spiritual and freed from all gross substance. But for that does He reject all homage of His creature, when this homage is clothed with a sensible form? He who made us body and soul, He who gave us individual existence and social existence, is He offended that we wish to ascend to Him such as He made us, and does He expect that we strip our nature to go to Him? No surely, one could not say so, if I prove that on the contrary God modified, if I dare so speak, His own manner of being to condescend to ours. What! you do not wish that I, who am spirit and flesh, rise to God with the attributes of flesh, when my God, who is pure spirit, made Himself flesh to come to me! Hear here, my brethren, this exposition of the divine economy and Christian doctrine, and forgive me if the nature of the subject forces me to mingle with it some observations which seem of the domain of human philosophy.

Without discussing here the extension and restrictions of the axiom: *Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit in sensu*, there is nothing in the intelligence which has not passed through the senses; at least could we say, as a general rule, that our senses are the organs of our perceptions, and that our soul is so dependent on them that it is hardly touched except by what strikes them. This psychology is that of Saint Paul, and I dare say with this great Apostle that it is that of God Himself. That is why religion entire and enveloped under the bark rests on sensible and material facts.

At the instant when God created man, already this eternal intelligence had in some sort delivered itself to the action of the senses. In the admirable book of nature, God wrote His name, His attributes. Creation entire is only a visible manifestation of what is invisible in God: *Invisibilia enim ipsius a creatura mundi, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur.* But that was not yet enough in God's pleasure. Not content to approach man by signs and symbols, He wished to descend to him by making Himself like him. From the days of Adam, God appeared to him, spoke, walked with him, already essaying that human nature which He was one day to put on. That day came and the Word was made flesh: *Et Verbum caro factum est.*

And the Word made flesh, to be understood by all men, expressed Himself as they do orally and by material signs. Miracles were exterior and visible facts of which He made use to prove His invisible divinity: *Invisibilia enim Dei, per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur.* A star appears in the East to signal His birth and the place of His dwelling. The Angels sing a canticle in the heavens. At His baptism, the Spirit of God descends on Him under the emblem of a dove. During the course of His ministry, He employs at every instant the language of signs to instruct men. He does not wish the temple to be profaned, because it is the sign of the dwelling of God among men, and from the profanation of the sign to the profanation of the thing there is only a step. When the sensitive woman of Bethany comes to pour on His feet perfumes of great price and His disciples murmur at this expense, He represses in them that spirit of hard and austere spirituality which refuses something exterior to the effusions of a loving and generous soul, and also that spirit of false beneficence and miserly stinginess which, under pretext of relieving the poor, increases their number by arresting the noble impulses of love and charity.

Finally, this divine Saviour, the Word made flesh, before re-ascending to the heavens, wishing to found His Church, gives her a visible institution, leaves on earth men, His representatives. What do I say? He leaves Himself in their hands. His grace, He entrusts it to them united to sensible signs, incarnate, if I dare so speak, in material elements. Finally, His very person, His divine person joined to humanity, He leaves still among us hidden under the sensible appearances of our most common foods. The Word made flesh, in re-ascending into glory, bequeaths to earth His flesh and blood in the admirable sacrament of the Eucharist, adorable centre of all the Christian liturgy, brilliant sun from which emanate and toward which converge all the splendours of Catholic worship, fruitful institution of the incarnate God which app ealed and which drew after it all the ritual institutions of the Church: to the Eucharist, there must be a tabernacle, there must be an altar, there must be a temple, there must be a priest, there must be solemnities, there must be triumphs.

Let us stop here, my brethren, and avow it: God, the God of the gospel, the God of Christians is a God who has prodigiously drawn near to men; He is truly Emmanuel, the God with us. He took our nature, He made Himself our food. To say all, He humanised Himself, He materialised Himself, beyond what we could ever have desired and even imagined. Now, my brethren, I repeat, when my God who is pure spirit, when the uncreated Word makes Himself flesh, makes Himself man to come to me, you want me who am man, who am carnal by nature, to strip humanity and senses to go to Him! No, evidently no; that is not the theology of God, it is not the theology of Christ. And consequently, whatever names they bear, whether they be called Arius, Mahomet, Luther or Jean-Jacques; whether they be iconoclasts, Protestants, deists or theophilanthropists, I repudiate all the adversaries of exterior and public worship, all those partisans of a purely abstract religion which has no possible realisation in the heart of men: desiccating doctrines, which stifle all sentiment, which make of faith a pure theory and which inevitably dig the deep abyss of atheism.

My brethren, let those who are present here sound their conscience! Is religious faith very lively in the heart of those who have abjured all religious practice? Would you dare give yourselves this testimony that you honour God better than your brethren, you who almost never come into our temples? And above all, tell me, since the heads of society have learned by their doctrines, as they still do every day by their examples, since they taught the people to neglect public worship, has the people more religious spirit? On the contrary, must it not be avowed that we live in the midst of an atheist people, a people which, no longer believing in any truth, no longer believes in any duty; a people which has no more morality, because it has no more faith, and which has no more faith, because it has no more worship?

And here, my brethren, hear some principles which I shall have occasion to apply in the following talks. Without exterior worship, a religion will never become popular, for two reasons: 1st, that the multitude does not know how to understand abstract and lofty doctrines, whereas it knows how to see spectacles and ceremonies; 2nd, that the multitude hardly judges by the mind, but much by the heart, hardly by examination, much by sentiment. Therefore, every religion which does not translate its dogmas by rites, symbols, monuments, every religion enemy of the fine arts and of the language of signs is condemned never to reach the mind and still less the heart. That is why Protestantism is struck with unpopularity among us, by the very testimony of its sectaries. The naked and dry religion of Luther, the wholly interior mysticism of Protestantism, with its sad and monotonous liturgy, may have obtained some successes in the glacial lands of the North; but in France Protestantism has never known how, and never will know how, to naturalise itself. Its nakedness wounds our eyes and still more our hearts. One feels that divine charity, that source of all warm inspirations, poured from the Heart of Jesus, does not reside under these dead forms. It was not with this insipid look and this cadaverous complexion that truth had to show itself on earth. So (and it is a Protestant who gives this advice to his co-religionists), Protestantism lacks the essential conditions to have hold on the human mind, and above all on the French mind. And it is a quite mad illusion to imagine that the religion of Luther, of Calvin or of Henry VIII can ever gather in France the inheritance of Catholicism. In good faith, can one reasonably hope that a nation of thirty million souls, where the taste for the fine arts is popular, which has wit, imagination and above all heart, can ever have much sympathy for a worship which is afraid of a statue or a picture?[1]

How comes it, one will ask, worship being the surest means for a religion to reach the heart, that the sects have neglected this instrument of success? Ah! my brethren, it is that it is not easy for error (it feels it well) to denature sentiment and exploit it to its profit. Truth alone is guardian and depositary of sentiment, and sentiment is hardly tributary to anything but truth. All that speaks to the heart speaks of God, of virtue, and all that speaks of God and of virtue speaks against the sects. That is why, before as since Luther, the heads of error have regarded sentiment as a dangerous instrument. In fact, a Protestant who lets his heart go to the sweet impressions of our beautiful ceremonies is on the eve of making abjuration, and already he is Catholic in heart.

My brethren, it is time to finish. One word only, which I borrow again from this Protestant publicist, and which renders marvellously a thought I should like to express. “The future of France,” he says, “depends much more than is thought on a question of liturgy.” That is incontestable, my brethren. The social and moral future of France depends on its religious future, and on a near future; for there is no more drawing back, we must become Catholic again or perish. If we do not let faith re-enter our houses and our cities, the barbarians are at our gates. The social question will thus be untied only by the religious question, and the religious question, I have just shown it and I shall show it still more evidently, the religious question holds above all to a question of worship.

Let the temples be more frequented, let Sunday be sanctified, let the pomps of religion attract as formerly the multitudes, let the great give the little the example of bowing before the altars, of purifying their consciences long stained, of sitting at the sacred table of the Lamb too long deserted! In a word, let the ancient days of Catholic worship return for our fatherland, and its religious and Catholic spirit of former times will return to it, and with religion will return also for it its ancient virtues, the charity of the rich, the submission of the poor and the happiness of all! It is, my brethren, the grace I wish you.[2]

Translator’s notes

1. Rhetorical device: the “axe-man” parable (the assassin who ‘spiritualises’ his victim) is the preacher’s own; it is directed at the “pure spirituality” school (Quakers, certain rationalists, Rousseauists).

2. The anachronistic “theophilanthropists” is the Directory-period cult (1797–1801).

3. Latin “Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit in sensu” is the scholastic axiom (usually attributed to Aristotle/Thomas); the preacher declines to discuss its limits. “Béthanienne” is Mary of Bethany.

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[1] The “Protestant publicist” is not named by the preacher in this piece and is not identified here; see his further reference below.

[2] Cf. Appendix I: A, 48. (Editor’s note.)

n° 36. Instruction for the Fifth Friday of Lent: On Catholic Temples

Chartres cathedral, fifth Friday of Lent (the Friday before Passion Sunday), 1842.

Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram: ut inhabitem in domo Domini omnibus diebus vitae meae, ut videam voluptatem Domini, et visitem templum ejus. [One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life; that I may see the delight of the Lord, and may visit His temple.] I have asked only one grace of the Lord, and this grace I shall ask again, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, that I may see the holy delight of the Lord, that I may be able until the end to visit His holy temple. (Ps. 26:4.)

MY DEAR BRETHREN, let us cast, to begin, a glance behind us, and after repeating these truths: no morality without religion, no religion without worship; let us add today: no worship without temples, without altars.

Our century, less unjust than the preceding one, no longer hardly contests certain general truths, for example: the existence of a God, the necessity of a religion. But God, but religion, these are things which are still hardly admitted except as speculative truths which one strives, as far as possible, to push away and keep at a distance. One believes in God, but one leaves Him in His heaven, and one does not wish to go and seek Him where He gives us audience on earth. One speaks respectfully of religion, but one avoids all the ways, one shuts all the avenues by which it could reach us. Religion has a place among our ideas, it has none yet among our actions. The admission of certain great truths has made our intelligence better; but as the intelligence has not converted the will, the latter does not allow the ray which lights the understanding to descend to the heart, and warm it with those fruitful inspirations which make burst forth the transport of praise and love.

Let there be a God, but let Him not reach us too closely; let there be a religion, but let it keep at a distance and not come in some sort to lay a hand upon us! That is where we are, my brethren. And that is why, while speaking of God, we so carefully elude all that forms the bond between God and us; that is why, while speaking of religion, we hardly set foot in the temple, because it is there that religion, coming out of abstraction and generality, individualises itself, if I dare so speak, and applies itself to us. The temple is religion in practice, and we want it only in theory.

Oh! my brethren, may I on this day inspire you with the holy idea, make you take the generous resolution to come henceforth more faithfully into the temples! May I make you understand how many sweet enjoyments you steal from yourselves, how many virtues you cause to abort in your own heart and in that of others, by deserting and giving the example of deserting the temples! May I obtain that some one of my hearers withdraw, expressing this wish which escaped formerly from the soul of the young and gracious David, who, amid the anguishes of an unjust exile, sighed only for the holy sweetnesses of the house of God: I have asked, he said, only one grace of the Lord, and this grace I shall ask again, to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life: *Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram: ut inhabitem in domo Domini, omnibus diebus vitae meae.*

I shall proceed, as usual, my brethren, with no other order than that of the linking and natural development of my thoughts; for I do not wish these instructions to lose the familiar character of talk and conversation. If the richness of the subject did not force me to restrict myself, I should consider it under a double point of view, and I should say that the temple is the house of God and the house of men. The temple is the house of God; it is there that God communicates Himself and puts Himself in relation with us. The temple is the house of men; it is there that man fraternises and puts himself in relation with man. Take away the temple: man becomes a stranger to God, and there is no more religion. Take away the temple: man becomes a stranger to man, and there is no more city. Yes, my brethren, the temple is the centre of relations even purely human. Without the temple, no more family bond, no more social bond, no more attachment to the fatherland, that sentiment which our fathers called philosophically the love of the bell-tower. But, once more, this civil, municipal, social, commercial character of the temple, I abandon to your personal reflections, and I confine myself solely to the religious considerations which arise from my subject.

I. The temple is the house of God: *Haec est domus Dei. Vere Dominus est in loco isto.* [This is the house of God. Truly the Lord is in this place. (Gen. 28:17, 16.)] Yes, my brethren, whatever specious arguments false philosophy may make on this point as on so many others, there must be on earth places, asylums consecrated to the divinity. There must be an exterior worship, we have shown it; and, consequently, there must be a theatre where this worship will deploy: that is the temple. And I say that everywhere and always the religious spirit will build temples, and that in their turn temples will keep up the religious spirit.

No people has believed in God without building at once a temple to God. Run over the whole surface of the globe, and read the history of all past generations. These same sophists of the last century, who made merry over the superstitious practice of shutting the God of the universe between four walls, came back afterwards to the logic of common sense, when, by a contradiction of which they did not perceive, they pretended that there existed certain tribes stripped of all religious sentiment, and brought as proof the absence of temples and altars in those barbarous countries. Yes surely, where there would not be at least a stone to serve as altar for sacrifice, there one could assert that there is no religious idea, no religious faith.

It is the property of religious sentiment to express and translate itself on the outside in a more or less simple or magnificent way, according to the more or less advanced development of society and the arts, a development moreover of which religious inspirations are always the principal agent and the most efficacious stimulus. In a simple and naive age, the temple, simple itself and without art, will be, as in the days of the patriarchs, only a rustic altar hastily raised, now on the summit of high places, now in the shade of woods or on the bank of rivers; or again, in an age of persecution, religion, wandering and fugitive as in

the days of Nero, of Henry VIII or of Robespierre, will go and hide the celebration of its mysteries in the catacombs, behind rocks and even under the dark vaults of dungeons. And these temples improvised by necessity will not be the least agreeable to God. The fervour of prayers, sometimes even the brilliance of miracles, and I know not what religious impression which results from persecution and which comes sweetly to dilate the soul amid its anguishes, and the more felt goodness of a God who comes to mingle with misfortune, all that will give worship a kind of magnificence which leaves nothing to be desired.

But if humanity, come out of the swaddling clothes of childhood, grows and perfects itself, if religion, better known, becomes as it were the soul and life of a grateful society; then, richer and more brilliant, it will appear in the camps of Israel under the figure of the majestic ark, and will soon take possession, under the reign of Solomon, of that famous temple, the glory of the nation and the marvel of the world. Or again, holier and more august still, more triumphant and more multiplied than ever, called from the deserts into the cities, endowed by princes and seconded by the love and liberality of peoples, after having for some time appropriated the spoils of the pagans, inspired by its own conceptions, it will make spring from the earth those admirable basilicas, stamped with the Christian character from their foundation to their summit, masterpieces of art harnessed in some sort to the chariot of faith.

We hear every day the cold and avaricious egoism of impiety regret the sumptuous expenses of our worship, and recall us to the simplicity of primitive ages. But then make the whole of humanity go backward; for after all is it reasonable, when everything else grows and develops in society, to condemn religion alone, that is, what is greatest, noblest, to keep for its temples their first narrow forms and their meanest proportions? They speak to us of apostolic times: ah! my God, who knows them and admires them more than we? And has our priesthood not shown in its exile that at the end of the eighteenth century, quite as well as in the first century of the Church, it knew how to suffer with patience and to withdraw the holy mysteries from the rage of persecutors, seeking for Jesus Christ other veils than those with which His love clothed Him in His sacrament? Yes, we know our duties, and if need be we should still know how to fulfil them.

Evidently, my brethren, what is done in a state of poverty and proscription cannot serve as a rule for happier times; or else one would have to reproach spring its garment of verdure and flowers, because it departs from the nudity of winter. No, I repeat, it is impossible to suppose that a century be at once religious and civilised, and that it not apply first the resources of civilisation to the profit of religion. The fine arts are, above all, tributary to heaven. So, my brethren, do you wish to appreciate the measure of faith and religion of a people and of a century? Observe its temples. Holy Scripture is there to demonstrate it to us as regards the Jewish people. The lot of religion was intimately bound to that of the temple. Was the people faithful and fervent? the temple was splendid and frequented; was the people lukewarm or unfaithful? the temple was deserted and fell in ruins.

It is so everywhere. The material temple undergoes all the phases of the increase or decrease of faith in hearts. Run over our France. If you see a city from the bosom of which rise a great number of sacred edifices, which cast here and there their light fronts and their graceful pinnacles toward the heavens, say: this city was built in a century of faith, in a century which was not glued to the earth and which sometimes lifted its eyes toward heaven. If you perceive on the contrary a city sad and dull to the eye, where no monument appears, except, through the smoke that escapes from its factories, the theatre, the exchange, the town hall and the jail, hardly one or two temples of pagan forms whose crushed dome indicates only faintly, by doubtful conjectures, the house of God, say: this city was built by a materialist century, by a century whose heart was not on high, all of whose thoughts were low and creeping.

In a word, my brethren, the productions of a century are in relation with its ideas; therefore, let us conclude. Where there is no temple, there is no religion. Where the temple has only a special form, but can become tomorrow an exchange, a pantheon, a bazaar; there is only a vague religion, exploited by the caprice of the governors. Where temples are neglected and deserted, religion languishes and dies. Where temples are

changed into theatres or prisons, the religious thought gives place to two things which hold together: voluptuousness and crime, the licence of individuals and the necessity of repression by material force. But also, let us say it, where temples, long neglected and almost buried under ruins, begin to flourish again and become again the object of the attention, love and cult of the citizens; there the spirit of faith begins to be born again and promises soon to resume its ancient life and its first warmth. For it is impossible to study the temple, to frequent the temple, without its soon making re-enter into our soul all the teachings of faith and virtue whose secrets its mysterious structure preserves. It is faith which, in better days, built the temple; it is the temple which is going to reconstitute and maintain faith in hearts.

Renew here your attentions, my dearly beloved brethren, and enter with me into the marvellous detail of the diverse Catholic inspirations which attach either to the ensemble or to the diverse parts of our temples.

II. And first, my brethren, let us speak of the teachings of the Catholic temple whatever it be, however rustic, however simple you suppose it. The temple before all is the house of prayer and of all the salutary emotions which accompany prayer; it is the house of God and the gate of heaven. Involuntarily, as soon as the Christian has passed the threshold of the Catholic temple, he feels touched with respect; he thinks he has crossed the barriers of the world, been transported into the dwelling of peace. His senses are more recollected, his soul calmer, his passions are appeased in spite of him; he must fold back on himself, occupy himself with his soul, with the God who created him, with the eternal lot that awaits him.

Then, what memories mingled with sweetness and regret come to offer themselves to him! Behold those sacred fonts where he took a second life, from which he was carried back innocent and regenerated, and given back into the arms of his mother who from that time venerated him as an angel. Behold that sacred pulpit from which there fell formerly into his soul, still fresh and candid, words which penetrated it with light and inundated it with love. Behold those sacred tribunals where his delicate and timorous conscience went to pour with confidence into the ear of a father the story of his first frailties: painful avowal which the tender effusions and suave exhortations of the merciful pastor softened. Behold that holy table where, joyful and palpitating with love, under the eyes of a father who on that day had become a Christian, of a mother who followed him with a moist look, he went to receive for the first time the sweet Saviour of his soul.

And here, he falls into a deep and holy reverie; he thinks that this same Saviour, who spoke on that fair day so sweet a language to his soul, rests still in the tabernacle; his knees give way, he prostrates himself, he listens and a voice comes forth: My friend, my friend, what have I done to you that you have fled Me so long? I am here, calling you, always the same toward you, always ready to load you with the same caresses. After a few moments, I see this man rise with eyes wet with tears. Pensive and dreaming, he makes a few steps, he finds himself at the feet of Mary, at the feet of Her who is in religion what a mother is in the family. There he understands that a prompt pardon is assured him, if he will return to God; that in throwing himself into the arms of the mother, he will soon obtain grace from the Son. He kneels, he prays, and his heart is changed, his resolution is taken; the priest of the Lord is there, he unburdens his soul; he had entered this temple a sinner, he leaves it justified; twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years perhaps of omissions, faults, crimes, remorse have just been effaced, annihilated in an instant. A single visit in this temple produced this marvel.

But I have spoken only of a temple of any kind; let us leave the humble village church, and approach the great and magnificent basilica of the city.

My dearest brethren, our cathedrals, such as the ages of faith produced them, are the most beautiful hymn that could spring from the heart of humanity to the glory of God and of the Church. There is not a truth, not a belief of the Catholic Creed, not a virtue, not a counsel, not an evangelical beatitude which is not mysteriously engraved on some part of the edifice. The cathedral is a whole summa of historical, dogmatic and moral theology; it is the most magnificent poem men have sung, immense epic where the forefathers are evoked, where the heavens descend, where all centuries and all climates meet without derogating from the

unity of time or place, where nature comes to mingle with grace, time with eternity. My brethren, what a rich subject, when already I feel that I have perhaps exhausted your attention! Let us only leaf through a few pages of this great book which our century no longer knows how to read enough.

Do you see it from afar, this cathedral which dominates the whole country, which disdains earth, which lets the highest monuments creep at its feet and whose architecture seems in keeping only with the very architecture of the heavens! Is it not true that this house is indeed the house of the King of the universe, and that its dimensions answer worthily to the dimensions of the horizon your eye embraces? Already does your soul not feel the immensity and the height of the God for whom this temple is built? But let us enter. What elevation! what immensity! Behold indeed the double character of this architecture: elevation, for the Christian faith is supernatural, spiritual and heavenly; immensity, for the Christian faith is universal and Catholic.

Christianity is essentially the religion of spiritualism, the religion of faith, the religion of love. The great commandment which Christ gives men is to detach themselves from earth, and to take flight all together toward the heavens in the embraces of a common charity. Now follow with the eye these columns which scarcely touch the ground, which rise like prayers, which rise, which rise always, and which, in meeting before God, bow and embrace like sisters. For the material religion of paganism an art wholly earthly, wholly worldly, which did not leave the earth, sufficed. The heavy and ponderous vault of the Greek and Roman temple seems to crush us and forbid us all impulse. It must be so. The temple is the translation of belief. Where an incestuous Jupiter, an impudent Venus, a thieving Mercury rest on the altar, it is not necessary that the soul of the worshipper be able to ascend very high. But when it is a question of the God of the cross, of the God of suffering, when it is a question of the religion of detachment and of faith, let, let my soul ascend at ease and fly away into the heavens; permit this flame of faith to transform itself into stone and go lose itself in the regions of light; do not spread this vast roof like a tomb-lid over my head; lift these horizontal lines, surround the sanctuary with light lace-work and graceful colonnettes; crown the edifice with a thousand pinnacles, arrows shot toward the heavens from the quiver of prayer. Let the idea of elevation and of tendency to heaven dominate everywhere; let everything spring up and dart toward the Most High! My brethren, can one be earthly and glued to matter, when one opens one’s eyes in a Catholic temple, and reflects an instant on the character of spiritualism and supernatural elevation which is stamped everywhere? Elevation, but also immensity. See, my brethren, what vast, what immense proportions! The religion which built this temple, is it not evident that it is made to embrace in its bosom humanity entire? Is it not evident that heaven and earth, nature and grace, all centuries and all countries belong to it? Hear it come forth from every point of this edifice: I am Catholic: Mine the heavens! Do you see in my rich windows, in the midst of the splendours of heaven, the blessed repose of my Saints arrived at the term of glory? Do you see above all those ravishing roses, of harmonious proportions, transparent flowers set in the stone, brilliant with a thousand colours, bearing at the heart the image of God, and, in the rich petals which radiate from it, that of the Angels, Patriarchs and Saints! Admirable symbol: Behold heaven! The circle is eternity in the centre of which God rests. The blessed spirits, the prophets, the martyrs, the saints, all creation glorified gravitates, singing hymns, toward this majestic centre of all things. I am Catholic: Mine heaven! Mine the tomb! Do you see my vast naves, or, all around my sacred walls, those tombstones which cover the mortal remains of my children! They slumber there under my eyes, in the shade of my altars, awaiting the glorious resurrection. I am Catholic: Mine the Church triumphant! mine the Church suffering! mine the Church militant! See those floods of faithful inundating my porches from the entrance door to that of the sanctuary, the powerful beside the weak, the rich beside the poor, the emperor and the shepherd, the nonagenarian old man and the young virgin scarcely adolescent. I am Catholic: Mine time! mine all the centuries! See the zodiacs, those emblems of time, placed at the door of my temples; for time is the vestibule of eternity. Contemplate in my statuary and in my windows, as in a vast gallery, the ages assembled from Adam to Jesus, from the sacrifice of Abel and Isaac to that of Thomas of Canterbury, from Melchisedech and Aaron to Zacharias and John the Baptist,

and from Saint Peter to Alexander the Great [as printed], from Saul and David to Augustus under whom the Messiah was born, and from Constantine the first Christian emperor to Charlemagne and his paladins, to Saint Louis and all his brilliant chivalry of the crusades whose coats of arms came to complete my transparent enclosure. I am Catholic: that is what the Church continues to tell us by this variety of strange figures of pagan divinities which she makes enter into her constructions. Everywhere the profane Gods appear there as vanquished: here they support on their bowed shoulders heavy masses; elsewhere, the mouth of Jupiter serves as a conduit for rain. It is victorious Christianity dragging its humiliated enemies at its chariot. I am Catholic: that is what the Church tells us again by all the inanimate creatures, those vines, those vine leaves, those ears of wheat, those fruits, those trees of every kind which adorn the walls of the holy temple.

All the parts of creation have given themselves rendezvous there to praise God in their manner, and it is the powerful hand of the Catholic Church which has united them. One speaks to us of the beauties of nature, and are not the temples full of them? Have our druidic forests not passed, as has been said, into our Gothic churches, or rather has the forest of the palms of Jericho not been brought back there from Palestine with the cluster of Engaddi? I am Catholic: Mine the empire of the physical world and of the moral world! mine the monopoly of sciences and virtues! All that is great and beautiful belongs to me. Behold, my brethren, what the imposing voice of the Christian basilica does not cease to repeat.

But attention! Behold the sacrifice begins. I see a man clothed in sacred ornaments, who goes up to the altar and offers the bread and wine. What is this? I lift my eyes, and I perceive in the windows a personage who lived four thousand years ago: it is Melchisedech holding in his hand bread and wine. Beside him, I see another personage who lived eleven hundred years later: it is David, pointing with one hand to Melchisedech behind him, and saluting nine centuries before him another priest whom he called priest according to the order of Melchisedech. And quite near there, I see indeed Jesus taking bread and wine, saying to His Apostles: Take and eat, this is My body; do this until the end of the ages, in memory of Me. And behold that today, in the year 1842 after Jesus Christ, the ray of sun which comes to light the sacrifice of the bread and wine that I have continued, descends on the holy species, sanctified and coloured through the image of Melchisedech, of David and of Christ; that is, that three torches, three luminous beacons cast in the night of the ages, come to reflect their rays on the Eucharistic mystery! From this one example, do you understand, my brethren, that learned harmony which exists between the material temple and the mysteries which are celebrated in the temple? Do you not admire this light which descends from the figures on the realities, from the prophecy on the accomplishment, from the institution of the mystery on its continuation?

That is only one trait among a thousand. I could speak to you of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, made sensible in the tree of Jesse which carpets one of the windows of the entrance of the temple; of the dogma of the substitution of the new covenant for the old, admirably expressed by the four great Prophets bearing on their shoulders the four Evangelists; of the life and entire history of Jesus, written by the hand of the sculptors in the enclosure of the sanctuary. In a word, my brethren, I repeat, not a truth of faith, not a precept, not a virtue which has not its symbolism in the mysterious structure of the temple.

But let us finish, we must. Next Friday, if God permits, we shall give life and soul to this temple which we have considered today only in its structure. We have today sketched it empty and deserted; we shall try to sketch it animated by the pompous ceremonies of worship.

But already, my brethren, do you not feel this desire expressed by the words of my text: *Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram: ut inhabitem in domo Domini, omnibus diebus vitae meae; ut videam voluptatem Domini et visitem templum ejus?* I have asked only one thing of the Lord, and I shall ask it unceasingly: to dwell in His holy house all the days of my life; yes, may I see again the temple of the Lord and taste there the delights of His servants! *Omnibus diebus*: yes, I should think I had lost the day on which I had not come into the temple. *Voluptatem Domini*: yes, delight of the Lord! Come to it then, my brethren, into the temple, and

see and taste: *Gustate et videte.* [Taste and see. (Ps. 33:9.)]

Where do you find on earth anything else that answers to the beauty of this temple? Or where can you pass sweeter moments? And yet, shall I say it, my brethren (it is humiliating): this temple, built by the faith of our fathers, is as if non-existent for a great number of the inhabitants of this city, who never come to it, who pass beside these lofty towers built by Catholic thought with the same indifference as the Arabs pass by the pyramids of the desert, who cross this sacred sanctuary from one door to the other with the same apathy and the same brutal insensibility as the Mussulman tramples under foot the still bloody earth of Calvary and the stone of the Holy Sepulchre. And yet there, what graces our fathers obtained! *Ubi laudaverunt te patres nostri.* [Where our fathers praised Thee. (Isa. 64:11.)] Each time, O holy Virgin, that I contemplate this magnificent edifice cast in the midst of the country, and these two towers which lose themselves in the cloud like two arms going to seek the heavens, I seem to see, in this work of the Catholic centuries, humanity making an effort to detach itself from earth and dart toward the air, thought lifting itself, tearing itself from matter to soar in the regions of spirit; it is like an assumption of nature into the arms of grace and faith. Ah! holy Virgin, bring them back to us, those days of faith, those days of noble enthusiasm! The faith of our fathers knew how to animate stone, and our egoistic materialism, our avaricious industrialism has petrified our hearts. May your temple, O Mary, not be an anachronism in the midst of us, and may we not deserve to be dispossessed of it by a just judgment of God!

No, my brethren, it will not be so: the temple, deserted for half a century, will see again the ancient days of glory. The multitudes, which are certainly its most beautiful ornament, will come again to press under its vaults. Sion will see again its ancient solemnities. And our nephews, better than we, will not understand how a century which called itself civilised could forget to come to seek in this holy academy what it could not find elsewhere, true wisdom, true virtue, true happiness.

I finish by this word. Our fathers placed the last judgment at the entrance to the temple. Terrible and consoling thought: it is at the door of the temple that eternity is decided. You never enter there! you excommunicate yourselves, you pronounce your sentence, you accept your lot: *Ite, maledicti … Ibunt hi in ignem aeternum* [Depart, ye cursed… These shall go into everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:41, 46)]; but you who enter into the temple, come: *Venite, benedicti Patris mei … possidete paratum regnum* [Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared (Matt. 25:34)], yes, the kingdom prepared by this first temple which was the gate of heaven. So be it.[1]

Translator’s notes

1. The long architectural passage describes Chartres cathedral (rose windows, zodiac signs, the Jesse window, the “Melchisedech” window, the Evangelists carried by the Prophets). The “figures of pagan divinities” and “Jupiter’s mouth as a water-spout” are the preacher’s observations of gargoyles; his statements are rhetorical and not verified here.

2. “from Saint Peter to Alexander the Great”: printed so; presumably a slip (the series is chronological otherwise); left as printed and flagged.

3. “Montée … druidic forests … Gothic churches”: commonplace of the period (Chateaubriand’s *Génie du christianisme*), here attributed to “as has been said”.

4. “The Mussulman tramples under foot the still bloody earth of Calvary”: rhetorical image of Muslim control of the Holy Land.

5. The passage “Chaque fois, ô Vierge sainte…” repeats verbatim the closing prayer of n° 30 (Assumption), which the preacher reuses.

[1] Cf. Appendix I: A, 50. (Editor’s note.)

n° 37. Instruction for the Sixth Friday of Lent: On the Dramatic Character of Catholic Worship

Sixth Friday of Lent, 1842.

In funiculis Adam traham eos, in vinculis caritatis. [I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love.] I shall draw them to Myself with the cords of Adam, that is, by all the attractions that win men. (Osee 11:4.)

The holy forty days draw to their end, my dearly beloved brethren. We are on the eve of that week which the Church calls the great week, and in which the touching celebration of the most august mysteries is to be renewed. It is today the last time that it is given me to raise my voice among you; and yet, my brethren, how far I am from having, I do not say exhausted the substance, but skimmed the surface of the important subject we had embraced! The necessity of worship for the existence and maintenance of religion, the conformity of exterior worship with the plan on which God created us and according to which He redeemed us: such was the object of our first instructions; they tended only to lay down general principles. Then, beginning to descend to detail, we fixed our attention first on temples, which are the dwelling consecrated to the worship of God. It would now remain for me to speak to you: 1st, of the day which calls us all to the temple, that is, of Sunday with its double precept of bodily rest and spiritual works; 2nd, of the great action of worship, of the action par excellence, which is the sacrifice of the Mass; 3rd, of the second action of worship which Scripture calls the sacrifice of the lips, that is, of the prayer of the Church, of her psalmody, her canonical hours, her holy offices; 4th, of the movable part of worship, that is, of the distribution of the various feasts during the ecclesiastical year, and of the composition of the religious calendar; 5th, finally, to complete the subject, I should have to approach the so vast and so essentially liturgical question of the sacraments.

This last part, my brethren, that is, the Catholic teaching concerning the doctrine of the sacraments, will be, if it please God, the matter of our Lenten talks next year. And as to the question of Sunday, of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, of the holy offices of the Church, and of the Proper of the Time and of the Saints, it will be the object of four or five homilies which we hope to give at the parochial Mass on Sunday in the course of this year.

But what subject shall we treat today? Today we shall speak a little of all these things, presenting them from a particular point of view which merits our attention. My brethren, the incomparable researches of the Catholic liturgy, entirely unknown to a whole immense class of society, are not enough understood and appreciated by Christians themselves. It is a fertile mine, long unexplored; and it is indeed by this side above all that one can say with one of our great modern philosophers that our religion has for our present society all the force of an ancient thing and all the grace of a novelty.[1]

Certain ears, unaccustomed to religious teaching, are sometimes even astonished to find it in our mouth so full of grace, charm and poetry. They almost fear for our orthodoxy and seem to reproach us that evangelical doctrine borrows too many smiling and sweet colours from our brush. Be reassured, my dearly beloved brethren; it is at the foot of the cross that we meditate before speaking, and never shall we dress holy truth in worldly and profane ornaments. We know, when needed, how to show it to you quite bare, the cross of Jesus. But in the end, my brethren, if we must not paint truth, neither must we discolour it and age it, her who is always so fresh and so young.

Religion, like nature, has its severe side, but it has also its smiling side. It addresses itself at once to mind, imagination, heart, all the senses. It has on its side all the maturity and solidity of manly reasoning, all the efflorescence and descriptive grace of youthfulness, all the certainty of a logical and rigorous demonstration, all the drive of warmth and sentiment, all the height and depth of doctrine which suits metaphysical minds, all the striking and gripping forms which command the multitudes and which can make it popular. Religion, like the manna of the Israelites, having all tastes, can therefore be, must therefore be presented alternately

under different aspects. The evangelical preacher must therefore know how to take all tones, and it is the property of intelligent and benevolent hearers to associate themselves with the present thought of the orator, and never to seek to push it off the ground on which he has placed himself.

And that is, my brethren, the testimony I have tried to render to the immense majority of this auditory in which are not found, thank God, those childishly capricious minds of whom Our Lord Jesus Christ speaks, who complain of the dryness of reasoning on the day when one reasons, of the brilliance of imagination on the day when one describes; whose mind regrets what is said for the heart, whose heart is discontented when one speaks to the mind. The teaching is too metaphysical or too reasoned today; tomorrow, it is too sentimental or too descriptive. These are those children to whom Jesus Christ compared the generation of His time, those children who played in the square a game then in use, in which they said to one another: We have piped to you and you have not danced, we have mourned and you have not wept.

Once more, my brethren, such is not the disposition of that great number of hearers too humble and too judicious to set themselves up as censors of that evangelical word which is one day to judge them. So I shall not fear to establish and develop a proposition which no one else had perhaps ever treated in the Christian pulpit before one of the most eloquent and amiable defenders of Catholic truth in these latter times, that noble prelate of Catholic England, whose talent the Sovereign Pontiff qualified so graciously by the name of river of honey, in making him bishop of Mellipotamos. This celebrated controversialist, who joins to the power of reasoning the warmth of love and the charm of a rich imagination, will serve me as guide.[2]

Let us enter on the question, and say that one of the remarkable aspects of Catholic worship is its dramatic character (we shall explain well what we mean by this word). In other words, let us show that, to continue this providential plan according to which God put the whole of religion in facts, the ceremonies and feasts of the Catholic Church have for object to renew or place again before our eyes those same facts. Let us develop some general ideas first, and explain ourselves more clearly afterward by examples which we shall draw as far as possible from the ceremonies of Holy Week, to prepare the faithful for the understanding of the liturgical mysteries of that season of the year.

It is a thing worthy of remark, and which we have often made you remark, my brethren, that religion entire was as it were enveloped by its divine author under the bark of sensible and material facts. You recall what fruitful ideas the development of this text of Saint Paul furnished us in this regard: *Invisibilia enim ipsius a creatura mundi, per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur.* Religion does not rest on philosophical arguments nor on abstract discussions which the multitude could not follow and understand; it rests solely on sensible and material facts which are within reach of everyone. It enters by the eyes to arrive at the mind.

Religion consists in three great things: God; Jesus Christ, Son and envoy of God; the Church, organ of Jesus Christ. Now, the existence of God is proved by a fact, that of creation; the divinity of Jesus Christ is proved by the fact of His miracles; the authority of the Church is proved by the fact of her divine institution and her duration. That you may be Christians like me, I ask only that you have your eyes open and answer me, on seeing the world come out of nothingness, whether there is a God or not; on seeing Jesus Christ raise the dead and raise Himself, whether He is the Son of God or an impostor; on seeing the marvels of the nascent Church and the still more astonishing marvel of her permanence, whether it is a supernatural or a human institution.

And if you wish to run through with me the more circumstantial details of dogmatic or moral religion, I shall always show them to you in facts. Not a mystery which is not a fact. The Trinity revealed itself on diverse occasions as a fact: do you hear the Father who speaks in the heavens? see the Son on earth in the water of the Jordan; follow with the eye the Holy Spirit who descends from heaven on the head of Jesus. The Incarnation is a fact: a fact whose motive is in a first fact, the fall of man; a fact whose expectation is in a series of facts which last four thousand years, and whose principal authors are Adam, Noah, Abraham,

Moses and Elias; a fact of which Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Samaria are the theatre. The life of Jesus on earth is a succession of facts. The Eucharist is a fact: go to the cenacle. The Redemption is a fact: interrogate Calvary and the executioners. The Resurrection is a fact: go to the sepulchre. The Ascension is a fact: climb to the garden of Olives. The descent of the Holy Spirit is a fact: mingle with the multitude come from all nations; see those tongues of fire!

Let us leave dogma, and speak of morals. Humility, poverty are virtues: go to Bethlehem and see that stable, that crib, that straw. The little and the simple are more loved of God than the rich and the powerful: see the shepherds called to the stable before the kings. Obedience and particularly filial dependence are virtues: see at Nazareth the Son of God subject to Mary and Joseph. Suffering is a virtue: one must suffer to enter into glory; see the cross of Jesus and the sword which pierces the heart of His mother. In a word, my brethren, the character of the Incarnation of the God made man is stamped on all Christian theology; every belief, every virtue shows itself there united to a fact, which is in some sort its sensible body, its visible nature.

Behold what was the providential economy according to which God gave His religion to men, putting Himself thus within their reach, appropriating Himself to their needs. Man was carnal, and virtue made itself flesh. Man understood and consequently loved only what he saw; and truth and virtue, in the incarnate person of the Word, made themselves visible. And it is thus that God took men in the nets of Adam, that is, that He took sensual beings by the senses, material beings by matter, beings who understood and loved only what they saw, by showing Himself to their eyes to arrive at their hearts. Religion then in itself is only the history of the facts which were wrought formerly; it is a drama which Scripture gives us to read. Now it is here that we seize our subject well. Understand the connection of what I am about to say with what precedes.

God put the whole of religion in facts; but these facts are past. They must have struck vividly the mind and heart of those who were witnesses of them; but today we can have only the account of them. An account infinitely credible without doubt, an account full of interest and persuasion; but in the end, such is the nature of man that what reaches him by the sense of hearing penetrates him, warms him infinitely less than what strikes his eyes. It is the well-known thought of a profane poet, interpreter in this of nature: *Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem, quam quae sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.* [What is conveyed by the ear stirs the mind less keenly than what is put before the faithful eyes. (Horace, *Ars poetica* 180–181.)] And which of us has not caught himself sometimes, like Saint Augustine or Saint Bernard, regretting not to have been the happy witnesses of the touching scene of Bethlehem or that of Calvary! How it seems to us that we should have loved the new-born infant more, that we should have compassionated more keenly the agony of the Saviour, if we had been there, if we had seen with our own eyes!

God felt well the need of our nature, He answered perfectly to the exigencies of our humanity by incarnating Himself, by incarnating the whole of religion in facts; but to complete this work of love, but to condescend to the end to our need of seeing with our eyes, but to take us always in the bonds of Adam, that is, in the nets of our own nature, it would be needed that these facts could renew themselves, perpetuate themselves and last always. Now, that is precisely, my brethren, what Catholic worship realises in an admirable way; that is precisely what I mean by the dramatic character of our liturgy. The object and power of dramatic poetry consist in its being not solely descriptive, but also representative, and that whether it produces itself by actions or expresses itself only by words. Its proper merit is to make our imagination and our senses assist at scenes which others saw, and to excite in us the sentiments which reality inspired in us. Dramatic poetry being thus defined, nothing is more conformable to the sentiment of our nature, nor to the plan of religion.

In the ancient people of God, worship was eminently dramatic, that is, it tended to reproduce and perpetuate the important facts. Had some prodigy been wrought in favour of Israel? at once a monument was raised, and the lawgiver said: When your children ask you in several centuries why these stones, you will tell them the prodigy the Lord did. For example, Israel sojourned forty years in the desert before entering into the promised land; and more than four thousand years after, Israel, at a certain time of the year, went out of its

houses and its cities, and went to dwell several days under tents. The feast of Tabernacles reproduced every year the sojourn in the desert, placed the Israelites back there in some sort, after twelve and fifteen centuries. All the feasts, all the Jewish practices had the same character.

Moreover, this dramatic language is so conformable to our nature that it is met with above all among savage peoples, and that it is the triumph of art to approach it. One recalls the mysterious and significant present of the ambassador of the Scythians to Darius. At the death of Caesar, says Jean-Jacques Rousseau, I imagine one of our orators, wishing to move the people, exhaust all the commonplaces of art to make a pathetic description of his wounds, his blood, his corpse. Antony, although eloquent, says nothing of all that; he has the body brought. What rhetoric![3]

Well, my brethren, once more, that is the rhetoric of the ceremonies of the Church. Heresy removes the original picture, to argue and dissert. The Catholic Church dissertates only with regret; she narrates, she exposes, she reproduces the facts.

The liturgy is no more monotonous than nature; it has its diverse seasons. And as, every year, the same revolution takes place in the heavens and brings back the same constellations, so all Christian mysteries appear successively in the cycle of the liturgical year. What we said of the material temple, we say still more of the worship which is celebrated in the temple. Catholic worship, as it is consummated and completed in the course of the ecclesiastical year, is the vastest exposition of religion; it is a living Summa of dogmatic and moral, historical and mystical theology. It is a gallery where all beliefs and all virtues figure.

It is a drama where each mystery occupies a scene, where each precept is animated by an action. My brethren, the most beautiful book in the world, and, if you consent to take these words in their noble and elevated sense, the most admirable stage piece that was ever composed, is your euchologion, your book of the Office, your parish prayer-book. If you had the intelligence of this book, you would not let a single feast, a single ceremony of the Church pass without wishing to be present.

Each year the Catholic Church awaits the Saviour and sighs for His coming: that is the word of the whole liturgy of Advent; each year she sees Him again an infant in the crib: see Christmas; she follows Him in the development of His adolescence, through His apostolic journeys; she fasts with Him in the desert: see Lent; she contemplates Him offering Himself on the cross: see Good Friday; rising from the sepulchre: see Easter; re-ascending to the right hand of His Father: see the Ascension; sending the Holy Spirit on the nascent Church: see Pentecost; crowning the elect, His holy mother first, then all the Saints who leave this world: see the Assumption and All Saints.

And these mysteries the Church celebrates every year, not as accomplished facts, but as if they were being accomplished now: first, because indeed the sacrifice at once representative and real of Jesus Christ on the altar implies a renewal of each of the Christian mysteries; then, besides, because each of these mysteries has a double spirit, and if it is past in one respect, it is really still present in another. For example, Jesus Christ was born 1842 years ago; yes, but of what use would this birth of Jesus Christ eighteen centuries ago be, if He did not return for each of us, if He were not born again within our hearts? When I celebrate Christmas, the object of this feast is therefore at once past and present. I join the patriarchs during Advent to call for the first birth of the Messiah; but also I borrow their words to call for a second birth of the Messiah in my heart: Heavens, send down your dew, and let the clouds rain the just! In the same way Jesus Christ died eighteen centuries ago; but what use would His death be to me, if the merits of this death were not applied to me? He was crucified; but sin crucifies Him still every day. Jesus Christ rose eighteen centuries ago; but what use would His Resurrection be to me, if the virtue of this mystery did not make Him rise in me, by making me pass from sin to innocence, from apathy to fervour?

It is thus, my brethren, that the grace of Christmas is not that of Good Friday, that the grace of Good Friday is not that of Easter, and so on. Each of the feasts and seasons of the Christian year has its special character and

its own spirit, under the double point of view of the dogma to be believed and the virtue to be practised. And it is toward this double aspect of each mystery that the dramatic liturgy of the Church carries us back, ever recalling to us the original scenes which she wishes to celebrate. Let us bring out this truth by the analysis of some of the offices of Holy Week.

Palm Sunday is destined to recall the triumphant entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, at the same time as the first steps He made in the course of His Passion. The Church could have been content with a simple narration, a lesson, an exhortation to the faithful, to inform them of the aim of the solemnity. But no: instead of this cold and languid method, the Church opens the office in the most dramatic manner. It is a procession, which recalls the march of Jesus Christ. Palms are carried in it, children sing the hosanna; the gospel of the triumphant entry is proclaimed under the vault of the heavens.

Formerly the Church of Chartres made its procession on this day to the abbatial church of Saint-Chéron, because our fathers, returned from the Holy Land, had noticed that this hill had, with respect to Chartres, the same topographical situation as the Mount of Olives, and the village of Bethphage with respect to Jerusalem, like that valley of Lèves where they at the same epoch and for the same motive built a monastery which they called Josaphat. These circumstances, dramatic again, smiled on their piety. Then, on the return of the procession, at the gates of the city formerly, later at those of the church, today (for our fervour goes always diminishing) at the door of the choir, a ceremony still dramatic is performed. The door is shut; thus the entrance of heaven was forbidden to fallen man. The celebrant, who represents Jesus Christ, strikes with the staff of the cross, and soon, after a dialogue of the most perfect lyrical poetry, the doors open and the procession enters, while the choir recounts the triumphal entry of Our Lord into the holy city which He is soon to regenerate by His cross, it and the whole human race.

The same dramatic principle, but strengthened by the recommendation, I almost said by the precept of the Lord, has caused to be preserved among the ceremonies of Holy Thursday the custom of washing the feet of the poor. My brethren, the grandeur and nobility of the poor man, that is a truth which the Church translates by a very intelligible drama. At Rome the Sovereign Pontiff, in our cities the bishops, in Catholic courts the sovereigns, leaving their sumptuous ornaments and washing the feet of the poor, that is significant. It will take many philanthropic pamphlets to replace that. But let us hasten. The adoration of the cross, the tomb of the Saviour, the sad and silent march of the levites who let nothing be heard but the cadenced noise of the vases of the perfume of burial: so many historical facts reproduced.

And what cannot escape the attentive observer is that if each part of the offices of Holy Week possesses the character of life and action which forms the essence of dramatic representation, the whole is so disposed that each day adds to our sentiments of recollected and melancholy piety, by the variety of contrasts and episodes. Thus the office of Palm Sunday opens in a manner at once solemn and sad, with a mixture of passing joy (palms are carried there), and a beginning of sorrow (the staff of the cross is used, and the Passion of the Saviour is sung there for the first time). During the three following days, the office is all impregnated with sadness; but the demonstrations of mourning begin only at Tenebrae, where the Lamentations and the Miserere are sung. Thursday, for a moment, arrests the course of sorrow: it is the institution of the Eucharist, mystery of love. The Church leaves for an instant her black garments, she intones the hymn of the Angels: *Gloria in excelsis.* But this moment of grateful gladness soon ends. The Church falls back more than ever into her sadness, the sanctuary is bare, the sacrifice ceases, the Church remains without incense or light, like a mother at the death of her only son. Then the next day, the rite of Holy Saturday lets the dawn of consolation be glimpsed; one feels the approach of the Resurrection. The Alleluia of the following day is timidly announced, and thus is avoided the too brusque transition which otherwise would throw us from the abyss of sorrows into the abyss of joys, from a dark dungeon into the resplendent light of noon.

I ask, my brethren, of those who are accustomed to profane spectacles: find me elsewhere a drama conceived like that, adapted like that to all the sentiments of the human heart, where religion, in giving us its highest

lessons, has forgotten none of the delicacies of art, where it has taken account even of the caprices of our attention. Ah! it has been said that the theatre was the school of morals. If you mean the sacred theatre of the holy ceremonies, yes, that is true. O you who have a heart to love, instead of going through the world playing what is called today the drama of the passions, come then with us to assist at the drama of the Passion of Jesus Christ!

Shall I say a word of the dramatic character of sacred music? My brethren, you who go into ecstasies over talents often mediocre, do you come to hear, for example, those two immortal masterpieces of Palestrina, the Improperia of Good Friday, and the chant of the Passion according to Saint Matthew and according to Saint John? This last chant is executed by three interlocutors in deacon's habits; the narration is made by a noble and strong tenor voice; the words of the Saviour are sung by a deep and solemn bass, and a contralto says all that is put in the mouth of the other characters. This ensemble produces the liveliest dramatic effect that can result from a musical composition. Each part has its particular cadence perfectly adapted to its spirit; it is an ancient chant, simple, but rich and worthy of ancient tragedy. That of the narrator is clear, plain and faintly modulated; that of the various interlocutors has a lively tone and almost that of familiar conversation; that of the Saviour is slow, grave and solemn. It begins very low and rises by full tones, then extends in simple and rich modulations, and ends graceful and expressive, modified with still more effect in the interrogative phrases. But let us stop, my brethren.[4]

One of those men whose education was made by the impiety (which only a misnomer could call philosophical) of the last century, said one day in my presence in language rather undistinguished: "If the Mass changed as often as the comedy, one might go to it more." In these words which I beg your pardon for reproducing, there is true and false: true, in that it is incontestable that monotony is tedious to our nature; false, in that it is of the grossest ignorance to suppose that the offices of the Church are all alike every day of the year. Without doubt, there is in the offices a foundation which is found every day (and, it must be said, the foundation of all dramas is the same); and this foundation, which is the essential part of the sacrifice, can certainly awaken and sustain attention eternally, since the sacrifice of the altar is the Incarnation and Redemption renewing themselves: every day the God-Man is born again on the altar, and dies there anew: *Et renascens perpetua moriendo vivit.* [And, being born again, He lives by dying perpetually.][5] Every day therefore the foundation of the sacrifice is the same, but every day also the rest of the action varies; every day a new aspect of religion comes to present itself, new words, new rites come to change the scene and sometimes to transform it quite completely.

Come then, O my dearly beloved brethren, and this is the whole consequence of this instruction and of all those which we have addressed to you; come then to assist at the offices of the Church. There is nothing so beautiful elsewhere; is it then because holiness is joined here to beauty that you desert these admirable spectacles? My dearly beloved brethren, you come to hear our words, and sometimes they interest you, but perhaps they do not change you. Oh! come then also to hear the word of the Church, the language of worship. This preaching will go much more to your hearts, in a surer, more delicate, more efficacious way. We, we can be mistaken sometimes; the Church is never mistaken. How often, O my God, the holy pomps of Your Church have rested my saddened soul, put back on the way my straying mind, dilated with love my heart contracted by fear!

Come, my brethren, you will find here the faith you have lost, the virtue which seems to have become for you against nature, the happiness you have not yet been able to find elsewhere. Men sometimes tell us: To go to the offices, I should like first to be convinced and to believe. And I say to you, my dearly beloved brethren: come and you will believe. It is impossible to assist at the offices of the Church and not believe. You know what Diderot and Jean-Jacques wrote on that of their own disposition. The most beautiful conquest Christianity has been able to make, it owes to its worship: Augustine was converted above all by the melody and pomp of the Ambrosian liturgy.[6]

You would like to have faith, you tell me. I ask only one thing of you. Assist with attention and recollection at the sacred ceremonies of the Church, and you will have faith. It is the shortest, surest way. Do not try to find light by discussing; no, enter, and you will see.

Have you sometimes looked from outside at the windows of our Gothic churches? What a sad and repulsive aspect! it is an insignificant heap of shapeless pieces, ill-fitted, dark and black. As long as you are outside the temple, in vain would one wish to prove to you that there is some value, some merit in these objects. But if you enter, ah! suddenly you are ravished by the beauty, brilliance, harmony of what seemed to you a disorder. Each fragment is an emerald or a flower. The ensemble produces an effect whose combination is a marvel.

My brethren, you understand where I want to come out. You do not come to our assemblies, to our sacred mysteries, because you do not believe; our dogmas seem to you repellent, obscure; our morality difficult, cruel. Ah! I beg you, let us not discuss at the door, you would not understand. Enter, enter with me, and soon the light will come of itself. What seemed to you evil will excite your admiration. You will love what displeased you. Enter, my brethren, and you will believe, these are my last words. May they remain engraved in your hearts![7]

Translator's notes

1. The "river of honey" (*Melipotamus*, Greek for "honey-river") is the title *in partibus* of the English bishop alluded to; the preacher says the Pope "qualified his talent" by that title. This is a rhetorical gloss by the preacher.

2. "The chant of the Passion … three interlocutors in deacon's habits": a description of the traditional Holy Week Passion chant (tenor chronista, bass Christus, alto "synagoga/others"). The preacher names Palestrina for the *Improperia*; the attribution is his.

3. "Saint-Chéron" and "Lèves" are as printed (Chartres and its environs); the "Josaphat" monastery is the preacher's allusion. Not verified here.

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[1] M. de Bonald: *Pensées*, vol. I, p. 28. (Note of M. l'abbé Pie.)

[2] The "noble prelate of Catholic England" with the title of Melipotamus is Nicholas Wiseman (coadjutor vicar apostolic, titular bishop of Melipotamus, 1840), as I read it; the preacher does not name him, and I have not verified the work to which he alludes. Identification mine.

[3] The preacher gives Rousseau without a reference; the passage is not located or verified here.

[4] Here a few words first to the faithful on the zeal with which they should follow the pious ceremony of the Church. The best book of piety is the life of Jesus Christ in us. Now, etc. The ancient Christians followed all the offices, to the point that a layman became in a few days a priest and even a bishop: Saint Ambrose. Saint Louis knew his breviary like a priest, and he was none the less a hero, etc. (Indication of M. l'abbé Pie.) — This is an outline note by the author, interleaved with the printed text; I have placed it here, where its marker stands.

[5] A Latin line quoted by the preacher without attribution; not identified here.

[6] The preacher's reference to Diderot and Rousseau is unspecified; not identified here. On Augustine and the Ambrosian chant cf. *Confessions* IX, 6–7 (my reference, not the preacher's).

[7] Cf. Appendix I: A, 61. (Editor's note.)

n° 38. Sermon for the Anniversary Ceremony of Expiation, on the Occasion of the Sacrilegious Theft Committed in the Church of Luisant, Preached in the Said Church

Sunday, 10 April 1842.[1]

Secundum tempus et secundum diem in qua contaminaverunt illud gentes, in ipsa renovatum est in canticis … Et cecidit omnis populus in faciem, et adoraverunt et benedixerunt … Et facta est laetitia in populo magna

valde, et aversum est opprobrium gentium. [At the same time and on the same day on which the Gentiles had defiled it, it was dedicated anew with canticles … And all the people fell on their faces, and adored and blessed … And there was exceeding great gladness among the people, and the reproach of the Gentiles was turned away.] At the same season and on the same days on which it had been defiled, the altar was consecrated anew amid canticles and acclamations. All the people fell with their face to the ground, and they adored, and they blessed. And there was great joy among them, and the opprobrium of the profanation was buried for ever. (1 Mach. 4:54, 55, 58.)

MY VERY DEAR BRETHREN, Time, which soothes all ills, has not yet softened our grief. It seems to me that it was yesterday that I made to resound in the ears of the immense multitude gathered around the pulpit of truth in our great basilica, those words, those mournful words which carried consternation into every heart and dismay on every face: The holy Eucharist has just been profaned at our very gates; they have taken away my Lord Jesus, and I know not where they have laid Him: *Tulerunt Dominum meum, et nescio ubi posuerunt eum!* [They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him. (John 20:13.)] And our eyes, of all of us who were there, mingled tears with the bitter tears shed by the angels of peace. And what happened of old in Israel was renewed among us.

It is written in the first book of Machabees that the brave and courageous Judas, having conquered the enemies, immediately assembled the army, and they went up to Mount Sion. And there they saw the holy places desolate, the altar profaned; and they rent their garments, made great mourning and put ashes on their heads, and they fell prostrate with their face to the ground and cried out to heaven. Then Judas chose priests without blemish, religious observers of the law of God. They purified the holy places, and cast the profaned stones into an unclean place. And they took new stones, and built a new altar, like the first; they made new sacred vessels and set lamps before the altar; and the altar was consecrated to the sound of canticles and acclamations, at the same season and on the same day on which it had been defiled by the Gentiles. All the people prostrated themselves, and they adored and blessed the Lord. And there was great joy, and the reproach of the nations was destroyed for ever.

My brethren, is this the history of what happened in Israel or of what has passed before our eyes? In the person of the courageous Judas Machabeus, have you recognised that courageous and holy pontiff, occupied in combating the enemies of the Lord, who, at the news of the profanation committed at the gates of the city, cries out at once: *Ecce contriti sunt inimici nostri: ascendamus nunc mundare sancta et renovare;* [Behold, our enemies are crushed: let us go up now to cleanse the holy places and to renew them. (1 Mach. 4:36.)] let us leave for an instant our weakened and scattered enemies, let us go quickly to purify and renew the temple. In the tears and consternation of the holy people who ran to the mountain of Jerusalem, have you recognised all that multitude run together from the hamlets and the city, those poor, those rich, who have come to mingle their tears here and confound their prayers? In that eagerness to renew the sanctuary and the altar, to make new sacred vessels in place of those that had been profaned, to hang and light the lamps before the altar, have you recognised the noble and pious impulse with which hands were opened to contribute to repair the disasters and to make amends to the Lord, if it be possible, by more decency and pomp than ever, for the outrage He has received? Finally, my brethren, in that anniversary ceremony which the people of Israel celebrate at the same season and on the same days on which the enemies had defiled the temple, have you recognised the expiatory ceremony which gathers us at this moment at the foot of this altar? *Secundum tempus, et secundum diem in qua contaminaverunt illud gentes, in ipsa renovatum est.*

Having had the happiness, very little justified doubtless by my unworthiness, of being one of those priests chosen by our holy pontiff, as of old by the leader of Israel, to concur on this day in the completion of the expiation: *Et elegit sacerdotes sine macula, et mundaverunt sancta;* [And he chose priests without blemish, and they cleansed the holy places. (1 Mach. 4:42–43.)] do not expect of me, my brethren, eloquent and pompous words. God knows, I would wish to speak to you only by my tears and the voice of my sighs. For

our grief is the grief of Rachel who will not be consoled, because the object of her love has disappeared. And besides, my brethren, if it were possible for us to feel less keenly the outrage done a year ago to our merciful Jesus, alas! how many other new outrages since that time, and every day still, come to desolate our soul! Hear then, my brethren, what I have to say to you, in this short homily, of the love of the Lord continually outraged by the hatred of His enemies, but still more painfully outraged by the indifference of those whom He would wish to call His friends.

Christus, cum dilexisset suos qui erant in mundo, in finem dilexit eos: [Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end. (John 13:1.)] Jesus Christ having loved His own who were in this world, He loved them to the end. Now one can say also, my brethren, that men, not having loved Jesus Christ who was in this world, have persisted in not loving Him to the end. Jesus Christ began with love, He continued with love, and He pursues, and will pursue to the end, with love. But alas! by a desolating inversion, it must be said also that men began with hatred and indifference, that they continued in the same way, and that the same conduct goes on always. Perseverance of love on the part of Jesus Christ; perseverance of ingratitude on the part of men. On the part of Jesus Christ, perseverance of love which brings Him to make Himself always a victim for men; on the part of men, perseverance of ingratitude which brings them to immolate Jesus Christ always. On the part of Jesus Christ, perseverance of love which perpetuates His passion and His crucifixion; on the part of men, perseverance of ingratitude which perpetuates either the rage of the executioners or the unfaithfulness of the cowardly disciples.

Christus, cum dilexisset suos, in finem dilexit eos. What is the proof of love? It is sacrifice. What other truly real testimony of love can one give, if not to suffer for those one loves? Jesus Christ therefore, having during His mortal life loved His own and suffered for them, Jesus Christ being on the eve of dying for them, devises a means of loving still and consequently of suffering still in some manner after His death and until the end of the ages: *Christus cum dilexisset, in finem dilexit.* It is love that made Jesus descend from heaven into the bosom of Mary, love that made Him dwell on earth for thirty-three years; the same love is going to fix Him for ever among men. Christ having loved His own, that is, Jesus Christ having from all eternity loved men and sighed for the instant when He would take their nature, Jesus Christ having loved men in time and made Himself their brother, Jesus Christ having loved men during His life, wished to love them still beyond the tomb: *Christus cum dilexisset suos, in finem dilexit eos.* Jesus Christ, having loved His own, loved them to the end; that is, Jesus Christ having loved His own by working prodigies of love for them during His life and at His death, wished, before leaving them, to give Himself to them for ever. Jesus Christ, having loved His own from His crib to His sepulchre, wished to love them to the end on the altars and in the tabernacle where He continues to dwell for them, where He continues to suffer for them.

For hear this, Christians, my brethren: the Christian religion consists entirely in expiation. Jesus Christ came on earth as a victim. His life was only a continual sorrow. His passion and death were only the last outcome and completion of a long immolation; what do I say, the completion! no. And if the apostle Saint John assures us that the Lamb was slain from the beginning of the world, because already He was immolated by the desire of His heart and by the figurative sacrifices; with far greater reason can I say that He will be immolated until the end of the world, since His real presence in the Eucharist subjects Him anew to all the humiliations, and, in a certain way, to all the sorrows which He endured during His life and at His death: *Christus cum dilexisset suos, in finem dilexit eos.* Yes, on re-entering the heavens, glorious henceforth and impassible, Jesus Christ found the secret of remaining still in a state of obscurity and, as it were, of suffering on earth.

He is there until the end of the ages, who lives among us, and who dies for us, a victim ever living and ever immolated.

Jesus Christ is there ever living, as He was of old in Judea, that is, ever good and merciful, calling us to Himself, speaking to our hearts.

Ever dying, that is, never ceasing to renew His sacrifice for us; keeping, as it were, ever fresh and vermilion the divine blood in which He redeemed us, saving bath whose efficacy is ever new, and whose virtue, unalterable in itself, but moreover ceaselessly rejuvenated, cannot fail for an instant.

Ask Jesus why He is here; He will answer you that He continues, that He propagates His sacrifice here: *Adimpleo in me ea quae desunt passionum.* [I fill up in my flesh what is wanting of the sufferings of Christ. (Col. 1:24.)] In the crib, He began to immolate Himself by abasements, humiliations; and here, He is wrapped in swaddling-clothes more humble still than those of Bethlehem: *Adimpleo ea quae desunt passionum.* Scarcely born, He was forced to flee before His enemies, and to hide from their eyes His holy humanity, an insufficient veil to disguise a God from the rage of men; and here, He is reduced to flee still before His enemies and to seek other veils than the veils, so thick nevertheless, of His sacrament: *Adimpleo ea quae desunt passionum.* In Jerusalem, He listens in silence to all the false witnesses, He remains dumb before those who accuse Him; here, He condemns Himself to a silence still more absolute: He lets His enemies speak and act; He lets Himself be accused, judged, condemned, almost convicted; one would say that He has no reply. When voices cry to Him as of old: If He is God, well, let Him show it! *Jesus autem tacebat;* [But Jesus held His peace. (Matt. 26:63.)] He is silent still: *Adimpleo ea quae desunt passionum.* On Calvary, He Himself offers His life, pours out all His blood, dies; and here, He continues to offer Himself, to shed His blood, to die: *Adimpleo ea quae desunt passionum.* So that, I repeat, the Redemption of men is always being accomplished, the victim is always under the knife, the bath of our souls is always renewed, and what Jesus Christ did and endured for His own while He was in this world, He does and endures always for us until the end of time. O love! love! love!

But alas! my brethren, why am I forced to add at once: O cruelty, O ingratitude! What Jesus Christ did and endured for His own in this world, He does and endures still, He will do and endure for them until the end. And what His own, who were in this world, did against Him, they do still every day. His own who were in this world, not having loved Him, have persisted to the end in not loving Him. A desolating perseverance of which it remains for me to speak to you.

II. Saint Paul said, speaking of his own sufferings: *Adimpleo in me quae desunt passionum Christi.* It is thus that we should all take part in the Passion of Jesus Christ, uniting ourselves to it by our own sufferings, or at least by the interest and compassion we should bear toward the divine Saviour. But no; we complete what is wanting to the Passion of Jesus Christ by continuing to make ourselves either His enemies who deliver Him up and crucify Him, or His lukewarm and cowardly friends who deny Him and abandon Him.

Jesus Christ is in the tabernacle, ever a victim for love of us; and men are there, ever traitors or executioners toward Him. He was in the garden of Olives: suddenly, in the night, in silence, thieves come, Judas the perfidious at their head, and He is delivered up. My brethren, what else is that which happened here? Jesus Christ was there, living, praying, immolating Himself for us in silence: suddenly, men came, the sacrilegious hammer forced the entrance, and night a second time covered with its veils the attempt of a Judas who laid hands on his God for money. He was in the praetorium, receiving insults, spittle, scourged, etc.; and here, He was trampled underfoot, delivered to the winds. He was on Calvary crucified; and here, He was destroyed in some manner a second time, in a more guilty way, for His death was useful on Calvary, here it is wholly criminal and without purpose.

Ah! my brethren, how then are men capable of such a crime? What had the Lord Jesus then committed toward him who came to defile himself with such an attempt? Ah! He had given him life, He had given him grace, etc. *Populе meus, quid feci tibi aut in quo contristavi te? Responde mihi. Quia eduxi te de terra Aegypti, parasti crucem Salvatori. Quia eduxi te per desertum quadraginta annis, et manna cibavi te, et introduxi te in terram satis bonam, parasti crucem Salvatori tuo. Quid ultra debui facere et non feci?* [My people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I grieved thee? Answer me. Because I led thee out of the land of Egypt, thou hast prepared a cross for thy Saviour. Because I led thee through the desert forty years,

and fed thee with manna, and brought thee into a land exceeding good, thou hast prepared a cross for thy Saviour. What more should I have done for thee and have not done? (The Improperia of Good Friday.)] Jesus Christ said to him well by the voice of his conscience: *Amice, ad quid venisti?* [Friend, whereto art thou come? (Matt. 26:50.)] Ah! my brethren, when there is no more faith in a heart, when cupidity reigns there, of what is it not capable? We have horror of this crime, alas! and we have not enough horror of the vices which can lead to this degree of perversity. I say that we have horror of it; but it is not enough. We shall never be, I hope, profaners, sacrilegious despoilers; but are we sufficiently sensitive to the outrage received by Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ, in the tabernacle as on the cross, suffers less from the iniquity of the enemies who persecute Him than from the immensity of the friends who take almost no part in His sorrows. That there should be on earth some unhappy men, exceptional beings by the depravity of their hearts, who continue against the person of Jesus Christ the function of Judas and the executioners, ah! it is doubtless a horrible misfortune for them! Unhappy men! *Nesciunt quid faciunt.* [They know not what they do. (Luke 23:34.)] It would be better for them never to have been born, or that a millstone were hung about their necks; but after all, they are the instruments of a certain divine economy which pursues its course on earth: *Oportebat Christum pati.* [Christ ought to have suffered. (Luke 24:26.)] But, my dearly beloved brethren, that in His temple as on Calvary, Jesus Christ should perceive around Him no faithful friend who compassionates: *Circumspexi, non erat auxiliator,* [I looked about, and there was no helper. (Is. 63:5.)] this is what desolates His heart! And yet, my brethren, how a sacrilege against Jesus Christ passes unperceived! Ah! it is always: *Torcular calcavi solus* … [I have trodden the winepress alone. (Is. 63:3.)] Nothing is sooner forgotten, nothing is less noticed than what outrages God alone. Misfortune touches us: God made Himself unhappy, and as far as His glorious state imperfectly permits, He wished to remain as unhappy and unfortunate among us to excite our love; and we are sensitive to all ills except that one! If God could be reached by misfortune, He would be the most unhappy of beings, for He is without friends: *Torcular calcavi solus.*

But no, my brethren, I am wrong. You who have run together with such eagerness, you are not of these indifferent: be blessed for it. Be blessed, inhabitants of this parish, who have shown so much grief; but, I beg you, make amends to Jesus Christ. Be more respectful in the temple, come to it more assiduously. To repair the crime which profaned the Eucharist by casting it to the ground, prepare for Him a worthy dwelling in your hearts. Love the beauty of the exterior temple, contribute to its embellishment, but love also the beauty of the interior temple which is your soul.

And you also, be blessed, pious inhabitants of the city, who have come on this day to complete here the reparation, the expiation begun already last year. God will reward you for your zeal for His glory. Continue thus to take part in His sufferings. Near Calvary there was a soul, that of Mary, faithful mirror in which all the sorrows of Jesus came to be reflected. My brethren, may your souls near the tabernacles be as faithful in receiving the reverberation of all that wounds Jesus Christ! May the counter-stroke of all that reaches Him reach us on the instant! The Church of earth celebrates the Compassion of Mary; the Church of heaven will crown the compassion of our souls.

How I pity those who feel not the sorrows of the Church: *Et nihil patiebantur super contritione Joseph.* [And they suffered nothing for the affliction of Joseph. (Amos 6:6.)] Are they then Christians? Christians are the members of Jesus Christ; now, when the head suffers, does not the body suffer? And if some part feels nothing, must we not say that it is paralysed, that it is dead? I repeat it: be blessed then, Christians who have come with us on this day to make amends to the outraged Saviour! For all those who shall have been on earth partakers of His sorrows and His humiliations, Jesus will make in the heavens partakers of His happiness and His glory. This is the grace, etc.[2]

Translator’s notes

1. The text has the look of a developed sketch rather than a polished sermon: it ends “C’est la grâce, etc.”, and several sentences carry “etc.”, “flagellé, etc.” I have kept them as printed.

2. Occasion: the sacrilegious theft from the church of Luisant (near Chartres) and the anniversary ceremony of expiation one year later. The preacher’s earlier announcement “in our great basilica” refers to the cathedral. The details of the theft are not stated in this text beyond what is translated; not verified here.

3. Scripture citations in brackets were supplied by me from the Vulgate for the Latin as printed; the printed reference “I Machab., ch. IV, vv. 54, 55, 58” is kept as the epigraph’s own. The Amos 6:6 verse is quoted by the preacher in a Vulgate form (*super contritione Joseph*).

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[1] The date, 10 April 1842, is given both in the heading and in the text.

[2] Cf. Appendix I: AB, 34. (Editor’s note.)

n° 39. First Homily on the Sanctification of Sunday, for the Third Sunday after Easter: The Existence of the Law of Sunday

1842.[1]

Videte ut sabbatum meum custodiatis. [See that you keep My sabbath.] Take great care to observe my day of the sabbath. (Exod. 31:13.)

MY VERY DEAR BRETHREN, We spoke to you during the holy forty days of several general and particular points of Catholic worship, and we announced to you that we should continue, in our homilies at the parochial Mass, to explore this rich mine. Exterior worship is necessary; the dramatic character is a perfection of this worship; the temple is the place of worship: this is what we have said. Sunday is par excellence the day of worship: this is what we are going to try to say today, but only in part; for this question of the sanctification of Sunday is so fruitful, so important, that it demands to be deepened and developed in order to be well understood in all its extent. And to express to you my whole thought at the outset, my brethren, the law of the sanctification of Sunday is by itself a whole legislation. The observance of this single precept leads to the observance of all the other precepts. Sunday is the keystone of the whole religious and social edifice. There is not one dogmatic truth, not one moral law, not one Christian practice that is not bound up with the sanctification of Sunday: so that the profanation of Sunday is an absolute destruction of the Christian economy. To tear up this third commandment is to lacerate the whole law: this we shall see in detail in a later instruction. But let us lay down today the preliminaries of this question, and let us make its whole gravity felt by showing the solid foundations on which it rests.

Before penetrating the motives of a law, one must establish its existence: this is what we are going to do today. We shall not yet enter into the discussion of the advantages of the law of Sunday; but we are simply going to verify the authentic text of this law. And you will admit, my brethren, that from the point of view of authority there is no law in the world more venerable, more ancient, more solemnly promulgated, more frequently enjoined, more severely sanctioned than the law of Sunday, and that consequently the infraction of this law is the most culpable disobedience and the most audacious revolt.

If we wish to go back to the origin of the law which orders the sanctification of Sunday, we must have recourse to the first pages of human history. Sunday is written at the head of the book: *In capite libri scriptum est de me.* [In the head of the book it is written of me. (Ps. 39:8; Heb. 10:7.)] Founded on the very essence of things, and flowing, as to its substance, from the natural law itself, the precept of the sanctification of the seventh day is contemporary with the existence of the world. The earth and the heavens had scarcely come into bloom, creatures at the voice of God were still springing from nothingness, and already the law of Sunday was being born with the universe; that is, the very order and duration of the creative action became the primordial type of the division of time into six days of work followed by a day of rest.

Hear the only authentic account of the beginning of things: *Sex diebus creavit Dominus caelum et terram, et requievit die septimo ab universo opere quod patrarat. Et benedixit diei septimo, et sanctificavit illum.* [In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and rested on the seventh day from all the work which He had done. And He blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it. (Cf. Exod. 20:11; Gen. 2:2–3.)] And God rested the seventh day from all the work He had done during six days; and He blessed this day, and sanctified it. What does this mean, my brethren? Could God not then create the world in the twinkling of an eye, and why did He bind Himself to work six days, and why did He rest on the seventh? Why, my brethren? Assuredly it was not through impotence that the Almighty thus prolonged His work, and it was not through fatigue either that the Eternal rested. Why then, once again, this labour of six days and this rest of the seventh, if not, my brethren, in order that this first seal of the divine operation might imprint on the whole succession of ages the invariable form of the division of time into six days of work followed by a day of rest? *Sex diebus creavit Dominus caelum et terram, et requievit die septimo.* What does this mean again, my brethren, and why did the Creator bless and sanctify the seventh day? Was not each of the first six days holy and blessed, and as they were completed, is it not said that God found them good? *Et vidit Deus quod esset bonum.* [And God saw that it was good. (Gen. 1.)] Why, my brethren? Because God, who is the author of all days and who could have required that we consecrate them all to His glory, while consenting to leave six of them to us for our labours and all the cares of the earth, wished to reserve the seventh day to Himself; and that day He made holy; that is, according to the sacred language, He separated it from all profane use, He distinguished it from the other days; He blessed it, that is, He assigned it wholly to His worship: *Et benedixit diei septimo et sanctificavit illum.*

Now, my brethren, do you ask me from when the law of Sunday dates? I shall answer you: it dates from the day on which days were born; it was brought forth in the very bringing forth of the world. Do you ask me where it was first written? I shall answer you: it was written by the finger of the Most High in the entrails of creation, of creation which was, if I dare so speak, struck, moulded in the image of this law. The first observer of this holy day was God Himself, who consecrated it by His example at the same time that He instituted it by His authority: *Et benedixit diei septimo et sanctificavit illum.* The short instants of innocence which our first parents spent on earth were the fortunate hours of this first sabbath. Created at the end of the sixth day, they awoke, so to speak, in the day of the Lord. And all that their virginal hearts let escape of accents of love and gratitude formed the prelude of those hymns and sacred songs which their children were to make resound on this same day until the end of the ages.

Yes, my brethren, innocent Adam had gathered from the divine action and word the precept of the sanctification of the seventh day. Occupied on the other days, not in labouring, for labour supposes pain, but in acting (*ut operaretur*) [that he might work (Gen. 2:15)], in operating, in preserving, he was to abstain, on this day, from all manual action, and give himself wholly to the contemplation of his divine author and to the expression of his love and worship. For innocent man, the seventh day was not the relaxation from a fatigue, but only a sweet rest in God. But this happy sabbath of innocence shone only once for man. Adam became guilty, and soon he bowed his head under that terrible anathema which still resounds in the ears of his descendants: “The earth shall be cursed in thy work. Only at the price of labour and fatigue shall it give thee its fruits; thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy face.” (Gen. 3:17, 19.) A terrible condemnation, which nothing has been able to revoke, and since which labour is the first condition of humanity.

But yet, in His pity for His creature, God did not retract what He had established, and the decree of continual labour imposed on man had its mitigation in the precept of rest and the sanctification of the seventh day: a day of temporal favour, on which man could rest his exhausted limbs; a day of spiritual and supernatural favour, on which he could lift his brow toward the heavens and address his God once more. And the seventh day, celebrated first under the cradle of Eden, continued to be for Adam and his descendants the consolation of their exile. And the proof that there never was any interruption on earth in this regard is that a short time

before the law was given on Sinai, we see still, we see already the holy people, on the occasion of the manna, observe the sabbath; and that, says Bossuet, as a common practice and not newly established, which shows that it came from higher up and from the origin of the world.[2] The law of the seventh day was therefore the law of Adam, the law of Abel, the law of Noah, the law of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; in a word, it was the law of the whole human race, before it became by the Mosaic revelation the more special law of the Jewish people.

For in vain, to contest the ancient and primitive origin of the law of Sunday, will the unbeliever tell me that he does not believe those marvellous stories that come from so far, and that he rejects the authority of the code in which this law is recorded. I shall answer him: Deny the history of the past, I am quite willing, though it takes a good deal of courage to deny the Bible; but present facts cannot find you incredulous. Now here is a very positive fact. Transport yourself to whatever country you will, among peoples whose customs are different in everything else; everywhere you will find this same historical phenomenon: the week of seven days, and of seven days one day consecrated to the Lord. Now among so many possible ways of dividing time, among so many combinations equally indifferent in the eyes of reason, how explain this universal concert of all the nations most foreign to one another, unless by admitting in this regard a revelation and a primitive law, addressed to those first patriarchal families from which all peoples descend? The observance of the seventh day is primitive, for it is universal, for it is invariable. Try, if you dare, to abolish the week of seven days. It was attempted in the last century, and this project ended only in ridicule. One does not thus change what God has established from the origin of things. The children of God will be docile in accepting from human powers any manner whatever of counting for all the rest, for God has established nothing eternally in this regard; but do not go applying your systems to the division of days. We shall receive your decimes, your decimetres; but the decade never, because here the septenary is of divine institution. But let us advance. The law of Sunday, contemporary with the world and with man, had not ceased to be in the traditions and practice of what is sometimes called, wrongly no doubt, the time of the law of nature; but here come the days of the written law. Sinai is furrowed with lightning, the thunders resound on the brow of the mountain, the trembling people prostrate themselves in the dust. The Lord speaks in all the splendour of His glory and with all the apparatus of His supreme authority, and Moses listens and writes, or rather God Himself engraves His commandments on stone. Let us read the text that concerns us:

“Remember to sanctify the day of the sabbath.

“Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy works. But the seventh day is the rest of Jehovah: on that day thou shalt do no work, neither thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.

“For in six days the Eternal made heaven, earth, sea, and all that they contain, and He rested on the seventh day: therefore Jehovah consecrated and blessed the day of rest.” (Exod. 20:8–11.)

My brethren, what law more imposing than that? Is the text not clear enough? Let us nevertheless study some of the terms:

“Remember to sanctify the day of the sabbath.” Therefore, my brethren, it was not a question of a new law; it was only the reproduction of an existing and known law: *Memento ut diem sabbati sanctifices.*

Another remark. The decalogue, in all the rest of its content, only promulgates anew laws written in the depth of man’s heart and indicated by natural reason; laws which are not special to the Jews, but which oblige all men and belong to all times. Therefore the law of rest on the seventh day is, as to its substance, a law, if not of nature and reason, at least as ancient as nature and reason; a law of all times and all places. And this is so true that this law is imposed even on the stranger who is found among the Jews, and whom the Jewish legislation does not reach in all the rest: *Et advena qui est intra portas tuas.* [And the stranger that is within thy gates.]

However, all is not over, and Moses, after God has promulgated the decalogue, spends forty days still on the mountain receiving the orders of the Lord for all the judicial and ceremonial institutions of his people. At last, at the end of forty days, the Lord is going to permit him to descend; but before that He makes him one last recommendation. Let us hear the sacred text.

“The Lord spoke to Moses, and said to him:

“Speak to the children of Israel, and thou shalt say to them from me: Take great care to keep My sabbath: *Videte ut sabbatum meum custodiatis;* for it is the sign of the covenant between you and Me for all your generations. Keep My sabbath, for it is holy for you; he that shall profane it shall die, he that shall work on that day shall be cut off from the midst of his people.” (Exod. 31:12–15.)

And I give here only half of it, my brethren. God repeats Himself, He insists three or four times, so important does He judge this point. And it is when He has made this last recommendation to Moses that He hands him the two tables written by His hand, as if the observance of all the rest of the law depended solely on that of the sabbath.

Hence this so terrible sanction, this so severe punishment. The sabbath is the sign of the covenant of God with His people: therefore he who profanes it shall die.

And, in fact, Israel was in the desert and had not yet crossed the distance from Sinai to the promised land, when one day a man was found gathering sticks on the sabbath day; and the crowd seized him, and led him before Moses and Aaron, saying to them: Behold, this man has been found gathering sticks on the sabbath day.

Aaron and Moses had him put in prison, not knowing what penalty they should inflict on him. But the Lord said to Moses: That man must be put to death and the people shall stone him outside the camp. And this man was stoned, and his body remained buried under a mound of stones, which doubtless was shown for a long time to the children of Israel. So much did it enter into the designs of the eternal Lawgiver to engrave in souls, from the beginning, a salutary horror of the profanation of the day He had reserved to Himself. (Num. 15:32–36.)

And this horror remained to the end in Israel, for God Himself took charge of maintaining it there. When there came days of error and giddiness in which the sabbath was profaned, God sent His prophets, who never ceased to renew His precept. The example of the courageous Machabees is known. And at the moment when Jesus Christ came on earth, the law of the sanctification of the seventh day, far from being forgotten and fallen into desuetude, was rather too severely and too literally observed; to the point that the holy liberty of Our Lord wounded the Pharisaic susceptibility, which needed to learn from that most holy mouth that man was not made for the sabbath, but the sabbath for man.

And here, my brethren, renew your attention, and follow the history of the divine legislation concerning the law of the day reserved to the Lord. Certainly, Jesus Christ, who had not come to destroy the law but to fulfil it, no more abrogated the third commandment than the other commandments of the decalogue, which all passed into the new covenant. The precept of the sanctification of the seventh day was from the beginning a fundamental law of Christianity. Only, as to the fixing of the holy day, there was a shift, ordered without any doubt by Our Lord Jesus Christ in those numerous prescriptions which He gave to His apostles during the forty days in which He conversed with them of the kingdom of God, that is, of His Church, the organization of which He was teaching them.

And the motive of this transposition is easy to understand. The sabbath or Saturday had been, since the origin of the world, the day consecrated to the Lord, for it was the day on which the Lord, after creating the world, had rested. And for that reason God had blessed this day and sanctified it. But behold, man by sin tore God away a second time from His rest. For four thousand years God meditates the great work of a second

creation. The second person of the August Trinity, leaving the centre of His rest and glory, descends on earth where He spends thirty-three years in the most painful labours: *In laboribus a juventute mea* … [In labours from my youth. (Ps. 87:16.)] a labour of redemption a thousand times more painful than that of creation, for then God commanded nothingness and nothingness does not resist; and now He has to struggle with sin: *Laboravi sustinens* … [I have laboured bearing it. (Jer. 15:6.)] a labour which ended with the hardest of all labours, that of Calvary, a labour which ceased only on the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, when, triumphing over death, He had completed the work of the reconciliation of sinners and re-entered for ever into possession of His eternal rest.

And that day of the Resurrection was the day after the sabbath. The brilliance of the first sabbath therefore naturally faded before the glory of that great day which was henceforth to be called Sunday, or the Lord's day: a day on which the Lord manifested His glory in beginning to create the world; a day on which the Son rose glorious after having redeemed it; a day on which the Holy Spirit soon descended on the Apostles, to found the eternal reign of the Church; a day of the whole Trinity and which will henceforth be that which we are to sanctify by rest and by holy rejoicings: *Haec dies quam fecit Dominus: exultemus et laetemur in ea.* [This is the day which the Lord hath made: let us be glad and rejoice therein. (Ps. 117:24.)] The substitution of Sunday for the sabbath of the Jews is attested by the Apostles. Saint Luke and Saint Paul tell us that the disciples gathered to break bread on the first day after the sabbath: *Una sabbati, prima sabbati.* [The first day of the week. (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2.)] And Saint John, banished to the isle of Patmos, and unable to take part in the assembly of the faithful, teaches us that he was carried up to the heavens on a Sunday.

The observance of Sunday, from the first days of Christianity, was so essential a point of the Christian legislation that the meetings and holy practices of this day were the distinctive sign of the new religion. The pagans, wishing to define the Christians, said of them, for example Pliny in his letter to Trajan: They are men who gather all together on the day of the sun (now it is known that this day, among the pagans, corresponded to our Sunday, which is the first day of the week). The Christians themselves, for example Saint Justin and later Tertullian, wishing to give an account of their religion to the emperors, sum it all up in the practice of Sunday: "At dawn of this day which you call the day of the sabbath [sic], the Christians of the towns and the countryside, leaving their ordinary labours, assemble in one place. There we read, as far as time permits, the gospels or the books of the prophets, a reading followed by an exhortation made by the priest. Then all rise, and, in the midst of recollection and the most fervent prayer, the bread and wine are offered to God. The celebrant continues the thanksgiving, the people answer: Amen; and all the assistants take part in the divine mysteries by communion, and the deacon carries the heavenly offering to the absent."[3]

Thus spoke Saint Justin in the first [sic: second] century.[4]

By which you can see, on the one hand, that Sunday was already exactly and minutely observed just as today, and, on the other, that in the eyes of this holy doctor and of the whole primitive Church, the observance of Sunday embraced the whole Christian law.

Thus, my brethren, no law has been more constantly recalled to the faithful. In the fourth and fifth century of the Church, if some rare infractions come to profane this holy day, Saint John Chrysostom will thunder with his terrible words, Leo the Great will crush the transgressors under the weight of anathema. From apostolic times to our own, I defy anyone to cite me even a quarter of a century in which the silence of the Church could have allowed prescription against the law of Sunday. It would take volumes to gather all the definitions of the councils and all the teachings of pastors in this regard. In particular, the eighth council of Paris assures us that all the centuries have been witnesses of some exemplary vengeance. And even today the profanation of the holy day of Sunday is the most ordinary theme of the courageous invectives of our bishops, who find again all the eloquence and authority of the prophets to avenge this holy day, and never cease to repeat that Sunday is by itself the whole Christian law, that contempt of this day destroys the whole economy of religion. And if it still happens sometimes that God reveals Himself to the saints of earth and speaks to

privileged souls, it is almost always to manifest His sorrow or His anger on account of the profanation of Sunday.

At the voice of God and of the Church, Christian princes have made it a duty to join theirs. The first of the Caesars who embraced the Catholic faith, Constantine, issued edicts to this effect, and they were maintained and renewed by several of his successors. But above all in the Catholic monarchies, and in particular in our most Christian kingdom, in that France of former times where Church and State put in common interests which it is impossible to disunite, our kings, eldest sons of the Church, and the bishops of the realm, omitted nothing that was in their power to have the holy day of Sunday observed. The laws of Gontran and Childebert, so celebrated in our ancient codes, were confirmed by those of Charlemagne, Saint Louis and Louis the Great. And these laws, renewed again by their descendants, are still inscribed in our legislative code, and, though very badly observed, have not ceased to be laws of the State. I regret that I cannot cite some of these laws of our religious princes; they are stamped with a touching character of veneration for the holy day of Sunday.

I stop here, my brethren, and conclude. The law of Sunday is therefore the most sacred, the most ancient, the most universal, the most important of all divine and human laws. Founded on nature and on reason, it dates from the first days of the universe. Given to men in the garden of delights, observed under the tents of the patriarchs, renewed on Sinai, promulgated with more solemnity than ever by the gospel, defined by all the ecclesiastical councils, written in all the codes of Christian nations, the law of Sunday is the law of God, the law of Jesus Christ, the law of the Church, the law of the State. Therefore no other law has ever had for it so many and such imposing authorities; and if this law can be despised, it must be said that there is no longer any respectable authority in heaven or on earth.

And yet, my brethren, if we look around us, what do we see? Walk through the streets of the city, and, on seeing everywhere those open workshops, those public sales, that undisguised traffic, will you not cry out with the prophet: *Lacerata est lex*, [The law is torn. (Hab. 1:4, “scissa est lex” in the Vulgate; the preacher’s wording is as printed.)] the law is torn? And yet has God, or has He not, the right to command? And if He has this right, has He, or has He not, used it to prescribe Sunday? And if He has used His authority to prescribe Sunday, is man, or is he not, guilty and rebellious in not obeying?

My brethren, there is no doubt that the profanation of Sunday is by its nature a mortal sin. He who profanes it shall die, says the Lord. O man, you did not wish, after the sixth day of labour, to observe the day of rest. Well! God will avenge it. And when the sixth day of your life, which is a long labour, shall be finished, when the first dawn shall have appeared for you, God will refuse you the rest of His eternal Sunday, and will condemn you, as the price of your obstinate labour, to the forced labour of that gloomy prison where one never rests.

And what shall be said of those men who govern, who, while complaining unceasingly of the spirit of insubordination, of contempt of authority, etc., nevertheless command and have carried out public works on the day of Sunday? What then! you make perpetual homilies on the progress of anarchy, on the weakness of power, and you yourselves foment anarchy against God, you teach contempt of the greatest authority in the world, that from which alone all other authority emanates! And what will you have to say if tomorrow those same arms, which you have forced today to pave your streets, for example, arm themselves with the materials you have put into their hands, to barricade the public ways and overthrow the existing authority? They will be only logical; you alone will be guilty. For, by making them work today, you teach them that there is no authority in heaven; they will be consistent tomorrow, in proving to you that there is no authority on earth. We have sometimes seen, my brethren, this hideous and desolating spectacle of a multitude of men, armed on the Lord’s day with all their instruments of labour, and it seemed to us we saw a sedition against God. My brethren, we stir up men against heaven, and we complain of not finding peace and subordination on earth!

And do not allege to me for excuse the liberty of worship. This excuse is pitiful in almost all the circumstances in which it is employed; but here it is absurd. For there is not a single worship on earth which does not consecrate one day each week to the divinity. Be it permitted to you by law, I am quite willing, to act as a Calvinist, a Lutheran, an Anglican, rather than as a Catholic; but Calvin, Luther, Henry VIII did not even think of abolishing the law of the sanctification of Sunday. The very Jew and Mohammedan will claim from you a day fixed by their worship, and the savages of the forests of America or of the islands of Oceania, on the seventh day of the week, will refuse to obey you. It is not therefore the liberty of worship, it is only the absence of all worship that can justify the profanation of Sunday. Now, if Sunday work implies the negation of all worship, by that very fact it implies the negation of all authority, of all divine authority, and consequently of all human authority.

Let us conclude. You have seen today, my brethren, the existence of the law of Sunday. I have set before you the primitive text and the successive developments of this law. It will remain for me to show you shortly its wisdom and fruitfulness: which will bring out still more the enormity and consequences of the crime of the profaners. But already, my brethren, take before God the resolution never to violate, neither by yourselves nor by any of yours, this so sacred law:

Videte ut sabbatum meum custodiatis: signum est inter me et vos. [See that you keep My sabbath: it is a sign between Me and you. (Exod. 31:13.)] My brethren, let us not heap on our heads the coals of the divine wrath; but rather may the Lord's day always rain down on us new graces, temporal and spiritual! Amen.[5]

Translator's notes

1. The Latin quotations "In laboribus a juventute mea" and "Laboravi sustinens" are printed truncated; I have given the Vulgate reference in brackets (my references, not verified against the preacher's source).

2. "Lacerata est lex": the Vulgate of Habacuc 1:4 reads *scissa est lex* ("the law is torn"); the preacher's *lacerata* is as printed.

3. "Jehovah": the printed French (Genoude-style) renders the divine name so in the Decalogue citation; kept.

4. "Pliny in his letter to Trajan": the preacher gives a loose paraphrase (Pliny, *Ep.* X, 96 speaks of a fixed day on which they gather before dawn); I have not verified the exact wording. "The eighth council of Paris", the laws of Gontran and Childebert, and Louis XIV ("Louis le Grand") are mentioned without references; not verified here. The remark on the republican week ("attempted in the last century") refers to the French Revolutionary calendar's ten-day *décade* — my identification, which the context ("décimes, décimètres, décade") makes clear.

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[1] Editor's note: The *Œuvres épiscopales* of Cardinal Pie (vol. III, pp. 347, 564) contain two pastoral instructions on the law of Sunday; they correspond to the three homilies of 1842 (nos. XXXIX, XL, XLI) on the sanctification of Sunday. "For the reason indicated in the Avertissement (p. XXXV), 'we have not thought it necessary to suppress the first drafts of a thought which was to ripen later; we have, on the contrary, judged it useful to preserve them, in order to allow the reader an interesting study of comparison.'" (Editor's note.)

[2] Bossuet, in substance (the *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* and/or the *Élévations*, on the sabbath and the manna, Exod. 16:22–30); the exact place is not given in the text and has not been verified here.

[3] The preacher's quotation from Saint Justin is a paraphrase of *First Apology* ch. 67 (the passage speaks of "the day called Sunday"; the "day of the sabbath" is as printed here). I have not checked the wording against the Greek.

[4] Printed "au premier siècle". Justin wrote c. 150, i.e. in the second century. Left as printed; flagged. (Translator.)

[5] Cf. Appendix I: A, 53. (Editor's note.)

n° 40. Second Homily on the Sanctification of Sunday, for the Fifth Sunday after Easter: The Advantages of the Law of Sunday

1842.

Quicumque offendat in uno, factus est omnium reus. [Whosoever shall offend in one point is become guilty of all.] Whoever violates one point of the law is guilty of the violation of all. (James 2:10.)

There is, my dearly beloved brethren, such a chain and so close a connection in all the parts of the evangelical legislation that by the violation of a single point of the law, the whole law is violated. God, who is one in His nature, impresses this seal of unity on all His works, and consequently, as soon as you touch the work of God on one side, this work which subsists only by unity is altered throughout. It is above all in the economy of the religious plan that one can say everything concurs, everything conspires, everything consents. The religion of Jesus Christ, like the garment He wore, is a seamless tunic; if you break a single mesh, the whole network will give way at once. No matter in what part you have applied the knife, you are guilty of having lacerated the whole fabric: *Quicumque offendat in uno, factus est omnium reus.*

Yet, my dearly beloved brethren, there is a point of the Christian legislation to which the word of Saint James will apply in a quite particular manner: this point is the one of which I was speaking to you in my last instruction, the sanctification of Sunday. I told you already, the law of Sunday is by itself a whole legislation. The observance of this single precept leads to the observance of all the other precepts. Sunday is for the accomplishment of the other laws of the decalogue what the keystone is for all the rest of the edifice. Sunday is the principal mesh of the fabric: to tear this third commandment is to tear the whole law. To attack Sunday is to strike the law of Jesus Christ to the heart. The violation of this central and fundamental point entails at once the violation of all the points: *Quicumque offendat in uno factus est omnium reus.*

We verified the authentic text, established the existence, the promulgation and the sanction of the law of Sunday. Today, my brethren, we are going to try to penetrate the motives of this law, to understand its aim and utility, to bring out its profound wisdom and admirable fruitfulness. If it seems to you that I still omit today some important considerations which ought to be ranged among those I am going to offer you, pardon me, my brethren, on account of the immensity of the matter. A later instruction on the manner of observing the law of Sunday will complete this question, and will finish, I hope, by enlightening your minds and touching your hearts.

And to begin with a fundamental idea which will dominate our whole subject, let us admit, my brethren, that it would be a great temerity and an absurd pretension on our part to put seriously in question the wisdom and utility of the law of Sunday. For, after all, no one knows better than the workman what suits his work; and, if you permit me this familiar language, the mechanic who has calculated the dimension and force of all the springs he has employed is alone competent to fix the measure of action beyond which the mechanism would break; the watchmaker knows better than anyone after how many days it is necessary to wind the clock that has come from his hands. Now, the Creator of the world, He who alone knows what force and spring He has given to our muscles, He who alone has calculated the secret needs and intimate exigencies of our soul, He who made man, the family, society, He who is the author of the natural and supernatural order, He who has regulated the harmonies and relations of heaven and earth, the great and sovereign workman, at the same time that He brought forth His work, brought forth also the law of rest and sanctification of the seventh day; a law contemporary with the world, written by the finger of the Creator in the very entrails of creation, of creation which was, if I dare so speak, moulded, struck in the image of this law. Therefore, I shall conclude at once, my soul and my body have been created and constituted in such a way that rest and labour must be interspersed for me in the proportion of one day to six.

To claim to judge this law would be to doubt the wisdom of the workman, which consists in proportioning the function of any agent whatever to its power of activity. In a word, God made the world in six days, and rested on the seventh; therefore the rest of the seventh day is in harmony with the very constitution of the world; and it is an imperious need of man, of physical man and of moral man, of individual man and of social man, of natural man and of supernatural man, to cease material action at the end of six days, and to sanctify the seventh by rest of the body and by works of the spirit.

There is no wisdom against God. You ask me the philosophical reason of the law of Sunday, and I answer you: God, who made the world, made also the law of Sunday; therefore it is philosophical. And who am I, to appreciate the secret tendencies and to balance the moral and physical forces of man? Who will tell me how long the body can water matter with its sweat without numbing and paralysing the spirit? By what mysterious statistics shall I establish the term beyond which man soon forgets heaven altogether, if he does not make an absolute truce with the thoughts of earth? By what experiments shall I fix what the period of labour should be to the period of rest? Why six days of work rather than five or seven? why the week rather than the decade? Once more, neither I nor any created being has in hand the elements of this calculation. This transcendent dynamics, in which the forces of the soul must be measured like those of the body, belongs only to the Creator. Now the Creator has solved the problem, He decreed from the beginning and by the very type of His creative action that man must work six days and rest on the seventh. I hold to the divine law, and I guarantee it more philosophical and more experimental than all the radical dissertations of economists and physiologists.

I had to say this to answer I know not what secular and rationalist theology which, always considering things from the purely human point of view, has seemed at times almost to suspect, in these latter days, the divine origin of Sunday. Thus, my brethren, in several of its aspects, the law of Sunday is not a question of reasoning nor of human science; it belongs to the domain of faith. All that reason can do is to establish after the fact, by the results, the wisdom and utility of this law, its harmony with our forces and needs, its religious and social, supernatural and human influence. Let us hold therefore in hand, my brethren, the double torch of revelation and reason, and, approaching the substance of our subject, let us show that there is no law more fruitful than the law of Sunday, and that it is the pivot on which turns the whole economy of the created world.

All that God proposed to Himself in creating man was: 1st, His own glory; 2nd, the happiness of His creature. Now the law of Sunday powerfully procures the glory of God and the happiness of man. Or again, man is placed here below between time and eternity, his feet on earth and his eyes toward heaven, sighing after the future joys of the fatherland and desiring also every possible alleviation of the sorrows of the present exile; now the law of Sunday, considered in its religious and moral influence, prepares for man a dwelling in the heavens; considered in its human and social side, it softens and embellishes the dwelling on earth.

1st. On the religious and moral side, one can say that the law of Sunday has an immense bearing. More, one can say that the observance of Sunday contains an application of the whole Christian law: an admirable simplicity, which sums up in a single gentle and easy law the practice of all the duties of the Christian life. All religion consists in honouring God, and in making men more virtuous. And Sunday, when well observed, obtains this double aim in an assured way.

God, who is the author of time and life, was bound at least to reserve some moments of them for Himself. The day and the night are Yours, cries the prophet; it is You who made the dawn and the sun that measures the days: *Tuus est dies et tua est nox; tu fabricatus es auroram et solem.* [Thine is the day, and thine is the night: thou hast made the morning light and the sun. (Ps. 73:16.)] God could well, in His infinite goodness, depart from the rigorous right He would have had over each of these days; His merciful providence could abandon a part of them to the necessary cares of our material existence. But it would have been against nature for an infinitely wise workman, who must necessarily refer everything to Himself, not to have reserved on His work a certain due, which on our part is as the acknowledgment of His dominion over the days: *Tuus est dies et tua est nox.* This is what God did.

For six days man, occupied no doubt from time to time in praying to his Creator, can attend to the cares of earth; but the dawn of the seventh day brings back the day consecrated to the Lord. On that day, God, who made all for His glory, awaits from man a tribute of homage which he must pay Him in his own name and in the name of all nature. On that day every man is priest and sacrificer. Come, O mortals, bow your head

before your God. Come, the blood of Jesus Christ flows on the altar and cries louder still than the Angels did: Glory to God in the highest: *Gloria in altissimis Deo!* [Luke 2:14.] Come and associate yourselves with the prayer and immolation of Jesus; come to pour out, before the tabernacle of the living God, your prayers and thanksgivings, come to hear the holy word which will warm your hearts and make virtues blossom in your soul; come to receive the sacraments which the Church your mother holds in her hands. Come. Alas! during the six days that have passed you perhaps scarcely thought of anything but yourselves; come, today is the Lord's day.

My brethren, the Christian who answers this call will necessarily be a perfect Christian. The observance of Sunday and the weekly tearing away from the preoccupations of sensual and animal life will restore him to the grave and serious thoughts of religion; the life of the soul will never be smothered in him by the life of the body. The mysterious leaven which the holy day of Sunday will deposit in his life will make all the other days fruitful; the torch lit on that day at the fire of the altar will illuminate all his thoughts and all his actions. One day it will be said to him to enter into the eternal rest of the heavens, and that because he has sanctified on earth the rest of the holy day. Thus Sunday is the Lord's day, that is, the day on which God is more adored, more loved, religion more studied, virtue better understood and better observed; a day on which earth takes the way of heaven, on which time spreads its wings toward eternity.

But suppose a man for whom Sunday is only an ordinary day, a man who does not distinguish the Lord's day from the other days. Look at him closely, and you will see, my brethren, that the entire life of this obstinate violator of the holy day is a practical atheism. Does he believe in God? I know nothing of it; but what I know well is that he acts as if he did not believe. The unfortunate man, he never hears God or his soul spoken of; nothing awakens in him the sentiment of adoration and love. What does he do on earth? He drinks, he eats, he sleeps, he laughs when he is happy, he blasphemes when he suffers. What a life, my brethren, what uselessness! One is so useless on earth when one does nothing there for God! And what a death will come to put an end to such a life! And what an eternity awaits, on leaving this world, that poor soul which has not thought even a minute a week of God and of its salvation? He was not a wicked man, you tell me; I grant it. But the wretch, what has he done for heaven? nothing. What did he need to be saved? one single thing, the observance of Sunday, which would have taught him not to neglect God and to fulfil here and there some easy obligations. Sunday would have opened the heavens to him, at the same time that it would have embellished the earth for him.

For, my brethren, and this is the place to apply the celebrated saying of a modern: it is an admirable thing that every religious institution, at the same time that it prepares us for the happiness of the other life, contributes powerfully to the happiness of this one.[1] I do not believe, my brethren, that there exists, from the human point of view, a more precious institution than the law of Sunday. Sunday is the Lord's day, yes doubtless; but it is also the day of man. Every individual, every family, every society that profanes Sunday is guilty not only of sacrilege, but also of suicide. God, who alone knows the depth of things, established this law of rest; whoever goes against this law forces his nature and struggles against an imperious necessity.

The day of Sunday is the day of man, and above all the day of the poor man, the working man. For, my brethren, man cannot work always, he needs rest. Now, once again, God, who knows our nature to the depth, knows that He gave us strength enough to work six days, but not seven. On the seventh day therefore religion invites us, on behalf of the Creator, to rest, and she says to us: Come to Me, you who suffer and are exhausted by labour, and I shall, by this day of holy rest, repair your prostrate strength: *Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos.* [Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. (Matt. 11:28.)] And this tender mother takes her children in her arms, and during a whole day, now she rocks them affectionately in the shadow of her altars, to the sound of her canticles, now she recreates them with sweet and innocent rejoicings, and on the morrow she gives them back to their work, more active and more industrious after a holy rest. But on the contrary, do you hear that cruel stepmother

called cupidity? Do you hear her cry unceasingly to work, to work always, to take no respite? While religion says: Come to Me, all you who are overwhelmed by labour, etc.; the barbarous love of gain, that horrible passion, daughter of him who was a murderer from the beginning, cruelly immolates her victims under the yoke of a forced labour which crushes nature.

And then man does not need rest only for his body; it is also, it is above all necessary that his soul breathe, I do not say as to the religious life, but as to the intellectual life. That unfortunate whom his work enslaves in some sort to matter, needs days on which he regains his faculties of mind. If you keep him ceaselessly fastened in a workshop, in a factory, soon he will scarcely differ any more from the inert instrument in his hands: he will be another machine, functioning in much the same way as the one to which he is attached. See those poor little children, thrown into our factories from the most tender age: young plants from which the avarice of parents and the brutality of masters have demanded fruit in the season of flowers, and whose nascent sap is already exhausted; blanched beings in whom the soul no longer counts, and whose body is engaged in a condition of subjection that makes of it a machine whose products have been calculated. Poor little children, if at least the voice of the Church were heard and the sacred law of Sunday came once a week to rest their bodies and revive their extinguished intelligence! My brethren, do you believe that posterity will not be somewhat astonished, when it reads on the brow of this age so pleased with itself: In those days of civilisation and philanthropy, four years of discussion were needed to bring forth a law limiting to thirteen hours a day the work of a child of twelve![2] There are men who call themselves the friends of the people, who speak of liberty and equality and equality. Well! if that is so, let them respect Sunday, for Sunday brings back for the worker, every week, a day of enfranchisement. On that day the man of toil regains his dignity as a man, and, in the presence of the altars, he understands that his nobility is too high for the distinction of ranks to be able to degrade and debase him. Let history be studied, and it will be seen that modern liberty was long shaped and prepared at the foot of the altars, and that each Sunday broke a ring of the chain of serfdom!

When, on the same day, master and servant came to the same temple, prostrated themselves before the same God, sat at the same table, the master went out less a despot, and the servant less a slave.

But let it be taken care of; if the Christian feasts made the liberty of the people, the profanation of the feasts, and of Sunday chiefly, will bring a new servitude. The old glebe is conquered, I admit it; but there is a glebe that can return, that has returned; it is no longer by the conquest of the sword, it is by the domination of money. In ages of materialism, it is cupidity that makes the slavery of the people; industrialism bows its head under the heaviest and most frightful of all yokes. No rest under this barbarous feudalism. If the people rest one day, they will be given no bread for the other days. The workers are no longer men, they are brutes. The law of the State proclaims them free citizens; industrial tyranny makes helots of them. Now see how God knows how to avenge His law. The people have been made to believe that they would be freer by freeing themselves from religious laws, and in proportion as they free themselves from them, they become slaves: slaves of themselves and of their passions, yes; but also slaves of another, slaves of a master who is there, pouring on their heads infamy and misery for all liberty. Whoever attempts the liberty of Sunday, him I denounce as the fiercest enemy of the people, who perhaps had the weakness to applaud him.

“Come to Me, all you who are weary, and I will refresh you.” What is more restful than the holy exercises of Sunday? It is often said: the people need spectacles. I believe it; it is in the nature of man, especially of one who suffers, he has need of them. But what spectacles? yours! they would make him more unhappy the rest of the week; and besides he has no bread, and your spectacles are sold. Whereas the Christian law of Sunday procures for all the most beautiful, the most delightful spectacles. On that day the house of the Lord is open, and it is also the house of men. The man in rags comes on that day into the most magnificent edifice of the city, and he is not out of place there; the poor man is at home, in his house; it was built for him and by him; he hears the most beautiful harmonies and the most solemn chants, and he who possesses not a penny can give himself the sweetest and liveliest enjoyments.

Spectacles are needed; yes, do you mean thereby that of nature? Well, without Sunday nature is not a spectacle for the people. All the rest of the week, he struggles painfully against that ungrateful earth which gives him nothing but in the sweat of his brow; he looks on it as an enemy, and that is true: *Maledicta terra in opere tuo.* [Cursed is the earth in thy work. (Gen. 3:17.)] But there is a day on which this curse falls away, there is a day on which this poor worker will dare to lift his eyes and permit himself to enjoy the fair spectacle of verdure, plants, and all the beauties of the universe: it is Sunday. Take away Sunday, and nature will be for him only an object of malediction, only a subject of blasphemy.

Sunday is the day of man; it is also the day of the family: I shall have occasion to say so another day. Nothing civilises the people like Sunday. On that day, more polished, more benevolent, happier, religion spreads over him I know not what delicacy.

It is the day of society. There is no social institution more admirable than the Christian Sunday. Let Sunday be observed, and happiness will flourish again in the fatherland. There will be in youth less fury for pleasure, more obedience and respect for parents; in parents more vigilance and delicacy; in the female sex more modesty and reserve; in manhood less harshness for gain; in old age less apathy and insensibility at the approach of death; more loyalty and frankness in commerce, more social relations among the citizens; more horror of vice, more encouragement of virtue. Finally, let Sunday be observed, and the just vengeance of God will no longer deliver us so often as a prey to all the misfortunes of revolutions and all the scourges of anarchy. For it is a law written in the heavens that the people who forget the Lord cannot be happy.

My brethren, one day the prophet Nehemias, after the long calamities of the exile, when the people of Israel had just returned to the fatherland, saw some unfortunates who dared still to violate the sabbath. At this sight, the holy old man burst into tears, and cried out: Wretched men, what is this evil thing you do? And why do you profane the day of the sabbath? Your fathers committed this crime, alas! and you know what befell them for it! Will you then force the Lord to renew the same misfortunes? (Neh. 13:17–18.)

My brethren, my brethren, I am not Nehemias; but when I think of the terrible scourges which for fifty years have come to avenge on us the contempt of the law of the Lord, and when I see our unhappy fellow-citizens infallibly calling down on us the same calamities; at this sight my eyes are bathed in tears, my heart contracts, and I have scarcely voice enough left to repeat these words of the prophet: Unfortunate men, what is this evil thing you do? why do you profane the Lord’s day? Your fathers committed this crime, and you know what befell them for it. May your fidelity, my brethren, avert these misfortunes from us! This is what I wish.[3]

Translator’s notes

1. “Glebe” (*glèbe*): the soil to which a serf was bound; “the old glebe” = serfdom.

2. “Helots”: serfs of Sparta; as printed (*ilotes*).

3. “Spectacles”: *spectacles* in French covers theatre and public shows; I have kept “spectacles”. The phrase “Tandis que la religion dit : Venez à moi … etc.” has the preacher’s own “etc.”

4. The preacher’s “fifty years” of scourges since the contempt of the law of the Lord alludes to the Revolution (c. 1789–1842); my reading.

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[1] The “modern” is not named in the text; the saying is not identified here.

[2] Presumably an allusion to the French child-labour law of 1841; the preacher’s figures (“four years”, “thirteen hours”, “twelve”) are given as printed and have not been checked. My identification, not verified.

[3] Cf. Appendix I: A, 56. — See M. Fayet, *Mandements de Rouen*; M. Laurentie, *Lettres à un curé sur l’éducation du peuple*; Proudhon. (Note of M. l’abbé Pie.) The works are cited as printed; not verified here.

n° 41. Third Homily on the Sanctification of Sunday, for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost: The Manner of Sanctifying Sunday

1842.[1]

Et requievit Deus die septimo … et sanctificavit illum. [And God rested on the seventh day … and sanctified it.] And God rested the seventh day, and He sanctified it. (Gen. 2:2, 3.)

A few weeks ago, my brethren, I tried to bring out before your eyes the high wisdom and admirable fruitfulness of the institution of Sunday: a primitive and fundamental institution, adapted to the most secret needs and most intimate exigencies of man, of society and of the whole creation; an institution whose effects, more or less direct and immediate, procure the salvation of the soul, the health of the body, the harmony of the family, the preservation of the social order, in a word the felicity of the present life and the happiness of the life to come.

What remains for me to do today, my brethren, if not to set forth in a clear and exact manner in what the perfect observance of the law of Sunday consists: a purely practical question, which must be treated rather with the precision of the casuist than with the eloquence of the orator. Do not expect from me, therefore, lively and warm words that stir your hearts, nor happy insights that flatter your intelligence; this language does not belong to my subject, except perhaps a few words of refutation which I shall have to throw out against objections too often repeated. What I desire above all today, my brethren, is to enlighten your consciences on the nature of the duties which the law of Sunday imposes on you.

Now these duties are of two kinds, as God Himself defined them from the origin of time. In the first pages of Genesis I read two things: 1st, that God rested on the seventh day; 2nd, that He sanctified it: *Et requievit Deus die septimo, et sanctificavit illum;* whence Scripture and tradition have always concluded the double obligation of consecrating the seventh day by bodily rest and by spiritual works. And this will be the division of this instruction: cessation of material labour on the seventh day; exercise of supernatural works on the seventh day, after the example of God, who Himself rested on that day and sanctified it: *Et requievit Deus die septimo, et sanctificavit illum.*

I. “Six days thou shalt labour and do all thy works. But the seventh day is the rest of the Eternal. On that day thou shalt do no work, neither thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that dwells within thy gates.” (Exod. 20:9–10.)

There is the text which forbids Sunday work; is it not clear enough? Nevertheless, my brethren, to avoid every kind of exaggeration, let us distinguish with theology three different sorts of works. The first, which the language of the schools calls liberal works, are those in which the mind has more part than the body, and which are most often exercised by persons of a higher class; for example: reading, writing, studying, singing, teaching, drawing. 2nd. Common works consist in those actions which belong to the daily habits of life, and which are, for example: preparing food, cleaning, taking a walk. 3rd. Finally, servile works are those in which the body has more part than the mind, and which are done more ordinarily by servants and working people; for example: practising any trade, cultivating the earth, sewing, embroidering.

This distinction being established, let us advance as a principle that liberal works, no more than common works, are not forbidden in themselves on the day of Sunday. Certainly, religion does not pretend to prevent us, on Sunday, from thinking and living; now liberal works are hardly more than an action of thought, and common works are a necessary condition of our daily existence. God rested on the seventh day, that is, He ceased to create matter and to produce beings; but did He cease to think and to be? Did He cease to beget His Word and to produce His Holy Spirit? *Pater usque modo operatur, et ego operor.* [My Father worketh until now, and I work. (John 5:17.)] Did He cease to direct and govern the world? Are the stars arrested in their march, and does the earth interrupt its daily motion? No. Now the rest of God on the seventh day is the model

of ours. On that day therefore we may attend to the works of the mind and the daily cares of life.

Far from us, consequently, be that senseless rigorism of some neighbouring peoples, who, having abandoned the way of truth on essential points, make a show on other points of their excessive susceptibility and bizarre scruples. The zealous Anglican would do far better to obey the Pope, and not forbid himself music on Sunday. Further from us still, the superstitious indolence of those Orientals who, for fear of violating the law of rest, avoid everything that has the appearance of movement and condemn themselves to a sort of immobility! Truth, always full of measure and discretion, rejects these exaggerations, which are the property of error. Pharisaism is one of the roles of heresy.

However, my brethren, let us not be deceived: when I say that liberal works and common works do not violate the sanctity of Sunday, I suppose that they will not absorb so notable a part of the day that they could hinder the second obligation of Sunday of which I am to speak later, that of spiritual works and religious exercises. In the contrary case, these actions, without being contrary to the law of rest, would be so to that of the sanctification of Sunday.

Another remark, and it is important for the clearing up of several questions: it is that works which are permitted on Sunday do not cease to be so though they be done with a view to gain, because in the eyes of theology it is not the intention of persons, but the very nature of things, that constitutes the servility of a work. It is not therefore forbidden to teach the sciences on Sunday, though it be by profession, any more than it would commonly be permitted to embroider and sew, though it were for amusement and even for charity.

Finally, a last observation: *Omnia licent, sed non omnia expediunt.* [All things are lawful, but not all things are expedient. (1 Cor. 6:12.)] There are permitted things which yet it is not expedient to do. It often happens that exterior circumstances, for example custom, duration, scandal, give to works permitted in themselves a dangerous character. In these delicate cases, a somewhat timorous soul will always have recourse to the Church, sole depositary and interpreter of the law.

It is therefore only servile works, my brethren, that are prohibited by the law of Sunday rest. But to these applies in all its rigour the law given from the beginning of the world and solemnly dictated amid the lightnings of Sinai: On that day thou shalt do no work, neither thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. The serious infraction of this law is, by its nature, a grave and mortal fault, a fault which will bear its penalty in the future life, and which bears it almost always in the present life. Without doubt, the law of rest, even with regard to servile works, is not a law without dispensation, which cannot, which must not yield sometimes before a grave necessity; for example, in the presence of notable damage, of an urgent need, of a duty of charity, of a service of public utility. Which of you, said Jesus Christ to the Pharisees who reproached Him with the holy liberty He used on the day of the sabbath, which of you, if the ox or the ass of his neighbour fell into a pit, would not draw it out at once? Do you not know, He said again, that the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath?

I truly admire, my brethren, that I know not what philanthropists meddle sometimes to preach charity and condescension to a religion whose very foundation is charity, and that they come seriously to plead the cause of the poor before one whose divine founder showed everywhere His predilection for the poor. Be tranquil, O you who make yourselves the advocates and defenders of Sunday work: when there is a valid reason of dispensation, religion, which is as wise and as merciful as you, will not hesitate to dispense. Only she will not mistake the value of your pretended charity, which is often only a cruelty, and she will take good care not to accept as a just reason what is only a false pretext. The interest of the poor man: that is the motive for which the law of Sunday rest is ordinarily combated, when the unfortunate class is in question. Now I say that Sunday work is not in the interest of the poor man.

Since people have worked on Sunday, do you know many poor men and workers who have made a fortune? Is it not true that among us the condition of hired labourers is such that by working seven days they still earn absolutely only the daily bread necessary for themselves and their family? Is it not true, on the other hand, that workers in time past, by working only six days, earned the bread necessary for seven days for themselves and their family? Must we not therefore conclude that, all things well examined, the master has made them undergo a diminution of wages, so that he gives for seven days of work only what he would be bound to give for six days, since it is of natural right that the labour of the worker should feed him and his family. And besides, how numerous is that class of men paid by the year, who would not receive a penny more for having been crushed with work on the first day as on all the other days! For these, tell me, is Sunday work in their interest or to their harm?

The interest of the poor man! But no more for the poor than for the rich is there any real interest contrary to the law of God. For do not forget, my brethren, the God who laid down the law of rest of the seventh day is the same powerful God to whom all nature obeys. He made the precept, and He will well know how to procure, willy-nilly, its rigorous execution. Hear this teaching of a prophet: Israel, having become a transgressor, had neglected during several reigns the observance of the sabbath. Now behold Israel was led away and remained in exile for seventy years. Why this severe chastisement? why, my brethren? Hear the answer of the Holy Spirit. In order, says the prophet, that the law of the Lord might be accomplished and the land keep its sabbath days; for it was in a continual sabbath during all the days of its desolation: *Donec compleretur sermo Domini, et celebraret terra sabbata sua; cunctis enim diebus desolationis egit sabbatum.* [Until the word of the Lord should be fulfilled, and the land should keep her sabbaths; for all the days of her desolation she kept sabbath. (Cf. 2 Par. 36:21; Lev. 26:34–35.)] Behold how God always goes about having the law of the sabbath executed by force.

This working man had for several years disregarded Sunday, and he congratulated himself on having a few advances ahead of him; but behold his strength is worn out by labour; he is fastened to a bed of pain; he will be several months unable to work; all his resources are exhausted. Behold him condemned to a forced rest; all the Sundays he profaned, behold them end to end: *Donec compleretur sermo Domini, et celebraret terra sabbata sua; cunctis enim diebus desolationis egit sabbatum* … Too happy if he does not go off, an old man while young, to die in the hospital, leaving his wife and children clad in rags on public charity, until philanthropy, weary of meeting them in its path, has them shut up in a depot of mendicity. The unfortunate, he did not know then that I, the Lord, who made the law of Sunday, am the same who hold in My hands health and life.

That other man had deposited in hands he thought safe the fruit of long savings painfully drawn from Sunday work. The depositary of his funds has gone bankrupt. All the fruit of his iniquity is lost; all his life he despised Sunday, and Sunday brought him nothing: *Donec compleretur sermo Domini, et celebraret terra sabbata sua; cunctis enim diebus desolationis egit sabbatum.* The unfortunate, he did not know that I, the Lord, who made the law of Sunday, am the same who hold in My hands events and the success of affairs.

In the presence of the calamities which the floods had multiplied around him, the worthy successor of the Pothinuses and Irenaeuses spoke thus not long ago, with an authority mingled with an admirable gentleness.[2] “My brethren,” he said, “on seeing the overflowing waters violently close both the places of work and the places of pleasure, condemn to inaction the merchant and the worker not one day in the week, but whole weeks, we asked ourselves whether it was not the justice of God passing through our streets and squares to avenge the violation of the day which the Lord has consecrated to Himself, by forcing industrial regions to a long rest, because the worker who works and the master who employs him will not for a moment leave the workshop and the counting-house to occupy themselves with the only important and only neglected affair.” My brethren, are not these reflections, so true and for that reason so frightening, the literal translation of that word I cited: *Donec compleretur sermo Domini, et celebraret terra sabbata sua; cunctis enim diebus*

desolationis egit sabbatum? You will not close your workshops and shops on the seventh day. Well! I, the Lord, who made the law of Sunday, am the same who hold in My hands the thunderbolts and the tempests, and I shall well know how to take back from you the days that belong to Me.

And without the Lord's having recourse to these violent means, tell me, men of business, asks another of our pontiffs, could you explain clearly to yourselves what we hear you repeat rather often: why your commerce and your industry re-enter about every seven years into periodic crises in which ill-established enterprises perish, and during which a sad anxiety penetrates even the most solid establishments; why the earth seems weary of producing at the same epochs and gives you only less beautiful and less abundant fruits; why, finally, the seasons themselves seem newly subjected to like vicissitudes? Would the God of Sunday be still the God of nature? And, sovereign master of our destinies, would He refuse you the benefits of the seventh year because you publicly refuse Him the rest of the seventh day: *Donec compleretur sermo Domini, et celebraret terra sabbata sua; cunctis enim diebus desolationis egit sabbatum?*[3]

No, my brethren, Sunday work is in the interest of no one. It is not in the interest of the worker, for it kills his body, it materialises his soul, and does not enrich him by a penny. It is not in the interest of the master, for, by demoralising the worker, it prepares for society those violent convulsions, those riots and revolutions which are the most relentless enemies of property; if it enriches him for a moment, sooner or later the justice of God will pass over this fortune acquired by the violation of His laws. Cupidity is therefore mistaken when it claims Sunday work; it has nothing to gain from it but reverses and despair.

There is another objection against Sunday rest, to which I must reply also, however little serious it be, since it has become very common.

But is it not better for the people, we are told, to work on Sunday than to spend it in places of pleasure and debauchery; or again, if it concerns persons of a higher class, is it not better, we are told, to keep at one's work on Sunday, and work for the poor or for churches, than to pass the whole evening in inaction, boredom and perhaps slander? Sunday evenings are so long and so tiring!

Let us say first, my brethren, that when a part of this holy day has been employed in the religious exercises which should sanctify it, as God and His Church ordain, it becomes quite easy to avoid the excesses or the boredom that Sunday can cause. And then, tell me, my brethren, have the people come to such a point of moral degradation that human creatures no longer know how, after the long fatigues of the week, to take a few hours of relaxation without dragging themselves in the mire and plunging into libertinism? If it is so, in good faith, is the fault in the institution of Sunday? Is it religion that instituted for the immense majority of the working class the scandalous orgies of Monday? Or rather must it not be said that improvident irreligion, by tearing from the people their Christian Sunday and their sanctified rest, has itself plunged them into those brutal enjoyments that a being who, in losing the religious sentiment, has lost every sentiment of his moral dignity and domestic duties, will never be able to refuse himself? It is better to work on Sunday than to get drunk, that is possible. But as it is utterly impossible to work always, if there is no middle course between not working and getting drunk, you will not stop this disorder by suppressing Sunday rest; at most you will throw it back to Monday. Religion understands things far better when she commands rest, and after having sanctified her children by pious exercises, exhorts them to relax by innocent pleasures and the sweet enjoyments of the family.

But here, my brethren, another question from me: would society and the family have come to such a degree of mutual disaffection and cold indifference that a few hours to be spent in the conversations of kinsfolk and the relations of friendship should weigh on our soul as a hard and crushing yoke? The Sunday evening is so boring! My brethren, my brethren, there are words which seem indifferent and which at bottom are frightful; these in particular, which a light banter sometimes objects, have an immense import in revealing one of the deepest wounds of the social body. The Sunday evening is so boring! Oh! it is indeed the language of an age

without affection and without bowels, of an age of cupidity and egoism, of an age of ambition and rivalry, of an age of isolation and boredom, of an age in which no one loves another, where reciprocal distrust is universal and unhappily only too well founded, of an age in which there are no more family ties, no more relations of good neighbourhood, of an age in which the heart knows how to vomit only gall, in which the lips know how to distil only venom in the moments when the hand ceases to hold a calculating pen!

Now tell me, is it the fault of Sunday if our age, in losing charity and the Christian virtues, has lost joy and love and lets nothing be seen on its brow but sadness and boredom? And because men hate and flee one another, must God reform His law which tends to bring them together and unite them? The Sunday evening is so long and boring! Our fathers always found it too short. Go and ask that people of neophytes, the marvel of modern times, whether it seemed too long to them, that evening in which fellow-citizens and kinsfolk, gathered together after the religious exercises of the day, all sang in chorus the words of the psalmist, words which our egoism no longer understands: *Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum.* [Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. (Ps. 132:1.)] Oh! how good, how delightful it is for brothers to dwell all together![4]

My brethren, do you wish the law of rest not to be onerous on the day of Sunday? Accomplish in all its perfection the law of sanctification that religion prescribes to you. And then, on returning from the altars where you will have adored the Saviour whose principal commandment is that we love one another, you will be less exposed to boredom or to evil-speaking; and even Christian persons will no longer need to insist with the guide of their soul to be authorised to work on Sunday for the profit of the poor or of churches: a concession that has never been made except with regret, *ad duritiam cordis,* [for the hardness of heart (cf. Matt. 19:8)] and which, if it is not opposed to the spirit of the law, is at least contrary to its literal text and never fails to furnish a pretext for graver infractions among inferiors who witness it. The fingers of a truly Christian woman must not guide the needle nor handle the linen or the silk on the day on which the Almighty rested and which He sanctified.

II. I have accomplished, my brethren, only the first part of my task; I have spoken only of the law of bodily rest; I should now speak of the precept of spiritual works. But our next instructions will be special instructions on the holy sacrifice of the Mass and on the other offices of the Church, and then the natural occasion will present itself to define the strict obligations of the Christian and to counsel him works of perfection. Let it suffice for me to have you observe here how provident the immortal Legislator has been.

In imposing rest on the seventh day, was there not danger of occasioning all the vices that idleness brings in its train? Yes, doubtless. A rest was therefore needed which should not be idleness; and this is what the Christian Sunday has known how to reconcile. On this day the body rests from all material labour, but the mind gives itself to spiritual works; this day seems taken from the cares of earth, but it is given entirely to the cares of heaven; it leaves aside the interests of time, but it labours for the interests of eternity. The Christian Sunday is not a holiday without motive, without aim; an occasion of parade for children and women, of consumption for the wine-sellers, of idleness and additional debauch for the workers. The Christian Sunday is a day on which the soul is renewed at the same time as the body relaxes, on which the heart finds again at the foot of the altars, where a God sacrifices Himself, the sentiment of prayer and the courage of self-denial, on which the mind finds again the science of religious truths at the foot of the pulpit. For this is the double means of sanctification of Sunday which the Church regards as indispensably obligatory: attendance at the holy sacrifice, and the hearing of the word of God.

People speak of the ignorance of the people. A people that knows its religion is not ignorant, and the people knows its religion when it observes Sunday in a Christian way. On this so important side, Sunday is therefore not, as is said in the materialistic language of industry, an unproductive day. No, my brethren, the day is not unproductive which alone is capable of giving us that for which God created us and put us in the world, the eternal happiness of the heavens.

My brethren, all you who have heard me, take the resolution to observe Sunday and to have it observed. We do not ask for repressive laws, for severe punishments. But we ask of all those whose example makes law that they understand that the most efficacious means of contributing to social regeneration is to bring back the observance of Sunday. By that they will have done the act of good citizens, and at the same time they will have worked for their soul. I should like to be able to write on the tomb of every man these words which have served me as text: *Et requievit die septimo et sanctificavit illum.* This man always rested on the seventh day, and always sanctified it by religious practices. This epitaph would be for me a guarantee that, while his body rests for a time from its labours in the dust of the tomb, his soul celebrates the perpetual sabbath and sings the eternal alleluia in the temple of the heavens. This, my brethren, is the grace I wish you all.[5]

Translator's notes

1. The printed Latin "ad duritiem cordis" is corrected to the Vulgate *ad duritiam cordis* (Matt. 19:8). In "Donec compleretur …" the preacher's quotation is a free combination of 2 Par. 36:21 and Lev. 26:34–35; my references.

2. "Pothin and Irénée": the Latin names *Pothinus*, *Irenaeus*. The pontiff quoted (the archbishop of Lyon) is not named; the date of the floods is not given.

3. "Another of our pontiffs" is the author of the note, "M. Fayet, *Mandements de Rouen*", as printed; unverified.

4. "Orgies of Monday" = *saint-lundi*, the working-class custom of keeping Monday as a holiday after the Sunday; the preacher's phrase is "les orgies scandaleuses du lundi".

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[1] The heading reads "VIIIe dimanche après la Pentecôte", as does the preacher's own register (Appendix I, n° 57: "8e dimanche après la Pentecôte 1842").

[2] The "worthy successor of Pothinus and Irenaeus" is the bishop of Lyon (the see of Saints Pothinus and Irenaeus). The preacher does not name the prelate, nor the date of the floods; I have not identified the passage. (Translator.)

[3] M. Fayet: *Mandements de Rouen*. (Note of M. l'abbé Pie.)

[4] "That people of neophytes, the marvel of modern times" is not named in the text; I do not identify it.

[5] Cf. Appendix I: A, 57. — Of the three homilies on the sanctification of Sunday M. l'abbé Pie composed one instruction, which he preached several times. Cf. Appendix I: AB, 42, 42 *bis*, 47, 48, 63, 65; A, 90. (Editor's note.)

Tome II

n° 1. First Homily on the Holy Sacrifice, for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost: The Nature of Sacrifice

31 July 1842.[1]

Impossibile est sanguine taurorum et hircorum auferri peccata; ideo ingrediens mundum dixit: Hostiam et oblationem noluisti, corpus autem aptasti mihi; holocautomata non tibi placuerunt; tunc dixi: Ecce venio. [It is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sins should be taken away. Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith: Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldest not, but a body Thou hast fitted to Me; holocausts for sin did not please Thee. Then said I: Behold I come.] It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins; therefore the Son of God, entering into this world, says: You would not have victim nor offering, but You have formed me a body; You have not been pleased with holocausts and sacrifices; then I said: Behold, I come. (Saint Paul to the Hebrews 10:4–7.)

Exterior and solemn worship is necessary on earth; the temple is the place of worship; Sunday is the day of worship: this, my brethren, is how the different questions which we have treated up to now are linked one to another. Sacrifice is the great and essential action of worship: this is what is to occupy us today. A lofty matter, to the sublimity of which the great Paul himself despaired of equalling the height of his words; for what human vocabulary could furnish here terms which would answer to the things? *De quo nobis grandis sermo, et ininterpretabilis ad dicendum.* [Of whom we have much to say, and hard to be intelligibly uttered. (Heb. 5:11.)]

The sacrifice of the altars, my dearly beloved brethren, is the centre of all Catholic worship. Make the sacrifice cease: the temple becomes sad and solitary like a tomb; it is an empty and uninhabited house, for the sacrifice which is celebrated on the altar is the whole life of the temple. Make the sacrifice cease: Sunday becomes mute and insignificant; it is a tedious and aimless holiday, for the sacrifice which is celebrated in the morning is the whole soul of Sunday. Make the sacrifice cease: and the solemn pomp of the ceremonies, the melodious poetry of the chant, and the grave and pious slowness of the offices fade and disappear; the liturgy, chilled and frozen, is reduced to a dry, short and monotonous psalmody, for the sacrifice is the whole motive and the whole inspiration of the liturgy. But what do I say? The sacrifice of the altars is as the sun of the whole of religion; it is the hearth from which the sparkling rays of truth and the warm influences of grace proceed; it is the source from which all the inspirations of tender piety spring and flow. And as, in our bodies, the function of the heart is ceaselessly to purify and renew the blood which by a double movement it first draws in and then drives back into our veins; so the august sacrifice, condensing as it were every day on the altar the blood of Jesus, maintains and refreshes its virtue and then makes it re-enter our souls more life-giving and more saving.

But I have not said enough yet. The sacrifice of the altars is the only homage worthy of God: without it, the earth would have nothing to offer to heaven; the Most High would never lower His eyes on this universe powerless to honour Him, and creation, a work henceforth useless to the glory of God, would fall back into the abysses of nothingness. Hence those magnificent but just expressions of the Fathers of the Church and the holy Doctors. The Mass, says Saint Odo of Cluny, is the work to which the salvation of the world is attached. It is by the Mass, adds Saint Timothy of Jerusalem, that the universe subsists; without it, it would long since have been annihilated: *Per quam terrarum orbis consistit.* [By which the globe of the earth stands.][2] But let us not anticipate considerations that will have to be developed later.

The holy Council of Trent, after having defined, with admirable clearness and precision, the points of the Catholic faith concerning the august sacrifice of the altars, exhorts the pastors of souls to take often and by preference this adorable mystery as the matter of their instructions at the parochial Mass: *Ut frequenter inter*

missarum celebrationem … inter cetera sanctissimi hujus sacrificii mysterium aliquod declarent. [That frequently during the celebration of Masses … they explain, among other things, some part of the mystery of this most holy sacrifice. (Council of Trent, Session 22, ch. 8.)] An obedient minister of this holy Church our Mother, all of whose laws are so wise, all of whose wishes are so dear to us, whose every desire we have learned to anticipate, we shall try, my brethren, to fulfil her intentions and to set before you, in several consecutive instructions, the inestimable riches and ineffable grandeurs of our Christian sacrifice.

Let us prelude today with some elementary notions on the nature and existence of the holy sacrifice; these simple and familiar words will be rather an exposition than a development of the question.

Sacrifice is the essential and indispensable act of religion. From the first days of the world, wherever there has been worship, there has been an altar, a priest, a sacrifice. And in the received ideas of all humanity, religion can no more be conceived without sacrifice than a thing can be conceived without its determining and constitutive attribute.

The law of sacrifice is universal, we shall say here again; therefore it is primitive, therefore it is divine. But does this law result from the very nature of things or from the positive will of God? Is it written in the depth of hearts among the first principles of reason, or did it need to be revealed by the Creator? The law of sacrifice, which is the law of our present condition, was it also the law of innocent man? Is it the law of the Angel, the law of man beatified in the heavens? So many questions which are going to be cleared up by an exact definition of sacrifice and by the distinction of its various parts. Lend me, my brethren, all your attention: these abstractions, which seem to belong to the domain of high theology, will end by resolving into practical conclusions for your faith. Piety depends more than one thinks on science, its sister. It is in meditation that the fire of devotion is kindled, and the ray of light begets warmth.

Sacrifice is the offering which one makes to God of a thing which one immolates in His honour. Two things therefore constitute sacrifice principally: oblation, immolation; and, as the interior disposition must be joined to the exterior sacrifice, to this double condition of the visible sacrifice there must correspond the double sentiment of offering and of self-annihilation which constitutes the invisible sacrifice. But these two things and these two sentiments, oblation and immolation, can be referred, in sacrifice, to four different ends. Sacrifice tends to honour God, to acknowledge His sovereign dominion, and in this respect the ancient law called it holocaust and theology calls it latreutic, because it constitutes the supreme worship of adoration or *latria* which belongs to God alone. Sacrifice tends to render thanks to God for all the benefits which He has poured on us, and under this title the ancient law called it peace-offering and theology calls it eucharistic, or sacrifice of thanksgiving. Sacrifice tends to appease an angered heaven and to obtain pardon, and in this respect the ancient law called it sacrifice for sin and theology calls it expiatory or propitiatory. Finally, sacrifice tends to ask the Lord for new graces, new favours, and for this the language of the ancient law as of the new calls it impetratory. Now, these notions being well understood, sacrifice considered in this last end of impetration or prayer cannot suit either the angel or man in the blessed state of glory where all their wishes are satisfied, all their desires fulfilled, where consequently they have nothing more to ask. The sacrifice of expiation, which supposes sin, could not be offered by Adam when he still enjoyed the purity and innocence in which he had been created. But sacrifice, considered in its first two ends of adoration and thanksgiving, suits every intelligent and rational creature, whether innocent or fallen, whether on the way of merit or at the term of enjoyment, because in every state the creature must adore its principle and refer to Him the glory of all that it has received from Him. This is how the law of sacrifice is the law of heaven as well as of earth, the law of Eden as well as of our exile. This is how we shall be able to speak with the Church, with Peter the prince of the Apostles and with John the beloved, of that sublime altar which is in the heavens and on which the elders sacrifice, at the same time that the Angels offer to God spiritual victims acceptable to Him through Jesus Christ, by whom, as the Church sings, the Angels praise the majesty of God, the Dominations adore it and the heavenly Powers tremble before it. This is how we shall be able to believe, with Saint John

Chrysostom and a great number of doctors, that the angelic troops descend from the heavens to assist at and participate in the sacrifice of our altars.

But who then revealed to man the mysterious power of sacrifice? Oblation, immolation: did the human mind find in its own fund the idea of these two constitutive things of sacrifice? To offer to God the first-fruits of his gifts, to set apart presents from his benefits and consecrate them to Him by an act of homage and gratitude, I conceive that this first idea could have come from the natural reason of man; but this is only the prelude of sacrifice; the very heart of sacrifice is immolation. To recognise and honour the sovereign dominion of God over created being by the destruction of that being; to witness one's dependence on him who is the principle of being and life by laying down, as it were, that being and that life in his hands; to immolate oneself in spirit and by representation, and, if I dare so speak, to annihilate oneself in effigy before Him who drew all things from nothing: that, once more, is the essence of sacrifice as all times and all places have seen it practised.

Now I say that this idea, founded doubtless on nature and on reason, could nevertheless have blossomed only as the result of a primitive revelation, an incontestable revelation which taught the first man, and through him all his descendants without distinction of time or place, to perform an act of vassalage toward the divine sovereignty by destroying before His eyes, as far as human power can permit of destroying, one of the creatures that came from His hands. For if in sacrifice everything is not destroyed and consumed, this comes from human weakness, as powerless to destroy as to create. Death, being what comes nearest to an absolute destruction, is an ordinary law of sacrifice, but it is not an essential law of it; every sacrifice demands destruction, but not necessarily the death of the victim. Thus in the law of Moses the victims and offerings of the sacrifices were destroyed, some by fire, others by death, others by eating and by the natural fire of the stomach. In the state of original purity there would have been sacrifices, since there would have been a religion, but not bloody sacrifices. Death could not intervene in them, since death entered the world only by sin.

Man, having become a transgressor, began to offer to the Lord bloody sacrifices, and it had to be so, for the shedding of blood had become necessary on earth. It no longer sufficed him to borrow from the destruction, such as it was, of a created being a representative symbol of his dependence on God, his merciful benefactor; as a guilty worshipper, he had another duty than that of dependence or gratitude to fulfil, the duty of expiation. Let us hear a great Christian philosopher of these modern times: "The Gods are good and we hold from them the goods we enjoy; we owe them praise and thanksgiving. But the Gods are just, and we are guilty; they must be appeased, our crimes must be expiated, and to achieve this, the most powerful means is sacrifice and the shedding of blood." Such was the ancient belief, and such is still, under different forms, the belief of the universe.[3]

It was an opinion as old as the world that heaven, angered against flesh and blood, could be appeased only by blood, and no people has doubted that there was in the shedding of blood an expiatory virtue. And as neither reason nor folly could have invented and propagated this idea, it has its root in the last depths of the history of human nature. God Himself taught guilty men the merit of bloody sacrifices, and He said to them: By your crime you have deserved to die, I will have you acknowledge it. You shall therefore immolate victims, and you shall confess that it is you who ought to have been immolated; in place of your blood, I shall accept theirs, for in the cry of their blood I shall hear the voice of another blood which will be shed one day and which will wash away all the sins of the world.

Thus, my brethren, in the universal and constant practice of sacrifices there lay the dogma of the future redemption of men by the blood of Jesus Christ: a dogma of substitution and reversibility, according to which innocent flesh was to suffer and expiate in place of guilty flesh. But alas! how altered and corrupted that dogma was by the errors and passions of men! Shall I make pass before your eyes all the atrocities of the pagan mysteries? Shall I tell you that the horrible superstition of human sacrifices has gone round the globe

and dishonoured both hemispheres? abominable attempts which, instead of appeasing heaven, provoked its just wrath.

I shall spare you these hideous descriptions; after all, my brethren, these were abuses; and what institution praiseworthy in itself has not begotten abuses? Sacrifice was none the less a religious law of humanity, a law which did not cease for a single instant to be fulfilled on earth within the religion of the true God. When it was by hands pure as those of Abel, Noah, Abraham, Melchisedech among the heads of patriarchal families, or as those of Aaron, Samuel, and so many other holy priests among the children of Levi, the Lord took pleasure in smelling the sweet odour of the victims; that smoke was an incense He loved to breathe: *Odoratus est Dominus odorem suavitatis.* [The Lord smelled a sweet savour. (Gen. 8:21.)] *Holocaustum in odorem suavissimum Domino.* [A holocaust for a most sweet odour to the Lord. (Lev. 1:9.)]

Yet, it must be said, how imperfect all these sacrifices were, or rather how inefficacious in themselves! And when the faith of the sacrificer ceased to give to these figurative immolations a virtue borrowed from the great immolation to come, how the Lord took them in disgust! I am weary, He says to them by His prophet, of all your holocausts, of your offerings and your sacrifices. Has not the blood of animals sufficiently reddened the courts of My temples, and have not My altars been long enough encumbered with flesh and fat? I have conceived horror of all these preparations that make of My sanctuary a sort of butchery … I will have no more of you, adds the Lord by the mouth of Malachias, and I shall receive no more offering from your hand. Behold, from the rising of the sun to its going down, My name is great among the nations; in every place a pure victim is offered and sacrificed to the glory of My name, because My name is great among the nations. (Is. 1:11–15; Mal. 1:10–11.)

And the Lord yet waited five hundred years after the prophecy of Malachias. Then, when He had dissembled for forty centuries, at last the hour of the great expiation struck for humanity. And behold in the fulness of time the Lamb of God, the august and holy Victim awaited by heaven and earth with so much impatience, descended among us. Immolations, peace-offerings, holocausts, sacrifices of every kind, vain shadows, disappear: here comes the reality. The human race has no need of you: a unique sacrifice is going to replace you; it alone will satisfy all the exigencies of the Creator, all the needs of creation. Hear the Son of God, the Catholic Priest of the Father, as Tertullian speaks, who, on entering this world, announces the end of your reign. O my Father, He says, You would not have victims nor offerings, but You have formed me a body; You have not been pleased with holocausts or sacrifices for sin; then I said: Behold, I come.[4]

And the holy Victim was immolated, and we know the place, the day, the hour and the efficacy of His sacrifice. The altar was at Jerusalem, says Origen; but the blood of the victim bathed the universe. An infinite Victim, for He was a God, the voice of His blood sent up to heaven an infinite homage of adoration, a hymn of infinite gratitude, a sigh of infinite expiation, an infinite cry of prayer. At this voice, God and man, heaven and earth, the heavenly spirits and all creatures trembled at once with sorrow and with joy. This blood was useful to all. To God it gave back His glory, to man innocence; for it pleased God, says Saint Paul, to reconcile all things by Him who is the principle of life and the first-born from the dead, having made peace by His blood, both as to the things that are on earth and the things that are in heaven. (Col. 1:18–20.)

But where am I letting myself be carried, my brethren? Is it of the sacrifice of the cross or of the sacrifice of the altars that I have come to speak to you? Ah! you understand, my brethren, the one is so linked to the other that, if the sacrifice of the altars is void without that of the cross, the sacrifice of the cross is incomplete without that of the altars.

The sacrifice of the cross is incomplete without that of the altars! At these words the heretic cries blasphemy and accuses me of restricting the virtue of the blood of Jesus shed on Calvary. I persist none the less, and I say, with Scripture, with tradition, with the Church, that the altar is the necessary complement of the cross, and I give two reasons: 1st, it is the sacrifice of the altars which applies; 2nd, it is that which continues the

sacrifice of the cross.

And here, my brethren, without ceasing to consider the Eucharist as sacrifice, my subject forces me to pronounce the word communion, for communion is not only a sacrament, but is also an integral part of the sacrifice. In all the ancient sacrifices, the priest and the people had to participate, to communicate in the victim by eating a part of it. This communion, as a celebrated Protestant who made abjuration in this church, Pellisson, has remarked in his beautiful *Treatise on the Eucharist*; this communion or manducation was so essential that if there were certain sacrifices, such as holocausts, where the victim was entirely burned, they were accompanied by some other offering, so that even in these sacrifices there should be something for man to eat, and that by this the virtue of the sacrifice might be applied to him.[5]

Now, my brethren, at the sacrifice of the cross, there was not, there could not be a communion and manducation. For what man, my brethren, would not feel his nature revolt and cry out like the Apostles at the idea of eating the natural flesh of Jesus? At Calvary therefore there was oblation, there was immolation; there was no communion. The sacrifice consequently was incomplete; I am mistaken, it was not, for at the instant when the sacrifice of the cross was being consummated, the sacrifice of the altar, its necessary complement, already existed. Jesus Christ, says Saint Gregory Nazianzen, had forestalled by His love on the eve the cruelty of the Jews, and the manducation of the victim, far from being lacking and deferred at Calvary, on the contrary already existed by anticipation, says Saint John Chrysostom; so that these two things joined one to the other, the Supper and Calvary, formed a single and most perfect sacrifice. Behold already, my brethren, how the altar completes the cross. On the cross, says Saint Augustine, the victim is only offered, but on the altar it is offered and distributed. At Calvary Jesus paid the price of our ransom, at the altar He applies to us the fruit of this payment. Oblation and immolation on the cross; communion on the altar: that is the whole sacrifice of Jesus. And that is how the sacrifice of the Mass is truly necessary, that we must necessarily participate in the oblation which Jesus Christ made of Himself, and communicate in the victim immolated for us.

In offering and immolating Himself on Calvary, Jesus Christ expiated sin and merited the salvation of the world; but this offering, this death did not apply the expiation and the grace to our souls; for that the sacraments are needed, and above all the Eucharist, which is the virtue and perfection of all the others. The sacrifice of the cross is therefore the sacrifice of redemption and merit, but it gives and applies nothing; and the sacrifice of the Mass is the sacrifice of application and sanctification, for it gives and applies everything. The sacrifice of the cross is the general and universal source of grace; the sacrifice of the altar is the channel by which grace arrives and, if I dare so speak, individualises itself in the heart of each one of us in particular. The sacrifice of the altar completes that of the cross by applying it; it completes it still by continuing it.

The sacrifice of the cross was and could be offered only once, and yet religion needed something other than a transitory sacrifice. For, as we have said, sacrifice is the essential and indispensable act of religion; and besides, the sacrifice of the cross was offered for us, but not by us; the men who took part in it were not sacrificers but executioners. Behold therefore that this sacrifice of the cross, however perfect in itself, becomes still insufficient on this side, that it is not at our disposal to offer it, and yet we need a sacrifice of every day to offer to the Lord. Lord, You died once on the cross. Your sacrifice was immense, infinite, perfect, but yet it was transitory. I should like to ask for no other than Yours, but in the end I need one to offer every day. Shall we return to the blood of goats and bulls? ah! we shall have no more the courage, after Your pure and immaculate blood has been shed. Your sacrifice therefore, I would that, while remaining unique, it should last, it should continue always.

The prophets, speaking of the sacrifice and priesthood of Jesus Christ, had designated three qualities of it: order, extent, duration. They said that He would be a priest according to the order of Melchisedech: *Sacerdos secundum ordinem Melchisedech;* [A priest according to the order of Melchisedech. (Ps. 109:4.)] that His sacrifice would be perpetual: *In aeternum juge sacrificium;* [An everlasting continual sacrifice. (cf. Dan.

8:11–12; 12:11.)] universal: *Ab ortu solis usque ad occasum in omni loco sacrificatur et offertur nomini meo oblatio munda.* [From the rising of the sun even to the going down, in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation. (Mal. 1:11.)] Now I see none of these three things on Calvary. Jesus Christ, a bloody victim, is there rather a priest according to the order of Aaron than according to the order of Melchisedech; His sacrifice lasts there only a few hours, and it is offered only once, only at one point of the world. Lord Jesus, where then is Your priesthood? where then is Your sacrifice? Have Your prophets been mistaken? I should like Calvary permanent on earth, Calvary minus its bloody and tragic apparatus. I seek the unbloody sacrifice, the perpetual sacrifice, the universal sacrifice … I seek it, and from the height of the cross You show me the altar; from Calvary, You recall to me the Supper. There I find the sacrifice according to the order of Melchisedech, for I see bread and wine; there I find the perpetual sacrifice, for eighteen hundred years it has not ceased to be offered; there I find the universal sacrifice, for from the dawn to the setting it is renewed at every instant on earth. Lord Jesus, yes, God has sworn it and will not repent, You are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech; and, from the dawn to the setting, over all the earth, a pure victim is sacrificed and offered to Your name.

I stop here, my brethren. We shall speak shortly of the great fruits of the Christian sacrifice; it is enough that we have established today its necessity and existence. Do you understand now how Saint John could say that the Lamb was slain from the beginning of the world: *Agni occisi ab origine mundi?* [Of the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world. (Apoc. 13:8.)]

Yes, my brethren, Jesus Christ is the eternal victim. It was He who already was offered and immolated in figure by the hands of Abel, Melchisedech and Abraham; it was He who was offered and immolated by the sons of Levi and Aaron; it is He, but disfigured and unrecognisable, who was offered and immolated on idolatrous altars and even under the homicidal knife; it is He who was offered and immolated, more by His love than by the cruelty of men, on the cross; it is He who offered and immolated Himself in the Cenacle; it is He whom we offer and immolate every day, whom we shall offer and immolate until the end of the ages on the altars; it is He who offers and immolates Himself, who will offer and immolate Himself eternally, on the sublime altar of the heavens, where the beloved disciple saw Him in the attitude of sacrificer and victim: *Agni stantis tanquam occisi.* [A Lamb standing as it were slain. (Apoc. 5:6.)] So that there has been, there is, there will never be, in heaven and on earth, in time and in eternity, but one altar, one priest, one victim, one sacrifice, Jesus Christ Our Lord, to whom be honour, glory and love for ever and ever. Amen![6]

Translator's notes

1. Scripture citations in brackets are given from the Vulgate and are mine; the preacher mostly cites by paraphrase. "Origen", "Gregory Nazianzen", "Chrysostom" and "Augustine" are named without references and are left unverified.

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[1] 31 July 1842, the eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, as in the preacher's register (Appendix I, n° 58).

[2] The attributions to Saint Odo of Cluny and "Saint Timothy of Jerusalem" are given as printed; not verified here.

[3] The "great Christian philosopher of these modern times" is not named; the quotation reads like Joseph de Maistre (*Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*) — my guess only; not verified here.

[4] Gaume: *Catéchisme de persévérance*, vol. VII, p. 184. (Note of M. l'abbé Pie.)

[5] The author is Paul Pellisson(-Fontanier). The preacher names the *Traité de l'Eucharistie*; I have not verified the reference.

[6] Cf. Appendix I: A, 58; AB, 43, 49 bis; p. 20, n. 6 bis, 6 ter; p. 23, n. 22 quater; p. 24, n. 24, 8°; p. 31, nos. 62, 89. — Avertissement, p. XXIV. (Editor's note.)

n° 2. Address for the Distribution of Prizes at M. Brou's School

13 August 1842.[1]

MY DEAR FRIENDS, Other hands than mine were to crown you, and your crowns would have been more precious, embellished by the sweet and encouraging words of him who so loves to share in the joys of your triumphs.[2] This year above all, it would have given him happiness to congratulate you on all the hopes you have given us. Yes, my dear friends, the school year which ends today has been remarkable; and if, as I cannot doubt, your work and your conduct within the house have answered to the sentiment of piety you showed on solemn occasions, most of you will carry off on this day, with their laurels, the applause of a good conscience.

Be always, my dear friends, what you have been. Be, in the family into which you are going to re-enter for some time, what you have been under the eyes of your masters. Do not blush to carry into the sanctuary of the domestic hearth virtues which, though not practised by all in the unhappy days in which we live, are none the less secretly admired, and often extolled by those very persons who have not the courage to imitate them.

My dear friends, God and men, religion and the fatherland expect much of the generation that is rising. The days that preceded us have been very bad. The earth has not yet recovered from its long shocks. Will society live? will it perish? The whole answer to this question depends on another question: will youth re-enter the noble path of piety and virtue? Will another generation arise, early fashioned by the hands of religion, of the Gospel and of the Church?

Yes, dear friends, we love to conceive this hope, we greet with happiness these better days. But what we shall perhaps wait for a long time yet, it is very sweet for us to see already being realised among you.

My dear friends, I am delaying your happiness. Come, young victors, present your brows to the crowns you have won. Religion loves to distribute the palms of science and of virtue.

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[1] See *Histoire du Cardinal Pie*, vol. I, p. 17. (Editor's note.)

[2] M. l'abbé Lecomte, parish priest of the cathedral of Chartres, was ill at the time. (Editor's note.)

n° 3. Second Homily on the Holy Sacrifice, for the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost: The Grandeur of the Holy Sacrifice

16 October 1842.[1]

Altaria tua, Domine! [Thy altars, O Lord! (Ps. 83:4.)] Your altars, Lord!

Exordium. — Cry of David: *Introibo ad altare. Circumdabo altare tuum, Domine.* [I will go in to the altar of God. I will compass Thy altar, O Lord. (Ps. 42:4; 25:6.)] I admire this impulse of David's heart, but I do not envy him the altar, object of his worship and his love, an altar reddened with the blood of goats and bulls, an altar where God resided only by a vague and uncertain presence like the cloud in which He wrapped Himself, etc. For we too, children of the new covenant, we have an altar. Saint Paul says it with a noble pride, with a holy emphasis: *Habemus altare,* [We have an altar. (Heb. 13:10.)] we have an altar. We have an altar, and on this altar the greatest of sacrifices is consummated each day; we have an altar, and, thinking of the marvels that are wrought there, our soul, wounded with love, languishing with desire, lets escape this cry of its ardour: *Altaria tua, Domine!* Your altars, Lord, Your altars! I shall approach Your altar, O Lord, I shall compass, I shall besiege, I shall embrace Your altar: *Introibo, circumdabo altare.*

Grandeur of the sacrifice of the altars. — 1st. A real sacrifice. *If anyone says that the sacrifice of the Mass, etc.* (Council of Trent).[2] And in fact, I shall say to the heretic, sacrifice is the necessary, essential act of religion. Now, if the Eucharistic oblation is not a true sacrifice, it must be said that the Christian religion has no sacrifice, consequently is not a religion. For I seek in vain where the sacrifice of Christ is. The sacrifices of animals, they are abolished. The sacrifice of the cross, it was offered only once. That is not an ordinary sacrifice, a daily sacrifice. Now if the oblation of the altar is only a shadow, only a memory, as a memory, a

figure, are not the matter of a real and true sacrifice, it must be said that the Church of Jesus Christ has no sacrifice. The Jews, consequently, were richer than we, since we see among them real sacrifices, true immolations. The worship of the pagans themselves obtained with better title than we the name of religion, since they had sacrifices of a sort, more or less disfigured. But Christianity is not even a worship, since it lacks the constitutive character of all worship. Thus Protestantism, by denying the sacrifice of the Mass, has ceased to be a religious society, and has become no more than a society of reasoners, whose doctrines must be relegated among utopias and systems.

How the Mass is a sacrifice … Bossuet, *Élévations*: sacrifice of the altars, real sacrifice; only the realities are hidden, because our eyes could not bear their brilliance.

2nd. Sacrifice of the altars, infinite sacrifice. Here, my brethren, on whatever side I turn, everywhere I find the infinite. Shall I distinguish, with Saint Augustine, four things in sacrifice: what is offered, he who offers it, he to whom it is offered, those for whom it is offered? The infinite presses on me from all sides. What is offered in the Eucharistic sacrifice is an infinite victim, it is a God. He who offers it is an infinite priest, it is a God. The secondary priest is there only an instrument, only a living species. At the solemn moment, see how he effaces himself, how he disappears, how he is absorbed in the sovereign Priest to whom he lends his voice: *Hoc est corpus meum … Calix sanguinis mei …* [This is My body … The chalice of My blood …] He to whom the sacrifice is offered is the infinite par excellence, it is the supreme God; to Him alone belongs this sovereign worship. Long ago Saint Augustine made in this regard the Catholic profession of faith … We sacrifice at this tomb of the Saints, but we do not sacrifice to the Saints. Who of us has ever said: Peter, Paul, I offer you this sacrifice? Finally, if I consider the sacrifice on the side of those for whom it is offered, I find that by that too it touches the infinite. For the Eucharistic sacrifice is offered before all for the Church, that is, for all the members of Our Lord Jesus Christ who, by the effect of this very sacrifice, are incorporated into their head.

Hear the text of Saint Augustine, it is admirable: *Et quoniam quatuor in omni sacrificio considerantur, quis offerat, quid offerat, cui offerat, pro quibus offerat, idem ipse, et qui offert et quod offert, unum esset cum eo cui offerebat, in unum faceret pro quibus offerebat.* [And since four things are considered in every sacrifice — who offers, what he offers, to whom he offers, for whom he offers — the same one Mediator, who both offers and is what is offered, would be one with Him to whom He offered, and would make one in Himself those for whom He offered. (Augustine, *De Trinitate* IV, 14, 19.)][3] And since in every sacrifice four things must be considered: he who offers, what is offered, he to whom it is offered, those for whom it is offered, I find that all this meets in Jesus Christ, who, being at once victim and priest of the sacrifice, is one in nature with Him to whom the sacrifice is offered, and incorporates and identifies with Himself those for whom it is offered. Thus all is divine in this sacrifice. The victim is divine; the priest is divine; He to whom it is offered is God; those for whom it is offered are deified by the very virtue of this sacrifice. An immense recapitulation, an infinite synthesis, which sums up everything on the Eucharistic altar, heaven and earth, God and man. And if we descend from these high theological considerations, if we consider the sacrifice of the altars in the four ordinary ends of sacrifice, there again everywhere we shall find the infinite. Sacrifice of the altars, sacrifice of infinite adoration. He who abases himself is infinite like the majesty before which he abases himself. The homage rendered is equal to the dignity of Him to whom it is addressed. Great God, mighty God, King of kings, You alone necessary, alone independent, alone eternal, all perfections are in You, all rights belong to You. Imperceptible beings, humble atoms come from Your hands, we are before You but a nothingness, but a nothingness which has an intelligence, a heart, and which must incessantly use them to cry: Glory to God! Yes, all the faculties, all the particles of our being should take a voice to cry: Glory to God! However humbly we prostrate ourselves, though we abased ourselves even to the dust, though we immolated ourselves entire and at every instant, it would not yet be a sufficient homage, a tribute equal to the rights of Your glory. And yet You must have this tribute, O my God; You created the world only for that.

It must be, well! You shall have it, O my God, abundantly, superabundantly; we shall pay our whole debt. *Respice in faciem Christi tui:* [Look on the face of Thy Christ. (Ps. 83:10.)] Lower, Lord, lower Your eyes on the Eucharistic altar, look at the brow of Your Christ. He who is the splendour of Your glory, He who did not think it robbery to be equal to You, see Him, become the august head of humanity to render You the infinite homage that belongs to You, who humbles Himself, who annihilates Himself before You on the altar where He loses even that appearance, such as it is, of His sacramental being. Answer, Lord: by such a homage, does the earth avow loudly enough Your sovereign dominion, and proclaim itself authentically enough the humble vassal of Your infinite majesty?

Sacrifice of the altars, sacrifice of infinite gratitude. He who gives thanks is infinite like Him who gives. The thanksgiving equals the benefit. Good God, liberal God, we are surrounded, overwhelmed with Your gifts, Your favours. We hold all from You. How shall we ever pay You the tribute of gratitude? *Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quae retribuit mihi?* [What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me? (Ps. 115:12.)] And yet You must have this tribute of gratitude, Lord. It must be, well! You shall have it equivalently, superabundantly: *Calicem salutaris accipiam.* [I will take the chalice of salvation. (Ps. 115:13.)] Lower, Lord, lower Your eyes on the Eucharistic altar: *Respice in faciem Christi tui.* See this chalice of salvation which the priest lifts up to You. It is a God who loads us with His gifts; it is a God who is offered in return. Answer, Lord: the earth which pays You with such wheat, with such wine, is it an ungrateful and sterile earth, and by so noble a return does it not show itself sufficiently grateful toward Your infinite liberality?

Sacrifice of the altars, sacrifice of infinite expiation. The dignity of him who repairs the offence is infinite like the majesty of Him who received it. The payment equals the debt. Most holy Lord, we have sinned, we have offended You. Who will ever repair such an evil? The gravity of the fault is measured on the dignity of the person offended, and the reparation has only a virtue proportioned to the importance of him who makes it. The creature has outraged a God; where find in the creature an infinite reparation to efface an infinite fault? And yet You must have this reparation, O my God, Your justice demands it. It must be, well! You shall have it, O my God; we ask no grace, we shall pay You the whole debt equivalently, superabundantly. *Respice in faciem Christi tui:* Lower, Lord, lower Your eyes on the Eucharistic altar. See, Lord, see Him who immolates Himself. To repair the outrage done to God, the reparation of a God was needed. Behold Him, recognise Him through the veils of the sacrifice that hide His face: *Respice in faciem Christi tui.* See this blood which flows to the last drop. See these wounds. Answer, Lord: by such a victim, does the earth expiate its fault generously enough and acquit itself rigorously enough of its debt toward Your infinite justice?

Finally, sacrifice of the altars, sacrifice of infinite impetration. The voice which asks graces is infinite like the hand that distributes them. The value of the prayer is equal to the price of the favour asked. Most indulgent, most merciful God, we had offended You; You have pardoned. But we are unworthy to receive from You new favours, we have lost all right to Your love, we could not merit Your grace. And yet we must have it, O my God, Your grace; without it, we cannot take a step. Who then will obtain it for us, merit it for us? We must have it, well! You will give it to us, O my God; we shall merit it abundantly, superabundantly. *Respice in faciem Christi tui:* Lower, Lord, lower Your eyes on the Eucharistic altar. Recognise Him who makes Himself a suppliant before You. It is Your Son, equal, co-eternal with Yourself, who, clothed in the livery of humanity, implores Your grace for it. He prays, but His prayer has rights, it must be heard: *Exauditus est pro sua reverentia.* [He was heard for His reverence. (Heb. 5:7.)] He makes Himself a suppliant; but must one treat with You as equal with equal, as crown with crown? Answer, Lord: the earth, by so efficacious a prayer, does it not merit Your favours, and can anything be refused by Your infinite mercy to such a client?

My brethren, and when I think that this sacrifice, of which the priest is infinite, the victim infinite, infinite on the side of Him to whom it is offered, infinite on the side of those for whom it is offered; when I think that this sacrifice of infinite adoration, of infinite thanksgiving, of infinite expiation, of infinite impetration; when

I think, I say, that this sacrifice is again infinite in extent, infinite in duration, that there is not an instant in the day, not a region of the globe where this sacrifice is not offered, that the sun carries its light successively to the various regions of the world only to illumine the altar of this sacrifice, oh! then I understand the magnificent expression of the Council of Trent, which recapitulates in the sacrifice of the altar the whole work of God, *opus Dei*, since it alone explains why God came forth from His eternal rest and justifies creation by attaching it ceaselessly to its author by the only bond worthy of Him. Hence those assertions of the Fathers and doctors, etc.

I could say still, sacrifice of the altars, infinite sacrifice in that it contains and renews all the other religious mysteries, the Incarnation, the Passion, the Resurrection, the Ascension of Our Lord. Which of us, my brethren, has not caught himself sometimes, like Augustine, like Bernard, regretting not to have been a witness of the Saviour's birth, not to have been of the number of the happy shepherds called to receive His first blessings, His first smile? Now, my brethren, it depends only on us to make amends. The Son of Mary is born each day among us. Here is the sign by which you will recognise Him: you will find Him wrapped in the swaddling-clothes of the sacrament, and lying on the stone of the altar. My brethren, Bethlehem, the crib are in the midst of us; you will find them at the Eucharistic altar.

At times finally, perhaps, my brethren, you will repent of not having been witnesses of the spectacle, terrible and consoling at once, of Calvary, of not having been able to contemplate that prodigy of love, a God laying down His life for His creatures. My brethren, Jesus Christ dies every day among us; the prodigies of His birth and of His Passion are renewed together: *Et renascens perpetua moriendo vivit;* [And, being born again, He lives by dying perpetually.] see this blood separated from His body. You will recognise Him by this sign: He is wrapped in the shroud of the holy species and laid on the tomb of the altar. Calvary, my brethren, Calvary, the sepulchre are in the midst of us; you will find them at the Eucharistic altar.

Pious Magdalen, He appeared to you, your risen master; happy disciples, you saw Him with your eyes, and you left Him only when He disappeared in the cloud, leaving on the mountain the trace of His feet. My brethren, Jesus Christ rises, Jesus Christ triumphs every day in the midst of us: *In memoriam resurrectionis, ascensionis Domini nostri Jesu Christi.* [In memory of the resurrection and ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ. (Prayer of the Mass.)] See this sacred particle which the priest joins to the blood of the chalice, emblem of the reunion of the soul of Jesus with His body. See, hear the Church who follows with her eyes and her prayer the Lamb of the altar re-ascending to the sublime altar of the heavens. Christian soul, who return from the sacrifice, what prodigy have you witnessed? *Dic nobis, quid vidisti in via?* [Tell us, what hast thou seen on the way? (Sequence *Victimae paschali*.)] I saw the sepulchre of the living God and the glory of the risen God: *Sepulcrum Christi viventis.* [The sepulchre of the living Christ.] My brethren, the monument of the resurrection, the Mount of Olives with the imprint of Jesus' feet are in the midst of us; you will find them at the Eucharistic altar.

Sacrifice of the altars, infinite sacrifice in that it contains the virtue of all the sacraments. I can only skim this consideration. Saint Thomas solidly established this truth, namely that the sacrament of the Eucharist contains the Word and the perfection of all the sacraments, that it is their principle and complement. Now the sacrament of the Eucharist itself has existence only by the Eucharistic sacrifice. Therefore it is from the Eucharistic chalice that all the other channels of grace flow and escape. If the altar disappears, close that pool henceforth without virtue and whose water is saving only by the secret efficacy it borrows from the redeeming blood of the sacrifice; remove those tribunals henceforth useless and even dangerous; to touch, to treat the wounds of my heart, I need a hand purified, sanctified by the daily contact of the God of purity.

Ministers of the Reform, you did yourselves justice in suppressing confession on the day you denied the sacrifice. One had to come down from the altar, like Moses from the mountain, the brow girt with a divine aureole, to go and sit in the tribunal of reconciliation. Pull down that pulpit, for if the sacrificer disappears, I challenge the apostle; to speak to me with fruit, with unction, to touch my soul, lips are needed stained with

the blood of a God. Finally, if the altar disappears, suppress the tabernacle and put out the lamp, make the chants and the psalmody of the hours of night and day cease, abolish the liturgy, make of the temple a solitude; for if the body of the Saviour is not there, the eagles, that is, fervent souls, will gather there no more. Apostles of the Reform, you are right: open the monasteries, which are no longer anything but common prisons. And as for you, cast the breviary into the fire, a burden henceforth superfluous. Useless sentinels, you have no function left to perform, since the temple is empty, the house deserted. Sacrifice of the altars, infinite sacrifice in that it is the centre of all religion, of all worship, of all liturgy.

But it is time to stop, my brethren, and to consider some of our duties toward the holy Sacrifice: *Sedenti in throno et Agno, benedictio et honor, et claritas et sapientia, et gratiarum actio, honor et virtus et fortitudo Deo nostro, in saecula saeculorum. Salus Deo nostro et Agno.* [To Him that sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb, blessing and honour, and glory and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour and power and strength to our God for ever and ever. Salvation to our God and to the Lamb. (Apoc. 5:13; 7:10–12.)] Amen.[4]

Translator's notes

1. This is a sketch (*croquis*), as the editor says; the paragraph on duties announced in the last paragraph was never written out (or is lost).

2. "Sepulcrum Christi viventis" and "Dic nobis, quid vidisti in via?" are from the Easter Sequence *Victimae paschali laudes* (the first printed with a slip "bic nobis"). The line "Et renascens perpetua moriendo vivit", already quoted in Tome I n° 37, is not identified here.

3. "Opus Dei" and "Augustin, Bernard" are given without references; unverified.

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[1] At the head of the manuscript we read this note by M. l'abbé Pie: "Sketch of the second homily on the holy sacrifice, the text of which is lost." Although we give in the *Œuvres sacerdotales* only discourses completely written out, we thought it useful to make an exception for the present sketch. We shall thus have a view of the whole of the homilies on the holy sacrifice. (Editor's note.) Note: this piece is therefore an outline in note form, not a finished text; its abrupt transitions and "etc." are the author's.

[2] *Si quis dixerit, in missa non offerri Deo verum et proprium sacrificium, aut quod offerri non sit aliud, quam Christum nobis ad manducandum dari, anathema sit.* [If anyone shall say that in the Mass there is not offered to God a true and proper sacrifice, or that to be offered is nothing else than that Christ is given us to eat, let him be anathema. (Council of Trent, Session 22, canon 1.)] (Editor's note.)

[3] The reference to *De Trinitate* is mine; the preacher gives only the name of Saint Augustine.

[4] Cf. Appendix I: A, 59, 91. (Editor's note.)

n° 4. Third Homily on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, for the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost: Assisting at the Sacrifice

23 October 1842.

Voluntarie sacrificabo tibi, Domine. [I will freely sacrifice to Thee, O Lord. (Ps. 53:8.)] I will offer You, Lord, a voluntary sacrifice.[1]

The sacrifice of the Mass, as we have shown, my dearly beloved brethren, is by itself a sacrifice of infinite value. In vain would one seek, within the limits of the possible, a more profound adoration and gratitude, a more meritorious expiation, a more efficacious prayer. However great the divine omnipotence, it could add nothing to the grandeur of the Eucharistic sacrifice. The sacrifice in itself and in what constitutes it essentially is perfect; on the side of the victim, on the side of the priest, nothing is lacking in it; independently of the virtue of human merit and of the piety of the faithful, it has all its rigorous integrity.

But yet, my brethren, the sacrifice of the Mass, no more than that of Calvary, is not applied to us in spite of us, nor without us. We participate in it only so far as we will and take the means. Jesus Christ immolates Himself on the altar, and that suffices for God. But in order that this immolation profit us, it must, by the part

we take in it, be consummated at the same time in the sanctuary of our soul, and the living and intelligent altar of our will must reflect, like a faithful mirror, all that takes place on the cold stone of the inanimate altar: *Voluntarie sacrificabo tibi:* I will offer You, Lord, a voluntary sacrifice. So that, my brethren, the angels of the altar, like those of Bethlehem, in singing: Glory to God in the highest! can add peace only for men of good will: *In terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.* [On earth peace to men of good will. (Luke 2:14.)]

Therefore, my brethren, the holy sacrifice of the Mass imposes duties on us; while a God immolates Himself for us, it is not open to us to fall asleep in a careless confidence in the virtue of His immolation. He does not intend to do everything by Himself alone, and the blood He sheds at the altar rebounds only on those who associate themselves voluntarily with His sacrifice as witnesses, ministers and victims. Follow these three considerations attentively. The very imperfect way in which I am going to treat this important matter, on which I was not to speak to you today, will require that your private meditations supply for it. I shall myself return, in a next instruction, to the things I shall have omitted today.

I. When Jesus offered His sacrifice of the cross, Saint John Chrysostom remarks that it was not in secret in a temple, nor under a roof, but outside the city and on a mountain; in order, he says, that it might be known that it was the universal sacrifice and that all nature might be witness of the death of its Redeemer: *Idcirco extra urbem et moenia.* [For this reason outside the city and the walls.][2] And also, on the eve of His death, when Jesus Christ gave His orders for the preparations of the new Pasch, that is, for the institution of the Eucharistic sacrifice, He insisted on the extent and magnificence that the cenacle required: *Coenaculum grande, stratum.* [A large dining-room furnished. (Mark 14:15.)] And, conformably to this primitive and divine type of the Eucharistic cenacle, as soon as the Church could breathe after the persecution, she delighted to give the vastest proportions and the most magnificent forms to the temples destined to shelter the altar of the sacrifice. My brethren, do not these so wide and deep naves tell you enough that Jesus Christ does not wish to be immolated solitary on His altar? And if the Christian Church, by the voice which comes from all the stones of this edifice, does not yet speak loud enough to you, hear her calling you every week by the formal and obligatory language of her precept: “On Sundays and feasts of obligation you shall hear Mass”; hear her pray you, conjure you, by the insinuations of her counsels, not to neglect any occasion of assisting at the sacrifice: there is no other feast of obligation this week, says the formula of the parochial homily; nevertheless we exhort you to come every day to church to hear holy Mass.

And in fact, my brethren, sacrifice, as we have said, is the great and indispensable action of worship; it is the proper and unique act by which supreme adoration is exteriorly and authentically rendered to God in the name of all creatures; it is the only juridical and solemn protestation of His absolute dominion and of our humble dependence. Therefore it is rigorously necessary, for whoever has not renounced rendering any duty to God, to come, at least on certain days, to assist at the sacrifice; no power divine or human can dispense him from it, for no one can dispense from religion, and sacrifice is the essential exercise of religious worship. Therefore again the first step to be made by whoever aspires to the perfection of Christian life is to assist each day, as far as possible, at the holy sacrifice; no other practice can supply for that one, for the holy sacrifice of the Mass, as Saint Francis de Sales says, is, among the other exercises of piety, what the sun is among the stars.[3]

Now, my brethren, on this point where are we in regard to the precept? where are we in regard to the counsel? The dawn of the seventh day has just shone. The doors of the temple are open. The altar of the sacrifice is set up; the sacrificer is ready. But I look for the assistants, I await the witnesses. The divine victim is impatient to descend from the heavens; He takes on Himself alone almost all the cost of the sacrifice; but He asks at least that the multitude not protest by its absence. In vain has the sacred bronze resounded three times over the city and the whole countryside, announcing everywhere the hour of the sacrifice: the greater part of the population remains deaf to this call. The rich man meditates new pleasures to make a diversion

from the pleasures of the night before; the tradesman remains obstinately seated at his counter, reckoning and calculating always; the publicist stays shut up in his study, gravely occupied perhaps in writing on the moralisation of the people; and if the workman has left the workshop, it is to go to the tavern. And meanwhile, my brethren, the blood of Jesus flows on the altar, in the temple almost deserted!

Have you noticed sometimes, my brethren, in the corner of a picture of the crucifixion of Jesus, those Roman soldiers who, in their stupid brutality, turning their back to the great scene of the death of a God, cast lots, throwing the die, for a poor garment, object of their cupidity? *Dividentes vero vestimenta ejus, miserunt sortes.* [And parting His garments, they cast lots. (Matt. 27:35.)] My brethren, this painful and disgusting contrast does not belong to the past; it is of every day. These soldiers represented a whole portion of humanity. In a moment a God is going to descend from the heavens, to immolate Himself on the altar; and almost the whole city, a stranger to this great action, will not make a single instant's truce with the preoccupations of business or pleasure. No, my brethren, we could not say how bitter this thought is for us. And when it happens to us sometimes, on Sunday, at the hour of the sacrifice, to be called to some dying person and to cross the streets of the city, on seeing our brethren almost all forgetting, not seeming to suspect what at that very moment is passing in the temple, our eyes fill with tears, and our heart contracts with sorrow.

If at least all those who come into the temple were really witnesses of the sacrifice! But alas! at the less solemn Masses above all, how many whose body is present, but whose mind and heart are so far away! Saint Luke tells us again that while Jesus was on the cross, the people stood and looked on: *Stabat populus spectans;* [The people stood beholding. (Luke 23:35.)] it was for them a spectacle, and that is all. My brethren, could one better render the attitude of a certain number of men whom a remnant of habit still brings to the sacrifice? *Stabat populus spectans:* they are there standing looking on. Do not look in them for intelligent and attentive witnesses, touched and tender spectators. No, they are standing, and they look; that is all one can say of them: *Stabat populus spectans.* Then Saint Luke adds: *Et deridebant eum principes cum eis.* [And the rulers with them derided Him.] Shall I say it, my brethren? this is what is renewed still before the altars. If the great and the rich of the age, to pay tribute to vulgar prejudices, grant at times half an hour to the God who immolates Himself for them, they seem to fear that the people take this act of religion seriously; and by their light chatter, by their too easy bearing, they teach their inferiors, already so wanting in faith, to go beyond the bounds of decency and treat derisively and sacrilegiously the most august mysteries, to the point that at times, as the Fathers said, the temple becomes a dangerous place, where luxury displays all its pomps, where passion lays all its snares, where vice comes to invoke the benefit of refuge in the shade of the altars: *Et deridebant eum principes cum eis.*

My brethren, the Church orders attendance at the holy sacrifice every Sunday, and a great number of men do not attend it, and many others attend it ill: this is a disorder to be wept for with tears of blood; for without the Mass no Sunday, without Sunday no religion; and without religion what happiness, what peace possible on earth?

But if the precept which the Church imposes on all is disregarded, is the counsel she addresses to some in particular better observed? It would be the wish of the Church, my brethren, that all Christians attend each day and even communicate at the holy sacrifice; but if this is impossible to the great number, at least there are privileged persons to whom their position permits it, and who have no pretexts or compensations to excuse them. The Christian man whom painful labour keeps far from the temple, if he does not associate himself with the sacrifice as a witness, participates in it at least as a victim, as I shall say. But you, my brother, you, my sister, whose every desire Providence has anticipated, you whose greatest and perhaps only anxiety is often to know how you will occupy your day, ah! will you not remember that your God immolates Himself for you at the altar, that He awaits you with hands full of graces and consolations? You have still so many faults! you are surrounded by so many dangers! your piety is so cold, so languishing! Go then, go to

the temple. It is for you, said Saint John of Jerusalem, it is for you that the sacrifice is offered; it is the very least that you assist at it when you can.

II. But what do I say? You are not only the witnesses of the sacrifice, you are still its ministers. Doubtless, my brethren, the priest alone, clothed with a sacred character, has the right to go up to the altar to immolate the holy Victim, and those have been condemned as heretics who wished to extend to all Christians what is the privilege of the priesthood. Nevertheless, the priest being only the deputy of the Church, one can say, one must say, that all the faithful are associated with him for the important function of the sacrifice. This is why the priest does not speak at the altar in his own particular name, but always in union with all the assistants who concelebrate with him: *Orate, fratres, ut meum ac vestrum sacrificium.* [Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours (may be acceptable to God).]

Saint Peter, enumerating the titles of nobility of the Christian people, calls it a royal priesthood, *regale sacerdotium*, [1 Pet. 2:9.] a holy priesthood, destined to offer spiritual victims. Now, my brethren, if each of you for his part is here priest and sacrificer, what a high idea must you not conceive of the attention, respect and piety with which you ought to participate in the sacrifice? During the celebration of the pagan mysteries, a voice repeated unceasingly to the sacrificer: *Age quod agis*, do what you are doing; that is, in common language, attend to your business, do not forget your duty: *Age quod agis.* My brethren, the divine priest of the altar, priest and victim, Jesus Christ, He will not fall asleep, He will not be distracted, He will do His duty, He will forget nothing: *Ecce non dormitabit, neque dormiet, qui custodit Israel,* [Behold, He shall neither slumber nor sleep that keepeth Israel. (Ps. 120:4.)] etc. But you, the coadjutors of His sacrifice, do you not lose sight of your ministry? Do you think of offering Jesus to His Father for the same ends for which He offers Himself: adoration, thanksgiving, expiation, prayer? Alas! what do I see? The minister must be careful not to omit a syllable of the prayers of the sacrifice; and you have no book in your hands, and you do not follow the prayers of the priest who offers in your name, and you do not even answer Amen to his prayer! The minister must observe minutely the ceremonies of the sacrifice; and you scarcely know when to rise, prostrate or sit, and you have never studied the motive of these sacred rites whose mysterious signification is an enigma to you! Is it then to this point, Christians, that you disdain this participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ with which you are invested? Ah! I beg you, meditate more on the holy functions you exercise, and know henceforth how to understand what you do: *Agnoscite quod agitis.* [Understand what you do.][4] For this, my brethren, the best method during the hearing of holy Mass is to unite oneself with the prayers and ceremonies of the Church, as I shall tell you in a next instruction. By that you enter into the thought of the sacrifice, you sacrifice really with Jesus and with the priest. Yes, my brethren, this sacrifice is yours, you are its ministers. This sacrifice is yours, it is your own: *Vestrum sacrificium.* Be not therefore strangers to your work and your property.

But there is a more particular way of making this sacrifice yours: it is to have it offered sometimes directly for you, for what interests you, for the living or dead members of your family. And here, my brethren, I beg you to understand well the doctrine of the Church and the teachings of theology. On the altar doubtless, as much as on Calvary, the sacrifice is offered for all men. However, as we have remarked, the sacrifice of the altar tends to apply to individuals the graces of which the sacrifice of the cross was the universal source. This is why the sacrifice of the Mass, besides the good it causes to the whole Church and above all to the faithful who are present, possesses yet a proper virtue, a special fruit, applicable to such or such a soul who has it celebrated for his intention. The blood of Jesus on the cross was shed for all; the blood of Jesus flowing on the altar needs a particular soul to sanctify. The principal fruit of the sacrifice belongs to this person, he can say: *Meum sacrificium.* The priest owes it to him as a matter of justice, though what he has received from him in exchange can and should be called only an offering, an alms, without any proportion to the thing acquired.

And here, my brethren, what a frightful indication of the weakening of faith! Until recent times, sacrificers had always been too few to suit the piety of the faithful, who disputed with a holy jealousy the blood of Jesus. But today, the divine blood which flows at the altar seeks a soul to which it may be applied, and no one presents himself. The world is full of paralytics to be healed, purgatory is full of prisoners to be delivered, and not one sick man has come to ask to be let down into the pool, and not one son has come to ask the deliverance of his father! The sacrifice is ended: God has smelled its sweet odour with complacency, He has let nothing of it be lost; but men have let an important part of it escape, and the special aim of the sacrifice, which is to individualise grace, is missed! Lord Jesus, check then the too generous impulse of Your love; close up Your veins too widely opened, dry up the source, already so diminished, of ecclesiastical vocations. For heaven there is never enough sacrificers; but for the earth there are too many. For however mutilated, however diminished your priestly tribe, the blood of Jesus Christ flows still too abundantly for a generation which no longer understands its value, which no longer feels the need of it.

III. Finally, my brethren, we must assist at the sacrifice of the altar as victims. For understand this doctrine of Saint Augustine. Jesus Christ being the head of the Church, the Church being the body of Jesus Christ, it must be that at the same time that He is offered by her, she is offered by Him. Jesus Christ immolates Himself on the altar, but it is only the head of the victim; the members must follow the head. Now, my brethren, in us, all that we are, the matter of the sacrifice does not lack. What is all humanity, if not one great victim? Read what is called history: what is it but a perpetual butchery, often a terrible succession of wars, plagues, murders, always a series of sufferings and deaths? Look well at humanity from head to foot: the imprint of sorrow is everywhere, everywhere the knife of sacrifice has left its trace. In this vast body there is not one sound part: *A planta pedis usque ad verticem non est in eo sanitas.* [From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness therein. (Is. 1:6.)] Jesus Christ found this on earth when He came into it: suffering is the inevitable condition of our guilty nature. Willy-nilly, humanity is only a victim.

Jesus Christ found this on earth, and He said: let us sanctify, ennoble, divinise this great flock of victims; let us change this butchery into a sacrifice; of this scaffold let us make an altar. And He Himself, august head of humanity, immolated Himself first on the cross, immolates Himself each day in the Eucharistic cenacle: and thence He calls to Himself all who suffer, He takes, He identifies their expiation with His own; of them and of Himself He makes one and the same victim, one and the same oblation; the universe is no longer a theatre of carnage, it is the temple of a sacrifice; humanity is no longer a common sufferer, it is a holy host; the earth is no longer a scaffold, it is an altar.

My brethren, does not this consideration seem to you most consoling? O you to whom each morning brings a sorrow, gather it up preciously, and go lay it on the altar as your offering for the sacrifice. Yes, it is a law of our present condition, a law terrible and desolating for nature, that we must suffer. All of us, all that we are, we are wheat ground under the millstone, wine trodden in the winepress. But at least, like Saint Ignatius, my brethren, let us be the wheat of Jesus Christ: *Frumentum Christi.* [The wheat of Christ. (Cf. Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans*, 4.)] This divine Saviour, on the altar, borrowed the substance of wheat for the matter of His sacrifice; let us too go and bring Him our bodies and hearts ground and kneaded by suffering; every sorrow is a wheat acceptable at the Eucharistic altar.

Let not Jesus complain at the altar, as of old by His prophet, of treading the winepress alone: *Torcular calcavi solus!* [I have trodden the winepress alone. (Is. 63:3.)] To the blood of the vine, offered in the chalice, let us mingle the blood of our sorrows; in this way the sacrifice will be complete. Jesus Christ will not offer it only at His own expense, but at ours also. The members will be immolated with the head. This society of suffering will soften, will divinise every sorrow. And as the sacred Lamb re-ascends each day, glorious and impassible, from the altar of earth to the sublime altar of the heavens; a day will come when our soul, long associated with His sacrifice here below, will take its flight with Him and go among the Angels and the elders to contemplate and bless His eternal sacrifice. This, my brethren, is the grace I wish you.[5]

Translator's notes

1. The Ignatian phrase "wheat of Christ" is from Saint Ignatius of Antioch's *Letter to the Romans* (my reference; the preacher gives only the name). "Saint John of Jerusalem" and the Chrysostom and Francis de Sales attributions are as printed and unverified.

2. The "formula of the parochial homily" quoted is the announcement customarily read at the parish Mass ("il n'y a pas d'autre fête d'obligation cette semaine …").

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[1] Variant: "the sacrifice that I shall offer You, Lord, will be the fruit of my will." (Editor's note, on the epigraph.)

[2] The Latin is the preacher's rendering of Chrysostom, as printed; not verified here.

[3] Attribution to Saint Francis de Sales as printed; the passage is not located here.

[4] The words *Age quod agis* and *Agnoscite quod agitis* — "do what you are doing" / "recognise what you are doing" — are quoted by the preacher as proverbial; the second echoes the Roman Pontifical's address to the ordinand ("Agnosce quod agis"). Not verified further here.

[5] Cf. Appendix I: A, 60. (Editor's note.)

n° 5. Homily on the Offices of the Church, Preached on the Third Sunday of Advent

11 December 1842.

Per ipsum ergo offeramus hostiam laudis semper Deo, id est, fructum labiorum confitentium nomini ejus. [By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise always to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing to His name.] Let us therefore offer to God without ceasing, through Jesus Christ, a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of our lips that glorify His name. (Saint Paul to the Hebrews 13:15.)

MY VERY DEAR BRETHREN, Our three previous instructions were devoted to setting before you the marvellous grandeurs of the sacrifice of the altars, of that sacrifice which the precursor of all theologians, Saint Denis the Areopagite, called with so much reason the most divine of all divine things: *Divinorum omnium divinissimum.*[1]

I might, perhaps I ought, before leaving this matter, to have meditated with you the prayers and sacred ceremonies which accompany this action par excellence; whether it be consummated with a more silent apparatus on an altar lit by two simple torches and around which a few rare faithful associate themselves inwardly with the childish voice of the novice who answers Amen; or whether it be celebrated with all that august pomp of which John the beloved surprised the model in the Jerusalem of the heavens, when in the depth of a sanctuary crowned with a thousand fires, perfumed with the sweetest incense, the sacrificer appears surrounded by a numerous clergy clad in ornaments where gold and jewels sparkle, and the temple resounds with the manly voices of the choristers and the delicious harmonies of the organ singing and sighing the thrice-threefold invocation of the Saviour and the Christ [the *Kyrie eleison*], the great doxology of the Angels [the *Gloria in excelsis*], the triumphant symbol of Christian belief [the Creed] and the Trisagion stolen from the eternal lyres [the *Sanctus*], and an immense multitude, of every age, of every sex, bows and prostrates itself at the descent of the saving Victim who opens the gate of the heavens.

The detailed explanation of all that relates to the celebration of holy Mass will more suitably perhaps be the matter of our familiar instructions of the Rosary. Today I pass to another subject which Saint Paul himself presents to me as a corollary and consequence of the preceding. After having spoken of the real sacrifice which is consummated on the altar, I am going to speak to you of the sacrifice of the lips which is consummated incessantly around the altar, in union with the sacrifice of the morning: *Per ipsum ergo offeramus hostiam laudis semper Deo, id est, fructum labiorum confitentium nomini ejus.* The faithful do not know enough what is the value of the public prayer of the Church, what its antiquity, its beauty, its variety,

its efficacy. Let us try, my brethren, to touch at least the principal points of this beautiful theology, and perhaps henceforth you will no longer be content with assisting at the holy sacrifice and you will be less indifferent to the other solemn offices of the Church.

Public or liturgical prayer, which we call the divine office, canonical hours, must not be considered as a common prayer; it has a value, a quite special virtue, which is inferior only to that of the sacrifice, with which besides it is closely united. Liturgical prayer is not simply an individual prayer, made in an individual name; it is not even only that common prayer, made in concert, to which Jesus Christ promised so particular an assistance. No; liturgical prayer is not the prayer of the individual, the prayer of the family or of any community whatever; it is the prayer of the Church herself, of the whole Church, prayer authentically and officially offered to God by men who have received juridical delegation to this effect. For, says Suarez, if God gave directly and immediately to the priest, by the very effect of his ordination, the right and power to immolate the real body of Jesus Christ by sacrifice, and to sanctify His mystical body, which is the Christian people, by instruction and the sacraments, the Church in her turn charges the priest to offer incessantly to God through Jesus, for herself and for all her children, the sacrifice of her praises and of her love.

Public prayer, my brethren, is therefore the prayer of the Church; and consequently as much as the Church is holier and more assured of the love of God than any individual, any particular community can be, so much is ecclesiastical prayer more excellent and more efficacious than any individual or common prayer. The private prayer of an individual, of a family, may be only the prayer of a sinner or of a gathering of sinners, and in all cases its efficacy is in proportion to the finite merit of those who pray. Liturgical prayer is the prayer of the Church, who is essentially holy and always worthy to be heard. The prayer of the Church is the prayer of the Spouse, and of a tenderly cherished spouse who exercises a sort of seduction on the heart of the monarch who crowned her. What do I say? the prayer of the Church is the prayer of Jesus Christ Himself; for the spouse is one with her husband. It is in Him, it is by Him that she confesses, hopes, loves, by Him that she praises, sighs, asks: *Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum.* [Through Our Lord Jesus Christ.] Jesus, residing on the altar of the heavens and in the tabernacles of earth, repeats word for word to God His Father every prayer the Church pronounces; He identifies Himself with the prayer of His Spouse, and a holy doctor calls Him the sole substitute of the Church.[2]

This, my brethren, is a principle that must not be forgotten, and without which one would understand nothing of the value of the divine office, of liturgical prayer. And as the holy sacrifice of the Mass, even when it is celebrated solitarily and without other witness than the priest and the altar boy, is none the less the sacrifice of the whole Church, in whose name alone the priest has the privilege of immolating the real body of Jesus Christ; so the divine office, recited even in private by the ministers of the altars, is none the less the prayer of the whole Church, whose deputies they are before God, to offer Him ceaselessly through Jesus Christ that second sacrifice which the royal psalmist and the prophet Osee with the great Apostle called already the sacrifice of the lips, a host of canticle: *Vitulos labiorum, hostiam vociferationis, sacrificium laudis, id est, fructum labiorum.* [The calves of our lips; the sacrifice of shouting; the sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of the lips. (Cf. Os. 14:3; Ps. 26:6; Heb. 13:15.)] The Church would wish, as far as possible, that all her ministers accomplish solemnly each day the liturgical act of the divine office. However, as there is another sacrifice no less agreeable to God than that of the lips, I mean the sacrifice of works, the sacrifice of charity: *Qui facit misericordiam, offert sacrificium,* [He that showeth mercy offereth sacrifice. (Ecclus. 35:4.)] the Church restricts to the members of the Religious Orders and of the Chapter the obligation of public psalmody, and she authorises the other priests to recite their office in private, in order to attend more freely to works of zeal and mercy toward their brethren. Nevertheless, I repeat, the private recitation of the office is none the less a liturgical act, that is, of social and not individual prayer; and every fault committed by the priest in the fulfilment of this duty is less a personal fault than a fault against the Church.

Now, my brethren, from when does this public and daily prayer date, which the Catholic Church does not cease to say over again by night and by day? those sacred Nocturns of the first, second and third watch; those Lauds of the dawn; those mystical chants of the first, third, sixth and ninth hour of the day, those Vespers of the twilight which the melancholy sighs of a falling-asleep voice complete? Since when has the Spouse of Jesus Christ been repeating all this ensemble of prayers?

My brethren, an eternal psalmody, and, if I dare so speak, an infinite liturgy was being celebrated before the ages in the very bosom of the divinity and in the adorable society of the three Persons contemplating, praising, glorifying one another unceasingly. There were no chants of the night and chants of the day; for immutable eternity distinguishes no morning, noon or evening. The sun does not set on the Jerusalem of the heavens. Then, on the day of their creation, the choirs of Angels, placed like holy constellations around the divine throne, began to mingle the accents of their lyres with the perpetual harmonies of the holy Trinity. Man himself, king of the visible world, was admitted to join here below his worship to the supreme worship of the heavens, offering the sacrifice and singing in the name of the entire creation the liturgical hymn to the glory of the Most High.

Human society increasing, public worship, reduced at first to the proportions of the family, took on more solemn social forms. Enos, says Scripture, began to call upon the name of the Lord; and the liturgical traditions of that antediluvian epoch so rich in divine communication, Noe saved from that abyss in which so many other sciences and so many other traditions were engulfed. Abraham fulfilled the laws and ceremonies; Moses himself observed them, until, at God's dictation, he wrote for the chosen people a new ritual, the sacred code of the Jewish liturgy in which, besides the morning and evening sacrifices, we know by the royal Psalmist that the psalmody seven times a day and in the middle of the night must be understood also: *Septies in die laudem dixi tibi: media nocte surgebam ad confitendum tibi.* [Seven times a day I have given praise to Thee; at midnight I rose to give thanks to Thee. (Ps. 118:164, 62.)]

Thus prayed the world, thus psalmodised the synagogue, when the Word, descended from the heavens, brought a new sacrifice to the earth: a sacrifice which, by fixing in the midst of men the incarnate God, henceforth corporally present night and day in the tabernacles, demanded a liturgy still more solemn, a more continual psalmody; for it was impossible that the living and true God should remain solitary and without worship on His altars, during the long hours that separate the sacrifice of the day from the sacrifice of the morrow. We have, says Saint Paul, an altar where Our Lord immolates Himself each morning and always resides: *Habemus altare.* Let us therefore come at every hour, by day and by night, to salute this august Victim, and join to His sacrifice of immolation the sacrifice of our lips and our praises: *Per ipsum ergo offeramus hostiam laudis semper Deo, id est, fructum labiorum confitentium nomini ejus.*

And we see that the first Christians, faithful to the voice of the Apostle, even at the height of persecution, neglected psalmody no more than sacrifice: *Cantantes et psallentes Deo in hymnis et canticis spiritualibus.* [Singing and making melody to God in hymns and spiritual canticles. (cf. Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16.)] Pliny, in his famous report to Trajan, informed him of those meetings before dawn, in which they prefaced the mysteries by chants in honour of Christ. Tertullian speaks almost on every page of the singing of psalms, of the morning assemblies: *Coetus antelucanos.* And the theologian of those first ages of the faith, so deeply initiated by the apostolic teaching into the mysteries and sacraments of the Christian Church, Denis the Areopagite, does not fear to say that psalmody is essential and in some sort consubstantial with the sacrifice, and that one cannot in any way separate it from it: a sentiment which is indeed that of the Church, since even today she wishes every priest to prepare and sanctify his mouth by the sacrifice of the lips before immolating, by the sword of the word, the Eucharistic Victim. And it is to be remarked that this union, this connexion of sacrifice and psalmody, of the real presence [the edition prints "pénitence"] and the breviary, has been justified even by our enemies, the heretics, who made the canonical hours cease as soon as they denied the Eucharist of which they were the glorious aureole. And it had to be so.

You know, my brethren, that among the ancients, the night as well as the day was divided into four parts, each of three hours. The first watch of the night was from six in the evening to nine, the second from nine to midnight, the third from midnight to three, the fourth from three to six in the morning. This last hour was the first of the day which was divided also into four, from prime to terce, from terce to sext, from sext to none. After none the evening began, *vespere.* Each of the parts of the night was called watch or guard, a term borrowed from the military language, because the soldiers kept watch or stood guard each for three hours. Now, from the beginning of Christianity, the Church, that army drawn up in battle array, wished to place beside her royal Spouse a guard of honour. Hence that office of the night, composed of three Nocturns which answer to the first, second and third watch, is ended by Lauds which salute the first fires of dawn at the fourth watch. Hence those canonical hours of Prime, Terce, Sext, None and Evening which answer to the ancient division of the days. A loving and attentive sentinel, the Church, in the persons of her ministers, thus makes her escort for eighteen hundred years, thus pays homage to the God of the tabernacle.

But you, child of error, who deny the continual presence of Jesus in His Sacrament, you have no more guard to keep around the altars. For you, the temple is empty, the palace uninhabited, the house deserted. Sentry henceforth useless, lay down your arms. Son of Luther or of Calvin, cast into the fire this breviary, a burden henceforth superfluous, for the sacrifice of the lips, which was offered night and day, converged in all its parts toward the God fixed in the tabernacle by the sacrifice of the morning. Priest of Geneva, of Berlin or of London, after a day given to the family and to business, go and spend the night gaily in the brilliant and worldly assemblies of the city, and sleep tranquilly on your return. We, Catholic priests, who believe in the God of the tabernacle, and who for that have espoused the sweet obligation of continual prayer, we shall sanctify the watches of the night and the hours of the day, and our lips as well as our heart will pay incessantly tribute to the God of the altar, as Paul orders us: *Per ipsum ergo offeramus hostiam laudis semper Deo, id est, fructum labiorum confitentium nomini ejus.*

Besides, my brethren, there are other reasons still to give for the division of the office into diverse hours of the night and day: reasons drawn some from the order of creation and nature, others from the order of religion, its facts and its mysteries, others finally from the order of our needs and duties. I shall treat this matter thoroughly, that is, what characterises each of the mystical hours of the divine office, in a special instruction on the Christian’s day sanctified by the Church. Let us advance.

But what then, my brethren, is this liturgical prayer of the Church of the new law? These divine offices, these canonical hours, who then furnished their substance? Here, my brethren, a new marvel. The prayer of the Church is the prayer of the Spouse; but it is the Spouse Himself who took charge of making the prayer of the Spouse, of composing those holy petitions, those divine formulas, those chants of praise and love which He wishes to hear from her mouth. The office of the Church, my brethren, is quite justly called breviary, that is, abridgment, summary, *breviarium;* for it is a marvellous compound whose diverse parts, brought back some each day, others each week, others finally each year, form among them a divine and varied repertory of religious history, of dogmatic instructions, of moral precepts, and above all a manual of admirable prayers. With my Bible, I am a Christian; with my breviary or my euchologion, I am a Catholic. There Jesus completes Moses; Paul interprets Moses and Jesus; the councils define and the doctors comment on the word of Moses, of Jesus and of Paul. The successive development of the Christian cycle unrolls before my eyes all the mysteries of the faith. The examples of the Saints and the legend of their lives teach me how all the centuries have understood the practice of evangelical perfection.

There above all, I repeat, the mind and heart learn to pray. All the Church borrows from the ancient law her chants and her psalms: now she asks Zachary, Simeon and Mary for their canticles; now, remembering that she too has received the trumpet and the harp, she yields to the Spirit who inspires her, and the inexhaustible source of poetry, prayer and love which is within her pours itself out in melodious rhythms, in hymns, responsories, antiphons and above all in collects: formulas, prayers, some so simple, others so solemn, in

which appears now the sweet confidence of a royal spouse toward the monarch who chose and crowned her, now the eager solicitude of a mother's heart alarmed for beloved children, but always that knowledge of the things of another life, so profound and so distinct, whether she confesses the truth, or desires to taste its fruits, that no sentiment could be compared to hers, no language brought near to her language.[3] The Protestants are forced to avow it. No one prays like the Catholic Church; she alone has the gift, the sense and the organ of prayer.

But what dominates in the prayer of the Church, what makes its fund, what is always, says Saint John Chrysostom, the beginning, the middle and the end, are the psalms: *Et primus, et medius, et novissimus David.* [David is both first, and middle, and last.][4] The psalms, my brethren, I take care not to say a single word of them; for I should no longer know how to end, and I hope, if God please, to make of this subject yet the matter of an entire instruction. Woe to him who would not relish the reading and above all the singing of the psalms! I deny him all sentiment of the beautiful, the grand, the sublime, the graceful; but above all I dare say that the religious sense does not exist in him.

Quantum flevi in hymnis et canticis tuis, suave sonantis Ecclesiae tuae vocibus commotus acriter. [How much I wept at Thy hymns and canticles, deeply moved by the voices of Thy sweet-sounding Church. (Augustine, *Confessions* IX, 6.)] My God, how I wept at the sound of Your hymns and canticles, and how deeply I was moved by the sweet accents of Your Church, says Saint Augustine, speaking of ecclesiastical chant! For, my brethren, the prayer of the Church is not spoken, it is sung. Song is to speech what poetry is to prose, what the dance is to walking; all the great impressions of the soul are not spoken, but sung; every sentiment founded on order resolves itself into harmony. Song is the enthusiasm of speech; song, the sacred books teach us, is the language of heaven. The Jerusalem of the earth must therefore naturally sing; and the divine Spirit, who inspired her formulas of prayer, inspired her chants too, chants worthy of her, chants such as earth knows none like, chants which are not of human composition. No, no one prays, but also no one sings like the Catholic Church. How cold and mean all the rest is beside the voice of the Church! Did you notice this morning, for example, my brethren, that *Christe eleison* by which the Church invokes the coming of the Messiah on the Sundays of Advent?[5] It is one of the thousand sublimities of Gregorian harmonies. It is not only the ear, it is the heart that is lacking in those for whom these heavenly chants say nothing. Holy Church, oh! how I wept at the sound of Your hymns and psalms, and how Your sweet melodies deeply moved me: *Quantum flevi in hymnis et canticis tuis, suave sonantis Ecclesiae tuae vocibus commotus acriter!* It was the chant of the divine offices that converted Augustine.

My brethren, oh! how agreeable to God must be this concert of praise which holy Church sends up to the heavens, makes resound around the tabernacles by night and by day! Those manly and strong voices of the sons of the cloister, those sighs and sweeter accents of the consecrated virgins, those melodious chants that resound in the basilicas, those two hundred thousand Christian priests who present themselves seven times a day in the name of the Spouse before the throne of the King, those voices of the East that pray when the voices of the West are silent, those voices of the South that sing when the voices of the North are at rest; once more, how agreeable to God must be this concert of praise which the Church makes ceaselessly resound, and how many graces and blessings must it not cause to flow on the earth!

However, my brethren, this prayer of the Church profits the Christian people only so far as they associate themselves with it, sometimes by their presence, always by the desire of their heart. My brethren, what I told you of the sacrifice I can say also of the offices of the Church. The Church offers the sacrifice for you every day; but she wishes you to come and offer it with her once each week. In the same way the Church prays for you unceasingly, by day and by night; but she asks you to come and pray with her, at least on Sunday. Oh! my dearly beloved brethren, how desolate we are to see that Sunday Vespers, that portion of the office for which the faithful used to come here to associate themselves with the daily and perpetual prayer of the Church, are almost completely abandoned, even by the most religious persons! Your fathers in the faith did

not leave the Church thus to pray alone. In the sixth [sic] century, Saint Augustine still required that all the faithful, on solemn feasts above all, assist at the sacred vigils of the night, and at the hours of Terce, Sext and None.[6] We do not ask as much of you, but at least on Sunday come and keep the Church company in the evening office. This day must be sanctified entire; after the real sacrifice of the morning, come then in the evening to offer the sacrifice of the lips: *Sacrificium vespertinum.* [The evening sacrifice. (Ps. 140:2.)]

My brethren, this abandonment of the divine offices which desolates us is due to this, that the faithful of our days no longer love enough, do not esteem enough the Spouse of Jesus Christ, holy Church their mother. There is a great number of persons to whom the public prayer of the Church says nothing, and who prefer to it collections of formulas more or less pious doubtless, but in which, after all, there is only the thought of man. Ah! my brethren, do not commit this disorder of thus substituting individual prayer for public prayer. To sing with the Church what the Church sings is the most beautiful homage you can render to God; there is no meditation or reading that is worth it. The best you will do is what you do with the Church. How happy your Pastors would be if they saw those among you who have the leisure and the taste apply themselves to holy things, initiate themselves into the mysteries of the public office, and assist, at least on solemn feasts, at the Matins of the eve and the Hours of the day! We never see a person praying, reading or meditating before some altar during the holy offices without regretting that his piety does not inspire him rather to join his voice to that of the choir.

But at least, I repeat, do not abandon Sunday Vespers; and as this touching evening office is a sort of sacred melodrama which has its unity of plan, come to it from the beginning. Our moralist, La Bruyère, points out an abuse which was beginning to be established in his time, and which consisted, he says, in neglecting Vespers as an antiquated thing out of fashion, and in keeping one's place for the Salut [Benediction]. Assuredly, my brethren, the Salut of the most Blessed Sacrament, which closes, in the great churches, the evening office, is a pious and touching exercise; we love to see you there in great number. The holy laws of discipline not permitting the priest to bring the divine Victim down from the heavens a second time in the evening, the Church, ever a tender mother, wished to console her children by this indulgent visit of the Saviour: a last family embrace, a touching evening farewell, in which Jesus takes pleasure in flooding our hearts with piety, consolation, light and joy.

However, my brethren, if necessities of position put you in the alternative of assisting either at Vespers or at Benediction, we should hesitate much to which of these two exercises to give the preference. The reason is that Benediction is a supplementary prayer, established for three centuries, as a result of private foundations; an exercise doubtless consecrated and sanctioned by the adoption of the Church, but which nevertheless does not belong to the body of the liturgical edifice, whereas Vespers are an essential and integral part of the public and secular office of the Church: they are its crown and perfection. The blessing of the most Holy Sacrament has something which perhaps flatters our piety more, which speaks more to the heart; but Vespers unite us more to the canonical and consecrated prayer of the Church.

My brethren, the holy offices of the Church are the prelude of the chants of the heavenly fatherland. Come then, come often to pray, to sing, to sigh with the Jerusalem of the earth in order to arrive one day at the Jerusalem of the heavens, in which there will be an eternal psalmody, an alleluia without end.[7]

Translator's notes

1. "Salut": the French devotion of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament (*Salut du Saint-Sacrement*); I have kept "Benediction" in the body and "Salut" in brackets once. "Mélodrame sacré" is the preacher's word ("sacred melodrama"), used in the older sense of a dramatic piece with music.

2. "La Bruyère" is cited without reference (*Caractères*, "De la mode"? — my guess, not verified here).

3. The English “kyrie”, “gloria”, “credo” and “sanctus” bracket-glosses in the second paragraph are my identifications of the preacher’s periphrases. The edition prints “pénitence réelle” for *présence réelle* (flagged in the text), and in the list of the watches of the night “la quatrième veille” for the first; both are corrected.

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[1] Attribution to Pseudo-Dionysius as printed; the phrase is not located here.

[2] The “holy doctor” is not named; not identified here.

[3] See Dom Guéranger. (Note of M. l’abbé Pie.)

[4] Attribution to Chrysostom as printed; not located here.

[5] The preacher says “ce *Christe eleison*”, as printed. I have not identified the particular chant he means (perhaps the Advent *Rorate caeli*); not verified here.

[6] Printed “Au sixième siècle, saint Augustin”: Augustine belongs to the fourth–fifth century. Left as printed; flagged. The demand attributed to Augustine is not verified here.

[7] Cf. Appendix I: A, 61; AB, 46. (Editor’s note.)

n° 6. Homily on the Year Sanctified by the Church, or on the Ecclesiastical Cycle, Preached on the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

29 January 1843.

Astitit regina a dextris tuis in vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate. [The queen stood on Thy right hand, in gilded clothing; surrounded with variety.] The Queen stood at Your right hand, clad in a garment of gold enriched with diverse embroideries. (Ps. 44:10.)

MY VERY DEAR BRETHREN, Allow me, in beginning this instruction, which follows upon all those I have addressed to you previously, to cast a rapid glance back over the road we have travelled. It is less for our satisfaction than for your profit that we wish not to let you lose sight of the whole of our plan and the linking of the various subjects which form its development. The nearer we approach the term, the more important it is not to forget the starting-point.

There must be on earth, we have said, and above all there must be in the Church of Jesus Christ a worship in keeping with the nature of man, that is, a worship at once spiritual and sensible, interior and public, secret and solemn. An essential character of this worship is to be dramatic, that is, to reproduce by symbolic signs and actions the great dogmatic and moral facts which compose the whole of religion, and by which God placed it within the reach of all men and made it in some sort visible and palpable. The temple is par excellence the place of worship. Sunday is par excellence the day of worship. The real sacrifice of the altars is the great and essential action of worship; and the sacrifice of the lips, that is, the public and perpetual psalmody of the Church, is the crown and complement of the sacrifice of the altars. It is here, my brethren, that we stopped. Today, understand what is to be the object of your attention.

Astitit Regina … in vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate. The Queen, the Spouse, that is the Church, presented herself to the Bridegroom in a garment of gold enriched with diverse embroideries. What does this mean, my brethren? and what is to be understood by that garment of gold, and by the embroidery with which it is sown? Hear, Christians. The garment in which the Church presents herself before the throne of God is the blood of Jesus shed in the real sacrifice of the altars, and glorified by the sacrifice of the lips. The flesh of the incarnate Word and His word which is another sort of incarnation, in other terms the Eucharist and holy Scripture, the Mass and the psalter, such is the ground of the garment of the Church, a garment more precious than gold and jewels: *Astitit Regina in vestitu deaurato.*

But however rich and resplendent this royal mantle of the Church may be, its aspect would perhaps be monotonous and its tint too uniform, if accessory and varied ornaments did not come to bring out the ground and give it each day a different air and an appearance of newness: *In vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate.*

And to speak more clearly, my brethren, there is in the Catholic liturgy a fixed and invariable part: these are the essential prayers of the sacrifice and the divine offices. The Ordinary of the Mass and the psalter, there is a fund of formulas which return, some each day, others each week; and it is this fixed and immovable part of the euchologion that I explained in my instructions on holy Mass and on the holy offices of the Church in general. A next instruction on the Christian day will finish what may still be lacking on this subject.

But the euchologion contains besides two other parts more or less movable and variable, I mean: the Proper of the Time and the Proper of the Saints; this is that light embroidery gracefully thrown over the garment of the Spouse, a garment with trembling fringes and shaded colours, as the prophet says: *In fimbriis aureis circumamicta varietatibus.* [In golden borders, clothed round about with variety. (Ps. 44:14–15.)] And that, my brethren, is what I come to speak to you of today, it is of that Catholic calendar which sanctifies each season, each epoch, each day of the year by new rites, new solemnities, new words, new chants. May you, my brethren, well understand all the riches of faith and piety contained in this mystical cycle! My words will be very general; for it is impossible to approach in so brief and rapid a discourse the detailed explanation of the mysteries of the Christian year.

An admirable thing, my brethren! this divine religion, which seems preoccupied only with eternity, is again she, she alone, who takes charge of embellishing time. Time, my brethren, do you know what it is? Time is a grace. God did not owe it to us; eternal punishment might have followed immediately the fall of man, as it followed the fall of the Angel. By divine mercy it was otherwise; time was given to man to reconquer eternity. Woe to him who makes another use of it! he is guilty of a sacrilege, since he abuses a grace. Woe to him after time, for time will be followed by an eternity of death! Woe to him in time, for time is a gift of God, which carries with it its vengeance and turns against transgressors! Time is a grace, a grace which the blood of Jesus Christ merited for us; therefore the Church, sole depositary of the blood of Jesus and of the treasure of graces, has jurisdiction over time: to her, to her alone belongs the care of directing all its instants toward the goal of all graces which is eternity. The means, like the end, is within her province and competence.

This is why, my brethren, in all times and in all places, the division of days has been considered as a work rather religious than civil. There is not a single people whose calendar is not stamped with the religious character. And the Catholic Church in particular has declared and defined dogmatically on several occasions her authority in this matter, particularly at the time of the heresy of the Quartodecimans and in the bull of Pope Gregory XIII for the reform of the calendar; a bull binding on Catholicity, since several questions which interest the general discipline have an inseparable connection with the question of the annual cycle. But, without approaching here all that the civil calendar owes to the ecclesiastical computation, all in which it depends on it, let us enter into the substance of the subject, and see how admirable is the distribution which the Catholic Church has made of the year in what the euchologion calls the Proper of the Time.

The Church has divided the year into three great principal parts. The first, which comprises the four weeks of Advent, recalls the four thousand years of expectation of the Saviour. The second, which extends from Christmas to the Ascension, comprises the whole hidden, public and glorious life of Jesus Christ. The third, which begins at Pentecost and ends at Advent, retraces the life of the Church on earth, her development in souls, her combats, her triumphs and her immortal destiny. This simple notion, my brethren, already gives you the key of the general system of the liturgical year. I know only one somewhat important derogation from this classification, and although it depends on ideas I cannot develop all here, I shall not fail to indicate it. The four weeks of Advent being insufficient for the Church to recall and celebrate all the virtues produced by the forty centuries of expectation which preceded the Saviour, she has supplied for it in the offices which separate Septuagesima from Lent. This transposition, which is proper to the Latin Church (for what is the object of our offices in the weeks that precede Lent forms among the Greeks only a single feast, the feast of the Forefathers, which they celebrate during Advent), this transposition, I say, being set aside, the division I

have indicated to you is exact.

First then, the Church consecrates Advent to celebrating the expectation of the Messiah, and this first section of the ecclesiastical year ends at Christmas. During this time, all the proper parts of the divine office, the introit, the collects, the preface, the antiphons, the hymns, the lessons, express but one thought, one desire, the coming of the Saviour: hence in particular those antiphons of the last nine days, which have taken their name from the interjection of desire with which they all begin [the “O” Antiphons]. And if some details of the office, principally the epistles and gospels, seem sometimes in dissonance with the rest of the liturgical composition, it is because, besides the dogmatic thought, the Church always has a practical thought, and in Advent, for example, she wishes to exercise her children in the virtues which will make them worthy to conceive and bring forth the Newborn in their hearts. Hence that gospel of the last and terrible advent of the Saviour, to break the hardness of those who would be insensible to His first and merciful advent: fear is the beginning of wisdom. Hence that austere colour of the sacred ornaments which preaches penance: the world had so much need, it has so much need still, of purifying itself to receive the Saviour!

Secondly, from Christmas to the Ascension, the Church retraces the life of the Saviour on earth, and this second section may be subdivided into three periods: the hidden life, the public life, the glorious life of Jesus Christ.

The hidden life; and here the solemnities succeed one another. Christmas shows Him born at Bethlehem; the Circumcision, under the knife of the high priest, who confirms Him in the name of Jesus; the Epiphany leads us with the Magi to His cradle; then, anticipating (for the multiplicity of the events and the rapidity of time press her), anticipating the mystery of the Presentation which will be celebrated only forty days after Christmas, the Church makes us contemplate this holy adolescent, returned from Egypt where the fury of Herod had forced Him to flee, leading a life of obedience and subjection, escaping only once to make a first trial of His zeal in the presence of the doctors, and re-entering at once into the obscurity of the family where He grew in age, wisdom and grace before God and before men.

Then His public life begins. Baptised in the water of the Jordan, He begins the career of preaching, He works His first miracle at Cana, He goes through Judea, spreading everywhere His teachings and benefits. Suddenly the Church leaves the white colour she had worn until the last mystery of the holy childhood of Jesus, until the Presentation; she resumes the sombre violet, for the malice of men conspires against the Saviour. Soon He withdraws into the desert, and the Church who follows Him there prays and fasts forty days with Him. At last, when the fatal term approaches, the Church takes the colour of mourning, and tells again by her solemnities and her sadnesses the sorrows of the Mother and the cruel torments of the Son. Then above all each day, each hour brings a new scene into the liturgy; there is not one circumstance of the Passion and death of the Saviour that is not translated by some symbolic ceremony.

Easter marks the third phase of the life of Jesus Christ on earth, His glorious and risen life. The alleluias resound at every instant in the temple. The offices of paschal time, filled with a holy joy, tell again the triumph of the Saviour, His so marvellous apparitions, the last teachings by which He founds His Church, confers an immortal priesthood on His apostles and promises to be with them to the end of the ages, while He rises by His own virtue and re-enters into the bosom of glory. The Ascension ends the life of Jesus on earth and thus closes the second section of the liturgical year.

Finally Pentecost opens a new era; the Holy Spirit, awaited for ten days, has descended on the apostolic College; the Church is going to begin her pilgrimage through the ages. Her first thought will be to glorify the august, incomparable Trinity, source and principle of all things. After this first tribute, the Spouse yields to the liveliest attraction of her heart, and hastens to show herself to her children leaning on her beloved, on her Spouse, the God of the tabernacle, who is assuredly her most precious ornament and her most efficacious means of sanctification: *Innixa super dilectum.* [Leaning upon her beloved. (Cant. 8:5.)] The solemnities of

the adorable Body and the sacred Heart of Jesus have not prevented the Church from beginning that admirable ensemble of teachings which, distributed with divine wisdom in the offices of the twenty-four Sundays after Pentecost, form the most complete exposition of evangelical perfection. During this long space, we see the heavenly exile recruiting the elect scattered to the four winds, and leading these regenerated and sanctified legions toward the eternal fatherland of happiness.

And when the term of her annual course approaches, opening heaven to our gaze, she makes us contemplate the felicity of the Saints with whom we shall one day be united; and summing up in three solemnities the three states of which her august communion is composed, she shows us at the same moment the expiatory flames of the brethren whom our prayers are going to put in possession of glory, and makes us celebrate, soon after, the Dedication of those temples of earth which are the vestibule of the Jerusalem of the heavens. Then, all being consummated, when this mother full of solicitude has exhausted all the industries of her zeal and her love, when she has sown on her way all the teachings of the faith, all the precepts of virtue, all the encouragements and examples of perfection; then, I say, the Church makes the trumpet of the last day resound, she calls the generations before the throne of the just Judge, and, to end as she began, she intones the hymn of eternal praise to the holy Trinity, principle and term of all things, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. There the Church stops, or rather she does not stop, for the queen of the ages, the tireless traveller, will begin again tomorrow the same march and continue it to the end of time.

Thus, to sum up, my brethren, Jesus Christ awaited from the first Sunday of Advent to Christmas; Jesus Christ living on earth from Christmas to the Ascension; the Church bringing forth men to the life of grace and guiding them toward the heavens from Pentecost to All Saints and the winter Trinity: those are the three principal phases of the Proper of the Time.[1] And, without yielding to any systematic idea, during Advent, where the Church wears the colour violet, the purgative life, that is, the penance preached by the Precursor, and that preparation of the soul which consists in flight from sin and return to grace. From the time of Christmas to the end of the paschal season, a period in which the Church wears almost always the colour white, the illuminative life, that is, the life of faith, enlightened by the examples of Jesus Christ, eternal light, dwelling on earth and teaching men the humble and hidden life during His childhood, the mortified and suffering life during His public career, the risen and supernatural life during His sojourn until the Ascension. Finally, from Pentecost to Advent, a time when the Church wears constantly the colour red, the unitive life, that is, the life of union with God by love, sustained by the effusions of the Holy Spirit and by the adorable flesh of Christ until the perfect consummation of love in the heavens: such is the threefold spiritual progress and practical advancement of the soul, which corresponds to the mystical division of the year.

However rapid this exposition, do you not begin to understand, my dearly beloved brethren, all that is contained of reason, faith, piety, consolation and joy in this succession of the mystical seasons of the Church? Each epoch of the year brings back new mysteries to believe, new truths to meditate, new examples to follow, new virtues to practise. What do I say, each epoch of the year? I am mistaken, it is each day. For, besides this general system and this continuous march of the liturgical year, an embroidery already so varied and so elegant, a second embroidery still more varied comes to enrich the first and to make a diversion from what an uninterrupted thought might have of weariness; the Proper of the Saints comes to combine with the Proper of the Time.

In the garden of innocent man, all days were feast days; the Church has restored us, so to speak, to that primitive state. Each day her calendar announces a feast to us. Now it is a solemnity in honour of the Virgin of virgins, it is the day of one of her joys, her sorrows or her glories; now it is the feast of the heavenly Spirits and the guardian Angels. More often it is the anniversary of the triumph of the martyrs; yesterday it was the birthday of an apostle, of a virgin, tomorrow of a pontiff, the day after of a solitary. Now, my brethren, what sweet enjoyment does a sensitive and recollected soul not find in this daily apparition of one of the inhabitants of glory! For the feast of each Saint brings a different emotion, a sweetness proper to it; each day

the place of the scene changes, the centuries cross.

In the week that has just passed, for example, it was first the feast of Saint Fulgentius, illustrious doctor of that Africa so interesting to us today, who cried one day in the midst of Rome, already invaded by the barbarians: If the earthly Rome is so beautiful and so brilliant, how much more splendid will be the heavenly Jerusalem which God has promised to His elect! Then it was the feast of Saint Timothy, that young bishop, the dear child of the great Apostle who addressed to him so gracious a letter, the great Apostle whose conversion the following day made us celebrate: an event whose account, as lively and as fresh as if it were of yesterday, borrows a still more piquant interest from the supernatural fact which has happened in our days. That young Paul too can say, whom Jesus did not throw down on the road to Damascus, but whom a smile of Mary conquered in Rome: *Non fui incredulus caelesti visioni:* [I was not incredulous to the heavenly vision. (Acts 26:19.)] I was not incredulous to the heavenly vision.[2] The next day it was the feast of Saint Polycarp, disciple of Saint John, venerable old man who answered the proconsul, when he urged him to deny Christ: For eighty-six years I have served Him, and He has done me no harm; how could I blaspheme my King who saved me! The day before yesterday it was the feast of the first bishop of a country neighbouring our own, Saint Julian, whose name is so well known, whose memory is so revered. Yesterday the name of Cyril carried us back to Ephesus, where we heard Nestorius condemned and that cry of joy resound on all sides: Mary is Mother of God.

Today it is a Saint of the last ages, Francis de Sales, the gentlest of the children of men, the Saint dear to our heart, who made virtue so lovable, piety so gracious. Tomorrow the legend of the pious queen Bathilde will speak to us of the first times of our monarchy; the day after tomorrow we shall plunge into the Thebaid to contemplate that Paul, first hermit, to whom heaven sent a loaf each day and sent two on the day Anthony visited him. On Wednesday, those astonishing words which are like a morrow of Calvary will come from the mouth of Ignatius of Antioch: *Utinam fruar bestiis quae mihi sunt praeparatae:* [Would that I might enjoy the beasts that are prepared for me.] Oh! how I long to enjoy this torment of the beasts prepared for me! *Frumentum Christi sum; dentibus bestiarum molar, ut panis mundus inveniar:* [I am the wheat of Christ; let me be ground by the teeth of the beasts, that I may be found pure bread.] I am the wheat of Jesus Christ; let me then be ground by the teeth of the beasts to become a truly pure bread! Finally on Thursday it will be Candlemas, that so popular feast, on which each, holding a lighted candle in his hand, will repeat that verse of the dying Simeon: *Lumen ad revelationem gentium et gloriam plebis tuae Israel.* [A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel. (Luke 2:32.)]

My brethren, ah! how holy, how sweet are the years, the months, the days such as the Catholic Church makes them! This horizon is never monotonous: and as each year the same revolution is accomplished in the heavens and brings back the same constellations, so all the Christian mysteries appear successively in the liturgical cycle. And moreover, each morning a new star comes to shine in the firmament to light and embellish the day.

Oh! how I pity him, my brethren, who is a stranger to the calendar of the Church, and who knows only the civil division of days! Time, thus secularised, becomes of a monotony, a cruel boredom. It is an executioner. Yes, how I pity that man whose existence would be withdrawn from the consoling influences of the Church! Inscribed at birth on the civil register, informed of his majority by the law of military recruitment, joined to a woman by the grace of the municipal officer, this man knows nothing of the parish and knows only the commune. The twenty-fifth of December is for him only the twenty-fifth of December and not the day of Christmas; the fourteenth day after the moon of March does not bring Easter back to him; Sunday is for him only the seventh day of the week. For him as for the animals, the seasons differ only by the sensation of heat and cold; so sun and rain are the most ordinary theme of his conversation. Thus his life will flow on until a delegate of the police accompanies his remains to the communal cemetery. What a life, my brethren! is it not rather a death?

Or else, to avoid the boredom of such an existence, will society, jealous of owing nothing to religion, undertake to compose, it too, its calendar and to substitute it for that of the Church? My brethren, the memory of it is still recent, what a derision was that republican calendar, composed entirely of names of vegetables and beasts! A singular consecration for the day, that tutelary patronage of a lettuce or an ox! What virtues, what devotions, what resignation can be born under such auspices, which foment the grossest sensualism and absorb the whole man in the brutal possession of matter? Oh! God forbid that I disdain the touching harmonies which the division of time is susceptible of contracting with nature and the occupations of the fields! For, after religion, nature is the most beautiful book that came from divine hands. Considered with simple and pure eyes, and above all with Christian eyes, nature is sanctifying, and, if I dare so speak, she is a near relative of grace. One of our celebrated writers has related in a style full of charm how, in ancient days, and even now among the tribes of the new world, the flowering of plants, the fall of leaves, the arrival and song of birds formed the domestic calendar and determined the labours.[3] Is it not Scripture that gave the type of this graceful language? The voice of the turtle-dove has been heard; the time of pruning has come; the vines in flower give forth their fragrance: *Vox turturis audita est in terra nostra; tempus putationis advenit; vineae florentes dederunt odorem suum.* [The voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the time of pruning is come; the vines in flower yielded their sweet smell. (Cant. 2:12–13.)] The Church herself consecrates these relations and harmonies.

In the zodiacs which the Middle Ages placed at the doors of our cathedrals, one finds three superposed representations which figure the Christian calendar, the civil calendar, and the calendar of field labours. There is a whole philosophy in it: the calendar of nature is only the humble support of that of grace; if it is detached from it, it loses all its beauty, all its merit; it is no longer the holy and innocent worship of nature, it is the brutalising idolatry of matter. And besides, my brethren, how well the calendar of the Church harmonises with the nature of things and with that of man! How well the stable of Christmas where the newborn weeps agrees with the cold season of December! How well Easter agrees with that spring awakening, that resurrection of all nature! How well the Fête-Dieu [Corpus Christi] is placed in the season of roses! How well the funeral knell of the feast of the Departed mingles with the noise of the winds that carry away the dried leaves from the stripped trees!

My brethren, the calendar of the Church adapts itself so well to our nature that it has long been, that it is the only calendar of the simple. There are minds that can never be initiated to the civil division of the year, and who know the seasons and months only by the Christian solemnities and the feasts of the Saints. Candlemas, Easter, Christmas, Saint John’s, Our Lady’s, Saint Denis’s, All Saints’, Saint Martin’s: this is what forms the popular calendar; a calendar, I repeat, full of philosophy, since it subjects and subordinates the least habits of natural life to what furnishes the most efficacious means of the supernatural life, of that life without which every other life is only a death more or less disguised.

I conjure you therefore in finishing, Christians my brethren, be attentive to gather the gifts which the Church your Mother dispenses to you each year, the manna she rains down each morning. For this, study, meditate with care the whole ensemble of your euchologion. Not content with uniting yourselves each day or each Sunday to the four great ends of the sacrifice, and not content with following the order of the Mass and the psalter, penetrate all the particular mysteries of the time and the day you celebrate. May your soul, enamoured of this divine succession of seasons which is in the Catholic cycle, come to feel physically, if possible, the diverse impressions of the supernatural atmosphere of the Church, as your lungs feel the diverse impressions of the natural atmosphere in which they breathe. In this way the divine life will absorb the human life in you, grace will reign over nature, faith will triumph over the senses, and you will arrive at that happy term where you will live, no longer you, but Jesus Christ will live in you. In this way, finally, your years will flow on, embellished, sanctified by the Church, and time will have been for you what it ought to be according to the designs of God, peaceful and holy, a way toward the eternity that I wish you.[4]

Translator's notes

1. Dates: the saints listed correspond to the Chartres/French calendar of the last week of January (Timothy 24th, Conversion of Paul 25th, Polycarp 26th, Julian of Le Mans 27th, Cyril of Alexandria 28th, Francis de Sales 29th, Bathilde 30th, Ignatius 1 February; Candlemas 2 February). "Julian… first bishop of a neighbouring country" is the preacher's phrase; I read it as Le Mans (my reading, not verified). The Paul-the-hermit commemoration is as printed.

2. "Quatuor décimants" are the *Quartodecimans* (the second-century paschal controversy).

3. "The republican calendar… names of vegetables and beasts": the French Revolutionary calendar (days named after plants, animals and tools).

4. "Fête-Dieu" = Corpus Christi; "Trépassés" = the Commemoration of All Souls ("feast of the Departed").

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[1] The "Trinité d'hiver" ("winter Trinity") is as printed; I take it to be the last Sundays after Pentecost, in the preacher's scheme. My reading; not verified here.

[2] The preacher does not name him; I take the allusion to be to Alphonse Ratisbonne (Rome, January 1842). My identification, not verified here.

[3] The "celebrated writer" is not named; my guess is Chateaubriand (on the "calendar of flowers" among American peoples); not verified here.

[4] Cf. Appendix I: A, 62. (Editor's note.)

n° 7. Homily Preached at the Cathedral of Chartres: On the Holy Heart of Mary

5 February 1843.

Supra modum autem mater mirabilis, bono animo ferebat. [But the mother was to be admired above measure, and worthy of honourable memory, who bore it with a good courage.] It was a mother's heart, admirable and courageous beyond what can be said. (2 Mach. 7:20.)

MY VERY DEAR BRETHREN, It is an axiom received by all, and trivial from being so evident, that the heart is the whole man. In our organisation, even physical, everything relates to the heart. It is the seat and principle of life, it is its organ; its function is to purify the blood which, by a double movement, it ceaselessly draws to itself from the furthest parts of the body and then drives back, more life-giving and saving, into our veins. But it is above all in the moral man that everything proceeds from the heart: *De corde exeunt cogitationes;* [Out of the heart come forth evil thoughts. (Matt. 15:19.)] it is by the heart that we are anything. When God wishes to appraise a man, He looks at the heart: *Deus intuetur cor.* [God beholdeth the heart. (1 Kings 16:7.)] In the language of all peoples, the heart has signified courage, generosity, love. The heart is the hearth and source of every noble sentiment, the point of departure of every virtuous act, of every heroic inspiration. So one thinks one possesses someone entirely when one has his heart. This part, in detaching itself from the rest of the body, seems to lose nothing, because the whole man sums himself up in his heart.

And this is the foundation on which the devotion to the Heart of Jesus is established. Physically this heart was the principal organ of a life at once divine and human; this heart elaborated, one after another, all the drops of the blood shed on Calvary. And if the material heart of Jesus is already worthy of so much honour, what is it if we consider this heart as the organ of His love, the principle of His inspirations? When I adore the Heart of Jesus, I adore that transport of love which made a God descend on earth; I adore that love which held a God nine months in the womb of Mary; I adore that love which made Him a child at Bethlehem, that love which made Him work so many prodigies, that love which fastened Him to the cross, that love which makes Him reside on the altars, that love which descends in torrents from the height of the heavens and pours

itself into hearts.

The whole man sums himself up in his heart; to this first proposition I add a second still more incontestable, if possible, that among all hearts there is none more admirable than that of a mother. The heart of a mother, my brethren, is assuredly the masterpiece that came from the hands of the Creator. Because this phenomenon is common and seems quite natural, it is less admired; one scarcely remarks anything but the exceptions, to brand them with a just rigour. But what marvels there are to meditate on the heart of a mother! Saint Augustine and Bossuet have spoken divinely of this work of nature which is wrought in those to whom she gives children. See that feeble bird, that timid hen, that knows only how to flee; well! let her become a mother, at once her nature changes, she knows no more peril. The heart of a mother, oh! who could tell all that the Lord has deposited in it of tender, patient, courageous love? it is an ocean of love without bottom, without shores. Have friends as many as you will, as faithful, as tender as possible; never will anyone love you as your mother.

Nature, I might well say grace, for nature here is on the confines of the supernatural, nature made for you nothing but a mother's heart. When God wishes to speak of His love for men, He knows in the language of men only one way of expressing it: He compares Himself to a mother. Can a mother, He says, forget her son? *Numquid mulier potest oblivisci infantem?* [Can a woman forget her infant? (Is. 49:15.)] No; if she is a monster, she will perhaps wish to, but she will not be able. God has said it: when one has received a mother's heart, one can no longer get rid of it: *Numquid potest oblivisci infantem?*

Now, my brethren, after these preliminary reflections on the heart in general, and in particular on the heart of mothers, do you understand how the Church could establish the feast of the Heart of Mary? And do you not see what a rich subject presents itself to me at this moment? What a mother's heart that of the mother of a God and the mother of men! *Supra modum autem mater mirabilis, forti animo ferebat:* it was a mother's heart, admirable and courageous beyond all that can be said, it is written of the mother of the Machabees. The mother of the Machabees was only a figurative sketch, a prophetic outline of Mary: *Supra modum autem mater mirabilis, forti animo ferebat.* Let us study first in Mary her heart as mother of a God; let us study next her heart as mother of men.

I. I have learned from those who have written on the things of nature, says the great Bossuet, that the heart of the mother is the common principle of her life and that of the child she bears in her womb; it is by the pulsations of the mother's heart that the child breathes. Now, if it is so, what a high idea will you not conceive first, Christians my brethren, of the heart of Mary, which was for nine months the principle and means of the life of a God? So that if Saint Augustine could say that the flesh of Christ is the flesh of Mary: *Caro Christi, caro Mariae,* [The flesh of Christ is the flesh of Mary.] with far greater reason must it be said that the heart of Jesus is the heart of Mary: *Cor Christi, cor Mariae.* By the heart of Mary, in fact, the son and the mother had a common life; her breath was at once divine and human; the hypostatic union and the theandric virtue, which were not in her person, were exhaled as it were in her respiration. In the beating of her heart something adorable mingled.[1]

So, my brethren, the theologians who have written on the heart of Mary have first insisted on the incomparable relations of her maternal heart with the heart of the Child-God whom she had conceived. It is here that the humanity of Mary seems to disappear, and that the distance, infinite nevertheless, which separates her from the divine person of Jesus, becomes ungraspable to meditation. Therefore when I venerate the heart of Mary, I venerate the principle of the life of a God, I venerate the first source in which the blood of a God was formed and from which it flowed.

But let us rise higher; for Mary is mother of Christ, still more by the spirit than according to the flesh, says Saint Augustine: *Prius corde quam carne.* [First by the heart than by the flesh.] It is in her heart that Mary conceived the Son of God. It is her faith: *Beata quae credidisti;* [Blessed art thou that hast believed. (Luke

1:45.)] it is her lowliness: *Respexit humilitatem ancillae suae;* [He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid. (Luke 1:48.)] it is her purity, and above all it is her love that drew the eternal Word into her womb: *Prius corde quam carne mater.* If there had not been on earth a virgin's heart, and a heart as humble, as believing, as chaste, as loving as that of Mary, the Son of God would not yet have come among us. Therefore, when I venerate the heart of Mary, I venerate the determining cause of the mystery of the Incarnation; I venerate that impulse of desire which tore the Son from the bosom of His Father, that cry of love which wounded the heart of the Bridegroom.

But how say all the qualities with which this heart of the mother of a God never ceased to embellish itself, all the divine emanations which passed from the person of the son into that of the mother? When I venerate the heart of Mary, I venerate all her virtues, since every virtue proceeds from the heart: *De corde exeunt cogitationes.* I admire, O modest Virgin, how you are frightened at the sight of an Angel, how you repel even the idea of divine maternity if it is to wound your modesty; but that blush of your face, those words so full of modesty, it is from your chaste heart that they proceed. I admire, O charitable kinswoman, how you cross the mountains of Judea to go and lend your help to Elizabeth; but your swift feet, it is your tender heart that guides them. I admire, O holy Mother, with what loving solicitude you wrap in swaddling-clothes that newborn whom you lay in the manger: *Et pannis eum involvit et reclinavit in praesepio;* [And she wrapped Him up in swaddling-clothes, and laid Him in a manger. (Luke 2:7.)] but it is your mother's heart that makes your hands so delicate and so skilful. I admire with what tenderness you press to your breast, you cover with your kisses that dear child; but it is your mother's heart that inclines your brow on that divine brow, it is your mother's heart that seeks to pour itself out by that kiss of your lips. When I venerate the heart of Mary, I venerate a mother's heart for whom her God and her son were one and the same thing; that is, I venerate the liveliest love that could ever blossom on earth, a love rival of the eternal love of the Father for His Son.

But above all, my brethren, what sufferings in the heart of Mary, in that heart of the mother of God! When one is a mother, when one has a son, and this son is God (every son is perfect in his mother's eyes; the mother's heart creates perfections for her son when they are lacking. But here this mother's heart had no chimerical perfections to dream for her son); when one is a mother, I say, when one has a son, and this son is God, how not die at the mere idea of losing this son? And Mary had, all her life, this horrible misfortune before her eyes. The old man Simeon had driven the sword into this mother's heart by his terrible prophecy; and this sword Mary, like a stag wounded by an arrow, bore away in her heart, and it remained there until the day it was pierced through at the foot of Calvary. Ah! how tell all the alarms, all the sighs, all the sorrows of this mother's heart? Therefore when I venerate the heart of Mary, I venerate the greatest human sorrow of which the earth has been witness; for suffering is not of heaven, and the sufferer of Calvary was a God. No simple mortal has therefore ever suffered as much as the mother of God.

But, I shall say to you here in approaching my second idea, she suffered with courage; for her heart was not only the heart of the mother of a God, it was still the heart of the mother of men.

II. *Supra modum autem mater mirabilis, bono animo ferebat.* Mary is the mother of men, and in this respect also she has a mother's heart, admirable and courageous beyond all that can be said. Predestined, from the first instant of her being, to become the mother of God, she already felt in her heart a maternal love for men. A humble daughter of Israel, she already bore a mother's bowels, and it is of her indeed that it must be said that mercy was born, that it grew up with her: *Mecum crevit misericordia.* [Mercy grew up with me. (Job 31:18.)] Witness of the sad state of humanity, keenly penetrated with the need the earth had of the Redeemer, each day she felt more keenly in her soul the solicitudes of maternity. The salvation of men, the redemption of Israel was the constant object of her prayer and her desire. Suddenly an Angel appears to her, and proposes the mystery to her; she listens, she meditates an instant; she asks an assurance for her purity; then (far more jealous of procuring the felicity of men than of acquiring for herself the glory of divine maternity), notwithstanding all that it must cost her in sorrows, for the Angel had to show her all she would have to

suffer, she pronounces that decisive word for the salvation of the world: *Fiat mihi*, [Be it done to me. (Luke 1:38.)] a word that came from her mother's heart, a heart admirable and courageous beyond all that can be said. Therefore, when I venerate the heart of Mary, I venerate the decisive cause of the salvation of men.

Mary is at the foot of the cross. And how, O so tender mother, how do I see you standing? how has sorrow not cast you down? When one loses such a son, how keep so much courage? Where then is your mother's heart? — My mother's heart! answers me the august Mary, ah! it is that which gives me this strength. I am not the mother only of the Crucified; I am the mother of all those whom the blood of the Crucified is going to regenerate and save. Two loves have fought in me; my heart as mother of men prevails. My brethren, my brethren, the heart of Mary has so loved men that she delivered up for them her only Son. If the executioners had failed, she herself would have taken the sword: *Supra modum autem mater mirabilis, bono animo ferebat.* Therefore when I venerate the heart of Mary, I venerate the greatest sacrifice that was ever made in favour of men, the greatest mark of love that was ever given them.

Mary dwells in the bosom of glory. Jesus Christ, who has placed her on a throne at His right hand, bends His head with love on the heart of His mother. Has the heart of Mary ceased for that to be that of the mother of men? No, no, my brethren. John the beloved saw one day, with his eagle's glance, a woman glorified in the heavens; the moon was her footstool, the sun her garment; twelve stars formed her crown; and she cried out like a woman who brings forth with pain. What does this mean, my brethren, if not that in Mary her heart as mother of men never ceases to endure the pangs of childbirth until Jesus Christ be formed in our hearts: *Filioli, quos iterum parturio donec formetur Christus in vobis.* [My little children, of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you. (Gal. 4:19.)] Mary in the heavens is still the mother of men; and her heart above all is tender toward sinners. My brethren, there is in the heavens a mother's heart that loves us, that solicits for us, that never wearies; a heart admirable and courageous beyond all that can be said; a heart that asks the conversion of a blaspheming Jew, and obtains it; that asks the return to grace of a negligent father, a straying son, a young girl who forgets herself, and obtains all it asks.[2] It is this heart that we thank on this day; for when I venerate the heart of Mary, I celebrate all these prodigies, all these miracles of conversion, of healing, of supernatural protection; all that came from the heart of Mary: *De corde exeunt.*

Christians, my brethren, come with new eagerness to address yourselves to the heart of the mother of God, who is also the mother of men. It seems, in these latter times above all, that this heart has become still more tender, more merciful. Implore it for sinners; if your confidence answers to its love, you will be heard. Implore it for yourselves; be faithful to those sweet evening gatherings; come and pay court to the heart of your mother. Love, a thousand times love to the heart of the mother of men! If anyone does not love the mother of earth, God curses him; if anyone does not love the mother of heaven, let him be anathema! By what side will God take hold again of a heart for whom the heart of a mother says nothing? My brethren, I repeat, love, a thousand times love to the heart of the mother of men! Amen.[3]

Translator's notes

1. The Latin of 2 Mach. 7:20 is given in the heading as "bono animo" and in the body twice as "forti animo"; I have kept the preacher's variants and offered the Vulgate reading in brackets once.

2. The "evening gatherings" refer to the May/February devotions at the cathedral; the sense is "the sweet evening meetings" as printed.

3. The paragraph on the "mother of the Machabees" and the quoted Bossuet and Augustine passages are not located here.

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[1] The quotations from Bossuet and Augustine are given without references, as printed; not verified here.

[2] The "blaspheming Jew" alludes again, I take it, to Ratisbonne's conversion (Rome, 1842) — my reading, not verified here; cf. n° 6.

[3] Cf. Appendix I: A, 63; AB, 58 ter; p. 21 n. 11 ter, 11 quater; p. 28, n. 51l [sic]; p. 32, n. 63 bis. (Editor's note.)

n° 8. Homily Preached at the Cathedral of Chartres, on the Third Sunday of Lent: On the Day Sanctified by the Church

19 March 1843.[1]

Dies diei eructat verbum, et nox nocti indicat scientiam. [Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night sheweth knowledge.] The day which ends carries the word to the day which is to come, and the night gives its indications to the following night. (Ps. 18:3.)

MY BRETHREN, No intelligent man will contemplate the march of the seasons and the periodic revolution of the stars without avowing that the heavens declare the glory of God, and that the firmament proclaims the wisdom and power of His creating hands. God, that is the word which the suns carry each year to the suns, and which the constellations repeat to the constellations: *Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei, et opera manuum ejus annuntiat firmamentum.* [The heavens shew forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands. (Ps. 18:2.)]

It is fine, my brethren, to lend the ear to that divine hymn which results from the concert of the heavens and the harmony of the worlds. But is there need to wait for the expiration of the annual cycle and the complete development of the marvels of the firmament, in order to recognise and salute the workman who made and conducts all things? No. The daily revolution of the earth is no lesser prodigy than the annual revolution of the heavens. In nature the present day never resembles exactly either the day that preceded it or that which follows. So that, as the Psalmist says, each day is going to carry another watchword of the Creator to the day that will succeed it, and each night transmits a new command to the following night: *Dies diei eructat verbum, et nox nocti indicat scientiam.* Thus, my brethren, ever faithful and ever unequal messenger, the dawn never ceases to announce to us Him who, having made the dawn and the sun, has the right to give them laws: *Tu fabricatus es auroram et solem;* [Thou hast made the morning light and the sun. (Ps. 73:16.)] as the varied twilight of evening reveals to us Him to whom belong the night and the day and who sends them His wills: *Tuus est dies et tua est nox.* Thus the name of God, written in characters of fire in the glittering vault of the firmament, mingles each morning with the whitening brightness of the dawn and each evening with the purple tints of the horizon.

Now, my dearly beloved brethren, we showed you, in a preceding instruction, that to the calendar of the civil year, regulated on the revolutions and conjunctions of the heavenly bodies, there corresponds a calendar of the ecclesiastical year, a mysterious firmament where the heavenly constellations of the religious world appear periodically: the Trinity, the septenary of creation, Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, the Ascension, Pentecost, the Fête-Dieu, the Assumption of the Virgin, All Saints, the feast of the Departed, the Dedication of the churches of earth, humble vestibules of the Jerusalem above. You remained convinced of it, I hope, my brethren: no other voice proclaims so eloquently the glory of God, the power, wisdom and love which presided over all His works, as this voice of the Christian cycle and the liturgical year; a divine sphere in which appear the beneficent stars of grace and the mystical zodiacs of the heaven of heavens: *Caeli enarrant gloriam Dei.*

It is fine, my brethren, it is salutary, to lend the ear to the thrice-holy hymn which results from this concert of religious mysteries and these harmonies of the supernatural world. But, independently of this ensemble of marvels contained in the complete calendar of the Church, each week, each day, each hour also brings back mysteries. At whatever moment of the night or the day a Christian recollects himself and reflects, the Church offers him some subject of prayer and meditation suited to that very moment. There is therefore, in the liturgical system, besides the annual plan and development, a weekly and daily liturgy, to consecrate each of the days of the week, each of the hours of the day; so that, in religion, not only each day and each night, but each hour of the day will carry another watchword and inspire a new thought to the hour that will follow: *Dies diei eructat verbum, et nox nocti indicat scientiam.*

This is why, my brethren, after having spoken to you previously of the Christian year, I am going to speak to you today of the Christian day, that is, of the day sanctified by the prayer of the Church. I shall speak to you first of the liturgy common to all days, then of the special liturgy of each day of the week.

I. And, before beginning, do not think, my brethren, that in initiating you into the symbolic sanctification of the Hours of the Church, I have the idea of imposing on you or even of counselling you the diverse exercises of the night and the day which are prescribed only to the ministers of the altars. God forbid that I should so far misjudge the exigencies of social life and the obligations of the family, under whose empire most of you live! Only my whole desire is to teach you to bring your private exercises of piety, as far as possible, near to the public and consecrated prayer of the Church. Happy, my brethren, happy the Christian for whom the sun of grace measures the hours even more than the sun of nature!

Have you not been astonished sometimes, Christians, that the ecclesiastical day, so different from the civil day, begins in the evening and commonly lasts from one sunset to the next? This usage, which perhaps seemed odd to you, rests nevertheless on the most solid historical foundation, at the same time that it is full of a high philosophy. Among the Jews, the day began in the evening. Heiress of the traditions of the Synagogue, which itself had inherited the patriarchal traditions, the Catholic Church composes her days in the manner in which they were created by the Almighty Himself, as the book of the origin of things teaches us: *Factumque est vespere et mane dies unus:* [And the evening and the morning were one day. (Gen. 1:5.)] and of the evening and the morning was made the first day. And this division of the day into evening and morning, I repeat, contains a high philosophy, I am mistaken, a high theology. For the frivolous man, the day begins with the brilliant fires of the dawn, his morning is rocked in the sweet illusions of life; but soon the light declines, the horizon darkens and sadness descends with the shadows into his heart. The worldling's day is that intoxication, that extreme gladness which ends in mourning and tears: *Extrema gaudii luctus occupat.* [Mourning takes hold of the end of joy. (Prov. 14:13.)] For the child of the Church, on the contrary, the day begins with the decline of the light, soon it is invaded by the shades of sadness and the darkness of death; but the instant returns when the radiant star of day dissipates this night and pours out in floods immortal clearness. The Christian's day is that prolonged mourning of the evening to which succeed serenity and gladness in the morning: *Ad vesperam demorabitur fletus, et ad matutinum laetitia.* [In the evening weeping shall have place, and in the morning gladness. (Ps. 29:6.)]

Yes, my brethren, this way of counting the days, which is that of God and of His Church, implies the most exact notion and the most complete definition of man and his destiny. The whole existence of man is a dark evening which a morning crowned with the fires of an eternal noon must follow. Our first life, that of nature, is only the expectation of a second life, that of grace, and the life of grace itself is only the prelude of that of glory; time is the vigil of eternity. Man has sometimes been called a child of a day: it is true, but it is the child of a day which will have no end, of a day on which the sun has set so quickly only to reappear more brilliant and pure and never to set again.

But let us approach the detail, and see how the Church teaches to sanctify the hours of the night and the day.

The night, doubtless, my brethren, is destined for the rest of man; the silence of all nature, the need of repairing our exhausted forces invites us to sleep. But yet will the universe be mute during these long hours, and will the God who made the stars of the night as well as the star of day gather no homage from His creatures? It is during the silence and in the shade of night that God the creator and redeemer wrought the greater part of His marvels; it is amid the thick darkness of a long primitive night that the Spirit of God moved over the waters and fecundated them with His life-giving warmth; it is in the night that the exterminating angel crossed all Egypt, striking with death the first-born of that race of oppressors and thus procuring the deliverance of the ancient people; it is in the middle of the night that the Liberator of the world was born; and it is in the shade of night again that a part of the mysteries of the sorrowful Passion of the Redeemer was accomplished.

And besides, does not the night, so fruitful in prodigies in the order of nature as in that of grace, cover many dangers for man, does it not shelter many crimes? May it not happen that, passing from the sleep of night to that of death, we wake at the foot of the redoubtable tribunal? For all these reasons the night must therefore be sanctified, sanctified by all in a certain way, sanctified by some in the name of all the others in a more special way. While the rest of the city is plunged in deep sleep and private persons, after having provided for the safety of their house, fall asleep on the faith of the watchmen, these keep guard at the gates of the town, and they go through its streets several times. So, while her children rest, the Church, a sentinel who never sleeps, consecrates the hours of the night by song and prayer. Such is the object of Matins, composed of three Nocturns and ended by Lauds.

When the bronze that strikes the hours announces the first watch, the clock of Gethsemani announces the agony of the Saviour, His tender farewells to His disciples, and the kiss of the perfidious Judas: it is the hour of the first Nocturn. Toward the end of the second watch, the clock of Bethlehem announces the birth of the Saviour, the apparition of the Angels and the adoration of the shepherds, at the same time that the clock of the tribunals of Annas and Caiaphas announces the first humiliations of the Redeemer: it is the hour of the second Nocturn. The cock-crow, herald of the third watch, recalls the sin of Peter, the mild glance of his Master; and then, alas! the clock of the praetorium announces the iniquitous sentence of death passed on a God, and the ignominies with which the heavenly condemned is drenched the rest of that horrible night which He spends at the mercy of valets and soldiers: it is the hour of the third Nocturn. Finally when the fourth watch brings back the first gleams of dawn, the creation of the universe, of which the appearance of light is the image, and the resurrection of the Saviour, make us intone the canticle of praise to the glory of the Creator of worlds and the Conqueror of death: it is the hour of Lauds. Thus every three hours, three psalms, three lessons and three antiphons have been sung in honour of a thrice-holy God, author of the law of nature, the law of Moses and the law of grace. The invitatory and the hymn preceded the triple Nocturn, and it ends with the *Te Deum*, chant all full of enthusiasm and quite worthy of the two great geniuses and the two noble hearts to whom tradition attributes it [Ambrose and Augustine]. The canticle of the birth of the Precursor, [the *Benedictus*], that *Magnificat* of the dawn, crowns the five psalms of the chant of the fourth watch.

Once more, my brethren, I do not expect you to accomplish each of these exercises of the night, which most priests themselves, by the indulgence of the Church, anticipate the evening before or put off to the morning before the sacrifice. I know that, in centuries of fervour, all the people went to join the pastors at least for a part of those nocturnal chants; and I have often heard with happiness the Chrysostoms, the Ambroses and the Augustines recalling to the faithful those so sweet vigils blessed by heaven, the memory of which perfumed the soul like a remembrance of the songs of the heavenly fatherland. But, if the solitary cloisters alone have preserved the practice of the holy vigils, the private devotion of Christians can at least associate itself with them, and imitate them up to a certain point. For example, of what do Matins and Lauds of the night consist? Of the singing of psalms and hymns, the recitation of the holy Scriptures, and the reading of the homilies of the Fathers or the acts of the Saints.[2]

Well! my brethren, tell me? Is it impossible for the Christian family to consecrate to pious readings, to holy canticles, to the meditation of the Gospel or the Lives of the Saints a few short moments of the evening, stolen from pleasure rather than from business? And then, as every good is common among the children of the Christian family, can the faithful not, before falling asleep, offer to the Lord and pray Him to accept, as if they came from himself, all the homages which will be presented to Him by the persons consecrated to His service, at each of the hours of the night? Then the sleep of this Christian will be changed into a sort of prayer. And if the Lord comes to knock at his door at the second or third watch, He will not take him unawares: *Si venerit in secunda vigilia et si in tertia vigilia venerit, et ita invenerit, beati sunt servi illi.* [And if He shall come in the second watch, and if He shall come in the third watch, and so find them, blessed are those servants. (Luke 12:38.)] In the painful intervals of sleep, can the Christian not still, if not rise like

David: *Media nocte surgebam ad confitendum tibi,* [At midnight I rose to give thanks to Thee. (Ps. 118:62.)] at least think of the mysteries of Bethlehem or Jerusalem, of the God of the tabernacle who watches ceaselessly: *Memor fui nocte nominis tui, Domine?* [I have remembered Thy name in the night, O Lord. (Ps. 118:55.)] And as soon as his eyes open to the day, can he not turn them toward the uncreated light of the heavens: *Praevenerunt oculi mei ad te diluculo;* [My eyes to Thee have anticipated the morning. (Ps. 118:148.)] pray the Lord, in union with the Church, to open his lips and sanctify his mouth to make it worthy to intone His praises: *Domine, labia mea aperies, et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam;* [O Lord, Thou wilt open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise. (Ps. 50:17.)] finally answer the touching invitation which nature and the Church address to him to adore the God who made heaven and earth: *Dominum qui fecit caelum et terram, venite, adoremus?* [Come, let us adore the Lord who made heaven and earth.] And what I say of the holy vigils of the night, with greater reason, my brethren, shall I say of the mystical hours of the day, with which it is still easier for the Christian to unite. The night has folded its veils; the East is gilded with the rising rays of dawn. An august and solemn temple, the universe awaits a sacrifice; the trees of the forest and the flowers of the fields pour out their perfume; the singers of the air intone their melodies: not a particle of the created world that cannot become the matter of the sacrifice; not a rational being that must not become its living altar and priest. To the voice of nature, man is going to mingle his own. And as each hour of the day recalls new benefits of the Lord and brings man new duties, each hour will receive from the Church a particular consecration, will offer to God new homages, will call down on man new graces. Such is the object of the office of the day.

Prime, by its psalms and its hymn, expresses the sentiments of faith which should awake in a Christian heart with the birth of the Lord [sic: the “day”; “du Seigneur” as printed]. Without prostrating ourselves, like certain peoples, before the rising sun, at the sight of that star we beseech a more resplendent and purer sun to enlighten our souls and guide our steps all day. I know Christians who have the devotion of reciting Prime as their morning prayer, and of substituting on certain days this little Hour for the prayer of the diocesan euchologion. I congratulate them, for Prime is the morning prayer of the whole Church; and for my part, I have no sweeter consolation than to pray with the Church: no other formula equals the formulas of the Church. — Terce recalls to us the descent of the Holy Spirit on the earth. It is the hour when men begin to attend to their affairs and to communicate with their fellows. The Church then asks for her children that the sentiment of divine charity accompany them amid the cares of temporal affairs, and that fraternal tenderness preside over all their relations: *Et nos amoris mutui, arctis coapta nexibus.* [And may we be joined together in the close bonds of mutual love. (Hymn of Terce, Parisian breviary — as printed in substance.)] Sext shows us the sun at the highest point of its course, and the Saviour, that other sun, raised on the tree of the cross from which He is to draw all to Himself. At this hour Peter received the order from heaven to make the torch of the Gospel shine before the eyes of the gentiles and of the universe. The Church asks for her children fulness of light and perpetual increase of love: *Fac pura, nostris fulgeat lux veritatis mentibus: fac nostra plena caritas crescendo surgat ad diem.* [Make the light of truth shine pure in our minds; make our love grow in fulness to the day.] At the hour of None, a great cry is heard, the sun is darkened, the earth trembles. The God-Man has just expired, and from His opened side I see the new Eve come forth, the Catholic Church. A tender mother, her first thought is to pray the God of the cross to make poor mortals love His cross whom the decline of the day already carries toward the tomb.

Thus, my brethren, the four Little Hours, which contain four times three psalms, have sanctified the twelve hours of the day. The evening is consecrated by a special office. It was in the evening that Jesus instituted the Eucharist, in the evening that He was borne from Calvary to the sepulchre. A touching continuation of that evening sacrifice which was offered at nightfall in the temple of Jerusalem. Vespers lead us to the feet of God to render Him thanks for the benefits received from Him during the day, what do I say? to render Him thanks for a thousand other greater benefits whose memory the diverse hours of the night and day have made pass before our eyes: the benefits of nature and those of grace; the benefits of the Father who created us and

keeps us in life, of the Son who redeemed us and nourishes our soul with His grace, our flesh with His flesh; the benefits of the Holy Spirit who sanctified us and gives life to our hearts. Loaded with so many favours, the Church wishes by a last impulse to express her gratitude. She borrows the purest, sweetest, but also the strongest voice that ever made itself heard from Heaven; the Spouse intones the canticle of the mother, that *Magnificat* whose sublimity is an abyss in which the heart is confounded, in which the intelligence is lost.

Then, while awaiting that happy day which will no more have an evening, in Compline, which crowns the office, the Church asks the Lord to ward off all the dangers of the night, all the snares of the demon.

My brethren, what I said of Prime I can say of Compline: it is the most perfect and most admirable evening prayer; the Religious Orders know no other. How touching indeed are those last accents of a soul that commits itself into the hands of God: *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum;* [Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. (Luke 23:46.)] of a soul that, assured that God keeps it as the apple of His eye, that He shelters it under the shadow of His wings, falls asleep repeating the words of the old man Simeon: *Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace!* [Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace. (Luke 2:29.)]

Behold then, my brethren, how the Christian's day has flowed by. The sun of grace, more than that of nature, has measured all its hours. Christian my brother, who have associated yourself, at least by desire and by some brief aspirations, with the sacred Hours of the Church, go back to your couch, with a happy heart and a tranquil conscience. After a day so full, the God who gives sleep to His beloved will Himself come to close your eyelid, which will open again under His fingers one day, never more to shut.

However short the development I have given my subject, you will now understand, my brethren, how Origen could say that a single day in the Church of God sums up all the feasts of the year and consequently the whole of religion. The Christian who has the understanding of religion, says that great doctor, is persuaded that each day is for him a Friday, and even a Good Friday, because he tames his passions and receives in the flesh the impressions of the cross of Jesus Christ; that each day is for him a day of Easter, because he continues unceasingly to separate himself from this world of corruption and to pass into the invisible and incorporeal world, nourishing himself with the word and flesh of the Word made man; finally that each day is for him a day of Ascension and Pentecost, because he rises again in the Spirit with Jesus Christ, ascends with Him even into heaven, to the throne of the Father, where he sits with Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ, by whom he receives the fulness of the Holy Spirit.[3]

II. However, my brethren, the Church, in order to occupy us with fewer things at once and to fix our mind more on each thing in detail, has made the idea of some particular mystery dominate in each of the days of the week. A vast and immense picture, the Christian year is reduced to the frame of the Christian week, as this is reduced to the narrower frame of the Christian day. The ecclesiastical week is thus a development of the day, as the year is a development of the one and the other.

Let us hasten to say it, my brethren: the civil denomination of the days of the week is completely foreign to the language of the Church. Preoccupied with this idea, true in itself and profoundly philosophical, that religion must mix in everything, impregnate, imbue all the habits of our social life, the pagans, whose gods were so many demons, had given the name of one of their divinities to each of the days of the week. The Catholic Church, charged to restore and rehabilitate all things in Jesus Christ, *instaurare omnia in Christo*, [to restore all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10)] hastened to banish these hideous names from the language of her children; and as all days, since the enfranchisement of the ages wrought by Jesus Christ, were henceforth to be feast days, she distinguished them only by the name of second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth feria, leaving to the first day the ancient name of sabbath [sic] and consecrating the first day by that of Sunday. "Would to God," cried the great genius of Hippo, "that Christians were Christians in their language, and that people would cease to designate the days of the week by pagan names! Let us speak the language that is proper to

us; let us not profane our mouth with words that smack of idolatry. May we be warned by their very names that all our days are days of rest and that our whole life is a feast consecrated to the God of all holiness!" The wish of Augustine was never perfectly granted, except as regards the designation of Sunday.[4]

I am not unaware that the Catholic centuries lost sight of the idolatrous appellations of the days; that the name of the Saint, the number of the feria, the first words of the introit were for a long time the only terms in use among the children of God, to distinguish the days of the week as well as of the year. But, with the formation of our vulgar tongue, the excessive love of antiquity and already some sympathies for paganism made reappear among us the days of the moon, of Mars, and all that profane baggage of which Augustine longed that Christians should be rid. The Church tolerated this usage, but she did not adopt it, and, without attaching excessive importance to it, she could not however but feel some regret, for she knows all the power of words. However, to correct the words by the things, and to oppose the holy practices of truth and virtue to the denominations of falsehood and vice, pious and ancient traditions attached to each feria a particular devotion.

I do not speak of Sunday: this day, which is par excellence the Lord's day, belongs to the holy Trinity, and specially to the Father from whom everything proceeds in God as outside God. — Monday, or the second feria, was successively dedicated to the worship of the divine Word, the eternal Wisdom, by whom all was made, and to that of the Holy Spirit, the eternal Love, in whom all was made. Ecclesiastical monuments of a rather remote epoch bear witness to this double consecration of Monday. — Tuesday, or the third feria, puts us in relation with the first-born of creation, with the heavenly spirits in general and specially with our guardian angels: a touching fraternity of the inhabitants of earth and the citizens of the eternal Jerusalem. — From apostolic times, Wednesday has been, in the Church of the East as in that of the West, a day of mourning and abstinence. The fast of Ember Wednesday and the reservation commonly made of the Wednesdays of Lent in the most general dispensations are remains of the ancient usage: it is that the tragic scene of the Passion of the Saviour had its first beginning on this day. — Thursday, or the fifth feria, makes us honour the most holy Sacrament of the altars. It was on that day that the Saviour gave Himself to us as companion of our exile until the consummation of the ages. — Friday, or the sixth feria, is consecrated to the memory of the Passion of Jesus Christ: a day on which God had made man, amid the applause of the whole creation: *Cum jubilarent astra matutina;* [When the morning stars praised me together. (Job 38:7.)] a day on which Jesus Christ remade man amid the mourning of nature and the bitter tears of the Angels of peace: *Lugete, pacis Angeli.* [Mourn, angels of peace. (Cf. Is. 33:7.)] With these words begins the hymn of Friday Vespers. Now I forgot to tell you that it was above all in the hymns of Matins, Lauds and Vespers that one had to seek the thought which the Church attaches to each of the days of the week. — Finally Saturday, anniversary of the ancient sabbath, but also anniversary of the burial of a God, had been successively a day of feast and a day of fast in the Church, when, in the century of the crusades, it was dedicated, by Pope Urban II, to the most august Virgin Mary; a precious devotion which became so rapidly popular that in the following century our old authors already called Saturday the sabbath of Mary or the Sunday of Our Lady; a touching vigil of the Lord's day, whose institution is a translation of this teaching of the Church: that it is by Mary that one must go to God and seek His grace: *Quaeramus ergo gratiam, et per Mariam quaeramus.* [Let us seek grace, and let us seek it through Mary. (Saint Bernard.)] — Beginning and end of the week, Sunday returns, and with it the memory of the risen Saviour. It is thus, my brethren, that the Church, with a holy dexterity, knew how to reproduce in the narrow circle of the Christian week the great solemnities of the year and consequently to perpetuate the high lessons that result from each of those passing solemnities. Each Sunday is a less solemn Easter, as each Thursday an octave of Corpus Christi, each Friday a half Good Friday.

And do not think, my brethren, that these are mystical ideas, pious pasture exclusively reserved for ascetic souls; there is no solidly Christian man who does not undergo the influence of these institutions. And in the

ages of faith above all, they produced marvellous effects. In the Middle Ages, those men, clad in iron, always arms in hand, whose restless humour and warlike ambition the principles of faith were insufficient to repress, do you know how the Church succeeded in imposing a curb on them? Who does not know that Truce of God, which lasted each week from Wednesday evening Vespers until Monday morning, thus comprising the whole duration of the ecclesiastical offices of Holy Week? Admirable authority of the Church! cries the learned bishop Wiseman. One could therefore, trusting in the religious sanction of this sacred convention, count each week on four days of peace and security: the ravages of war were restricted to two days; passion had time to calm, and the disgust of a languishing war made a more peaceful life appreciated.[5]

My brethren, was it not a salutary dike imposed on vice? was it not a powerful means of morality, this periodic return of Friday, with the grave and religious ideas it brought to our fathers? Marshal Boucicaut, in memory of the Passion of the Saviour, always dressed in black, and fasted on Friday. In an old French poem, Luke of Tabarie teaches Saladin that it is the duty of every loyal knight to fast on Friday, in holy memory of the fact that on that day Jesus Christ was pierced with a lance for our redemption. And, according to a chronicler, in the eyes of the people of the time, one of the most odious traits of the character of that Robert with the so well-known infernal surname was his contempt for Friday.[6]

Those times are past, I know, my brethren, and I know also that society has lost much since men are no longer led to become better, less vindictive, more Christian. Woe to the age that has stripped the days of the week and the hours of the thought of supernatural faith and virtue which the Church had attached to them! *Quoniam quae perfecisti, destruxerunt:* [For they have destroyed the things Thou hast made perfect. (Ps. 10:4.)] What religion had so perfectly established, the hand of error has destroyed. The Church had so well oriented man on earth, his eyes ceaselessly turned toward the star of faith, toward the sun of eternity! Oh! my brethren, we who wish to live the divine life even more than the human life, let us not neglect these venerable observances. They will make of our days holy days, happy days here below, days that the eternally holy, eternally happy day of eternity will come to close.[7]

Translator's notes

1. The hymn lines quoted for Terce and Sext are from the Parisian breviary hymns, in Latin as printed; I have translated them without checking the text of the breviary.

2. Augustine's name for Hippo ("the great genius of Hippo") is as printed. The preacher calls the *Benedictus*, the canticle of Zachary at the birth of the Precursor, "that *Magnificat* of the dawn": the morning's counterpart to the evening canticle.

3. "Instaurare omnia in Christo" is Eph. 1:10 in the Vulgate, quoted as printed.

4. Truce of God: the preacher says it ran "from Wednesday evening Vespers until Monday morning" (the traditional medieval formulation).

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[1] 19 March 1843, the third Sunday of Lent (Appendix I, n° 65).

[2] Several of the quotations that follow are borrowed from the Parisian breviary, then in use in the diocese of Chartres. (Note of the Editor.)

[3] The passage attributed to Origen is a paraphrase, as printed; not located here.

[4] The quotation from Augustine is given in substance (cf. *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 93, 3, a place where he mentions the pagan names of days); the reference is mine and not verified here. The French reads "leaving to the first day the ancient name of sabbath": the sense seems to be that the seventh day kept the name of Sabbath; left as printed.

[5] The preacher here names "le savant évêque Wiseman" — which supports my identification in Tome I, n° 37 of the unnamed prelate of "Mellipotamos" as Nicholas Wiseman; I have not verified the work cited (presumably his Holy Week lectures).

[6] Marshal Boucicaut (Jean II Le Meingre); "Luke of Tabarie" = Hugh of Tiberias in the French poem on Saladin; "Robert" = Robert the Devil. The identifications of the last two are mine, from the context; not verified here.

[7] Cf. Appendix I: A, 65. (Editor's note.)

n° 9. Instruction for the Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent: A Summary of the Instructions on Worship, and a Reply to an Objection against Prayer

29 March 1843.[1]

Hoc autem genus non ejicitur nisi per orationem. [But this kind is not cast out but by prayer.] This kind of demon is cast out only by prayer. (Matt. 17:20.)

MY BRETHREN, One day, Jesus Christ having approached the multitude, a man came to Him, knelt before Him, and said to Him: Lord, have pity on my son, who is a lunatic and sorely tormented, and who falls now into the fire, now into the water. I presented him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him. Jesus answered: O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I suffer you? Bring him to Me here. And threatening the demon, He cast him out, and immediately the child was cured. The disciples then came to Jesus privately and asked Him: Why could not we cast him out? Because of your unbelief, *propter incredulitatem vestram,* the Saviour answered them … This kind of demon is not cast out but by prayer and fasting: *Hoc autem genus non ejicitur nisi per orationem* … (Matt. 17:14–20.)

At this hour, my brethren, do you not know a poor sick man whose mind is sorely astray? This sick man is the human race, it is our age, worked upon by I know not what pernicious symptom, I know not what weariness of life, and which, in the dark fits of its inexplicable disgust, asks now of water, now of fire more rapid means of destruction. Frightened at the sight of this restless humour, of this something unhappy which seems to stir at the bottom of all souls, those who preside over the interests of society begin to be troubled. They have tried everything: they had gold and power in hand; they have appealed to science, to civilisation, to philanthropy.

The pretended healers have not been long in coming. Some judged that the evil had its principle in ignorance; according to them, the propagation of enlightenment was an infallible specific; schools were multiplied, and enlightenment was propagated. Others thought that the malaise came from idleness; increase of production and a severe economy were pointed out as the true remedy; public chairs were founded, a thousand institutions were created whose motto consisted in these three words: work, economy, temperance. Others believed that isolation, individualism, as they say, was the plague of our age; that association was the only plank of salvation; and a thousand prospectuses of philanthropic societies of every kind circulated in an instant throughout France, and every day the walls of our cities were papered with a thousand announcements more bombastic than those of the day before. God forbid, my brethren, that we should blame noble efforts, respectable attempts! Every man who works for the public cause, when he is disinterested, deserves our gratitude and our praise.

But behold, after immense sacrifices which have ended only in making the fortune of a few individuals, the cure seems further off than ever; and the poor sick age turns painfully from one side to the other, uttering now a cry of revolt and rage, now an accent of despair and sorrow. Ashamed of having delivered for so long the life of peoples to trials and experiments, like those lives of no price (*animam vilem*) [a worthless life] that are sacrificed to the groping of art and the studies of science, the heads of society have at last remembered that, like its founder Jesus, who went through the streets of Judea healing all the sick and delivering the possessed, *qui pertransiit benefaciendo et sanando omnes oppressos a diabolo,* [who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil. (Acts 10:38.)] Christianity, for soon two thousand years, has been crossing the centuries, healing the nations, exorcising vices, strengthening morality, popularising virtue. Willingly or by force, forgetting its old prejudices, society resolves to employ this last resource; and, seeing that the Christian, ever full of love and condescension, makes the first steps toward it, *et cum venisset Jesus ad turbam,* [And when He was come to the multitude] it approaches, and says to him: Master, have pity on this poor age which is sorely tormented and which throws itself from one abyss into another abyss: *Miserere filio meo quia lunaticus est et male patitur: nam saepe cadit in ignem et crebro in aquam.* I have had

recourse to all the sages, to all the politicians, to all the economists, some of whom even had at times the word religion on their lips, and they have not been able to cure it: *Et obtuli eum discipulis tuis, et non potuerunt curare eum.* Why then has their art been so fruitless?

What will the Church answer? What Jesus Christ Himself answered: The evil of this people has resisted up to now all the efforts of those who wished to cure it, because of their unbelief: *Quare nos non potuimus ejicere eum? Dixit illis Jesus: propter incredulitatem vestram.* It is by faith and self-denial, by the spirit of prayer and sacrifice that the demon to which this people is given over will be driven from it: *Hoc genus daemoniorum non ejicitur nisi per orationem et jejunium.* No, it is not by exciting cupidity, by bowing all hearts toward matter, by fomenting egoism that a moral and virtuous society will be formed. The morality that rests only on interests is a sad morality. Every act of virtue comes out of a sacrifice and supposes it. Now I do not know that materialism begets sacrifices: that is the fruit of faith and prayer. One must love God above all things and serve Him with all one's heart, to love and serve one's neighbour as oneself.

Therefore, my brethren, after all the modern theories, all the dreams of I know not what humanitarian sects, as they call themselves, it is still to the supernatural religion, the religion of spiritualism, the religion of faith, prayer and grace, to the religion of Jesus Christ, in a word, that one must come back, if one wishes to find a solid base for morality and efficacious means of popularising virtue. And that is why, my brethren, we do not cease to make the sound doctrines of the Catholic Church resound among you; that is why we have persisted for so long in telling you that the demon of egoism, cupidity, materialism which works upon society can be driven out only by faith and prayer, the sole source of self-denial and sacrifice, virtues without which society is impossible: *Quare nos non potuimus ejicere eum? Propter incredulitatem vestram; hoc genus non ejicitur nisi per orationem.*

Allow me, my brethren, to sum up here what for two years has been the object of our instructions, whether we addressed them at this evening exercise, in the holy forty days, or whether they were the matter of the parochial homily.

I. Faith is the sole foundation of morality: that is what first we established in several consecutive instructions. There we showed that to expect from all forms of worship the same practical result, to pretend that the diverse forms of dogma are indifferent to public morality, is to resemble the gardener who, to obtain grapes, for example, would plant indifferently vines or thorns. We told you that the true religion was necessarily one, and consequently exclusive, and that on this title intolerance in matters of doctrine was one of its distinctive characters. Error is ready to capitulate with all errors; they are daughters of one father: *Vos ex patre diabolo estis.* [You are of your father the devil. (John 8:44.)] But truth never enters into composition with falsehood, she makes no concessions. So, among the diverse societies which pretend to possess the truth, do you wish to fix your judgment, settle your conviction? Imitate, we said again, the wisdom of Solomon; have a sword brought and look at the faces of the claimants. Some will consent to the division: those are not the true mothers; but there is one who will be inflexible, who will melt into tears, who will throw herself on the sword to prevent any mutilation, any parcelling of the truth: this is the true mother. There is the Church of Jesus Christ, sole depositary of truth, consequently sole guardian of morality.

But if faith is the necessary foundation of morality, grace is its indispensable means. Even when my mind is enlightened, my will remains to be helped. It is not enough to know, one must be able; or else I shall say with the poet: *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.* [I see the better and approve it; I follow the worse. (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VII, 20–21.)] The ship is in port, that is something; but if the wind does not come to fill the sails, it will remain there for ever motionless. Now the only efficacious means to procure the accomplishment of the laws of morality is supernatural grace. Faith is the why of morality; grace is the how. Now this supernatural grace, we told you, man asks by prayer, and God confers it on him by the sacraments. Prayer and the sacraments, that is the double element of which Catholic worship is constituted. Up to now we have treated only of prayer, and we have established the following propositions:

Exterior and public worship formed an essential part of the religion of man.

One of the striking characters of Catholic worship is that it takes the dramatic form, that is, that it reproduces the religious facts which are the base of Christianity.

The temple is par excellence the place of worship; and here we brought out the religious power of Catholic temples.

Sunday is par excellence the day of worship; and here we showed at length the wisdom, the fruitfulness of the law of Sunday, its immense results from the religious, social and domestic point of view.

Sacrifice is the great and essential action of worship; and we devoted three discourses to developing the infinite grandeurs of our Christian sacrifice, and the important lessons of self-denial and sacrifice that one can and ought to bring away from the altar where a God immolates Himself.

The holy offices of the Church and canonical prayer are a complement of the sacrifice; here we tried to reveal to you some of the riches of the Catholic liturgy, and we spoke in particular of Vespers.

Finally, we unrolled before your eyes all the mysteries of the Christian cycle, the whole succession of the ecclesiastical calendar; and we told you how religion had attached to each epoch of the year, each day of the week, each hour of the day, a thought of faith and virtue.

Now, my brethren, you who have followed us attentively, we appeal to your judgment: is there on earth a greater power, a more efficacious means to bring men to the constant practice of virtue than Catholic worship? Can he fail to be a virtuous man, a man fulfilling all his duties toward God, toward his neighbour, toward himself, who offers to God the public homage of his worship, who frequents the temple assiduously, who sanctifies Sunday and feasts, who assists on those days at the sacrifice of the Mass, who takes part in the other solemnities of the Church, and who follows with intelligence the development of the mysteries contained in the annual cycle of the liturgy?

And now, addressing myself to those who complain so bitterly of the vices of society, who enlist in holy crusades for the moralisation of the people, as they speak, should I not be right to say to them: This people whom you wish to make better, does it see you sometimes, in the attitude of prayer, offering to the Creator the homage that belongs to Him? Does it meet you often in the temple? Is it not true that you have given it the example of desertion? Sunday, that powerful lever of moralisation, do you maintain its sanctity? Do you procure its observance? Do you give the example of attendance at the holy sacrifice and the public solemnities of the Church? Do you take great account of the holy traditions that are attached to the Christian year, and do you even perceive whether there is an Advent, a Lent, an Ash Wednesday, a Good Friday, a feast of Easter, a day of the Dead?

Alas! my brother, and you speak of making men better and more virtuous! And perhaps you complain that our priesthood does not occupy itself enough with the needs of society! Is it our fault if our temples are empty, our solemnities deserted, our mysteries not understood? Is it our fault if, by a vertigo which can be attributed only to the bad example of the heads of society, the whole society has taken a disgust at this ensemble of practices, this concert of gentle and powerful means which had naturalised, as it were, virtue in the hearts of men and the habits of peoples? There are still on earth true Christians, men who frequent the church, who respect Sunday, who assist scrupulously at Mass and Vespers, who receive the sacraments, who are piously preoccupied with the various mysteries attached to the various epochs of the year. There are men such as the Church still makes them.

There are other men also, a little different from those. Inscribed at birth on the civil register, informed of their majority by the law of military recruitment, joined to a woman by the municipal officer, for these men the parish is nothing, and the commune is all: it is there that the certificates required by legality are delivered, and it is there also that one goes to carry one’s savings to the savings bank. For these men, the seventh day of

the week is only a common day and is not called Sunday; the fourteenth day of the moon of March brings back only a day like the others, and not the day of Easter; for them, as for the animals, the seasons differ only by the sensation of cold and hot. So their life passes until a delegate of the police accompanies their remains to the communal cemetery. There are the men such as our institutions make them, since a complete divorce was pronounced between society and religion.

Now I ask you, my brethren, which of these men, either those who live under the salutary influences of the Church, or those who withdraw from them entirely, which are met in the streets and in riots, which fill our prisons, which make us fear at every moment some new shock, some new upheaval? Is not the conclusion of this rapid summary I have just made of our preceding instructions already evidently this, my brethren, namely that if we wish to become better, there is no other course to take than to become Christians again?

But let us try, my brethren, to continue our teachings, time advances; and after this glance, which it was important to cast behind us to establish the road already travelled, I fear to weary you if I approach, and above all if I treat thoroughly, a subject.

You may have remarked, my brethren, that I have spoken up to now only of what composes public prayer, prayer in the social state, if I may so speak. It is that, in fact, my brethren, exterior acts, symbols of a sentiment, are very efficacious in awakening it in hearts where it would have fallen asleep. It is to have done much already for the soul to have regulated the exterior conduct. However, I avow, public prayer has real worth only so far as it is the expression of private prayer. So I must speak to you shortly of prayer, of the prayer of the heart. Today I shall content myself with answering an objection which has unhappily become too common.

II. My dearly beloved brethren, because science has established in these latter times some more marvels among the works of the Most High; because the observation and experience of past centuries have led to some discoveries in the order of natural things, man thinks himself henceforth dispensed from having recourse to Him who is the first cause from which all other causes proceed. We walk as if we were under the empire of a fatal necessity, as if we depended solely on second causes to which we suppose a blind direction and immutable laws. I am going to try, my brethren, to answer these false ideas of our age, by establishing, not successively but concurrently, these two truths:

1st. That the discoveries of the physical sciences bring no blow to the power or providence of God; consequently:

2nd. That these discoveries diminish nothing of the necessity and efficacy of prayer.[2]

Let us acknowledge therefore, my brethren, that prayer is placed far above all the miserable objections that are made to resound in our ears. Prayer has its entrenchment in the very depth of our heart, whence escapes often, in spite of us, the testimony of a soul naturally Christian, as Tertullian says. Prayer is inseparable from our nature.

I ask your pardon for having perhaps stopped too long to refute these errors. Shortly, if it please God, we shall meditate together on the necessity, the power, the sweetness of prayer. Happy, my brethren, happy he who knows by experience the holy, the ineffable consolations of prayer! Happy I myself if my feeble words can revive in some hearts the sentiment, perhaps extinct, of prayer! This is the grace I ask of God and of His holy Mother.[3]

Translator’s notes

1. The second part (II) is evidently an outline: the two propositions are only stated and the editor refers to Tome I, p. 429 for their development. The text ends with an expression of hope rather than a developed argument.

2. The paragraph on the “men inscribed at birth on the civil register” repeats almost word for word a passage of Tome II, n° 6 (the homily on the ecclesiastical cycle); kept as printed.

3. “Willingly or by force” renders *De gré ou de force*. “Animam vilem” is the preacher’s Latin tag (a worthless life, the phrase used of subjects of medical experiment). “Sects humanitaires” = “humanitarian sects” (Saint-Simonians, Fourierists, etc.; my gloss).

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[1] The edition prints “29 mars 1842”, here and in its table of contents; but the Wednesday of the fourth week of Lent fell on 29 March in 1843, and the piece belongs with the Lent of 1843.

[2] See vol. I, p. 429, the development of these two propositions. (Editor’s note.)

[3] Cf. Appendix I: A, 66. (Editor’s note.)

n° 10. Instruction for the Wednesday of Passion Week: On Prayer

5 April 1843.

Benedictus Dominus qui non amovit orationem meam et misericordiam suam a me. [Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me.] Blessed be the Lord who has not taken prayer from me. (Ps. 65:20.)

One of our kings wrote one day to his mother, after a bloody and disastrous affair: All is lost save honour.[1] And honour saved consoled that great heart for the loss of all the rest.

My brethren, another king, greater still and more religious (this king was called David), carried away by a moment of violent passion into the most guilty excesses, in presence of the ravages caused in his soul by sin and of the calamities multiplied around him by the anger of heaven, let fall from his lips these last accents of hope: Blessed be the Lord who, amid so many evils, has not permitted prayer to be taken from me: *Benedictus Dominus qui non amovit orationem meam a me!* And prayer, preserved in his heart, reassured this unhappy king; it was to restore to his brow the crown of virtue as well as the diadem of Israel, which had escaped from his head at the same time.

And fifteen hundred years after, a man whom I may well name after kings, for he had the royalty of intelligence, the greatest and most learned man of the Christian times, commenting, according to the sense we ourselves gave it, on the word of his predecessor in the career of sin as in that of repentance, holiness and genius, boldly promulgated this rule so consoling for the sinner: As long as you feel that prayer has not been extinguished in your heart, that it has not been taken from you, take good courage; God has not withdrawn His mercy from you. From the instant that the mercy of God would no longer be for you, His spirit of prayer would be no longer in you: *Cum videris non a te amotam deprecationem, securus esto, quia non est amota misericordia ejus.* [When thou seest that thy prayer is not removed from thee, be secure, for His mercy is not removed. (Augustine, *Enarr. in Ps.* 65.)][2] Which is equivalent to saying, my brethren, that in the eyes of religion, whatever ravages evil may have wrought in the life of an individual or of a people, when prayer remains to him, there is always reason to hope. If I hear it cried after the shipwreck that all is lost save prayer, I conclude, I, that nothing is lost: *Securus esto, quia non est amota misericordia ejus.*

It is this important subject that I come to treat at this moment among you, my brethren, not with the order and arrangement of a prepared discourse, I had neither the leisure nor the will for it; but with that simplicity of conversation which gently penetrates the mind and sometimes touches the heart. The great masters have deployed in this matter all their superiority; we shall not have the temerity to rival them. But if we have not their talents, we can do ourselves the justice to say that we equal them by the sincere desire which animates us to serve the cause of God and to be somewhat useful to your souls.

Inevitable and indispensable necessity of prayer; powerful efficacy of prayer; ineffable sweetness of prayer: these are the three principal aspects of our subject, although we are not slaves of our division.

I can only augur well of this Jubilee and this paschal Retreat for all those who, however far otherwise they be from the fulfilment of Christian duty, would withdraw today from this church with the resolution to pray. But let us enter the matter.

I. To pray, my brethren, for a man, for a Christian, is in some sort his nature and his respiration; it is above all his indispensable duty as creature and as sinner.

Man is: therefore he must pray, for all that is, prays. Here, my brethren, if I did not fear to cast myself into abstract considerations which perhaps would not be within the reach of all minds, I should tell you that, from whatever point of view prayer be considered, whether as homage or as petition, all nature prays in its way. By constantly accomplishing the laws which the sovereign will of God has traced for them, inanimate beings render homage to the infinite power and wisdom of the Creator. And by the dependence which binds and subjects all the parts of creation one to another, it can be said also that there is not a being in the universe that does not pray, that does not implore the elements in the midst of which it is placed, and consequently the God who formed them.

My brethren, God alone subsists in Himself and by Himself; God alone is independent and complete in His own substance; God alone is He who is; God alone has need of nothing nor of anyone; God alone does not pray. But all that is not God, all that has being only by communication, by outpouring from the first source of being, all that is created, in a word, is dependent, unfinished, exists only by borrowing, by a perpetual aspiration toward the sources of life.

There are, in this auditory, enlightened men who have studied the laws of nature. Have they meditated sometimes on that principal law, according to which every substance preserves, maintains, renews, perfects its being, by asking support and concurrence from all the surrounding substances? The created being, if left to itself, falls back with all its weight into nothingness, as a moving body tends toward its centre. The proof that it is nothing by itself is that it is not for a single moment like itself; it ceases not to alter, to impoverish itself; and it repairs its losses, it subsists and grows only by ever begging, by receiving from every hand. Thus, according to the expression of the poet, the withered plant bows its suppliant leaves which call for the dew: *Jovi supplicat imbrem.* [It entreats Jove for rain.] Thus, according to the more venerable expression of the Holy Spirit, the young of the birds receive their food from the God whom they invoke in their language: *Et pullis corvorum invocantibus eum.* [And to the young ravens that call upon Him. (Ps. 146:9.)]

An intelligent and free creature, but a creature nevertheless, man is not put outside the general law which reaches all created beings. Like them, more than they, he is forced to pray. For, although he has a more perfect and more elevated life, it is nevertheless only a communicated life. The river of being, which has its sources in the eternal mountains, only crosses rapidly this humble valley. Scarcely are we born, when life escapes us and a work of destruction is wrought in us. Each day, each instant, we die, if we do not feed our existence, if we do not go ceaselessly to draw at the principles of life. Now there are in man two lives: the life of the soul and that of the body, the spiritual life and the animal life. If man, humbly accepting, avowing his dependence on God, maintains a noble commerce with that supreme intelligence, and piously implores the dews of grace by which his soul is made alive, all the rest will be given him in addition and will come spontaneously to pay him tribute. And all the elements which compose the inferior creation, gravitating ceaselessly toward a higher order in the hierarchy of being, will have no other end than to arrive at the uses of man, of man at once altar and priest of all nature. Thus, by yielding to the necessity of prayer toward God, man acquires empire over all the rest of the universe. A tributary of heaven, he is king of the world; permit me to quote a poet: *Diu te minorem quod geris, imperas. Te minor, totum late reget orbem.* [Because you bear yourself as lesser than … you rule. Lesser than You, he shall rule the whole world far and wide.][3]

But if it is otherwise, if man affects independence toward the Most High and blushes to humble himself at His feet; if, neglecting to feed in himself the life of the soul and disdaining to implore divine grace, he is

preoccupied only with the animal life which is maintained by bread and matter, do you think that in this disorder man can escape the general law of prayer? No, but then understand what happens. The inferior creation, docile to man when he, its interpreter with the God of the heavens, was like the god of earth; creation, I say, revolts against the rebel, and in its turn wishes to be prayed to. Willy-nilly, man will pray: it is the condition of his being. He has denied his God; he has now only one God, it is matter: he will pray to matter. He no longer knows the prayer which is the elevation of mind and heart toward heaven; he is condemned to that other prayer which is the abasement of mind and heart toward earth. *Invocabunt Aegyptum*, [They shall call upon Egypt. (Os. 7:11.)] says the prophet: they would not invoke the God of Juda; they will invoke Egypt with her ignoble divinities.

Do you see them, my brethren, all those human generations on their knees before a god of gold, wood or stone; on their knees before a tree, before a plant; on their knees before the vices that received the honours of apotheosis? Do you see them, those generations for whom everything is god, except God Himself, and consequently for whom everything, except God, is an object of adoration, worship, prayer? And do not tell me that those ages of idolatry are past. Because the human mind would blush to resurrect the old mythology, it is none the less true that pride, ambition, lust, theft, gold and silver, matter, are the only gods of the people which does not adore the true God.

You, my brother, who glory in never bowing your brow before the altars, never praying to the God who gave you being, in good faith do you dare to pretend that you never pray? You do not pray, you say; but why then are you so crawling at the feet of that idol called power or fortune? How you stretch your hands toward that divinity which dispenses money, places, favours! Oh! how I see you there, humble and suppliant! You do not pray; and I saw you yesterday on your knees before a man whom you despise today, and I shall see you tomorrow in the same position at the feet of another to whom you do not grant today a glance. You do not pray; but that other idol, called renown, celebrity, oh! how I see you jealous to draw its glances on yourself! How you beg of the first comer a word of praise, an applause! How you pursue from door to door a suffrage from which you hope some distinction and which will give some resonance to your name! And then that other idol still called pleasure, voluptuousness, that idol of flesh which has captivated your heart, oh! how I see you, assiduous worshipper, pouring incense with full hands on its altars!

You, so haughty, so disdainful, so independent, how you know all the secrets, all the baseness of adulation and flattery, all the formulas of adoration and prayer, all the suppleness and versatility of a desire, of a passion that wishes to be heard! In vain these idols, which you have made for yourself, grant you, in return for your vows, only disdain and contempt, or at least imperfect favours! no matter: you accept your humiliation; a docile and submissive slave, you kiss your chains.

My brethren, it will always be so. Man is not a God: he does not have complete being in himself; he subsists only by borrowing, he is completed only by asking. Either he will pray to God, who, in exchange for this honourable subjection, will place on his brow a crown of virtue and glory; or he will pray to the world, to vice, that is, to the demon, who, as the price of his shameful homage, will pour on him abasement and contempt. But, in one way as in the other, man will pray: it is the inevitable and necessary condition of every creature; but it is above all the condition and necessity of sinful man.

You know it, my brethren, it is written in the first pages of Genesis. The earth produced of itself and without culture all that was necessary for the life of innocent man; he had no need to labour (labour supposes pain). His whole task consisted in an action, a gentle and easy conversation: *Ut operaretur et custodiret.* [That he might dress it and keep it. (Gen. 2:15.)] And heaven was then as propitious to man as the earth; his wishes were always anticipated, and the dew of grace fell into his pious and grateful heart before he had even implored it. But this so happy, so favourable state of things was disturbed by sin. At the same time that the earth, become ungrateful and unfruitful, gives man nothing until it has been watered with his sweat, heaven too has drawn in its gifts and liberalities, and it must be tormented, wearied by prayer, *pulsare caelum*

questibus, [to knock at heaven with complaints] to make grace descend. Since the days, not only of Saint John the Baptist, but since the days of Adam the sinner, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence; in the order of grace, everything is bought by efforts. Prayer, then, which was already for man an inseparable condition of his nature, has become since sin an obligation founded on the one hand on the precept of God, of God resolved henceforth to grant His grace only to prayer, and on the other hand on the misery of man to whom grace is a thousand times more indispensable than before. The words of Jesus Christ, our divine Saviour, are express enough on this point: one must pray, and pray without ceasing: *Oportet semper orare et nunquam deficere;* [We ought always to pray, and not to faint. (Luke 18:1.)] pray under penalty of obtaining nothing: *Usque modo non petistis quidquam; petite et accipietis.* [Hitherto you have not asked anything: ask, and you shall receive. (John 16:24.)]

Do you wish to know, my brethren, how far the necessity of prayer goes? Hear this principle laid down by the Doctor of grace and proclaimed by the whole Catholic Church: Without grace there is no salvation, and without prayer there is no grace. For, except a first grace which is inseparable from prayer, since it is its principle, we believe, and it is the Catholic faith, that God gives His grace only to those who pray to Him. We believe, says again this holy doctor, or at least an ancient and very approved author whose writings bear his name, we believe that no one comes to salvation but by an attraction and invitation of God, that no one, in conformity with this attraction, works out his salvation without new graces of God, and that no one, except him who prays, obtains these new graces: *Nullum credimus ad salutem nisi Deo invitante venire, nullum invitatum salutem non nisi auxiliante Deo operari, nullum nisi orantem auxilium promereri.* [We believe that no one comes to salvation except by God's invitation, that no one invited works salvation except with God's help, that no one but the one who prays merits help. (Saint Augustine or Gennadius.)]

You have heard it, my brethren, except a first quite gratuitous prevenient act of God which awakens in us the religious sentiment and the spirit of prayer, all the other graces are granted only on condition of prayer, *media oratione*, as Suarez says. God knows our needs: as much as you will; but He knows also our pride, our self-sufficiency; and besides He is master of His gifts, and the condition He puts to them is not, after all, so tyrannical, since it is only a question of asking in order to obtain. But at least one must ask. Without prayer, no grace! Now, my brethren, what need have we not of grace! Without it even innocent man was incapable of obtaining the beatific vision of the heavens: all the forces of nature are powerless to attain this supernatural term; the means must be proportioned to the end: to arrive at supernatural glory, supernatural grace is absolutely necessary.

But if grace was indispensable to primitive man to raise him above his nature, what is to be said of sinful man who needs above all to be replaced at the level of himself? What! with this hearth of concupiscence that is in us, and whose impure smoke, interposing itself always between objects and us, makes of everything a danger for us; with this germ of corruption that is in our heart, and this so timid protest, or rather this so easy complicity of our intelligence, we hoped, I do not say to do works meritorious for heaven, but only to keep ourselves in the line of virtue and duty without recourse to the grace of God! There is no need of the thunders of the Church to anathematise this Pelagianism: the experience of all of us gives us the sad right to sit on the benches of the council and to proclaim as loud as the Fathers and the Doctors this definition, unhappily only too certain, that we cannot, reduced to our own forces, avoid sin.

Ah! what do I say? our age on this point is of too good composition: it costs it nothing to avow, to exaggerate the weakness of our nature. The convict prisons are full of incendiaries, murderers or criminals of every kind, whom excessive clemency of human justice has withdrawn from the last penalty; sometimes the parricide himself cries mercy, and is heard. And do you wish to know the ground of this indulgence unheard of in the annals of history? I am going to tell you. Our age is consistent with itself. This materialist age, which knows only nature, flesh, blood and humours, and which understands nothing of the mystery of God, does not believe in grace, in the supernatural help which is obtained by prayer. Not believing in grace, it readily

believes in the drive and compelling impulse of passion toward crime: in that, I repeat, our age is consistent. I too believe it, that when one has long nourished one's passions, when one has contracted an inveterate habit, the moment comes when the will is no longer mistress of itself, when crime is inevitable. Is it excusable for that? Hear the Council of Trent repeating word for word the words of Saint Augustine: God does not command the impossible: *Deus impossibilia non jubet;* He orders us to do what we can and to ask what we cannot, and then He gives us the grace to be able: *Et petere quod non possis, et adjuvat ut possis.* [And to ask for what thou canst not, and He helps thee that thou mayest be able. (Council of Trent, Session 6, ch. 11, quoting Augustine.)]

Understand this doctrine well, my brethren; for apart from it the distinction between good and evil would risk vanishing, and the morality of human acts would become a problem. Yes, a moment comes when we cannot, when grace actually fails us to be able; but then there always remains to us the power to pray, and prayer will obtain for us the strength to be able: *Et petere quod non possis, et adjuvat ut possis.* Yes, a moment comes for the miser who all his life has caressed his treasure, a moment comes when it would be to tear out his bowels to tear from him his riches; you ask him the impossible, he cannot. No, my son, the Church answers him, I do not ask you the impossible; I ask you to pray, and you will be astonished to feel your heart detach itself from its idol: *Et petere quod non possis, et adjuvat ut possis.* Yes, for the weak and often unhappy heart that has become enamoured of a guilty affection, a moment comes when the sacrifice of its life would cost it less than that of its passion; you ask it the impossible, it cannot. No, my child, I do not ask you the impossible. The Church of Jesus Christ, who made my education in the art of arts, that of the handling of souls, knows too well of what clay God formed hearts; she is so gentle in all her means. My child, I ask you one thing that you can, it is to pray, and prayer will obtain for you the strength to be able: *Et petere quod non possis, et adjuvat ut possis.* Pray, and soon you will cry out with transport like David: *Dirupisti vincula mea, Domine:* [Thou hast broken my bonds, O Lord. (Ps. 115:16.)] My God, You have broken, ah! it is You indeed who have broken my bonds, bonds I thought eternal. Yes, perhaps a moment comes when fury blinds this murderer, when a fatal power arms his arm and leads it; but a grace remains to this man, he can pray. Let him fall on his knees, and the weapon will fall from his hands! It has not yet been heard that a man who had made his morning prayer, as the Church orders him, has cut the throat of his father or mother.

Therefore, my brethren, from all our evil passions, from all our impossibilities for good, there is only one legitimate conclusion to draw: it is that prayer is absolutely necessary to us; that there are circumstances where it is our only resource, the last grace left us and by which we can obtain others; so that if prayer fails, we fall into the abyss. Hence that accent of David's gratitude: Blessed be the Lord who, at the moment of so many wanderings that ought to have lost me, deigned not to take prayer from me: *Benedictus Deus qui non amovit orationem meam a me!* I repeat, my brethren, nothing is lost, when all is lost save prayer. Let us try to understand all its power.

II. The power of prayer rests on the one hand on the very nature of God and on the solemn engagements He has taken, and on the other hand it is proved by the experience of the facts and miracles which it has never ceased to produce.

Whoever has studied the divine attributes in holy Scripture has soon recognised this so consoling truth, namely that in God there is a dominant perfection which is the ground of His nature, and which is dear to Him above all other perfections: it is His love. The other divine attributes are only secondary attributes, accidental attributes, at least as to their application. When God exercises love, He yields to His attraction, for love is His essence; when He exercises Justice, He yields to necessity, for justice, vengeance, come to Him from outside and are the result of our sin. This theology, my brethren, I repeat, is that of Scripture, and Tertullian, that hard African himself, has marvellously developed it. Now, if it is so, if God, desirous to love, to pardon always, regrets to chastise and to be severe, do you understand the power of prayer, which puts itself in intelligence with the favourite passion of God, and which aspires only to steal from His justice for

the profit of His love?

The sophist of Geneva [Rousseau, my gloss] devoted a whole page to blaming prayer as an opposition, a contradiction to the divine laws.[4] Yes, doubtless, prayer is an opposition, a contradiction to the laws of divine justice; but the Father we have in the heavens loves to be contradicted and combated in this way: *Sic amat optimus vinci per lacrymas, per gemitus Pater.* [Thus the best of Fathers loves to be overcome by tears, by groans.][5] What do I say? When the fire of anger is lit, He Himself asks on all sides the water of prayer to quench it. I have sought, He says, among this people a man who would come and interpose the obstacle of prayer, and who would stand courageously against Me to prevent Me from ravaging the earth, and I have not found him: *Quaesivi de eis virum qui interponeret sepem, et staret oppositus contra me pro terra ne disperderem eam, et non inveni.* [And I sought among them for a man that might set up a hedge, and stand in the gap before Me in favour of the land, that I might not destroy it: and I found none. (Ezech. 22:30.)] Then, my brethren, reduced to punishing, He consoles Himself no doubt in the justice of vengeance; but only in heaving a sigh, an alas! which would split hearts harder than stone: *Heu! consolabor … et vindicabor.* [Alas! I will comfort Myself … and be avenged. (Is. 1:24.)] And if a man of prayer is found, in vain is iniquity carried to its height, in vain the Lord, forced to make prevail the imprescriptible rights of His justice, conjures His servant not to pray and to let Him act: *Dimitte me* … no matter! if prayer persists, if it holds boldly on, *non dimittam te* … it will carry the victory, it will break the arms already drawn from the scabbard: *Si non Moyses electus ejus stetisset in conspectu ejus in confractione.* [Had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach. (Ps. 105:23.)] And the almighty God, that Master of masters, who lately dictated ordinances with so much authority and sealed them all with His royal signature, *Ego Dominus,* I the Lord, at the voice of prayer is going to become obedient: *Domino obediente voci hominis,* [the Lord obeying the voice of a man (Jos. 10:14)] He is going to do the will of His creature: *Voluntatem timentium se faciet et deprecationem eorum exaudiet.* [He will do the will of them that fear Him, and He will hear their prayer. (Ps. 144:19.)]

Do you see that majestic ship, motionless in the port? A timid boat approaches, a feeble arm fastens the boat to the ship; and the ship is carried away by that frail boat. — Jesus was seated, Jesus the Son of God, the son of man. A man approaches who prayed Him, and Jesus rising followed that man. Jesus drawn, carried off on the track of prayer, and if I dared to say so, Jesus towed by prayer. Fear not for the dignity of this God-Man; for in this He yielded to His heart, He was slave of His nature, for the divine nature is charity; but also He was slave of His word, for God has taken formal engagements toward prayer.

Ask and you shall receive: *Petite et accipietis.* Seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you: *Quaerite et invenietis, pulsate et aperietur vobis.* All that you ask in prayer, believe that you shall receive: *Omnia quaecumque petieritis in oratione, credentes accipietis.* I, I who am the truth, say to you: *Ego dico vobis:* ask and it shall be given you, for everyone that asks receives: *Omnis enim qui petit, accipit.* [Matt. 7:7–8; 21:22; Luke 11:9–10.] Do you wish me to bind myself by oath? Well! verily, verily, I say to you, whatsoever you shall ask My Father in My name, He will give it you: *Amen, amen, dico vobis.* [John 16:23.] My brethren, is this promise of Jesus Christ positive enough? is it repeated often enough, confirmed solemnly enough? So see the blind confidence of the Apostles in the efficacy of prayer: If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all abundantly: these are the words of Saint James. [James 1:5.] Saint Paul is no less convinced: Let us go, he says, to present ourselves before the throne of grace to receive mercy. [Heb. 4:16.] You see, my brethren, in the thought of the great doctor, to receive one has only to present oneself.

And do not tell me, my very dear brother, that you have never experienced by yourself this so positive efficacy of prayer; that you pray often and do not receive. If you really pray, you receive. Sometimes you are mistaken in your request. God, who knows better than you what you need, still hears you in refusing you, at least for a time, the direct object of your prayer, as a father hears his son in refusing him the cutting

instrument with which he would wound himself. You pray sometimes and do not receive; but is it quite true that you prayed? That I-know-not-what that your lips murmured, that of which your heart had scarcely the feeling, is that prayer? I tell you, relying on the authority of Jesus Christ and on the experience of all the Saints, that each time a true accent of prayer came from your heart, you were heard. Yes, prayer, which is the cry of the heart, crosses the worlds, penetrates the clouds, goes to seize hand to hand, if I dare so speak, the divine mercy, and it does not withdraw, it does not let go until it has obtained a favourable glance: *Et non discedet donec Altissimus aspiciat.* [And it will not depart till the Most High behold. (Ecclus. 35:21.)]

Examples are not lacking. I shall not tell you, my brethren, that in the mouths of the prophets and great men of God, all-powerful prayer stopped the sun, drove rivers back to their source, quenched the ardour of fire, drew water from rocks, shut the mouths of lions, healed the sick, raised the dead. By prayer the Saints commanded nature and directed the elements at will: *Et oravit Elias ut plueret, et pluit; et iterum oravit ut non plueret, caelum non dedit pluviam.* [And Elias prayed that it might rain, and it rained; and again he prayed that it might not rain, and heaven gave no rain. (cf. James 5:17–18.)] But prayer has wrought, it always works, far greater miracles. Mountains are transported more easily than passions are directed and hearts led; and prayer has changed the world.

When Jesus Christ came on earth, idols and temples were not lacking, and yet there was no more prayer, true prayer, and because of that there was no more virtue. But with Christianity, prayer returned to the earth; what do I say? Christianity and prayer were long synonymous in the language of those outside the Church as of those within. This transformation of the moral world, which is the prodigy of the Christian religion, is the work of prayer. And even now, if we carry the faith of Jesus Christ to savage peoples, do you know what our religion is called in their idiom? For them too Christianity is prayer; the Christian priests, the bishops are the chiefs, the great chiefs of prayer. To embrace Christianity is to be “of the prayer”; they feel so well, those hard and ferocious hearts, that it is prayer which broke and softened them! Finally, without going so far, ask that sinner, returned from his long wanderings, come out of the abyss where he seemed lost for ever, what hand drew him out? he will tell you it was prayer. One day when he was weary of everything else and of vice itself, he prayed, and prayer gave him back to God and to virtue.

My brethren, what are called the miracles of grace, it is always a prayer that determined them: someone interested himself with God for that soul; a few *Ave Marias* were said for it. The young Israelite so promptly, so admirably, so sweetly conquered to the Christian faith, said on coming out of his ineffable ecstasy: Someone prayed for me. Yes, son of Abraham, someone prayed for you; a brother clothed with the priesthood, a friend as obstinate in his prayer as in his zeal, a dying man prayed for you; the Church of the children of the Heart of Mary prayed for you; and you yourself, you knelt down, you yielded to a first grace, to an attraction of prayer, and it is that cry which came from your heart that merited for you so many other graces.[6] God alone is mover of hearts, yes, I avow it; but the lever He uses is in our hands, it is prayer.

Prayer, my brethren, is the queen of the world; on it depends the salvation of nations as of individuals. Hear on this point yet a few words. One day when Josue, at the head of the Israelites, was fighting against the sons of Amalec, while the battle was being fought in the plain, Moses, on his knees on the mountain, prayed to the Lord. And when Moses held his hands up, Israel was victorious; but if he let them down a little, Amalec had the advantage. The hands of Moses therefore having grown heavy, Aaron and Hur supported his two arms. And so his hands did not tire until the setting of the sun; and Josue put Amalec to flight and triumphed over all his enemies. (Exod. 17:8–13.) That, my brethren, is without doubt the history of each of us: is it not true that prayer has always been the rule, the measure of our virtue, and, if I dared so speak, the thermometer of our whole life? that, according as we prayed more, we had more energy for good? that when prayer slackened in our heart, the passions began to triumph, and that we became their slave from the day prayer was extinguished in us? But if this is the history of each of us, it is also the history of peoples.

So long as in a nation prayer, ranged among the public institutions without which no association can subsist, shall have its houses, its domains, its ministers, its consecrated days, its great and solemn assemblies, this nation will march from prosperity to prosperity. Many vices inherent in humanity, many criminal passions will stir in the bosom of this gathering of men; but there is a counterweight to evil, there is a preservative against the thunders of heaven: it is prayer. But if prayer comes to weaken, if the nation, the family abjure prayer, if the temples crumble under sacrilegious hammers, if the tribe of prayer is mutilated, if the sons of the cloister are dispersed and the virginal voice of the turtle-doves is smothered; from that moment this accursed land, where vice is henceforth without compensation, is agitated by violent shocks. In vain skilful hands direct with calculation and precision the varied springs of politics and administration, to maintain equilibrium without as within the State; there is only one politics that can disarm Heaven, by balancing the sum of evil with that of good: it is the politics of prayer. Without it, the wisest will vanish in their vain systems; the machine is dislocated on all sides; this society will perish.

[Is it of French society that I wish to speak at this moment? No, my brethren. The struggle in which we are engaged is terrible. I hear on all sides the sages of the age despairing; if I believed like them only in the wisdom of the age, I should find that they are not yet despairing enough. The crisis is deeper, the evil more widespread and more intimate than the multitude persuades itself. When the anarchy of doctrines has been preached, favoured in a thousand ways, it is inevitable that anarchy must burst out in morals and in facts. Whatever form command may assume, it is condemned to death in a society that no longer knows how to obey. Therefore, I repeat, the evil is extreme.

Nevertheless, we who have learned from the Holy Spirit that God conducts and directs the nations on earth, *et gentes in terra dirigis,* [and Thou directest the nations upon earth (Ps. 66:5)] and who know that in this direction of peoples, in this government of societies, God takes great account of prayer, while presaging cruel and necessary expiations which the rights of God, so long disregarded, were at last to make us undergo, nevertheless, far from despairing of the future of our country, we affirm that France will come out victorious from all her trials.

And that because we remember the maxim of Saint Augustine: So long as you see that prayer has not been extinguished in the midst of you, take courage, be secure: God has not withdrawn mercy from you: *Cum videris non a te amotam deprecationem, securus esto, quia non est amota misericordia ejus.* Now, my brethren, who does not know, who does not see, that prayer has not been extinguished in France? Yes, France prays, she prays much. Of the whole Catholic Church, France is perhaps the country where prayer has most empire. France is the fatherland of prayer. It is not ten just men, it is thousands of just men that our cities and our countrysides contain. Let superficial men, who see only the effects and never the causes, judge in their fashion the events of here below. For ourselves, we bless only the blows of heaven; that is, we bless only the fruits of prayer.] (1)[7]

My brethren, there was in the ancient and primitive days a people which carried to the utmost limits the development of the arts, and also the refinement of vices. These children of men, as Scripture calls them, applying exclusively to matter that noble intelligence they had received from the Creator, and which, in spite of the ravage of sin, still felt something of its first virtue and native strength, produced each day new conceptions, built cities, worked metals, perfected the pleasing arts, and each day also drew among them the children of God, tempted by rich alliances with their beautiful and carefully reared daughters. Now, my brethren, this people whose civilisation and also corruption will never be equalled by the civilisation or by the corruption of modern ages, this people which the Holy Spirit calls a people of giants, do you know why it disappeared from the earth? Scripture will tell you: *Non exoraverunt antiqui gigantes, qui destructi sunt confidentes in virtute sua:* [The ancient giants did not pray for forgiveness, and were destroyed, trusting in their own strength. (cf. Ecclus. 16:8 and Gen. 4, 6.)] The ancient giants did not pray, and these men who trusted in their strength were destroyed. My brethren, we wish to do justice to our age: on certain sides it is a

giant age. Without perhaps regaining all the ancient and primordial traditions of science, the human mind has made great discoveries, given birth to unheard-of prodigies. The whole universe comes to pay tribute to our industry; days and distances are effaced; rivers are no longer tranquil in their beds, nor mountains on their bases; never have facility of transport, luxury and the comforts of life been pushed further. Well! in the midst of all these riches, of this material well-being and of all the vices inseparable from it, do you know, my brethren, what can save us from the fate that befell the ancient peoples? One thing only. While, attached, glued to the earth, we study, we perfect, we idolise matter; while we live absorbed in temporal cares and the pleasures of life, ah! let us see to it that on the mountain prayer lifts its hands toward the heavens. Far from insulting it or even troubling it in its pious cares, let us go if need be to support its arms; let us multiply, let us maintain those sons of the cloister, those consecrated virgins; let us not regret some aids, some privileges which the public power grants them: they pay the State a tax more useful and more necessary than the one that would be remitted to them. For if prayer were to fall silent among us, if prayer were to cease to purify matter, if sacrifice and immolation were no longer to compensate cupidity and selfishness, if that misfortune which Mardochai besought the Lord to avert from His people when he said: “Shut not the mouths of them that sing to Thee,” [Esth. 13:17] were to fall upon us; the day would not be long in coming when, on the smoking ruins of our fatherland and on the scattered wreckage of our civilisation, the generations could say: The giant men did not pray, and while they trusted in their strength, they were destroyed: *Non exoraverunt antiqui gigantes, qui destructi sunt confidentes in virtute sua.* But it will not be so. The thoughts that the Lord thinks of us are thoughts of peace. And when I see that around us each day prayer resumes its course and finds again its old asylums, I say: The Lord makes His rainbow shine in the cloud. Blessed be the day which, in such a shipwreck, where all was to be swallowed up, has at least saved prayer: *Benedictus Dominus qui non amovit orationem meam a me!*

My brethren, I stop here, it is time; and the most touching part of my subject has not been treated: I mean, the sweetnesses of prayer. *Si quis vestrum tristatur, oret:* [Is any of you sad? let him pray. (James 5:13.)] If any of you is sad, let him pray. I appeal to you, pious souls who have made the happy experience of the sweetnesses of prayer, to you who are not only faithful to the regular exercises of prayer, but who, yielding at times to an attraction, to an invitation of grace, open your whole soul to your God.

Oh! my brethren, how true it is that prayer drives away and dissipates sadness! When the heart is painfully oppressed, when the soul seems to faint and perish, oh! how God then takes us in His arms, presses us to His heart and inundates us with the sweet and ineffable joys of grace! Oh! how I pity him who is covered with wounds and does not know how to have recourse to the balm of Galaad! How I pity him who suffers and does not pray, who never prays! How I pity them, how dry and arid they are, those mountains of Gelboe on which the dew of heaven never rains!

My brethren, you lament every day that life is bitter, that the world is perfidious; your heart, which would wish to love, does not meet sure and faithful friends; sometimes the outpouring of your griefs into another heart becomes for you the source of new, sharper sorrows; the consoling charm of the human confidant changes so easily, so imperceptibly into a seductive ascendancy! My brother, my sister, I am going to point out to you a friend, a confidant in whose bosom you can unload your soul, and who will give you in return only support, encouragement, counsel, grace and strength; this friend, this confidant, is your God, that God who hears prayer, the God of heaven, and above all the God of the tabernacle. Oh! what rest, happiness, light, delights there are in this heart-to-heart! Try it then, try it: *Gustate et videte.* [Taste and see. (Ps. 33:9.)]

Men of the world, women of the world, I hear you say again that you regret having interrupted for long years the exercises of the Christian life, that you would like to believe, that you would like to practise, but that you have not the strength. In a few days the Eucharistic table will be set, the Church will call you to it. Alas! and a great number again will not have the courage to approach it. It is so long since they went away from it! the days are still so evil! the empire of human respect is so strong! there are so many habits to break, so many

violences to do oneself! It is impossible.

My brother, my sister, assuredly I do not remit you your obligation for this year; I groan with the Church that you perhaps do not yet go to fulfil it. But since you speak to me of impossibilities, ah! I will tell you that what is impossible with men is not impossible with God: *Deus impossibilia non jubet* … I ask you, I ask you as a favour, to do one thing which is in your power: it is to pray. And if you pray, God will do the rest; and what seemed impossible to you will become possible. And when another solemnity comes, your brethren will be astonished and consoled to see you at the head of those who advance toward the banquet; and you yourself will admire how all your bonds have been broken, and you will cry out with David: Blessed be the Lord who, in the midst of my wanderings, my coldnesses, my indifference, had not withdrawn from me the grace of prayer! I had abandoned everything, I had lost everything; there remained to me only prayer; one day I prayed, and prayer gave me back everything. This, my brethren, is the grace I wish you (1).[8]

Translator's notes

1. The long paragraph in square brackets (on France) is bracketed in the original, per the editor's note, as a later insertion. I kept the brackets.

2. The Horace lines are given as the preacher prints them (see the footnote). The Augustine/Gennadius, Suarez and Tertullian attributions are the preacher's, not verified here. The Council of Trent citation is my supplied reference (Session 6, ch. 11).

3. The preacher speaks of "the Jubilee and this paschal Retreat"; the date in the heading (5 April 1843) is as printed.

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[1] The king is Francis I (letter to his mother after Pavia, 1525, "Tout est perdu fors l'honneur"); the preacher does not name him. My identification.

[2] The great man is Saint Augustine; the preacher does not name him here, and I supply the reference from memory; not verified. "Fifteen hundred years" is as printed.

[3] The first clause echoes Horace, *Odes* III, 6, 5 (*Dis te minorem quod geris, imperas*, "you rule because you hold yourself lesser than the gods"); the preacher's text reads *Diu*, which I leave as printed. The second sentence I could not trace; it is rendered as printed.

[4] The preacher does not name Rousseau here; I supply the identification of "le sophiste de Genève" from common usage (cf. *Émile*, book IV, which argues against petitionary prayer). Not verified.

[5] The Latin line is quoted without attribution; not identified here.

[6] The "young Israelite … conquered to the Christian faith" is not named; I take it to be Alphonse Ratisbonne again (cf. n° 6, n° 7), whose conversion in Rome in 1842 is associated with the prayers of the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Victories and a dying friend (Count de la Ferronays). My identification, not verified here.

[7] (Editor's note.) The paragraphs in parentheses [here, in square brackets] did not form part of the first draft of this instruction on prayer; they were borrowed later from a sermon on prayer, preached in 1848 before Monseigneur the Bishop of Chartres. (Cf. Appendix I: p. 29, n° 57 *bis*.)

[8] (Editor's note.) Cf. Appendix I: A, 67; AB, 48 *bis*; p. 25, n. 29; p. 27, n. 44 *quater*; p. 29, n. 57 *bis*; p. 30, n. 57 *ter*; p. 31, n. 62, 1°.

n° 11. Address for the Marriage of M. Armand S— and Mlle Julia Le M—, Celebrated in the Cathedral of Chartres

Thursday, 4 May 1843.[1]

Young spouses, the Catholic Church, your mother, in calling you today to the foot of the altars, wishes to open to you the treasures of her love and her largesse. Marriage, which confers rights on Christian spouses, imposes on them above all duties; it was therefore necessary that it should confer on them graces too, both to sanctify the rights and to facilitate the duties. Our Lord Jesus Christ has divinely provided for this, in establishing the sacrament of spouses, that is, in making of marriage one of those mysterious channels which make the blood of Jesus Christ circulate in souls, which all transmit supernatural grace into souls, and of which each besides communicates a grace of its own and a particular virtue.

Thus, young spouses, in the same way as formerly, at your entrance into life, the holy water poured on your brows reached your soul and regenerated it; as later, in the days of your adolescence, the sentence of the priest effaced your faults and gave you back a second innocence; as the tabernacle opened to give you the transubstantiated bread come down from heaven; as the hand of the pontiff made descend into you the Spirit of strength and love which constitutes the perfect Christian: in the same way, today, the consent which you are about to express before the Church, and the blessing by which I am going to consecrate it, will work in you a supernatural prodigy, which will unite your hearts by heavenly bonds, and which will give you, my dear friend, the graces of a husband and father, and you, my child, the graces of a wife and mother.

All of us, as many as we are, have on earth a mission to fulfil; that of Christian spouses is august. To express by their mutual affection a living image of the union of Jesus Christ and His Church; to cooperate in the fecundity of Jesus Christ and the Church by perpetuating here below the family of the children of God, destined to console the Jerusalem of earth and to people the courts of the Jerusalem of heaven: is not this a holy vocation, an eminent function? No, I am not astonished that Saint Augustine called fatherhood a domestic priesthood.[2] The first minister that religion places beside her children is not the priest, but the father, the mother. So, as there is a sacrament to confer the priesthood of the temple, there is a sacrament also to confer the priesthood of the family.

It is then, young spouses, a great and holy thing, marriage, in the eyes of God and of the Church. You know it, and that is why you have prepared yourselves for it, both of you, by all the exercises of Christian piety. I congratulate you on it; for we are so much under the hand of God that to interest Him in so important an action would be human wisdom and prudence, even if it were not a religious obligation. God knows so well how to take back from us what we had refused Him! And often so many sorrows, anguishes, desolations come to punish the heart of a husband or wife who were not Christian enough on the day of their union, and who did not gather the graces without which the accomplishment of duty is above human strength! Whereas on the contrary there are so many blessings for those who gave each other their hearts under the eyes of God! For these, even the pains, for there are always some in life and in marriage above all; for these the pains themselves are softened and become elements of salvation, which means elements of happiness.

You, sir, are going to become the head and support of this child whom her family and the Church, her relatives and I, are about to hand over to you presently, in accordance with the free choice she has made of you. Presently her existence, sheltered until now under the maternal wing, will belong to you. Alas! new bonds, however intimate, cannot break bonds no less legitimate; it is with a heart that bleeds that one tears oneself from arms which have caressed us since the cradle. In the name of God and the Church, I beg you, sir, restore to your wife all that she is about to leave. Be to her in the place of that father whose indulgent and tender kindness she knew, as everyone knew his noble and loyal soul, justly appreciated by the illustrious masters who had invested him with an intimate confidence and whose hereditary and faithful servant he was (1); of that mother, so truly a mother by the heart, whose spirit and name at the same time recall one of the glories of our country (2): that good Monsieur Collin, as our villagers naïvely called him, without knowing that this appellation characterised no less his talent than his gentleness, and assured to the hermit of Mévoisins his most precious title to the interest of posterity, I mean a few traits of happy resemblance to the ingenuous candour of that inimitable fabulist in whom genius, observation, finesse and taste have ennobled and immortalised good-naturedness.[3]

I repeat it, sir, may the conjugal house continue for your wife all the sweetnesses she found in her father’s house! Happiness depends on virtue. Now the virtue of this delicate and pure soul is a deposit of which you will henceforth be the faithful guardian. You know under what precious auspices her youth was placed: happy child who grew in grace, wisdom and virtue among the beloved daughters of that woman whose hands poured out as many benefits as her eyes had shed tears, when other events came to reopen for her the source of tears and dry up that of benefits.

That piety, that religion which presided over her education, and which deposited in her heart the precious qualities you will find there, you will see to it, sir, that you preserve them there. You will do more, and you yourself will always precede your companion by your examples in the path of religion, prayer and virtue. The day one becomes a husband, one becomes a father, life presents itself with a train of graver, more serious ideas; one draws nearer to God, and feels more keenly the need one has of Him.

And you, mademoiselle, what shall I say to you other than what your heart says to you much better than I could? Ah! I beg you, form a just idea of the duties of your new position; they are great and serious, these duties, but the grace of God knows how to soften them and make them practicable. Be the truly faithful wife, truly a wife. Make yourself constantly lovable to him who has taken the very sincere engagement to make you constantly happy. The solid principles engraved in his heart, the gentleness and delicacy of character that one admires in him, are for you sure guarantees of happiness. Sweet relations have already taught you with what tenderness another mother will call you her daughter, a brother and a sister will call you their sister. Your new family, so honourable and so worthy of your own, was known to you beforehand, as to all of us, in several of its members, of whom one, who is still a second father to your husband, left among us lively regrets and a tender sympathy for him and all his (1), and of whom the other makes you today the ally of an amiable family which congratulates itself on having you in its bosom (2). On all sides, then, what becomes kinship for you today was already friendship and goodwill.

But amid the joys and happiness that such sweet relations promise you, ah! do not forget God, do not forget prayer, do not forget the house of the Lord, do not forget those altars of Mary that you have always so loved. That same Virgin, pure and spotless, who was the model and support of your virginal youth, will teach you also the duties of conjugal union, of maternal tenderness; for she was the virgin-wife, the virgin-mother. Above all the day when you become a mother, lay at her feet and on her heart the child she will give you; pour out into her soul all the wishes, all the desires of yours: mothers understand each other so well, above all when they speak to each other of their sons! Oh! young wife, you will be, will you not? a very Christian mother. Society has such great need of it! Yes, it is so high time that solidly religious mothers prepare for the earth, shaken to its very foundations, a better generation, and happier because it will be more Christian. The task will be easier for you than for another, since, to bring up your children, you will have only to remember your own childhood and to gather the traditions of your two families.

May this day be for them, for your husband, for you, a day for ever happy and blessed; a day from which will date your happiness on earth, and also your happiness in heaven! Amen. (1)[4]

Translator’s notes

1. The name “Mévoisins” is as printed.

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[1] (Editor’s heading.) “Allocution pour le mariage de M. Armand S*** et de Mlle Julia Le M***, célébré à la cathédrale de Chartres.” The table of contents gives the bride as “Julie”; her family name, Le Moine, appears in M. l’abbé Pie’s note (2) below.

[2] Attribution to Augustine as given by the preacher; not verified here.

[3] (1) M. A. Le Moine, former usher of the cabinet of King Charles X. (Note of M. l’abbé Pie.) (2) Mme Le Moine, née Collin d’Harleville. (Note of M. l’abbé Pie.) — Collin d’Harleville (1755–1806) was the comic dramatist; “the inimitable fabulist” is La Fontaine, I take it (the preacher does not name him). My identification of La Fontaine; the Collin d’Harleville identification is the author’s own note.

[4] (1) M. le baron Saillard, receiver general of the Loiret, and before that of Eure-et-Loir. (Note of M. l’abbé Pie.) (2) M. Ferdinand Goupil, husband of Mme Rouillard de Beauval. — These two notes belong to the “(1)” and “(2)” marks in the paragraph on the new family. A final “(1)” after “Amen” refers to the editor’s note: Cf. Appendix I: A, 68. (Editor’s note.)

n° 12. Address for the Consecration of the First-Communion Children to the Blessed Virgin

31 May 1843.

Ubi non est mulier, ingemiscit egens. [Where there is no woman, he mourns that is in want. (Ecclus. 36:27 Vulg.)] Where there is no mother, there is suffering and distress. (Ecclesiasticus, ch. XXXVI, v. 21 [as printed].)

My dear children, so beautiful a solemnity could not end without Mary; something would be wanting to the joys of this day if she had not her share in it. After having been so sweetly treated, so tenderly caressed by the Son, it was necessary that you should come to gather the embraces of the mother. Yes, holy Virgin, to complete this beautiful day, we needed to leave for an instant the altars of your Son, to pour out our soul at the foot of your altars. When a child is happy, he must tell his happiness to his mother; there is no feast without a mother. The Holy Spirit has said it so well: where there is no mother, there is always groaning and distress. Where you are not, O Mary, the heart has always something to regret: *Ubi non est mulier, ingemiscit egens.*

You know it, my dear children, in the family a mother is needed; without her everything there is in suffering. The father may be good, very good; yes, but he is good in his way of a father. But there is another kind of goodness which the hand of the Creator poured only into the hearts of mothers. Poor child who never knew his mother, who never smiled at his mother, and at whom his mother never smiled, ah! how I pity him! He has never felt the sweetest emotions of earth. Oh! how he must have suffered! Who could count in detail all the sweetnesses of which he was deprived, all the delicate cares that were lacking around his cradle? My children, tell me, last evening, he or she among you who was blessed only by a father, and who sought in vain in the family a mother's hand to bless also … I stop, for I see tears flow … Oh! what a void at this moment! what an immense half of hands missing in this touching scene! *Ubi non est mulier, ingemiscit egens.*

You Yourself taught me it, Lord, and it is written in the book of the origin of things. When You had created man, You said: It is not good for man to be alone. You had felt it, O my God: it was not good for the child of man, on opening his eyes to the light, to find in the family only a father. You had discerned in the heart of the children of men a need, You had perceived a suffering which would not have failed to show itself, if a smile more gracious than that of man had not welcomed the child in the cradle, if a weaker being, and consequently more sensitive, had not joined its more delicate action to the action of man. Man is power, and power always has something austere; beside the power which is strong, there was needed a minister who should be gentle: and God placed the mother beside the father. Man is the head of the woman, said Saint Paul; the woman is the heart of man. Man commands with authority; the woman governs with love. What power would have of hardness, the minister softens. The mother! that masterpiece of divine goodness; the mother whose heart is a prodigy of ardent love, of generous tenderness; the mother, that being whom nothing can replace, for whom nothing can compensate! Sometimes the white-haired old man begins to weep at the memory of his mother: *Ubi non est mulier, ingemiscit egens.*

It is not good that the father alone should preside over the family: *Non est bonum hominem esse solum.* [It is not good for man to be alone. (Gen. 2:18.)] I accept this oracle, O my God, it answers to the most intimate sentiment of my nature; but this oracle I am going to apply to Yourself, and, if You permit me the language, I take You at Your word. The father is not enough: but then, lifting my eyes on high, I dare to say it to You, O my God, O Father who art in heaven, it is not good that You should be alone; it is not good that in religion I should have a father, and no mother. For after all, O my God, we have not two natures; You have not given us two hearts, one for human affections, the other for heavenly affections. What our heart so imperiously claims in the family here below, it asks also, it demands in the supernatural family. Yes, and if the house is incomplete and sad without a mother, for me, child of man, O my God, Your heaven too is incomplete, Your religion imperfect, if I do not find a mother in it: *Ubi non est mulier, ingemiscit egens.*

But God has provided for it, dear little children, and in religion too we have a mother. She is the one at whose feet we are prostrate at this moment, it is Mary. Oh! a thousand times blessed be the Lord who has deigned to reproduce for us in the supernatural order all the delicacies of nature! Dear children, it is not a mere word, Mary is your mother. You were not yet, when already your mothers of earth had consecrated you to this mother of heaven. They are here, I appeal to their recollection, to the memory of their hearts. They will tell you that twelve, thirteen years ago, young themselves still then, and frightened at the duties and also the dangers of motherhood, more than once, while you rested in their womb, they came to pour out tears and prayers at the foot of this statue of Mary.

Soon after, it was here, under the eyes of Mary, that you were regenerated. As soon as your mother could, she made you try your first steps by leading you to Mary, by teaching you to press your lips, to imprint your first kisses on this venerated stone which serves as throne to the Virgin honoured since the beginning of the ages by our fathers. And this mother of heaven, sharing the emotions of your mother of earth, took pleasure in contemplating you in her arms like a flower borne on its stem, flower adorned with all the freshness of morning, and whose chalice received all the drops, all the pearls of the baptismal dew. Mary then had long been already your mother: *De ventre matris meae … in te projectus sum ex utero.* [From my mother's womb … I was cast upon Thee from the womb. (Ps. 21:11.)]

But today, dear little children, Mary has become much more your mother; for today you have become other Jesuses. He whom she called and who was her son is in you, lives in you. Ah! dear children, while this morning your father, whose heart, sweetly moved, then felt itself so deeply Christian, while your mother, with moist eye, with tender glance, contemplated you from afar, followed all your movements, when you went to present your lips under the fingers of the priest; Mary too, from her throne, contemplated you, she too thrilled with love, and, if I dared say it, wept for happiness. Go, she said in an encouraging voice, go eat the bread and the wine that I have prepared for you; for this Jesus, it is I who gave Him to you, He is the son born of my womb: *Comedite panem et bibite vinum quod miscui vobis.* [Eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you. (Prov. 9:5.)] Mother, mother, behold your sons! What do I say? behold your Son: do you not recognise Him? He lives in each of these children, He reposes in their heart, He is veiled under their features.

Dear little children, you have then a mother in the heavens, a mother in religion; and at this hour you come to tell this mother that you wish to love her always. You come to tell her that you are afraid, that you are going to re-enter a perfidious world, that you wish to persevere, but that you fear you have not the strength. You come to ask her support for all your life, to place yourselves under her virginal and maternal aegis to remain always pure as you are at this moment. Well, yes, dear children: you will always be pure as you are today, if you always love Mary. With her there are only victories; without her there are only defeats. If the sun were to set on a single one of your days without your having invoked Mary, that day would be a fatal day for your innocence, and the angel of your purity, gathering up the lilies he loved to scatter with full hands on your path, would henceforth shed inconsolable tears. But love Mary every day of your life, and every day of your life you will be pure. Christian parents, this morning you were moved and you shed tears, and we shed them like you; for we share, to a degree known only to him who has made the heart of the priest, all the emotions of fatherhood. What passes at this moment is no less touching, is no less decisive. Father, father, ask Mary that the heart of your son be always in her hands, skilful, intelligent to direct hearts, to master all their movements! Father, find again here, at this moment, the sentiment of prayer. You felt it this morning, did you not? the God of the tabernacle is indeed the living and true God. My brother, my brother, to you parents who hear me, if the evil times in which we live had made you forget the God of your fathers, today be converted to the God of your children. In descending into the heart of your son, of your daughter, Jesus this morning wished something other than the heart of the children; He wished the heart of the fathers: *Ut convertat cor patrum ad filios.* [That he may turn the heart of the fathers to the children. (cf. Mal. 4:6; Luke

1:17.)] Father, today the religion of your sons has reconquered you to the religion of your forefathers.

Come near, young child (1); fear not; it is to a mother that you are going to speak in the name of all her children (2).[1]

Translator's notes

1. "Mère, mère, voilà vos fils! Que dis-je? voilà votre Fils" is rendered as printed; the speaker addresses Mary's own words to the Son in the communicants, as I read it.

2. The scripture citation "ch. XXXVI, v. 21" is printed so; the verse in the Vulgate is 36:27 (I give both).

[1] (1) Adine de la Rochejaquelein. (Note of M. l'abbé Pie.) (2) Cf. Appendix I: A, 70. (Editor's note.)

n° 13. Address Delivered in the Chapel of the Children of the Heart of Mary, before Giving the Scapular to Mlle Adine de la Rochejaquelein and Her Governess Miss Brown

4 June 1843.[1]

Fortitudo et decor indumentum ejus. [Strength and beauty are her clothing. (Prov. 31:25.)] Her garment gives strength and beauty. (Prov. ch. XXXI, v. 25.)

How happy I am to clothe you today, my dear child, and you too, mademoiselle, with the livery of Mary, and to rank you among her most privileged children! The grace you are about to receive today will be for each of you the complement of the innumerable graces you have already received.

You, mademoiselle, oh! how much you have to bless the Lord for all that He has done for you! You alone know the marvels He has wrought in your favour, the providential ways, so astonishing, so merciful, by which He made you pass from the darkness of error into His admirable light. Clothed with the shield of faith, I come today to clothe you with a new shield, the shield of Mary, the shield of innocence, of gentleness, of charity.

Your fathers, before the unhappy days of the schism, were famous for their love of Mary, and especially for their zeal for the devotion of the holy scapular. England, in fact, is the fatherland, the birthplace of the scapular. He was English by birth, that Blessed Simon Stock, the glory of Carmel, to whom Mary presented one day this little habit that I am going to give you presently, making such beautiful promises to all who should wear it: "Behold," she said, "the sign of my confraternity for my brethren; it is the pledge of the peaceful and eternal covenant that I make with you; it is an assurance of salvation, a safeguard in dangers. He who shall die with this habit shall not be lost for ever."[2] My dear daughter, I repeat to you these words that the Virgin of the heavens addressed to your compatriot: "Behold the pledge of the peaceful and eternal covenant that Mary makes with you; behold an assurance of salvation, a safeguard in dangers. If you die with this habit, you will not be lost for ever."

And you, dear little child, oh! how happy your heart must be at this moment! What graces in these last days have rained into your heart! Reconciled by the blood of Jesus Christ, nourished with His adorable flesh, filled with the presence and gifts of the Holy Spirit, what was there left for you to desire? Dear child, the hand of our venerated pontiff armed you a soldier of Jesus Christ. Today I come to arm you a soldier of Mary. Your sex, whose happy portion is gentleness and peace, does not mingle in the camps of the age. Save for a few providential beings, like that brave and pious Joan whom you love so much, young maidens are not found in the camps, nor on the field of battle. But in the Church everyone is a soldier, and the woman as well as the man has a right to the title of knight of Christ and of His mother. Dear little child, it is in this holy and spiritual militia that you will exercise your courage, and that you will deploy that energy which your

illustrious parents showed in the defence of their country and their king.

You know well those memorable words which belong to history and which the remotest ages will love to repeat: “If I advance, follow me; if I retreat, kill me; if I die, avenge me.”[3] Well, be, my child, the standard-bearer of virtue, of innocence, of affability, of nobility of soul. May all follow you on this field of honour where one fights oneself, where one excites oneself to Christian perfection, to the exercise of private and public virtues. Yes, dear child, may those whose model you are one day to be, in imitating your examples, enrich themselves with all that is true, all that is chaste, all that is just, all that is holy, all that is lovable, all that is noble, all that is honourable; in a word, with all the virtues you found around you at birth and in the gathered traditions of your glorious family: *Quaecumque sunt vera, quaecumque pudica, quaecumque justa, quaecumque sancta, quaecumque amabilia, quaecumque bonae famae, si qua virtus, si qua laus disciplinae, haec cogitate.* [Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline, think on these things. (Phil. 4:8.)]

Dear little child, all your life you will remember, will you not? having come to clothe yourself here with the garment of Mary, in a house opened by your good and tender grandmother as an asylum for the purity, for the innocence of the young maidens of Chartres. These grateful children will pray long, will pray always for you. There is not a single place in the world where you and yours have more right to invoke the grace of God and the goodness of His Mother than this sanctuary of the Heart of the Virgin Mary. Oh! if the beloved and venerated forefather who represented, in that picture, those young girls in blue dress, prostrate at the foot of the altar, were witness of what is about to be accomplished, how his brush would love to render this touching scene: his dear little Adine, assisted by her mother and her grandmother, surrounded by the orphans who bless the offshoot of their benefactress, receiving the livery of Carmel which her piety has asked as the completion of the most beautiful and happiest week of her life!

Courage, dear child! If it is written that God rewards even to the tenth generation, and beyond, the virtues and good works of fathers, a thousand blessings, at this moment, are going to descend on your head. From this place will go with you graces which will follow your traces, which will accompany you in all the positions of life, and which you will transmit again to those who come after you. Oh! how Mary is disposed to adopt you for her daughter and for her sister, at the foot of this altar, where arms accustomed to caress you so tenderly have brought to her and present to her daily so many other children (1)![4]

Translator’s notes

1. The “pontife vénéré” who confirmed the younger girl is the bishop; he is not named in the text.

2. That the grandfather painted the picture is how I read the sentence (“l’aïeul … qui a représenté, dans ce tableau …”); no more is known to me from the text.

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[1] 4 June 1843.

[2] The words are the traditional “Sabbatine”-type scapular promise as the preacher gives it; I have not checked their sources.

[3] Words famously attributed to Henri de La Rochejaquelein (Vendée, 1793); the preacher does not name him. My identification.

[4] (1) Cf. Appendix I: A, 71. (Editor’s note.)

n° 14. Homily for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost: On the Prayers that Make Up the Mass of the Day; Forgiveness of Injuries and Love of Enemies

9 July 1843.

Noli aemulari ut maligneris: quoniam qui malignantur exterminabuntur; sustinentes autem Dominum, ipsi haereditabunt terram. [Be not emulous to do evil: for evildoers shall be cut off; but they that wait upon the

Lord shall inherit the land. (Ps. 36:8–9.)]

Do not let yourselves go to rival the wicked in malignity, for those who plot malignities shall be exterminated; but those who count only on the Lord, these shall have the earth for their portion.

(Words taken from the Introit of the Mass.)

My very dear brethren, For a long series of instructions I have spoken with you of the holy offices of the Church, I have unrolled before your eyes the majestic picture of the Catholic liturgy, I have tried to give you the key to the general system of the Christian year. A few questions of the highest practical importance remain still to be treated.

Holy Scripture, and in particular the Psalms, are the principal matter and form the richest fund of the liturgy; I promised to give you some instructions on the reading of the holy books, and some commentaries on the Psalms most frequently used in the offices. The cult of the Saints, the recital of their actions, is another fruitful source from which the liturgy often draws; and I shall devote some instructions to speaking to you of the confidence we ought to have in the Saints, and of the importance of studying their lives. On this occasion I shall treat of miracles and of the supernatural relations of God with His creatures. Finally, prayer for the faithful departed who await the place of refreshment, is found often in the office of the Church and in the adorable sacrifice of the altar; and I shall try to interest your piety in the souls in purgatory, showing you all that you can do for them, all that they can do for you. There is again, you see, my brethren, ample matter of teaching, always apropos of the liturgy of the Church: reading of the sacred Books; explanation of the Psalms; cult of the Saints; study of their lives; appreciation of the phenomena of the supernatural order; prayer for the dead. All these questions are essentially practical, alas! and I would dare to say that they have the sad merit of novelty, because of the profound oblivion into which most of the things have fallen which formerly interested in the highest degree the sentiment of Christian piety. Today, my brethren, I shall not yet approach any of these subjects. I wished to justify, by a particular example, what I told you of the general composition of the holy offices of the Church, and for that I am going to try to give you some familiar developments on the office of this day. The Church celebrates today no solemnity, it is a simple Sunday after Pentecost; the liturgy, consequently, is reduced this day to its simplest expression. Yet see, my brethren, what immense matter the Church is about to offer to your meditations! A single one of the words sung at the Mass of this day can occupy your minds and hearts throughout this whole week.

The office of each of the Sundays after Pentecost contains a practical teaching, applicable to some of the positions of life. The practical teaching of the office of the fifth Sunday after Pentecost is the conduct to hold toward our enemies, toward those who are ill-disposed to us. The Church, having to develop the Catholic principles on this matter, is going to borrow successively from David, from Saint Peter, from Ecclesiasticus, from Saint James, from Our Lord Jesus Christ, from Saint Paul, supernatural maxims of wisdom which she herself will pass into her Orations and her petitions.

But before I approach the words of the Introit, which form the magnificent opening of the sacrifice, I allow you, my very dear brother, my very dear sister, to reveal to me the wound of your heart, to pour out into my soul the bitternesses of yours. Ah! you tell me, my heart is ulcerated; I am the object of the ill-will, of the calumny of a false brother, of a perfidious and dangerous friend. Often I have the grief to learn and to see that he who caresses and flatters me in my presence has for me only deceptive consideration, calculated tendernesses, hypocritical appearances; scarcely has he turned his head when his vain and jealous soul goes pouring itself everywhere and at every turn in malign words, in injurious suspicions, in calumnious imputations: his whole life and his most constant occupation is a hostile chatter against me: *Verbis malignis garriens in nos.* [Prating against us with malicious words. (3 John 10.)] At last I am driven to extremity; I wish to lay bare all his perfidious machinations; I wish to reveal his criminal plots; I wish in my turn to bring down on him all the hatred he deserves, and to apply to him the penalty of retaliation.

Stop here, my very dear brother. I understand better than anyone your vexatious position; I sympathise with it. But listen to me, or rather listen to the Church. The offices of this day are addressed to you, precisely to you. My brother, my brother, hear these first words which opened the great action of the sacrifice, and which are borrowed from the royal Prophet, that is, from the man in the world who has perhaps most experienced the injustices of hatred and the rigours of jealousy: *Desine ab ira et derelinque furorem:* [Cease from anger, and leave rage. (Ps. 36:8.)] calm, calm this movement of anger; renounce this project of vengeance. *Noli aemulari ut maligneris:* Ah! do not go and enter into competition of malignity with him of whom you have to complain. Do not go and say: he has offended me, I shall pay him back; if he knows how to sting, to wound, I know his weak side, and I am going to avenge myself. No, my son: *Noli aemulari ut maligneris;* this sad emulation is not worthy of you, and it would not be salutary to you: *Quoniam qui malignantur, exterminabuntur.* Patience, patience! those who dream, who plot evil, who weave a perfidious web, with whatever industry they hide their game, however basely they shelter under the darkness, those in the end will always be confounded; the rigour of God, the just contempt of men, will fall on them.

My son, believe the experience of him who suffered everything from a Saul, from an Absalom, from so many envious: *Quoniam qui malignantur, exterminabuntur.* However skilfully they are handled, the weapons of iniquity always turn against those who sharpen them; whereas on the contrary those who put their confidence in the Lord, who leave to God the care of their justification, who, instead of following the wicked on the ground of his perfidies, instead of unravelling the threads of his inextricable trickeries, keep their eyes fixed toward the heavens, these will end by gathering the inheritance of the earth: yes, of the earth. Heaven without doubt will one day be their portion; but a beginning of justice will be rendered them here below; some rays detached from the immortal aureole will descend on their brow; and the moment will come when these predestined of eternity will be called and will in effect be the happy of the earth: *Sustinentes autem Dominum, ipsi haereditabunt terram.*

Those, my brethren, are the first words that the Church addressed to you this morning; and after having made you sing: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost! to engrave them better in your mind and heart, she repeated them to you a second time: My son, calm this effervescence, moderate your indignation; do not rival those who plot evil, for the instruments of malignity shall be confounded; but those who lean on the Lord, these shall inherit the earth. And, already gathering these first teachings in a prayer which she calls the Collect, the Church says to the Lord: “O God, in whose sight the reconciliation of brethren is an acceptable sacrifice, grant that, by the forgetting of all the injuries we have received, we may obtain from You the pardon of our faults which we come to implore: Through Jesus Christ Our Lord.”[1]

My brethren, how I pity the hearts that do not feel all that there is of spirit and life in these prayers of the Church! With the grace of God, I would give up all the productions of science for the preservation of a single one of the collects of the Mass; there is not one that is not marked with that supernatural seal that the Spouse of Jesus Christ imprints on all she does: nothing human resembles the prayers of the Church. But here is another voice making itself heard. Just now, in the Introit, it was that of David, authority already so imposing, above all in the present question. Now it is the voice of Saint Peter the Apostle: *Lectio epistolae beati Petri apostoli.* [A reading from the epistle of blessed Peter the apostle.]

The letters of Saint Peter, my brethren, have a particular character, both of authority and of gentleness. They are like the first encyclical letters emanating from the apostolic See. Saint Paul discourses in his epistles when it is a question of dogma; Saint Peter expounds briefly and definitively. The one is doctor, the other is pope. When it is a question of precepts of morals, Saint Paul yields to the drive of zeal, and sometimes is animated with a just indignation; Saint Peter speaks always with calm and condescension. The one is missionary; the other is pastor. The epistles of Saint Peter are the letters of a father to his children: the paternal sentiment abounds in them; at every word one finds the pope again, that is, the father *par excellence.* And this language of Peter, my brethren, is always the language of his successors. For whoever has studied

the noble gravity, the ineffable suavity of the pontifical style, the resemblance is striking. The letters issued by Gregory XVI in 1843 are written still in the idiom of the two epistles of Saint Peter. No other human mouth speaks the language of the popes. Counterfeit is impossible: one does not counterfeit the voice of a father.

Now, my brethren, let us cross in spirit eighteen centuries; let us transport ourselves into the catacombs; the faithful have just received a secret letter from their first pastor, a letter of the apostle Peter, the head of the Church: My dearly beloved, *carissimi.* Ah! have all but one spirit, *omnes unanimes*, and having but one spirit, have also but one heart; when thoughts are common, affections must be reciprocal, *omnes unanimes, compatientes;* let a sweet fraternity reign among you; love to share with your brethren all you have, let community of ideas, of wills be completed by community of interests; make, in spirit, in heart and in purse, but one and the same family of brothers, *fraternitatis amatores.* [All of one mind, having compassion one of another, lovers of the brotherhood. (1 Pet. 3:8.)] And you know, my brethren, that this language of the Pontiff of Rome was understood by the faithful: *Erant cor unum et anima una, et erant illis omnia communia.* [They had one heart and one soul, and all things were common unto them. (Acts 4:32.)]

But, continues the supreme Pastor, the spirit of fraternity shows itself only by indulgence; we are Christians, and as such called to perfection: yes; but we are men, and as such liable to fall and sinners. Fraternity will remain among us only so far as we know how to forgive each other many things. My dearly beloved, be therefore indulgent and inclined to pardon, *misericordes;* be not obstinate about your rights, too full of yourselves; vanity, pride, love of the I, are the ruin of fraternity; it is maintained only by abnegation and sacrifice; be then modest and humble, *modesti et humiles.* My dearly beloved, render not evil for evil, nor curse for curse; but on the contrary, bless those who curse you, because you are called to this, *quia in hoc vocati estis.* [Not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing: for unto this you are called, that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Pet. 3:8–9.)]

Do you hear it, my brethren? the forgetting of injuries is the vocation of the Christian, *quia in hoc vocati estis.* I am mistaken, it is not only pardon, the forgetting of injuries; it is the love of enemies, it is blessing toward those who curse us, *sed e contrario benedicentes, quia in hoc vocati estis.* It is on this title that we shall inherit heavenly blessings, *ut benedictionem haereditate possideatis.* My brethren, never forget this word; when you find it hard to forgive; when you put some restriction in your good will toward those who make you suffer, recall the Epistle of the fifth Sunday after Pentecost: *Sed e contrario benedicentes, quia in hoc vocati estis, ut benedictionem haereditate possideatis.* The forgetting of injuries is a duty of your Christian and supernatural vocation; but hear also the wisdom, the philosophy of human interest speaking by the mouth of Peter: “For, my children, if anyone loves life, and wishes to have happy days, let him forbid his tongue every bitter word, and let his lips know not the windings of guile; let him seek peace, and pursue it!” [1 Pet. 3:10–11.] Ah! my brethren, what philosophy there is in these two lines: “If anyone loves life, and wishes to have here below happy days, let him restrain his tongue, and let his lips utter no crafty and hypocritical words!”

My brethren, do you see that man always trembling, always in fear; that man who looks every morning into the eyes of his neighbour to see whether he has anything against him? He is a man who does not know how to keep on his tongue a defamatory and perfidious word, an inconsistent man who disseminates here and there about each one the malign reflections which his vain and atrabilious humour distils. As he respects no one, he fears that all will end by revealing to one another the confidences he made to them; he feels that after all he cannot be loved by anyone, that in the conscience of each he is marked as a dangerous man. So he is seen at times sinking under the weight of a crushing weariness, disgusted with the world, with society, with life; to his sombre melancholy, to his misanthropic humour there is but one answer, one remedy: *Qui enim vult vitam diligere, et dies videre bonos, coerceat linguam suam a malo, et labia ejus ne loquantur dolum.* If anyone wishes to make himself an agreeable life and to pass happy days, let him forbid himself all bitter and

jealous words, let him seek peace, let him buy it at the price of a thousand sacrifices.

For after all, continues Saint Peter, who will have the courage to raise troubles for you, if you think only of doing good? *Et quis est qui vobis noceat, si boni aemulatores fueritis?* [And who is there that can hurt you, if you be zealous of good? (1 Pet. 3:13.)] The world is very wicked, you say; it is full of intrigues, cabals, passion. That may be true, my brother; but would not intrigue and passion also stir in your heart? The world is very wicked; but are you not, you too, very inconsistent, very irritable, and very wicked perhaps also at times? The world is wicked, it is true; but a conduct always gentle, condescending, indulgent, ends by taming the malice of the world. And do you not know, in your midst, those beings whose angelic goodness finds grace with the most wicked, those beings to whom no one would have the courage knowingly to cause a pain: *Et quis est qui vobis noceat, si boni aemulatores fueritis.*

And besides, if you suffer something for justice, then you shall be happy: *Sed et si quid patimini propter justitiam, beati.* [But if also you suffer anything for justice' sake, blessed are ye. (1 Pet. 3:14.)] You will know that you have in no way incurred the anger of the world; your conscience will tell you that you do not suffer through your own fault, but through the wholly gratuitous injustice of others. And then yield to no fear, to no trouble; do not agitate yourselves, do not torment yourselves. Repulsed by the injustice of men, re-enter with more recollection the sanctuary of your heart, and converse there more familiarly, more lovingly with the Lord Jesus Christ: *Timorem autem eorum ne timueritis, et non conturbemini. Dominum autem Christum sanctificate in cordibus vestris.* [And be not afraid of their fear, and be not troubled. But sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts. (1 Pet. 3:14–15.)] My brethren, Saint Peter knows for a Christian only one way to avenge himself on his enemies: it is to profit by this injustice to become better and holier, to converse more with Jesus Christ in the secret of his heart in proportion as he has fewer dealings with men.

That, my brethren, is what the Epistle of the fifth Sunday after Pentecost contains. Excellent persons no longer ask us often for subjects of meditation, and they scarcely understand us when we say to them: take your euchologion; the Mass of Sunday contains meditations for the whole week.

After the Epistle comes the Gradual. Here the Church is going to set beside the teachings of her first head the teachings of an ancient sage of the Synagogue. It is Ecclesiasticus who speaks: "My son, fear only the Lord, and have no resentment against your neighbour. Remember the covenant that the Most High deigned to make with you, and pardon the ignorance of your neighbour." What admirable words again, my brethren, and how worthy of being understood by the Christian! Then the Church adds the words of the apostle Saint James, which contain so extended a sense: *Ira enim viri justitiam Dei non operatur.* [For the anger of man worketh not the justice of God. (James 1:20.)] No resentment … for the anger of man works not the justice of God. What a lofty view again, what a reach in this observation! When you grow angry, to what purpose? That man offends God in speaking ill of you, in calumniating you, it is true. But leave to God the care of avenging Himself; He has said: Vengeance is Mine. As for you, you are too interested in the cause for God to use you as instrument of His justice. Your anger will make you lose all the merit of the persecution you endure; your self-love, your spirit of vengeance will be satisfied; God will love you less, your neighbour will think himself, and perhaps rightly, less guilty toward you: that will be the whole fruit of your anger; for the justice of God is not exercised by the anger of man: *Ira enim viri justitiam Dei non operatur.* Then the Church, having sung the Alleluia twice, repeats the exhortation of Saint Paul to the Colossians: "Let the peace of Jesus Christ exult in your hearts, that peace in which you are called to form but one and the same body! Alleluia." [Col. 3:15.]

Here it is no longer the Prophets nor the Apostles who are to speak, it is Jesus Christ. My brethren, I have not enough time left to undertake the least commentary on the gospel of this day; but read it attentively, and you will see what sublimity of doctrine it contains concerning the love of enemies. You will make above all two remarks there. The first is that the love of enemies is presented by Jesus Christ as the proper virtue of the Christian. To love those who love you, the publicans do as much; to salute only your brethren, the heathens

do that. But I say to you: Love your enemies, do good to those who weary you with their vexations, pray for those who pursue you with their ill-will and their calumnies. The second is the severity of Jesus Christ against those who speak ill of their brethren; it is nothing less than a question of an irrevocable judgment and of the eternal Gehenna. Finally, the third remark, and it is essential, is that God will not receive at the altar the gift of him who is not reconciled with his brother. Observe this: Jesus Christ does not say: If you remember that you have some resentment against your brother, but if you remember that he has something against you, leave there your gift, go, make the first advances, try to win back his heart, then you will return afterwards, and you will offer your gift … (Matt. 5:20–24.)

Assuredly, my brethren, this is not religion as it is understood by certain persons, Christian, even fervent in appearance, but who approach the altar, who go and sit at the Holy Table with a heart full of bitterness; who receive Jesus Christ on lips soiled the evening before by wounding words, by criminal insinuations: persons who are the dishonour of religion, the scandal of the weak, and who, returned to their houses and restored to their relations, seem to have brought back from the altar only a new treasure of bitterness, and to have made the eucharistic bread serve only to sharpen their tongues for calumny.

My brethren, let the vindictive souls then meditate a little the gospel of this day! they will see whether the serious practice of piety is reconcilable with that flow of hateful words which they never cease to vomit. We are pastors, and we should be gravely guilty if we did not try to make these hearts enter into themselves: their eternity is at stake; the word of Jesus Christ is too clear: *Reus erit gehennae ignis.* [Shall be in danger of hell fire. (Matt. 5:22.)]

My brethren, I stop here: the Offertory, the Secret, the Communion reproduce, under other forms, the same teachings. Allow me only to recite word for word this last prayer of the Church, which is always so touching, the Postcommunion: “O almighty God, grant us that, partaking of one bread and one chalice, we may draw from this food and this drink that charity which cherishes friends in You, and enemies for Your sake. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord.”

I know, my brethren, some truly Christian persons, to whom the Holy Spirit has given to appreciate and feel the beauty, the sublimity of the prayers of the Church, who never fail to recite, each day of the week, the three prayers of the Sunday Mass. Do so sometimes, my brethren, meditate often the holy offices of the Church: it is a hidden manna of which we beseech the Lord that He make you taste more and more the sweetness. I wish it to you (1).[2]

Translator’s notes

1. Scripture references in brackets are mine, supplied from the Vulgate; the preacher gives only the words. The Gradual and the Postcommunion are quoted as the preacher gives them (see the footnote on the Collect).

[1] The Collect as the preacher quotes it. As I recall it, the Roman Missal’s Collect for this Sunday is a different prayer, so the preacher may be following a diocesan (Chartres) use; I have not verified this.

[2] (1) Cf. Appendix I: A, 72. (Editor’s note.)

n° 15. Homily for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost: Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord

1843.[1]

Hic est Filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi bene complacui, ipsum audite. [This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him. (Matt. 17:5.)]

This is My beloved Son, in whom I have put all My complacency: hear Him. (Saint Matthew, ch. xvii, v. 5.)

My very dear brethren, The mystery of the Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ, whose solemnity this day brings back to us, and which the Church rightly substitutes for the Sunday office, is full of teachings for the mind and of salutary impressions for the heart. If Thabor is dazzling with light and glory, it is also, it is above all intoxicating with unction and grace; and, at the risk of yielding like Peter to the delirium of an ill-considered impulse, I shall cry out with him: Lord, it is good for us to be here: *Domine, bonum est nos hic esse.* [Matt. 17:4.]

Yes, my brethren, it will be good for us to be together for some moments at the foot of Thabor, and to meditate on each of the circumstances of this mystery. I shall dwell on it with the more joy that I shall find there an occasion to prelude in passing, by certain principles, rich and fruitful, the so grave and so important instruction which the sequel of my subject will oblige me to treat shortly, I mean the reading and study of the holy Scriptures. This time again, my brethren, let us hold the book in hand, and follow word for word the sacred historians.

“At that time, Jesus took with him Peter, James and John his brother, and led them apart into a high and solitary mountain.” You know, my very dear brethren, it was the habit of the divine Saviour to withdraw from the crowd, to pray. However recollected and contemplative His human soul might be, hypostatically united to the divinity, and rejoiced without ceasing by the beatific vision, nevertheless He went to seek in the silence of solitude, on the shore of seas, on the summit of mountains, a deeper peace, a livelier impression of the spirit of prayer. My brethren, oh! how touching it is to see the Word incarnate, He who as God is the author of all things visible and invisible, submit as man to the exigencies of the senses, take inspiration from the spectacle of nature, and ask the visible world the calm of the deserts, the noise of the waves, the elevation of the dunes, to converse more intimately and from nearer with the uncreated Principle who begets Him from all eternity!

And is not that, my brethren, to say it in passing, an eloquent and peremptory answer to the old Protestant declamations, reproduced lately in the bosom of France with so much noise and scandal by mouths that have sucked the stale milk of heresy: pale copyists who imagine themselves inventors; pretentious phrase-makers who think themselves the evangelists of a new Christian dogma, and who know only how to make the outdated arguments of Luther and Calvin glitter, reduced to antithesis or idyll in their phosphorescent faceted style; obscure navigators, towed in the wake of the old pilots of the Reformation, and who announce themselves with emphasis as the Christopher Columbuses of a new religious world.

What have they said and written that is new, these two adversaries not of the Company, but of the religion of Jesus (1)? Because the great Ignatius of Loyola, in his spiritual counsels concerning prayer and meditation, recommends to the Christian to take inspiration, either really or in thought, from the spectacle of created things; because he calls to the aid of the interior life of the soul the exterior conditions in which imagination and the senses dwell; because a Saint teaches, and we teach with him, this doctrine which is much more philosophical still than religious: behold, in the nineteenth century voices rise up to cry scandal, to repeat in every tone and on every note that we make of prayer a mechanical apparatus, that we transform the effusion of the soul into an artificial exercise, and the Christian life into a game of springs!

Vain sophists, I know you: you were called Carlstadt or Melanchthon three hundred years ago. The affectation of the fallen language you speak, and that tendency to effect, that search for wit which reveals a society of the Lower Empire, let me know that you are their last and pale disciples.[2]

My brethren, my brethren, when Jesus Christ, in whom humanity touched so closely on divinity, when Jesus man wished to recollect Himself in Jesus God, that is, after all, when He wished to recollect Himself in Himself, Jesus did not disdain to undergo the empire of nature over the senses, and of the senses over the soul; and when I, child of Adam, I in whom man is so far from God, when I shall wish to unite myself to that supreme intelligence, pretended philosophers will condemn me to lay down half of my being, to isolate my

soul from its dwelling, to separate thus what God has joined; or else they will call my soul a machine, my heart an automaton, and my prayer a corpse!

Jesus, my brethren, wishing to pray, withdrew to a secluded and silent mountain: *Et ascendit in montem ut oraret.* [And He went up into a mountain to pray. (Luke 9:28.)] Therefore the Society, let us say better, the Church of Jesus, teaches as Jesus did. But let us continue.

Et transfiguratus est ante eos; [And He was transfigured before them. (Matt. 17:2.)] and He was transfigured before them, that is, His face became resplendent as the sun, and His garments white as snow. My very dear brethren, the great Bossuet has remarked here, with his ordinary genius, that the Transfiguration was not a miracle, but rather the suspension of a miracle.[3] The true miracle was the common state and appearance of obscurity which disguised the majesty of Jesus. In showing Himself full of glory, Jesus showed Himself in His nature; and the effort of His power ceased in proportion as He let escape the rays of His splendour.

My brethren, if just now, when the priest shall have consecrated the eucharistic bread, Jesus Christ were to appear to us in all His immortal beauty, we should cry miracle. And yet the prodigy is not that glorious Jesus reveals His glory, but rather that He disguises it. When it is a question of a God, the mystery begins where brilliance ceases.

But what will astonish you, my brethren, is that one can say of the glorification of the elect in the heavens, and of the ecstatic state of some of the elect on earth, what is said of the Transfiguration of Jesus on Thabor. No, the marvel is not that the just man, freed from the bonds of mortality, is at once invested with light, resplendent with brightness. The marvel rather is that a soul should be the sanctuary of grace, the temple of the Holy Spirit, that a mortal body should be inhabited by the fullness of divinity, fed with the flesh and given to drink the blood of a God, and that this soul and this body should not let flash forth unceasingly the divine lightnings of glory; for the Catholic dogma does not permit us to doubt it: grace is one and the same thing with glory; a just heart is one and the same thing with heaven. All the difference, as also all the miracle, consists in this, that grace is a compressed glory; the just heart is a veiled heaven. But let the hand of God let fall this earthly veil, and at that very instant, by the nature of things, the just man will be transfigured like Jesus on Thabor, and will put on all the properties of the glorious body. This principle, my brethren, will be of great use to us when, in connection with the lives of the Saints, I shall have to speak to you of certain supernatural effects which all ages have seen reproduced in the Catholic Church and which Providence renews still in our days of atheism. The mysterious state of the two ecstatics of the Tyrol defies the severest criticism and the most intrepid incredulity.[4]

But, we are sometimes told, why do extraordinary things make so little noise, are they so little known? My brethren, why did Jesus Christ, when about to transfigure Himself on Thabor, take with Him only three of His apostles? why did He not convoke the whole multitude? When God works a miracle, why does He not take better all His measures so as to leave no room for objection? When God speaks, why does He not choose His terms better, so as to make every false interpretation impossible? My brethren, we should have occasion to develop on this subject the heavenly designs, and to show how, even in His most brilliant manifestations, the God of intelligent and free men, in order to leave them merit and not to do violence to their action, must still be the hidden God: *Deus absconditus.* [A hidden God. (Is. 45:15.)] God does enough that the man of good faith should believe in His intervention; and He does not do too much, that free will should keep its rights, so that there always remains room for malignity.

Saint Luke adds a circumstance to the account of Saint Matthew, and teaches us that it was while He was in prayer that the face of Jesus was transformed and became resplendent. My brethren, is it not indeed the property of prayer to illumine the face of him who prays? Catholic painting puts an aureole on the head of the Saints; and is it not true that there is light in holiness? See this woman who prays, this pious priest who has just left the altar, this holy young man who withdraws from the eucharistic table; look whether, in the fervour

of their prayer, their face does not light up with a heavenly brightness: *Et facta est, dum oraret, species vultus ejus altera;* [And it came to pass, as He prayed, the shape of His countenance was altered. (Luke 9:29.)] glorification begun which transfigures men into Angels: *Et intuentes eum, viderunt faciem ejus tamquam faciem angeli.* [And looking upon him, they saw his face as if it had been the face of an angel. (Acts 6:15.)]

But let us enter with Saint Augustine into the very depth of the gospel narrative. Jesus became resplendent as the sun, and His garments were white as snow; and Moses and Elias were seen speaking with Him. Remark, says the great doctor: it was Jesus Himself who became resplendent as the sun: *Ipse Jesus quidem, ipse splenduit sicut sol.* [Jesus Himself indeed, He Himself shone as the sun.][5] It is that in effect Jesus is the brightness of eternal splendour, He is the light which enlightens every man in this world. What the sun is to the eyes of flesh, Jesus is to the eyes of the soul; and what the eye is to the body, Jesus is to the heart.

This Jesus then, clothed with the sun pouring forth floods of light, is Jesus enlightening the earth with the rays of the Gospel, and warming it with the holy influences of grace. And these garments white as snow, which envelop the luminous Jesus, are His Church: the Church pure and careful guardian of the Gospel: the Church imperishable garment which preserves from all alteration the body of Him who said: "I am the truth"; the Church immaculate garment, whose whiteness could not be imitated and counterfeited on earth by any artifice of error: *Candida nimis velut nix, qualia fullo non potest super terram candida facere.* [Exceeding white as snow, such as no fuller upon earth can make white. (Mark 9:2.)]

Then behold, on the two sides of Jesus thus resplendent with light, thus clothed with whiteness, appeared Moses and Elias, speaking with Him: Moses, the representative of the law; Elias, the representative of prophecy. For, says Saint Augustine always, the law and the prophets bear witness to the Gospel. What do I say? the same divine Word who dictated the Gospel was He who inspired Moses and Elias, the law and the prophets: so the evangelists remark that Peter is troubled, and that he does not know what he says when he asks to make three tabernacles, one for Christ, one for Moses, and the other for Elias. That he loved the solitude of the mountain, that he was disgusted with the tumult of worldly things and above all that he took a liking to the spectacle of the transfiguration of his Master, I conceive it with Saint Augustine; but with him also I ask why Peter wanted three tents, unless it was because he did not yet know the unity of the law, of prophecy and of the Gospel, because he did not know that it is the same sun of the Word that shines in the Scriptures of the old covenant and in those of the new, and that it is the same tunic of Jesus that represents the Synagogue and the Church? Since then Moses and Elias are one with Christ, since the law and the prophets are fused in His light as in their hearth, what is the use of three tents where only one was needed? So Peter is going to receive a lesson.

While he was thus speaking, behold a transparent cloud covered them, and a voice came out of the cloud which said: "This is My beloved Son in whom I have put all My affection; hear Him." Peter, cries Saint Augustine here, you wanted three tents; and behold the cloud, which envelops all three, makes for them all but one tent. Christ is the Word of God: Word of God in the law; Word of God in the prophets. Peter, why do you wish to divide, when you ought rather to unite? You want three dwellings; but understand that there is here only one Christ. See this single cloud, and hear this voice: This is My beloved Son. There was Christ there, there was Moses, there was Elias; but it was not said: Behold My beloved sons; for the only Son is one thing, those associated with Him another. There is the Lord as Lord: there are Moses and Elias as servants and ministers. They are vessels, and He is the fountain; Moses and the prophets spoke and wrote; but it is in Him they had drawn all they poured out. My brethren, how beautiful this interpretation of Saint Augustine is, and how it makes the holy Scriptures venerable to us! Holding in my hands the whole Bible, from the Genesis of Moses to the Apocalypse of the beloved disciple, I have the right to say to you, on behalf of the eternal Father: This is My beloved Son, hear Him. It is My Son, it is My Word, it is always He, hear Him always; whether He speaks by Moses, by David, by Isaias, by Mark or Matthew, by Peter or by Paul, it is My Son, it is My Word, hear Him: *Ipsum audite.* Take, adore this book, for it shines with all the clarity of the

eternal Sun who is the Word; but take it with the white garment which covers it, and which is the Church, virginal spouse of the Word, confidante and interpreter of His thought: *Hic est Filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi bene complacui, ipsum audite.*

The voice that had resounded in the cloud had frightened the Apostles, and had cast them to the ground. Jesus, approaching them, touched them; they rose and saw no one but Jesus. The luminous cloud had dissipated; Moses and Elias had disappeared. And indeed, says Saint Augustine again, after the glorification of Christ, what use the law? what use prophecy? That is why Moses and Elias efface themselves: there remains only Christ, who shall be all in all: *Remanet tibi ut sit Deus omnia in omnibus.* [There remains to thee that God be all in all. (cf. 1 Cor. 15:28.)] Peter, descend with your Master. Ah! you wished to rest, you were meditating a tranquil sojourn! Descend, descend: you must work, you must row to arrive at the port of eternity, where you shall be transfigured in that glory of which Jesus has just revealed to you some rays, to excite your desire the more and to encourage your efforts.

You said, and you were right to say: Master, it is good to be here. Yes, Lord, it is good with You; yes, the happiness of sharing Your glory is the only true happiness; yes, I wish to despise all that does not lead to You. But you thought from this day to fix your tent on this mountain of glory, you dreamed here below your felicity; and in that you knew not what you said. Moses and Elias, who spoke with your Master, spoke of all the sorrows through which He was to pass to enter into His glory. Peter, Peter, descend from Thabor; it is not yet for you the time of rest and enjoyment. Peter, what labours, what sorrows, until the day when, after having planted the cross of your Master on the Capitol, you shall die yourself on a cross, which shall be the road of your glory!

My brethren, my brethren, ah! all of us, as many as we are, Jesus, to quicken our zeal, to inflame our ardour, has sometimes led us with Him on the solitary mountain of Thabor, where He transfigured Himself before our eyes . Is it not true, my brother, my sister: sometimes this God who is called the hidden God has rejoiced you with His sweet presence; you were as if inundated with delights; nothing cost you anything, His grace made everything easy for you; your soul, during those happy days, was in a continual transport of joy and love. The mute God of the tabernacle had a voice for you; if He descended into your heart by communion, your heart and your flesh thrilled in the living God. My brother, my sister, you were on Thabor; you said no doubt like Peter: *Domine, bonum est nos hic esse;* you dreamed for yourself a whole life thus perfumed with the unction of grace: *Nesciens quid diceret:* [Not knowing what he said. (Luke 9:33.)] you knew not what you said. Jesus poured thus a drop of His felicity into your soul only to make you aspire to the ocean of happiness which He is preparing for you, but at which you will arrive only by passing through tribulation. Descend, my brother, descend from Thabor; return to the plain; go and labour, go and suffer. Only courage, courage! your God has shown you a faint picture of the happiness which awaits you; courage! to suffer is the road of glory. Golgotha is not far from Thabor. The same Mount of Olives which the agonising Christ watered with His bloody sweat preserves also the imprint left there by His divine feet when He ascended again into the heavens.

Let us end, my brethren, by addressing to God this beautiful prayer which is the last prayer of the Mass of this day: “We beseech You, O God, that these heavenly foods which we have taken may transform us into the likeness of Him whose beauty You have revealed to us today by His glorious transformation, Jesus Christ Our Lord, who lives and reigns with You for ever and ever. Amen (1).”[6]

Translator’s notes

1. “the Company” = the Society of Jesus (*la Compagnie*). The Protestant-sounding attack alluded to is the 1843 polemic of Michelet and Quinet against the Jesuits, per the author’s own note.

2. The preacher’s allusion to “Peter … planted the cross of your Master on the Capitol” is rendered as printed.

3. The Latin phrase “Remanet tibi ut sit Deus omnia in omnibus” is as the preacher gives it (Augustine, as he cites it); I did not trace it.

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[1] The heading gives only the year, 1843. The feast of the Transfiguration (6 August) fell on a Sunday in 1843, the ninth after Pentecost by the Roman reckoning given in the heading. (My check of the calendar; not in the source.)

[2] (1) Michelet and Quinet: *Lessons at the Collège de France*; book *On the Jesuits*. (Note of M. l’abbé Pie.)

[3] The attribution to Bossuet is the preacher’s; I have not verified it here.

[4] The “two ecstatics of the Tyrol” are not named; I take them to be Maria von Mörl (Kaltern) and Domenica Lazzari (Capriana), much discussed in Catholic circles in the 1830s–40s. My identification, not verified from the text.

[5] The patristic quotations in this homily are given as the preacher gives them (Augustine’s sermon on the Transfiguration); I have not verified the exact text.

[6] (1) Cf. Appendix I: A, 73. (Editor’s note.) The Postcommunion is quoted as the preacher gives it; I have not compared it with the Missal.

n° 16. Address for the Distribution of Prizes at M. Brou’s School

12 August 1843.[1]

My dear friends, I am sorry for you that this year again the effusions of the pastoral heart cannot mingle with the joy of your triumphs, and pay a just tribute of encouragement and friendship to the conscientious and loyal zeal which presides over your education, and which makes of this little sheepfold the dearest and most interesting portion of our flock. May my voice seem to you at least an echo of that other voice so sweet and so dear![2]

The crowns placed here before your eyes, my young friends, are at once the conquest and the spur of work; and work is the guarantee and the means of all virtue, as of all success and all happiness. Work doubtless supposes pain; and if we go back to the cause of things we see that man, created to act and to keep, was condemned to work only as a punishment.

But it must be said also that, even in punishing, the divine hand was always a paternal hand. Under an apparent evil it hid a thousand goods; the thorn of work covered a flower, and happiness was placed beside the torment. The child of man has need of work; to undergo its chastisement is a necessity for him, necessity of his material existence, but necessity also of his moral existence. There is not a reasonable being who is not placed in the rigorous alternative of work or vice, of virtue by work, of vice by inaction.

Besides, my dear friends, have you not already tasted the delicious enjoyments of work? However bitter the first roots of science may be, have they not already distilled some sweetness for you? The day when, quite proud to possess already three words of Latin, you made the garden and the rose agree together, an unspeakable joy penetrated your childish soul. Soon after, with what happiness you saw the marvellous facts of the Bible pass into your translation! Then what pride to speak the language of Phaedrus, of Virgil, of Isocrates and of Homer! Dear friends, one day perhaps vast conceptions will germinate in your intelligence, lofty and new views will reveal themselves to your mind: well! I dare to say it, the noblest transports of genius will perhaps never equal the sweetness and suavity of that first thrill, of those first emotions which you owe to study and of which you will keep the memory for ever.

One of the greatest men of our century, a septuagenarian old man already bent toward the tomb, Monseigneur the Bishop of Hermopolis, said to me one day before an old wall carpeted with verdure: “When I see this ivy, I am only twelve years old, and I remember the crowns of the college. I have since run through what is called a brilliant career, amid universal applause; but nothing has been able to make me forget the crown of ivy.”[3]

Courage then, my dear friends! Give yourselves with ardour to this work which gives such sweet emotions, and which prepares more brilliant successes. We shall render account to God of all that He has given us;

intelligence is a field we must cultivate; we are not its owners, but its tenants. A day will come of solemn distribution: there the whole human race will appear, and there too, I dare say, there will be crowns only for work. I do not wish to seem to have made you a sermon; but yet virtue is so essentially dependent on work that I dare to tell you in ending that the crown of ivy is not without relation to the crown of eternity, and that hands accustomed to carry off palms on earth will be more skilful to reap the palms of heaven.

Above all, dear children, may piety grow in your soul in the same measure as science her sister! May the triumphs of the heart accompany the triumphs of the mind! and you will always be victors and crowned, crowned by the hand of God and by the hand of men.

Translator's notes

1. "The garden and the rose agree together": the schoolboy's first Latin exercise, agreement of adjective and noun (*hortus … rosa*); rendered as printed.

2. The Latin and Greek authors named are as printed (Phèdre = Phaedrus the fabulist).

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[1] (1) Cf. *Histoire du cardinal Pie*, t. I, p. 17. (Editor's note, on the heading.)

[2] The "other voice" is evidently that of the Bishop of Chartres, absent that year; the preacher does not say so. My reading.

[3] The Bishop of Hermopolis (a titular see) is, I take it, Mgr Frayssinous, who held that title; the preacher does not name him. My identification, not verified from the text.

n° 17. Instruction Preached in the Chapel of Calvary, in the Cathedral of Chartres, on the Day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

14 September 1843.[1]

Quem vos interemistis suspendentes in ligno, hunc principem et salvatorem Deus exaltavit dextera sua. [Whom you put to death, hanging Him upon a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand, to be Prince and Saviour. (Acts 5:30–31.)]

Him whom you have put to death by hanging Him on the wood, God has exalted by His arm as Prince and Saviour. (Acts, c. 5, v. 30, 31.)

Few days had elapsed since the infamous punishment inflicted on Jesus; His blood was still streaming on Calvary, and no one, neither Roman nor Barbarian, neither Jew nor Gentile, gazed without fright on the still smoking summit of Golgotha. The memory of that lugubrious scene was present to all minds; no one spoke of it in Israel without feeling a shudder of horror and dismay.

It was, so to speak, the morrow of the triumph of the executioners, the morrow of the defeat of Jesus. And already Peter and the Apostles were proclaiming loudly, boldly, before the officers of the State and the princes of the priests, the exaltation of the vanquished and the glorification of His cross. This man, they said to them, this Jesus whom you killed by hanging Him on an infamous wood, God, by His mighty arm, has raised up, full of life and glory, Prince of the earth and Saviour of men. You thought to make Him mount a scaffold, and you were installing Him on a throne; you thought to brand Him for ever with the ignominious seal of the cross, and you have for ever ennobled the cross by the glorious blood of such a crucified: *Quem vos interemistis, suspendentes in ligno, hunc principem et salvatorem Deus exaltavit dextera sua.*

My brethren, if such was the prophetic language of the Apostles, if they dared in the first days of the Church to announce the glorious destinies of the cross and its magnificent triumphs in all the ages to come; we who have the experience of eighteen centuries of glory, with what energy can we not repeat: Him whom you killed by hanging Him on a wood, God has raised up by His mighty arm, and has made of Him the Prince and the Saviour: *Quem vos interemistis suspendentes in ligno, hunc principem et salvatorem Deus exaltavit dextera sua.*

You understand then, my brethren, I do not wish today to draw tears from your eyes by moving you over the sorrows of Jesus. I shall tell you on the contrary to put aside the sad ideas that the sight of the cross might give rise to in you. I invite you to the spectacle, not of a punishment, but of a triumph. The cross has changed place; it is no longer planted on Mount Calvary, but on Thabor; it is not the gibbet of a criminal, but the chariot of a conqueror. It is more than that, it is the throne, it is the sceptre of a God: *Regnavit a ligno Deus.* [God hath reigned from the tree.][2] Throne of glory and of mercy; sceptre of greatness and goodness: these are the two ideas of which I wish to speak to you.

I. Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, said the sweet Saviour, making His way toward Calvary. No, weep not for Me, for I go to glory, I walk in the direct way that must lead Me there; you see Me, at this very instant, on the royal road of My triumph: *Oportuit Christum pati, et ita intrare in gloriam.* [Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory? (Luke 24:26.)] Presently, by the very hands of My enemies, involuntary instruments of My glory, I am going to be raised on a throne; and the sun darkening in the heavens, and the earth shaking on its foundations, and the dead awaking from the depth of their tombs, and the living striking their breasts, each in his own way, will proclaim My divine royalty, and they will say: This man who has been put on the cross was truly the Son of God. You pity Me at this instant when I am abandoned by some, despised, cursed by others, but take courage; presently, when I shall have been lifted up above the earth, I shall draw all to Myself: *Et ego, si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum.* [And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself. (John 12:32.)]

My brethren, you know how this oracle has been accomplished; and I am glad you know it, for a whole discourse would be needed to enumerate all the glories of the cross of Jesus, and I can present to you in this familiar conversation only a few rapid glimpses. But before all, my brethren, it is important to understand well the doctrine of Saint Paul, who, speaking of the blood that Jesus shed for our salvation, calls it, not His blood, but the blood of His cross: *Per sanguinem crucis ejus.* [By the blood of His cross. (Col. 1:20.)] What does this mean, great apostle? Did not this redeeming blood come out of the veins of Jesus? Why then do you attribute to the cross this liquor, this sap, which the wood did not distil, but which is the pure substance of the Saviour, and of which His divine Heart prepared, elaborated each drop?

Understand, my brethren, this mystery. Jesus and His cross are all one. His cross is as inseparable from Him as His very humanity; what do I say? He took a body only to deliver Himself to the cross. “Holocausts and victims have not pleased You, O my God; but You have given me a body, and I said: Behold, I come.” [Heb. 10:5–7.] The womb of Mary, the stable of Bethlehem were only points of passage: it was to Calvary that He tended. Immolated by the desire of His heart from the very origin of the world, the Son of God, at His entrance into life, contracts solemn betrothal with the cross; already He seals with His blood this first engagement. The nearer the time approaches, the more He loves His dear betrothed; it is a transport, it is an ecstasy. One day, the first of His apostles wishes to combat His affection; and he is repulsed with the most energetic indignation: *Vade retro, Satana.* [Get thee behind Me, Satan. (Matt. 16:23.)] Another day Moses and Elias come to converse with Him on the mountain of glory, and those happy instants are employed in speaking of the object of His tenderness, of which He would soon be put in possession: *Et dicebant excessum ejus quem completurus erat.* [And they spoke of His decease that He should accomplish. (Luke 9:31.)] The burning ardour of the most passionate lover does not equal the eagerness of Jesus for the consummation of His nuptials: *Et quomodo coarctor usque dum perficiatur.* [And how am I straitened until it be accomplished. (Luke 12:50.)]

At last the hour of the nuptial solemnity has struck: it is the cowardly Pilate who signs the contract of alliance between Christ and the cross, no matter! the groomsmen are executioners, no matter again! Jesus is in the arms of the cross, His spouse; He is attached, nailed there; His blood, which waters it, which bathes it, makes now but one with it. Henceforth Jesus and the cross are all one: *Et erunt duo in carne una.* [And they shall be two in one flesh. (Gen. 2:24.)] Henceforth whoever wishes to say Jesus must say the Spouse of the cross:

Jesum Christum, et hunc crucifixum; [Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. (1 Cor. 2:2.)] henceforth the blood of Jesus will be called the blood of the cross, His spouse: *Per sanguinem crucis ejus.* Henceforth Jesus will never be without the cross, nor the cross without Jesus; the bare cross will still contain Jesus, and Jesus, under whatever form He be represented, will always wear the nimbus of His cross: *Jesum Christum et hunc crucifixum.* This close union, this identity of the cross and of Christ being well understood, conclude now what are the ineffable glories of the cross.

The cross was the altar of the most august of all sacrifices. There was immolated the victim alone capable of rendering to God the homage of love and gratitude which belongs to Him; there was attached and cancelled the decree which carried condemnation for all the posterity of Adam; from there started the conquering shaft which blunted the sting of death; at the foot of the cross was crushed the head of the serpent; there was wrought the reconciliation between heaven and earth, and was signed the great treaty of peace between God and men: *Haec omnia praeclara facta crux nobis peperit.* [All these glorious deeds the cross has brought forth for us.][3] The cross, dyed with the blood of Jesus, has drawn all to itself: *Omnia traham ad meipsum.* It has drawn to itself on the one hand all the iniquities of the earth, it has covered itself with all the crimes of men: *Omnia traham ad meipsum.* It has drawn to itself on the other hand all the vengeances of heaven, it has condensed on its surface all the wrath of the Lord: *Omnia traham ad meipsum;* and, in the twinkling of an eye, the blood of Jesus with which it was soaked absorbed all the iniquities of the earth and all the vengeances of heaven. It devoured at once the crimes of men and the wrath of the Lord, as fire devours straw. These are the high deeds of the cross: *Haec omnia praeclara facta crux nobis peperit.*

That is not all. The blood of the cross, which once washed the stains of the earth, quenched the thunderbolts of heaven, continues still to flow on the earth, to spring back toward the heavens. The cross is always the depositary of the blood of Jesus, it is always its channel, it draws to itself all those whom it wishes to beget to Jesus: *Omnia traham ad meipsum.* It is from the cross that all the sacraments borrow their efficacy, it is by it that they operate. So it mingles with everything. Is it a matter, says Saint Augustine, of imprinting an ineffaceable character on the brow of the faithful, of making fruitful the water in which they are regenerated, of consecrating the oil and the chrism with which they are anointed, of celebrating the sacrifice with which they are nourished? none of these things is regular or perfect if the sign of the cross is not employed: *Quod signum nisi adhibeatur, nihil horum rite perficitur.* [Which sign unless it be applied, none of these things is duly accomplished.][4]

This fundamental dogma of the universal influence of the cross is so engraved in hearts that every Christian who implores divine grace begins by signing himself with the cross. Does he kneel to pray, enter the holy place, wish to sanctify the waking of the morning and the sleep of the night, to remove the snares of the demon? always he employs the sign of the cross: *Quod signum nisi adhibeatur, nihil horum rite perficitur.* Therefore, my brethren, all of us, as many as we are, children, soldiers, priests of Jesus, Christian spouses, we all march under the banner of the cross, have been marked with the seal of the cross; it is it that has made us what we are; it is by it that we eat the bread of salvation, by it that we wash in the bath of penance, by it that we die resigned and pure: *Haec omnia praeclara facta crux nobis peperit.*

But what do I see? *Multi sunt, quos saepe dicebam vobis, inimicos crucis Christi:* [For many walk, of whom I have told you often … that they are enemies of the cross of Christ. (Phil. 3:18.)] a crowd of enemies of the cross rises; the Greeks see in it only folly, the Jews a scandal. Lord, and You had predicted that Your cross would draw all to itself? My brethren, how interesting it would be to see for eighteen centuries Jesus Christ, the cross in hand, marching to the conquest of souls, drawing all to Himself, subjugating successively all peoples! Voluptuous children of Greece and Rome, adorers of shameless gods, sectaries of golden fables, harmonious disciples of the sages of the world, children, old men, timid virgins, valiant soldiers, rich and poor, behold the cross shine. If you go to it, you go to martyrdom: martyrdom of your passions by an inner sword, martyrdom of your limbs by the sword of tyrants. No matter, no matter! for five hundred years

legions of Christians come to range themselves under the standard of the cross, at the risk of bearing it engraved in characters of blood on their scattered limbs: *Omnia traham ad meipsum.* Thousands of martyrs during three centuries and the axe of the executioners tiring sooner than the perseverance of the confessors: behold one of the high deeds of the cross: *Haec omnia praeclara facta crux nobis peperit.*

But you have fought long enough against the cross, cruel and pitiless Caesars; your turn has come: *Omnia traham ad meipsum.* Cross of Jesus, mount to the summit of the Capitol, shine on the standard and on the diadem of the sons of Constantine, until the Vicar of the Crucified, the successor of him in whom Christ was crucified at Rome a second time, succeeds to the throne of the emperors.[5] And you, barbarian peoples, who run up from the depth of your deserts, calm, calm your furies, soften your ferocious humour, and submit to the yoke of the cross: *Omnia traham ad meipsum.* Proud Sicambrian, lower your haughty brow, so that the pontiff may baptise in some sort in your person the whole noble nation of the Franks; happy nation at whose birth the cross presided, and which in return has not ceased for fifteen centuries to carry the cross everywhere, to make it revered everywhere: *Omnia traham ad meipsum.* The old universe become Christian, that is, issued of itself and without violence from the horrible corruption of paganism to pass to the pure light of the Gospel; new peoples, begotten to Catholic truth at the same time as to civilisation: behold the high deeds of the cross: *Haec omnia praeclara facta crux nobis peperit.*

Yet, in the midst of these conquests of the cross, behold an impostor has appeared, an enemy of the cross. The sons of Mahomet have invaded the inheritance of Christ. O tears, O despair, the holy city is their possession! The cross of Jesus has fallen into their hands. Rise up, rise up, Christian peoples! Besides, long prosperity had been fatal to you; persecution was lacking; a bath was needed to purify you. Set out, set out toward the tomb of Christ! My brethren, do you see them, those armies of men, women, children, old men, who tear themselves from all they hold dear, from their country, from all their material interests? The cross shines on their breast; their expedition, all the centuries will know it under the name of crusade. It is the honour of the cross they go to avenge; it is Calvary that draws all this crowd, composed of all peoples: *Omnia traham ad meipsum.* Behold, my brethren, behold the high deeds of the cross: *Haec omnia praeclara facta crux nobis peperit.*

My brethren, I could continue to show you the glories and triumphs of the cross: the cross subjugating a new hemisphere: *Omnia traham ad meipsum;* the cross resuming its ancient empire over the peoples unhappy enough to have overthrown it for an instant, and soon bringing back to it the hearts that had blasphemed it: *Omnia traham ad meipsum.* My brethren, I have the sweet confidence that a day will come when selfishness will no longer be the sole law of our country; when the spirit of self-denial, of love of others will revive in the bosom of society; when the tyrannical cult of the god of matter will no longer be its only religion. And then the virtues of the ancient days will flower again, and our descendants, speaking of so many evils healed, so many wounds closed, so many goods recovered, will say one day in this pulpit, pointing to the cross become again the expression of the social thought and the rule of morals: Behold the high deeds of the cross: *Haec omnia praeclara facta crux nobis peperit.*

Besides, my brethren, we do not flatter ourselves with a chimerical perfection, and we know that, until the end of the ages, the cross loved, honoured by some, will be despised, hated by others. The cross is destined to dominate on earth, but in the midst of its enemies. But the day will come when this divine cross will appear in the heavens: *Tunc apparebit signum Filii hominis in caelo.* [Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. (Matt. 24:30.)] Then it will be so beautiful, so resplendent, so lovable, that all will wish to go to it: *Omnia traham ad meipsum.* Then, says the author of the *Imitation,* all the servants of the cross, all the lovers of the cross, will go and range themselves around it, and by it will be introduced into the eternal dwelling of glory, where there will be neither tears nor pain, but ineffable joy; and they will say: Behold, behold the high deeds of the cross: *Haec omnia praeclara facta crux nobis peperit.* Then too the enemies of the cross will understand that they were mistaken: *Videbunt in quem transfixerunt.* [They shall look on Him whom they

pierced. (John 19:37.)] The cross, which they judged a folly, they would now wish to throw themselves into its arms: *Omnia traham ad meipsum;* but it is no longer time. In default of their homage, it will at least have their regrets, and while these unfortunates fall, are engulfed in the eternal abysses, the cross will still draw to itself their last glances of despair: *Omnia traham ad meipsum;* their last cries of grief at being able to serve its triumph only by their deserved chastisement: *Haec omnia praeclara facta crux nobis peperit.*

II. My brethren, I have spoken too long of the glories of the cross; I shall tell you only a word of its sweet ties, and here understand an admirable doctrine of theology.

In the midst of the paradise of delights, my very dear brethren, God had planted the tree of life, whose precious fruits were to maintain in innocent man an eternal youth. Happy sojourn, from which a mysterious food kept away all alteration of life, all suffering of the body, all sorrow of the soul. But alas! you know it, my brethren, sinful man was soon driven out of that paradise of earth. A cherub, armed with a flaming sword, was charged to guard it and to forbid the entrance.

My brethren, sixty centuries have passed, and the Angel placed at the gates of Eden has not ceased to keep good guard there. No, no: the paradise of earth no longer belongs to us; it is folly for the sad children of the vale of tears to believe that here below they can be in the city of happiness. And that sect, whose appearance is a phenomenon unheard of in the very history of human errors and follies; that sect which in our days prides itself on soon begetting a religion whose principles, on establishing a society whose bases will be the perfect felicity of man here below, without any compensation to desire in the future; that sect, I say, whatever talents it has at its command, is not a sect of heretics, but of madmen.[6] Can one, without lying to humanity, promise it a state of complete happiness here below? What! man, born of woman, living few days, filled with a thousand miseries, man who appears like a frail plant trodden underfoot like grass, and who never abides in the same state; it is to him, to this being whom a nothing overthrows, whom a breath kills, it is to him that you speak of making a paradise on earth! But in this new society there will then be no more sickness, nor death! no more physical or moral suffering! and above all, we shall be torn from ourselves then! for what often weighs on us most is ourselves. Paradise on earth! it needed a century as mad as ours to bring to light such a charlatanism of doctrine.

But what do I say, my brethren? paradise on earth! another century than ours, the most Catholic of all centuries, heard these words pronounced; I read them in full letters in the most revered book of Christians after the inspired books, in the book of the *Imitation of Jesus Christ: Tunc invenisti paradisum in terra.* [Then thou hast found paradise on earth. (*Imitation*, II, 12.)] But understand, my brethren, the difference of this doctrine. The chapter where it is developed is entitled: Of the royal road of the holy cross. There a tree is shown to us, tree of life planted on Calvary. The fruit of this tree has not the property of removing suffering and death, but of softening them. One must suffer, one must die, no one will decline this law; but whoever approaches the tree of the cross, whoever eats of this fruit of life, will learn to find joy and rest even in the anguish of suffering, even in the arms of death: *Quando ad hoc veneris, quod tribulatio tibi dulcis est et sapit pro Christo, tunc invenisti paradisum in terra.* [When thou shalt come to this, that tribulation is sweet and savoury to thee for Christ, then think thou hast found paradise on earth. (*Imitation*, II, 12, 5.)] That, my brethren, is the threshold of the paradise possible here below, the paradise of sorrow, the paradise in the shadow of the branches of the cross. That is the paradise of earth, announced by Jesus Christ among the beatitudes: Blessed are they that suffer! Blessed are they that weep!

Come then, O my brethren, O you who suffer, come often to the foot of the cross which will transform your very sorrows into joys. Come, and you will experience what a Saint promises you, an interior unction which will increase in direct proportion to your afflictions; come, and sometimes you will feel so much strength, so much consolation, so much rest in adversity, because of your conformity with the cross of Jesus, that in those happy instants you would not wish to be without pain and tribulation: *Ut sine dolore et tribulatione esse non vellet.* [That he would not wish to be without pain and tribulation.] Either to suffer or to die, said Saint

Teresa; not to die, always to suffer, said another Saint. To suffer in order to love, said again a fervent soul; for without sorrow one cannot live in love: *Sine dolore non vivitur in amore.* [Without sorrow one does not live in love.] To suffer in order to enjoy, for it is in tribulation that You enlarge hearts, O my God: *In tribulatione dilatasti mihi.* [In tribulation Thou hast enlarged me. (Ps. 4:2.)] My brethren, these sentiments are not at the bottom of our nature; but the grace of the Crucifix is so great that what is naturally an object of horror to the flesh, the fervour of the spirit makes understood and cherished.

My brother, my sister, I end with this: *Calicem Domini affectanter bibe:* [Drink the chalice of the Lord with affection.] Drink with love, with a holy delight, the chalice of the Lord. Chalice bitter as the waters of Mara, but whose bitterness is corrected by the wood of the cross of Jesus: *Calicem Domini affectanter bibe.* Life is only a succession of sufferings, only a painful chalice to drink. Unite this chalice to that of Jesus, and drink it with love: *Calicem Domini affectanter bibe.* So life will be sweetened to you, so death will be delightful to you; so you will pass from the paradise of earth, paradise of sorrow and tears, into the paradise of heaven, paradise of joy and happiness. It is the grace, etc. (1).[7]

Translator's notes

1. The *Imitation* references (II, 12) are supplied by me from the chapter title the preacher gives ("De la voie royale de la sainte croix"). The Teresa, "another Saint" and "fervent soul" sayings are not identified; none is attributed by the preacher beyond what is printed.

2. The line "Hæc omnia præclara facta crux nobis peperit" is the preacher's refrain; see the footnote.

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[1] (1) "This same instruction was preached later, on 14 September 1864, in the chapel of Calvary, at Poitiers." (Editor's note.)

[2] The words are from the ancient hymn *Vexilla regis* ("regnavit a ligno Deus"), a gloss on Ps. 95:10 as read in some ancient texts. The preacher gives no source; I supply it from memory, not verified here.

[3] The refrain is given without source; I have not traced it.

[4] Attributed by the preacher to Saint Augustine ("says Saint Augustine"); I have not traced the passage.

[5] The allusion is to the tradition that Peter was crucified at Rome; "in whom Christ was crucified a second time" echoes the *Quo vadis* legend. My reading.

[6] The "sect" is not named. Contemporary utopian socialism (Saint-Simonians, Fourierists) is probably meant; my reading.

[7] (1) Cf. Appendix I: A, 75. (Editor's note.)

n° 18. Homily on the Reading of the Holy Books by Persons in the World, Preached in the Cathedral of Chartres

Sunday, 19 November 1843.

Quaecumque scripta sunt, ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt, ut per patientiam et consolationem Scripturarum spem habeamus. [For what things soever were written, were written for our learning: that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope. (Rom. 15:4.)]

All that is written is written for our instruction; that through the patience and consolation that proceed from the Scriptures we may have hope. (Ad Rom. c. XV, v. 4.)

My very dear brethren, The sequence and linking of the instructions by which we have striven to reveal to you the beauty of Catholic worship and to make you taste the manna hidden in the holy offices of the Church, lead us today to treat a question as delicate as it is important. The divine Scriptures, as we have told you, are properly the foundation and furnish the principal matter of our liturgy. Not only does the Church use the sacred text to compose her prayers; but even in her most pompous solemnities and her most august mysteries, she wishes that by the mouth of her Lectors and her Deacons we should always hear the recital of some passage of the prophets and evangelists; and in the course of the holy year she thus makes pass before our eyes almost the whole substance of the Old and New Testament.

Hence, my brethren, it seemed useful to your souls to take occasion to speak with you concerning the reading of the holy Books; reading which, wisely regulated, would be a source of light and graces for some, to whom the Church wishes us to reproach their negligence; reading which, done indiscreetly, is an occasion of scandal and ruin for others, whose temerity the Church wishes us to censure.

Divine Spirit, who inspired all the Scriptures and who know all their effects, put on my lips so much wisdom and in my words so much measure that, in tracing rules for these pious faithful, I may equally avoid letting them founder against a fatal reef, or closing to them a treasure of sweetness and joy. You who spoke by the Prophets and by the Apostles, reveal at this moment by my mouth the use that we ought to make of Your word. This, my brethren, is the object of this instruction, whose march and development you will follow easily without its being useful to indicate them to you.

When God traced in space the great book of nature, as He finished one of the pages of His work, He stopped to consider it. And all that great labour obtained successively the sanction of its divine author, who declared it good in each of its details: *Et vidit Deus quod esset bonum,* [And God saw that it was good. (Gen. 1:10 etc.)] and very good, and perfect in its ensemble: *Vidit Deus cuncta quae fecerat, et erant valde bona.* [God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good. (Gen. 1:31.)] Now, my brethren, this sublime and harmonious work of creation, this ineffable book of nature, however finished, however perfect it be, among the innumerable beauties with which it sparkles, nevertheless contains mysteries and abysses; and whoever wished to fathom certain obscure pages of it would plunge himself into doubt and blasphemy. What to conclude from that? That one must abstain from contemplating nature? God forbid, my brethren, that I should have recourse to this extreme means! It is only from children and madmen that one snatches from their hands the instrument, otherwise useful, with which they would infallibly wound themselves. I shall say to you:

My brother, read, contemplate, study the marvels that came out of the hands of the Creator. Expression of the wisdom, power, goodness, beauty of its author, nature is a book full of teachings for the mind, full of delights for the heart. For an upright soul, and above all for a pure soul, there is infinitely to gain in the spectacle of the created world. Delight and thrill with joy in the contemplation of the inimitable imprint that the divine hand has engraved on its works: *Delectasti me, Domine, in factura tua, et in operibus manuum tuarum exultabo.* [Thou hast delighted me, O Lord, in Thy doings: and in the works of Thy hands I shall rejoice. (Ps. 91:5.)] But do not go and examine the universe with a carping and critical mind, do not go and submit the work of the Eternal to the proud control of your thought of a day; above all do not go and repel from your heart the pious emotion which results from the harmonious and absolute beauty of the whole, to let your reasoning intelligence stumble against a few isolated details whose relative perfection hides under an appearance of disorder or ugliness. Love, praise the ineffable beauty, the maternal goodness of the Creator in that part of His works which charms your soul; revere, adore His power and His impenetrable designs in that which escapes your conceptions. And if at times you feel your feeble intelligence revolt, then turn your head from what is for your weakness an object of scandal, and let this unapproachable mystery, far from exciting you to blasphemy, make spring from your lips, as from those of the prophet king, a canticle of humility and faith: *Confitebor tibi, quia terribiliter magnificatus es; mirabilia opera tua, et anima mea cognoscit nimis.* [I will praise Thee, for Thou art fearfully magnified: wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knoweth right well. (Ps. 138:14.)]

My brethren, in these few words, so simple, so conformable to reason, I have indicated all that remains for me to say. It is only a matter of applying to the sacred book of revelation the rule I have proposed concerning the august book of nature. For, my brethren, the same God who spoke to us a first time and who never ceases to reveal Himself to us by the magnificent language of the marvels of earth and heavens, this same God has spoken to us a second time, and He never ceases to speak to us each day by the mouth of Moses and the Prophets, of Jesus and the Apostles. For, my brethren, the beauties of nature and the biblical beauties have so

great a conformity between them that an attentive eye recognises at once that it is the same hand that traced this double picture, that gave these tints and dictated these words. What do I say? Having produced only a sketch of His nature and His perfections in the uncertain mirror of creation, God has shown Himself, revealed Himself, given Himself in some sort wholly to us, and uncovered in the holy Books, which are His thought, the expression of His eternal wisdom explaining itself on His infinite essence and His eternal attributes. The Bible is the word of God. It is useless to say that it does not deceive, that it is always good, always holy; that from the Genesis of Moses revealing the principle of things, to the Apocalypse of John showing the consummation of the reign of God, there is not a sign, not a syllable of the divine book that is not worthy of its author, who judged it good in all its parts, and very good and perfect in its ensemble: *Et vidit Deus quod esset bonum. Vidit Deus cuncta quae fecerat, et erant valde bona.*

But yet in Scripture also, as in nature, however holy, however admirable it be, there are obscurities and precipices. On this sea, where one sails with full sails toward the port of salvation, there are shipwrecks. In eating this salutary manna, some have poisoned themselves and perished miserably; in contemplating this resplendent light, some have been dazzled, blinded, and have made sad deviations. What to conclude from that? That one must in principle abstain from reading Scripture, that it must be withdrawn from the hands of all simple faithful? Far from me that excessive rigour that the heretics of the Reformation never cease unjustly to reproach us with. Never has the holy Catholic Church approved or counselled this violent extremity; and in this respect we hold that she be justified in your eyes from the calumnies of Protestantism, at the same time as we shall offer you her so wise and measured rules.

It is true, and it is the teaching of all the holy doctors and of the most ancient pontiffs, that holy Scripture is principally the book of priests: *Liber sacerdotalis,* says Saint Ambrose.[1] He was a priest and even a bishop, that young Timothy to whom the great Paul recommended the assiduous reading of the holy books: *Attende lectioni.* [Attend unto reading. (1 Tim. 4:13.)] It was to a prophet that God said: *Comede volumen istud, et vadens loquere ad filios Israel:* [Eat this book, and go speak to the children of Israel. (Ezech. 3:1.)] eat this volume and go speak to the sons of Israel. And he was a priest too, that exile of Patmos to whom the angel said: Take this book and devour it, and it will cause sharp pains in your bowels; but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey: *Accipe librum, et devora illum; et faciet amaricari ventrem tuum; sed in ore tuo erit dulce tamquam mel.* [Apoc. 10:9.] Words which express so well the duty of the priest, who, according to Saint Ambrose, must take on himself all the bitternesses of Scripture, sound all its depths, devour all its difficulties, level its heights, facilitate its understanding: *Caelestium scripturarum eloquia diu terere ac polire debemus, toto animo et corde versantes,* [We ought long to grind and polish the utterances of the heavenly Scriptures, turning them over with all our soul and heart,] in order to present afterwards to the faithful a sweet light which accommodates itself to their eyelids, an agreeable and prepared nourishment, whose juice spreads into all the veins of their soul: *Ut succus ille in omnes se venas animae diffundat.* [That that juice may spread into all the veins of the soul.] Saint Denis the Areopagite, that theologian of the first ages, teaches that the body of Jesus and the divine oracles are the substance of our priesthood. And indeed, the holy Eucharist and holy Scripture are the whole priest. After the great action of the sacrifice, nothing is so priestly as the reading of the sacred Books. So, my brethren, how well I understand these effusions of the so eminently priestly soul of the great Augustine:

O Lord, he said, may Your Scriptures be always my chaste and innocent delights! May I not be mistaken in reading them, may I deceive no one in explaining them! O You, Lord, to whom belong the day and the night, in the midst of the numerous occupations of the pastoral charge You have imposed on me, make me find, in the times that flow by Your order, a space to meditate Your law. For it is not in vain that You have enclosed so many mysteries in so great a number of divine books. In these holy forests of the Scriptures, will there not then be stags who retire there, who walk there, who rest there and ruminate? O my God, Your word is all my joy, and it is more agreeable to me than all the pleasures of earth. Give me then what I love, for it is true that

I love Your word, and it is You who gave me this love. Lord, do not leave Your gifts imperfect. I am Yours, I belong to You since the day when a voice from on high said to me: Take and read: *Tolle, lege.* I am a poor little plant which the dew of Your Scripture caused to spring up, but which is thirsty still for Your dew. Oh! may I drink of Your salutary waters from the beginning of Your Scripture, where one sees the creation of heaven and earth, to the end where one sees the consummation of the perpetual reign of Your holy city! Grant me this grace, Lord, that the secrets of Your Scriptures may be uncovered to me when I strive to understand them.[2]

Such were the wishes, the ardent desires of Augustine. This thirst for the Scriptures, you know it, O divine Jesus, is still in the heart of Your priests. But I return to you, my brethren, for holy Scripture is not exclusively the book of the priest; it is the book of all Christians, it is a common inheritance for all the children of God. All have the right to come and drink at these sources of grace, light, unction and piety; all have the right to come and savour these chaste and innocent delights, these sweet and ineffable pleasures that flow from the holy Letters. Only let us lay down here some principles.

And first, my brethren, I shall address to you this question: Would Providence do enough for a child still in the cradle, if it laid beside him a loaf to serve as his nourishment? What then is further needed? Is it not a mother, a nurse to break this bread, to moisten it, to distribute it according to the need? Now, my brethren, for man, who lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, it is not enough that God has placed His Scripture; a nurse was needed too, a mother to break this bread: this mother is the Church. The holy Scriptures, my brethren, are the property of the Church. The Church is before Scripture, for the Church goes back to the first days of the world, and was definitively founded by the Redeemer; now the holy Books of the old covenant date only from Moses, and it was only several years after the death of Christ and the establishment of His Church that the books of the New Testament were written.

Therefore it belongs to the Church to put the holy Books into the hands of the faithful, when and how she judges it useful and suitable. Therefore the sectaries who sow Bibles in profusion, and who deliver the holy word to private examination and the arbitrary judgment of each, are guilty of iniquity toward the Church, dispose unjustly of her property, and are responsible before God for the blasphemies and scandals that Scripture may provoke when it is not interpreted by a sure authority. Therefore the indiscreet Catholics who of themselves arrogate to themselves the faculty of reading indiscriminately all Scripture, who do not ask the Church her counsels, who do not take account of her restrictions, who do not have recourse to her commentaries, will have no right to accuse the word of God of the temptations and doubts to which their faith will often be exposed, nor of the fanaticism and exaggeration to which their mind will at times be given over.

My brethren, I proclaim it with Bossuet: for him who reads Scripture with a reasoning mind full of himself, there are as many reefs as verses. So hear the fundamental principle established by this great man, and by means of which the Catholic Church forbids no one in an absolute way the use of the Scriptures. The most useful observation to be made, he says, on the reading of Scripture, is to apply oneself to profit by what is clear, by tasting and meditating it, and to pass over what is obscure, by adoring it and submitting all one’s thoughts to the judgment of the Church. By this means one draws as much profit from what one does not understand as from what one does, because one is nourished by the one and humbled by the other.

Another principle. One will find in Scripture certain narratives, certain expressions which the Holy Spirit inserted for secret designs, and which tend either to inculcate some truths or to inspire horror of great crimes. But as they may produce other effects on weak souls, one must pass over them and take great care above all not to dwell on them from curiosity; for God would strike terribly those who abused to this excess His thought, and who made serve as matter for their evil thoughts a book which is made to extirpate them. In the Scriptures, says Saint John Chrysostom, he is learned who knows not only where one may advance, but where one must stop; as in a river, he knows it who knows where the ford is, and where the abysses are

impassable.

Once more, my brethren, by means of this principle of humble and religious submission, the Catholic Church, far from forbidding the reading of the holy Books, never ceases to recommend it to her children, as a treasure of light, virtue, patience and consolation. The euchologion which she puts in the hands of all is hardly anything other than a Bible distributed with prudence, with measure, and put in relation with the various circumstances of times and solemnities. And if the euchologion is the Bible of all, the Church exhorts those of her children whose condition, education, piety allows it, to make a particular study of the holy Books.

It was for pious ladies that Saint Jerome undertook his great labours of translation of Scripture; it was to a Christian virgin that he wrote: Feed yourself on the sacred oracles both night and day; let in the evening, when your head is bowed with sleep, it fall and drop asleep on a page of the holy Book: *Cadentem faciem pagina sancta suscipiat.* [Let the holy page receive your falling face. (Jerome, *Ep.* 22 to Eustochium, as I recognise it.)] Finally, the great and immortal Bossuet, occupied at once with the highest interests of the Church and of the State, found time still to date from the palace of Versailles letters to humble nuns to whom he sent his translations and his commentaries on the Psalms, the Prophets, the Gospels and even the Apocalypse, indicating to them what particular fruits they could draw from the sapiential books, the prophetic and historical books and the writings of the Apostles.

Sustained by such authorities, we tell you boldly, my brethren, you who have at heart only to live a life wholly of union with God: read, read, meditate the holy Scriptures; let no day pass without reading at least one chapter of the New Testament. For the books of the old Covenant, take the advice and indications of the guide of your soul. As for us, from the height of the pulpit, the fear of abuse cannot cause the use of the thing to be proscribed. Only we shall add with Saint Augustine: that if, against our will, through the temerity of some proud intelligence, our counsel were to become treacherous to one of our brethren; if some unfortunate, through proud presumption, dared to go out of that holy cradle of divine authority where he ought to be nourished, alas! how great will be his fall! Have pity on him, my God, lest this little bird, which has no feathers yet, be trodden underfoot by the passers-by: and send one of Your holy Angels to carry him back to his nest, that he may live and abide there until he can fly.[3]

My brethren, it was the custom of the first centuries that Christians always carried the New Testament about them, and that this divine book followed them even into the tomb. Have all in your house this precious volume, my dearly beloved brethren; treat it with respect. Not being able to keep in your house the holy Eucharist which contains the body of Jesus Christ, keep as a precious treasure the holy Gospel, which contains, under the bark of letters and syllables, the truth of Jesus Christ. Let it be there as the divinity of your domestic sanctuary! See, at holy Mass, with what solemnity, what respect the Church wishes the sacred book to be touched. Remarkable thing, the subdeacon bearing the holy Gospel to the priest to kiss, passes before the altar, and before Jesus Christ Himself exposed on the altar, without saluting either the altar or the Blessed Sacrament, because in the eyes of the Church the Gospel is still Jesus, He who said: *Ego sum veritas.* [I am the truth. (John 14:6.)] Often the holy doctors have insisted on this relation of holy Scripture with the Eucharist. Though the hour advances, I cannot omit in this regard the touching words of the author of the *Imitation.*

Nevertheless, he says, I shall walk in faith, strengthened by the examples of the Saints. I shall have the sacred books for the consolation and mirror of my life, and above all the most holy body of Jesus Christ for remedy and refuge. For I feel that two things are above all necessary to me in life, two things without which this miserable existence would become insupportable to me; yes, held in the prison of this body, I avow that I have need of two things, of nourishment and of light. That is why, O my God, You have given me Your flesh for the support of my soul and of my body, and You have set Your word as a lamp before my feet. Without these two things I could not live well; for the word of God is the light of my soul, and Your sacrament is the

bread of life. One may say that these are two tables, placed on one side and the other in the treasury of Your holy Church. The one is the table of the holy altar, where reposes the sacred bread which is the body of Jesus Christ; the other is the table of the divine law, containing the holy doctrine, the pure faith, and leading into the interior of the Holy of Holies. Thanks to You, Lord Jesus, light of the eternal light, for this table of the sacred doctrine which You have served us by Your ministers the prophets, the Apostles and the other doctors![4]

It would be impossible to tell you, my brethren, all the happiness the Saints found in the reading of the holy Books. By prayer, says Saint Ambrose, we speak to God; by the reading of the divine oracles, it is God who speaks to us. The holy Scriptures, says the great bishop of Hippo, are letters that come to us from our fatherland; and Bossuet comments and develops this thought thus: All of us Christians, as many as we are, are poor exiles, banished far from our dear dwelling, deprived of the sweetness and liberty of our native air. Yet what softens the weariness and inconveniences of our exile are the letters which we receive from our blessed fatherland; you understand well that it is heaven. These letters are the divine Scriptures that our heavenly Father addresses to us by the ministry of the holy prophets and of His Apostles, and even by His dear Son, whom He sent on earth to bring us here below news of our country and to give us the hope of a prompt and happy return. So that if we desire ardently to see that glorious city where our good Father keeps a great and eternal inheritance, all our consolation must be to read these letters; we must kiss their sacred characters a thousand and a thousand times, and above all we must night and day ruminate their sense.[5]

O Lord, said David, I am a poor stranger on the earth; at least do not refuse me this sole consolation of meditating Your holy word: *Incola ego sum in terra; non abscondas a me mandata tua.* [I am a sojourner on the earth: hide not Thy commandments from me. (Ps. 118:19.)] Saint Paul had indeed the same idea of the holy Scriptures when he said (and these are the words that served me as text): All that has been written has been written for us, that through the patience and consolation that proceed from the Scriptures we may have hope.

My brethren, oh! that Christian hearts may understand well these words: *Ut per patientiam et consolationem Scripturarum, spem habeamus!* Yes, each syllable of the holy Books distils patience, consolation, hope. When an evil is no longer tolerable, it becomes tolerable still by the patience and consolation of the Scriptures. When the heart has lost all hope, when it is absolutely discouraged, it recovers hope and courage still by the holy Scriptures. When all the rest has become an object of disgust, when the heart is ulcerated and the very sweetnesses of friendship are insipid and without attraction, Scripture is always full of savour and charm.

Doubtless, as the great Apostle says elsewhere, Scripture is useful to teach: one never opens the holy book without learning something; one passes a hundred times by the same road, one always finds there something new. It is useful to correct and reprove: one never reads the divine text without becoming better, without being enlightened on oneself, on one's faults, one's morals. It is useful to excite to good: it makes you always more apt to virtue, more zealous for the accomplishment of duties. But the great fruit of Scripture is that it so always accommodates itself to the present impression, to the present situation of the soul, that it seems to be always the balm prepared for your wound of today, the consolation, the patience for your sorrow of today, the encouragement for your despair and dejection of today: *Quaecumque scripta sunt, ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt, ut per patientiam et consolationem Scripturarum, spem habeamus.*

My God, my God, grant me this grace to love more and more Your holy Scripture, to despise more and more all the productions of earth in order to attach myself only to that book of heaven which, containing Your thought, contains Your very heart, O my God: *Cor Dei scriptura ipsius* (1).[6] The men of the age have told me their fables more or less gilded, more or less painted; but they were no longer like Your law, O my God. I have sometimes opened their pretended histories, they were full of lies and saddened my soul; I have leafed through their pretended philosophy, it was full of sophisms and would have degraded my intelligence; I have

glimpsed their literature, their poems and their novels, they were hollow and empty of substance, they filled the mind with chimeras and carried corruption into the heart. I have lent my ear to all the foolish productions of the age: *Narraverunt mihi iniqui fabulationes;* [The wicked have told me fables. (Ps. 118:85.)] but none of all that, Lord, was like Your law, like Your Scripture always true, always holy and sanctifying, always pure and purifying: *Sed non ut lex tua.* [But not as Thy law.] And, wishing henceforth to hear only You, Lord, I have made You this request to find taste henceforth only in Your holy books, until You grant me to read in the book of life which is Your eternal Word. This, my brethren, is the grace, etc. (1).[7]

Translator's notes

1. The quotations from Ambrose, Augustine, Chrysostom, Jerome and Bossuet are given as the preacher gives them; where I name a source for a paraphrase it is marked "as I recognise it" and not verified here.

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[1] The Ambrose attributions in this passage are the preacher's; not verified here.

[2] This is a free paraphrase of passages of Augustine's *Confessions* (book XI, ch. 2–3 and VIII, ch. 12 for the *Tolle, lege*), as I recognise it; the preacher gives no reference.

[3] Free paraphrase of Augustine, *Confessions* VII, ch. 19 (the little bird fallen from the nest), as I recognise it; the preacher gives no reference.

[4] *Imitation of Christ*, book IV, ch. 11, as I recognise it; the preacher gives no reference.

[5] Attributions to Ambrose, Augustine and Bossuet are the preacher's; I have not verified the passages.

[6] (1) S. Aug. in Ps. XXI. (Note of M. l'abbé Pie.)

[7] (1) Cf. Appendix I: A, 78. (Editor's note.)

n° 19. Discourse for the Entry into Office of a Young Priest

1844.[1]

Ingredere … et imple manum tuam prunis ignis quae sunt inter cherubim, et effunde super civitatem. [Go in … and fill thy hand with the burning coals from between the cherubim, and scatter them upon the city. (Ezech. 10:2.)] Go up to the altar, and fill your hand with the burning coals that are between the Cherubim, and scatter them upon the city. (Ezech. c. X, v. 2.)

My young friend, It seems to me that they still resound in my ears, those words that a paternal and revered voice addressed to me with an accent so full of love, when, descended from the altar where I had prepared myself for the sacrifice, before going up again to consummate those sacred mysteries, I gathered with an eager ear the encouragements and teachings that fell for me from that pulpit in which I was henceforth to sit myself to teach, to encourage my brethren. I found them so sweet, so savoury, those divine words, that today I come in my turn to repeat them to you, to apply them to you, my young friend, destined, you too, to consecrate the very firstfruits of your ministry to the culture of souls in this city so dear to us, in this city of Mary, which was your cradle, which will be, I hope, our tomb: Go up, I shall say to you, priest of the Lord, go up to the altar; fill your hand with the burning coals that are between the Cherubim, and scatter them upon the city.

Ah! He who is mighty has done great things in you today. The hand of our venerable and venerated pontiff has been laid on your head, and your soul has put on a new character. A richer effusion of grace, of that supernatural and mysterious creation, a more abundant, more special, more intimate participation of the divine being, has raised you to a more sublime state. From the family of the children of Christ, from the militia of His soldiers, you have been transferred into the order of His priests. From today your word has contracted the virtue which consecrates, the virtue which absolves; your hands have acquired the virtue which blesses.

You will speak, and heaven, obeying your voice, will open, and the obscure elements will be transformed into the body and blood of a God. You will loose, and at that instant what you have loosed on earth will be loosed in the heavens. You will stretch out your right hand, and it will fill with blessing all the members of the Christian family. The famished will approach you, and you will feed him with the transubstantial bread of grace, the wheat of the elect. The sinner will come to cast himself into your arms, and he will withdraw justified. The newborn child will be offered to you, and you will mark him with the seal of Jesus Christ at his entrance into life. The young man, the young virgin whom the world pursues with its seductions, will come to seek your support; sustained by your arm, they will not stumble against the stone of the way, and the earth will be peopled with angels again, and the desert will produce flowers. The dying old man will call you; you will pour on his sorrow the balm of salvation with the sacred unction, and you will teach that fleeing soul the road to heaven. You will teach, and God Himself will express Himself by your lips, from which will flow the truth that enlightens and the grace that touches. And amid so many august functions, God will assist you always with His Spirit, will instruct you in His doctrine, will warm you with His charity, will fortify you with His grace.

Yes, truly, it is fair, my young brother, the inheritance that has fallen to you. Priest, king, doctor, judge, shepherd, above all father, all the most revered titles belong to you; ambassador of the Most High, you have a right to all our respects; I bow with faith, with love, under your sacred hand, still moist with the holy oil which contains the virtue of the priesthood. But with my homage, O my young friend, will you permit me other effusions? Yes, I shall tell you, your portion is magnificent, but you have inherited the priesthood in evil and difficult days. Priests of Eternity, how evil and afflicting is the epoch that has been reserved to us in the succession of the centuries! Husbandmen of souls, how ungrateful is the soil watered by our sweat! what obstacles, what hardening!

Your priesthood is a priesthood of truth, and the world lives no more but on errors. Your priesthood is a priesthood of purity, and the world breathes nothing but vice. Happily your priesthood is also a priesthood of charity, and the world will never cease to be sensible to love. The development of these three thoughts will reveal to you the present conditions of our priesthood, its fears, its hopes, its sadnesses, its consolations. Let us run rapidly through these various considerations.

I. Your priesthood is a priesthood of truth. The world was given over to error … *Et Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis; et vidimus gloriam ejus, gloriam quasi Unigeniti a Patre, plenum gratiae et veritatis* … [And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, as it were of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14.)] *Ite, docete* … *Docentes eos servare omnia quaecumque mandavi vobis* … [Going, teach … teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. (Matt. 28:19–20.)] Reducing every intelligence under the servitude of Jesus Christ … Though an angel from heaven should teach you otherwise, believe him not … Teaching of a God, sacred, unalterable, incorruptible word; truth one, unchangeable; exclusive affirmation; in Jesus Christ there is not yes and no, but yes only: *Sed est in illo fuit* [sic; the Vulgate reads *sed est in illo est*]… Christian faith, bond of the intelligence, like Christian morality, bond of the will; libertinism of mind forbidden like that of the heart … We are the men of dogma, the men of yes; we hold a creed.

Now this century is that of liberty; it was inaugurated by the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and at the head of these rights was proclaimed the right of free examination, of individual, independent thought; everything is submitted to the reason or the unreason of each. The law, the bond of the intelligence is in the intelligence itself: that is, every bond, every law has disappeared. No more creed, consequently, no more dogma, no more absolute yes. The diverse beliefs are indifferent forms of a certain vague religion that embraces them all; immense confusion of true and false, of yes and no. Philosophy is reduced to the negation of exclusive dogma; he is a philosopher who appeals from the Gospel and from the Catholic decision.

What difficulty to bring back into the way the human mind thus gone astray! Our language is clear, our reasoning easy to understand: *Numquid divisus est Christus?* [Is Christ divided? (1 Cor. 1:13.)] Can the divine word accommodate itself to for and against? Is not truth one? Does not affirmation exclude negation? Is there not a law for the mind as for the heart? Is it not a sacrilege to give the lie to the incarnate Word? … No matter! this century, which has tasted independence, continues to believe what it wills, and maintains, against the authority of Jesus Christ, its pretended right of free examination.

You will speak incarnation, and they will answer you: impossibility; hell, and they will answer: injustice; sin, and they will answer: chimera; eternity, and they will answer: deception … You will speak certainty, and they will answer: perhaps; gospel, and they will answer: examination … In the eyes of the sages of the age, you will be the priest of a dogma that is dying out, the priest of the past; you will not be the priest of a vaster cult that is beginning, the priest of the future.

Yet your ministry of teaching will not be without fruit … Souls wearied with doubt who have groped in the night; upright hearts, for whom the light will dawn amid the darkness, who will come to throw themselves on your breast, to gather at last the truth from your mouth, whom you will beget by the virtue of truth … And the world itself, in these days of doubt, when it finds a man of faith, of conviction, an apostle, remains astonished; ever in the darkness, it admires that some still attach themselves to follow so resplendent a torch; ever on the uncertain ground of perhaps, it lifts its head when it sees a man seated on the unshakeable rock of affirmation …

II. Your priesthood is a priesthood of purity. The ancient religions established dogmas more or less true, which became like an integral part of the national code, and which on that title everyone had to respect at least inwardly, under pain of death. But religion among the pagans had almost nothing to do with morality; dogma was not linked with the practice of virtue. The priests developed their more or less poetic creed, their more or less rich fictions; but only philosophers or legislators spoke of virtue. Virtue did not show itself supported on religion, and religion, having almost no practical consequence, could be more or less despised, but was not hated; it was so convenient, so little troublesome! There would be no lack even now of people ready to believe whatever you like, provided they remain free to do whatever they like; disposed to repair on certain days to some temple or other, provided that outside these rare manifestations of social worship they are allowed to live as they please.

Ah! it is not so with the religion of which you have today become the minister; this religion goes straight to the heart to combat its passions, it seizes at once on life to reform it. And, before all, it preaches purity: *Quae autem desursum est sapientia, primum quidem pudica est.* [But the wisdom that is from above, first indeed is chaste. (James 3:17.)] It commands by its rules an extreme purity; it insinuates by its counsels a purity more sublime still.

Now this century is that of vice, of the refinement of vice, of the apotheosis of vice. In all times the human heart has been a hearth of corruption; nowhere has there been found a society, an assembly of men exempt from vices. But at least vice hid itself from shame; it excused itself by pleading weakness. We are witnesses of another spectacle, a new spectacle. Vice shows itself in broad daylight, it makes display of its turpitudes. Thirty, forty thousand readers feed each day on the staging of the most ignoble passions of humanity. These mysteries of corruption, of ignominy, this horrible language, this infamous idiom of the dens of lubricity, pass each day under the eyes of the most polished, the most elegant world. The most delicate hands seize, with an interest bordering on fury, sheets steeped in the filthiest mire of the gutter. The literature of the convict prison and of prostitution has become the fashionable literature. There figure incest, adultery, the poisoner. There the most guilty passions, the most lamentable deviations become noble sentiments, what do I say? are transformed into a sort of transcendent religion.[2]

Vice formerly hid itself; but it also sought to excuse itself: today vice is called heroism, grandeur, virtue, piety. All the ideas of order, sacred or profane, are treated as prejudices, as laws in conspiracy against nature. Two hearts are more holily, more religiously united precisely because neither the stole of the priest nor the sash of the municipal officer has intervened in this meeting of two souls. At the bottom of a heart where all the centuries have supposed weakness and remorse, they place, I am quoting textually, a profoundly religious sentiment which is to dogma what the immensity of the firmament is to the ceiling of a church![3] Vice has become virtue, libertinism is holy, fornication is piety; and in this strange asceticism the most corrupt souls pass for the most mystical.

O heir of a priesthood which is before all the apostle of purity: *Primum quidem pudica*, what obstacles you will meet, my young friend! Ah! what painful impressions await you! You had prepared this young heart for the greatest act of life; your lessons had borne fruit. This child had approached, pure and virginal, the sacred table; she had for several years kept, in the midst of the world, her piety, her fervour. One day her brow, instead of innocence, was adorned with an unaccustomed luxury; her eyes no longer dared to rise toward you; then the next day, become more guilty, she passed by you with a look of disdain, with a mocking smile. Poor child! vice had passed that way, and had so changed her, lost her perhaps for ever.

Behold, my dear friend, some of the pains of the priest: *Filios enutrivi et exaltavi, ipsi autem spreverunt me.* [I have brought up children, and exalted them; but they have despised me. (Is. 1:2.)] For know it, this convenient religion of vice has sworn hatred to the religion of purity. There is a passion which develops in the vicious heart with the same energy as vice itself: it is hatred of the Catholic priest. The eternal matter of conversation of the children of the age, of the faction of the lascivious, is at once malignity toward priests and the language of lubricity. Our efforts to snatch a few victims from corruption are denounced to the entire nation as procedures of espionage, as machinations of infamy. Priests, because they are still an obstacle to vice, are designated boldly, publicly, to the contempt, to the hatred, to the dagger of the multitudes: in face of magistrates who keep silent, under the eyes of the law which arms itself with texts to defend every other class of citizens, but in whose eyes apparently priests are not a class of men.

III. Ah! happily your priesthood is a priesthood of charity, of superhuman, transcendent, divine charity. One may well travesty the charity of the priest: it is so true, so sincere, so great, so heroic, that it will triumph over all calumnies. It is impossible to counterfeit to that degree disinterestedness and love. All the resource then of the priest in these evil days is the charity that rests in the depth of his bowels, that shows itself in all his acts, that is mingled with all his thoughts, with all his works. Priesthood of truth, we are hated by error; priesthood of purity, we are hated by vice; priesthood of charity, of disinterestedness, of love, we astonish this century of selfishness and indifference: at that sight, it begins to reflect.

Therefore, my young friend, understand your mission. You are priest of the God who is charity, minister of the Church that breathes only love. This morning you were as it were clothed with charity: *Vestem sacerdotalem, per quam caritas intelligitur.* [The priestly vestment, by which charity is understood. (from the ordination rite; as I recognise it, not verified.)] *Induite vos, sicut electi Dei, viscera misericordiae* … [Put ye on, as the elect of God, the bowels of mercy. (Col. 3:12.)] The priest charitable to all: to those who err, running to meet them; waiting patiently for those who return … father of the prodigal … In the tribunal of penance, charity without limit … If your charity does not go to the point of scandalising the weak, it will not go far enough … I wish that people murmur at your charity …; for divine charity goes so far, and it must indeed go so far, in order that we may have some hope of salvation.

Courage, my young friend! It is under the eyes of Mary that you begin at this moment your sacred functions. You come at this moment to lay your priestly heart on that merciful heart, so tender to sinners. To save sinners is our whole ministry. You will labour in the holy vineyard with courageous workmen of the Lord; you will have beside you fine examples of devotedness, wise counsels. You will be among friends. Permit me to place myself behind all the others. Young myself still, I was your first master in profane sciences, and

later you opened several times your heart of levite to my priestly heart. I can give you this testimony that from your childhood you were initiated into the holy studies which can make one apt to procure your salvation and that of others. I was witness of this faith, this unfeigned piety which you had received from your dear family, and which has never ceased to grow in your soul.

Courage then, priest of the Lord! His grace is with you, and you will do great things. Go up then, go up to the altar: *Ingredere;* take in your hands Him who is called a devouring fire, Him who came on earth to bring fire there, and who desires nothing less than a universal conflagration. Take in your hands those burning coals which are between the cherubim; and may this first blessing that your priestly hands are going to give set on fire the whole city, all this city of Chartres, this city of Mary, this city once the city of virtues: *Et effunde super civitatem.* May this first blessing above all spread over all your priestly life, may it make fruitful all its works! *Et videas filios filiorum tuorum:* [And mayest thou see thy children's children. (Ps. 127:6.)] that you may see the children of your children grow; that is, that the fruit of your priesthood may extend from generation to generation! that you may be witness of the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life! that you may see peace reign over Israel: *Pacem super Israel!* [Peace upon Israel. (Ps. 127:6.)]

Translator's notes

1. This is a discourse "not preached, because of illness" and is, as the editor says, only partly developed (hence the ellipses, which are in the source).

2. The Vulgate wording in "Sed est in illo fuit" (2 Cor. 1:19) is left as printed with [sic].

3. The phrase "initiated into the holy studies" is as printed; "my young friend" is the abbé Houlle per the note. The speaker's mention that he had been this priest's first teacher is rendered as printed.

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[1] (1) M. l'abbé Houlle, curate of Saint-Pierre of Chartres. — Discourse not preached, because of illness. (Note of M. l'abbé Pie.) — "We reproduce this discourse, still full of timeliness, whose whole is truly striking, although the thought, in several places, is only indicated without any development." (Editor's note.)

[2] Allusion, I take it, to the serial novel (*roman-feuilleton*) of the 1840s, e.g. Eugène Sue, whose *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842–43) was printed in the *Journal des Débats*; the preacher names no one. My reading.

[3] The preacher says he quotes "textually"; he names no author (the allusion is to George Sand-style romantic fiction, I suppose; my guess, not verified).

n° 20. First Conference on Grace, Preached on the Second Friday of Lent: The Supernatural Life of Man

1845.

Scriptum est: Non in solo pane vivit homo, sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei. [It is written: Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. (Matt. 4:4.)]

My Lord (1), The holy forty days, in calling you more frequently around the evangelical pulpit, impose on us the duty of studying more attentively the state of your souls, my very dear brethren, in order to distribute to you a nourishment better suited to your needs and to apply to your wounds more efficacious remedies. A mother, intelligent with that intelligence of the heart which surpasses every other intelligence, does not give her young child indiscriminately every sort of food; she does not decide at random and without examination among the dishes heaped before her. No, she observes, she compares, and her hand, guided by an infallible discernment, adopts by preference what suits the disposition of the present hour, putting aside what is less opportune, little content with her choice if it is only good without being the best, if it does not join to its absolute merit the suitability of perfect timeliness.[1]

The priest of Jesus Christ, my brethren, has maternal preoccupations for your souls. Impiety may well disparage, travesty, calumniate our priestly ministry; we who find within us only the inspirations of love,

only the solicitudes, the alarms of tenderness, only the desires, the projects, the wishes of the most ardent charity, we remain in peace, strong in our conscience which reproaches us with no other ambition than the noble ambition to procure the salvation of our brethren, no other calculation than that of zeal, no other cunning than that of our secret prayers that it may please God to touch the hearts from which blasphemy escapes.

Amid the violent and frenzied attacks of which our priesthood is the object, its answer is to continue its work, praying for those who calumniate it, ever ready to bless those who curse it. The work of the priesthood is to enlighten minds and to touch hearts, to combat errors and vices, false ideas and evil passions. Now, my brethren, when I look around me, what I perceive everywhere is the forgetting of the lofty and pure doctrines of the supernatural order, the predominance of sensual, earthly doctrines; and if the human mind makes at times an effort to raise itself above matter, it is to attach itself to false gleams, to a hollow, empty philosophy, according to the traditions of men and according to the elements of the world, but not according to Jesus Christ. For our century the world of reason is scarcely anything; the world of matter is all; the world of grace is nothing.

And when I say for our century, I do not speak only of those who live outside religious practices; I include the greater number of our Christians, Christians according to form but not according to spirit; Christians by their exterior works, but strangers to the intimate mystery of grace.

Yet, my brethren, it is on this pivot of grace that the whole economy of the Christian religion turns. To be ignorant of this dogma is to be ignorant of the Gospel, it is to close heaven to oneself, since the only avenue to glory is the road of grace, since to attain the supernatural end the supernatural means is indispensable.

We shall treat therefore, my brethren, during this holy Lent, the important, difficult, yet elementary questions of grace; we shall try to make this teaching intelligible to all. Our language will be simple and familiar; they will not be discourses, but conversations. You will bring us, my brethren, your accustomed benevolence; and all, I hope, will gather some fruits of these doctrines so solid, so substantial, in presence of which all the rest is so little worthy of attention and interest. And to lay today the foundations of our subject, we shall establish these two propositions: 1° Existence and reality of a supernatural life; 2° Necessity for man to live this life.

I. Jesus Christ had passed forty days in the desert, abstaining from all bodily food, and nourished only by commerce with God His Father. The tempter approaches Him, and asks Him for a miracle: “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread.” Jesus answers him: It is written that man lives not by bread alone, but by every doctrine [as the preacher reads it] that proceeds from the mouth of God.”

This tempter, my brethren, have you recognised him? this tempter for whom every life other than the gross life of the senses is a chimera; this tempter who consents to proclaim Son of God only him who shall know how to draw bread from stone, and who asks as sign of divinity the transformation of a substance into a more productive one. By these traits have you not recognised our century? century wholly, exclusively given over to the cares of life, to the exploitation of matter; century industrious to make bread and money out of everything, to extract foods by mysterious combinations from the most hideous substances and even the most active poisons; century which has made a religion of interests, and which has said to the Church of Jesus Christ: If you are the Church of God, cease to preach to us these doctrines of renunciation and abnegation, and let us utilise your maxims and precepts for the profit of temporal prosperity; deliver to us the secrets of divine power to change stones into bread: *Dic ut lapides isti panes fiant.* [Command that these stones be made bread. (Matt. 4:3.)]

My brethren, those singular innovators of our century, those economists, those Fourierists, those phalansterians, if you will, whose creed, decalogue and liturgy are reduced to the means of stimulating production and exciting consumption; those apostles of matter, whose chemical science makes the whole priesthood, and who show their crucible as proof of their mission; those men who are only the exaggerated

expression, the portrait somewhat overdrawn of the thought and tendencies of their century, have they not some traits of resemblance with that tempter who, suspecting the divine virtue of Jesus, approaches His person and says to Him: If You are the Son of God, give the proof of it; say to these stones to be made bread: *Si es Filius Dei, dic ut lapides isti panes fiant.*

The Church of Jesus Christ, my brethren, has her answer quite ready; it is that of her divine Master: Man, humanity lives not by bread alone. Was it necessary for a God to descend on earth to teach men to make bread? Will not the care of self-preservation, and above all cupidity, always teach men this science enough? The Son of God came to lay down something else. Man, humanity lives not by bread alone, but by every doctrine that proceeds from the mouth of God. Remark, my brethren: if man lives not by bread alone, neither does he live by doctrine alone, by doctrine of any kind whatever; but his life is whole, is perfect only by means of the doctrine that proceeds from the mouth of God.

And here, my brethren, Jesus Christ Himself teaches us to distinguish three sorts of life: the life of the body, which is nourished with bread; the life of the mind, which is nourished with reason; the life of the soul, which is nourished with grace. The first is the sensual and animal life, the life of the beast; the second is the intellectual and rational life, the life of man; the third is the supernatural and divine life, the life of the Christian. Now, although these three lives are reconcilable, and the scholar and the Christian, for example, do not cease to live the bodily life, taking a reasonable care of this inferior part of their nature, and the Christian does not cease either to live the intellectual life, which is rather excited than deadened in him by the concurrence of the supernatural life; nevertheless one can say in a very true sense that each man lives by only one of these lives, because only one can dominate in him. The life of a man, says Saint Thomas, is that which pleases him most, which is the most habitual object of his thoughts and affections.[2]

There are then for man three sorts of life: and first an animal life, a life of the senses. My brethren, need I tell you that this lowest and grossest life, which is the life of the beast, is not, of itself, a life worthy of man; that a reasonable being cannot without disorder put his last end in it, find in it all his happiness? Surely God did not breathe a living soul into His creature, He did not enlighten him with the rays of genius, He did not give him a sublime brow raised toward the heavens, that he should live incessantly bent toward the earth, concentrated in the pursuit of brutal enjoyments.

When God, having formed this beautiful universe, introduced man into it, king of creation, holding the sceptre of intelligence, assuredly He wished to do something other than to set in the midst of a vast farm a keeper of unclean animals, sharing their instincts and tastes, envying their gross pleasures and feeding on their disgusting fodder. No, the destiny of man, his end, his life, are not his passions; his God is neither matter, nor flesh, nor gold and silver. Industry, commerce, fortune, acquisitions, progress of the arts, rapidity of transport, increase of well-being, perfecting of comfort, all that is not the last end of the individual nor of nations; the last word of the destinies of humanity is not found there. A century of delirium could doubtless degrade the human species to the point of speaking of the man-plant, the man-machine; but humanity will never make up its mind to accept a rank either among the wheels that move, or among the shrubs that vegetate, or among the oysters that digest.

Above the life of the body, the life of the senses, there is then another life, the life of the mind and heart, the life of ideas and affections, the life of reason and sentiment, the intellectual and moral life, which is nourished by doctrines: *Scriptum est: non in solo pane vivit homo, sed in omni verbo.* This second life, my brethren, is doubtless far superior to the preceding. As much as the mind is more excellent than matter, so much does the rational life surpass the animal life. Far be it from me to seek to depreciate the work of God, to speak ill of reason and of human nature! For I know that God could have left man in the state of pure nature, and that man would still have been the privileged one, the elder of creation: king of matter by intelligence, priest of the universe by his commerce with God, cultivating at once the earth by his industry, the sciences by his reason, the virtues by his heart, and, by this good use of all his natural faculties, deserving to obtain

beyond the tomb a natural felicity of which God would have been the object; God such as a created nature can see Him, God reflecting Himself in the mirror of His work and above all in the mirror of human reason, which is His masterpiece.

Therefore natural sciences, natural morality, natural religion, philosophy, investigations of genius, laws of conscience, relations of the heart with the author of nature, these are so many things which constitute the intellectual and moral life, the proper and natural life of man. And once more, far be it from me to confound him who lives by the life of intelligences with him who knows not how to raise himself above the senses! far be it from me to place on the same rank the naturalism of reason with the naturalism of matter, the philosopher with the brute! And although too often the man of science and of nature stops on the road that should lead him up to his author, although too often the God of the philosopher is his reason, as the God of the brute is his belly: *Quorum deus venter est,* [Whose God is their belly. (Phil. 3:19.)] although in the former too often the vices of the mind take the place of the vices of the flesh; nevertheless, setting aside this abuse, and considering things in their proper condition and in their first possibility, I avow that in itself there is an intellectual and moral life worthy of praise, a life of study, of duty, of devotedness, of probity, honourable, estimable in the eyes of men, and which would even have sufficed in the eyes of God to lead the creature to his natural end, if a transcendent mercy, in calling him to superhuman destinies for eternity, had not obliged him here below to a superhuman life and virtues.

There is then, my brethren, a third life. Above the senses, above reason, I perceive grace and faith; beyond materialism appears Christianity; the sensual and animal life, the moral and intellectual life, are only the two lower rungs surmounted by that of the supernatural and divine life. It is written: Man lives not by bread alone; he lives not by doctrine alone, but he lives by the doctrine that proceeds from the mouth of God: *Scriptum est: Non in solo pane vivit homo, sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei.*

What then is this supernatural and divine life, which is the life of the Christian? Who has revealed its existence to us? What are its invisible elements? It is here that our century becomes incredulous. More sensible than the century that preceded it, it makes a merit, and rightly, of having repudiated the ignoble inheritance of an atheistic and sensualist philosophy; but it has not the strength to rise beyond a spiritualism which knows no other laws than those of reason and nature. Ever-growing virtue of the intelligence, ever-ascending progress of humanity, that is the whole philosophy of our century! deist and rationalist philosophy, which does not admit, outside and above the ordinary laws and natural relations of humanity, a gratuitous outpouring, an unowed and unhoped-for effusion of divine truth and charity; philosophy according to nature, which entirely rejects the mysteries of grace. From this contempt, this disdain of the philosophers, what to conclude against the existence of the supernatural life?

Tell me, my brethren: take a man given over to the sensual and animal life, a man slave of his flesh and his ignoble appetites, who knows only voluptuousness, eating and drinking. Speak to him of the delicate enjoyments of the intelligence, the consolations of philosophy, the charms of literature, of poetry. He does not understand you; you address yourself to a sense that is lacking in him; he laughs at your hollow and speculative enjoyments. What will the philosopher answer him? Casting on him a look of pity, he will plunge again into his psychological investigations. The poet will pursue his harmonious compositions; the rhetorician will finish his elegant and polished phrases; and all will say to themselves that after all, for being unrecognised and blasphemed by an ignorant and a coarse man, the intellectual sphere in which they live exists none the less.

Well! my brethren, what this coarse man is to the philosopher, the philosopher is to the Christian. Speak to this scholar according to the world, to this man who knows only grammar, figures, the strata of the terrestrial globe, or the phenomena of the celestial bodies, to this man who cultivates only the elements of human science: speak to him of the supernatural life, of supernatural science, of supernatural virtue; speak to him of the order of grace and of glory, you speak perhaps the only language he does not understand. Circumscribed

in the sphere of the natural, he does not perceive, he cannot understand these phenomena of an eminent order: *Animalis homo non percipit ea quae sunt Spiritus Dei;* [The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. 2:14.)] in his eyes you fall into folly: *Stultitia enim est illi, et non potest intelligere.* [For it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand.] What will the Christian answer? He will pity his brother who is blind, but he will none the less continue to believe in the supernatural torch whose rays invest him, penetrate him on all sides.

But what is then exactly the supernatural life? An important question, a capital one. Fix your attention, I beg you, my brethren.

The natural is, for every being, what is the consequence of its creation, that is, the ensemble of its essential and constitutive attributes, and what flows immediately from these attributes; consequently, what is due to it, what belongs to it, that without which it cannot be conceived. For example, God could have never created man; but from the instant He created him, from the instant God produced a being composed of a material body and a rational soul, He owed to his body the instinct of preservation, to his soul those first principles which constitute reason; He had to assign him an end suitable to his nature, to furnish him means proportioned to this end. And the system, the whole that results from these attributes, these principles, this end, these means, these laws, is properly what is called the natural order.

The supernatural order, on the contrary, is what surpasses the forces and pretensions of every created or possible being; it is what flows from the pure goodness of God, from His entirely free and gratuitous generosity; what is demanded by no law, by no fitness, neither as consequence nor as crowning of any nature, and without which the work of God would be complete and would lack none of its constitutive parts. And, to come to a precise notion, to a special definition, the supernatural order consists: 1° for the future, in the vocation of man to glory, that is, to the happiness of seeing God face to face as He sees Himself, and in the same way as He sees Himself; 2° for the present, in the gift of grace, as means of arriving at glory, supernatural avenue to the supernatural dwelling. Let us explain ourselves.

God, in making a rational being, owed him happiness and the means of arriving at happiness; but He owed him only a natural happiness and only natural means to attain it. Natural concurrence of the Creator, by means of which the creature, by the good use of his native faculties, would have arrived at a felicity conformable to his wishes: that was the natural condition of man. But God conceived other designs; He meditated other thoughts, thoughts of love, of excessive love, of liberality, I am wrong, of unexampled prodigality. It is not enough to have given man abundantly all the happiness and glory his nature could bear; it is an incredible, unhoped-for superabundance of greatness and felicity that God is going to bestow on him: felicity, greatness that surpass the right and the forces of every nature. And what is it? Here it is.

God gives Himself to man for his term and his end; God calls man up to Himself, and destines him to see eternally the divine essence in itself face to face: that is, He draws him from his own nature to transport him in some sort into the bosom of the infinite and uncreated nature, to unite him to Himself by bonds as intimate as mysterious, to make him happy with His own happiness. And how will man, poor atom of creation, enter thus into participation of the eternal essence? Who will fill the infinite distance which separates the soul from God? On what wings shall we raise ourselves up to Him? To raise ourselves up to God: impossible! eternally, infinitely impossible! But God, that sun of the heaven of heavens, will lower down to us a ray of His divine essence, light of glory in which we shall see the invisible King, divine medium in which we shall possess Him who is inaccessible: intuitive vision, beatific enjoyment, consummated charity, these are the last words that can be stammered on our destiny.

But this glorious term of eternal felicity, who will give us to attain it? Hear: from here below, this same heavenly ray which enlightens, which warms the world of glory, descends to our intelligence to enlighten it with the lights of faith, to our heart to warm it with the fire of love; and this light, radiance of the Word, and

this heat, emanation of the Holy Spirit, is what constitutes the world of grace. In heaven glory, and it is the term; on earth grace, and it is the way. In heaven glory, which is the consummation of grace; here below grace, which is the germ of glory. Sanctifying grace, actual graces, infused and theological virtues, gifts of the Holy Spirit, prayer, sacraments, these are here below the diverse elements and as it were the apparatus of the supernatural life, union begun with God, obscure but real union; superhuman state in which all the thoughts, all the works of man, inspired, moved by a heavenly motive, hatched under the influence of a divine breath, take a transcendent value proportioned to the supernatural goal toward which they are directed.

Thus, my brethren, to sum up in a few words: the supernatural life is the pre-eminent union of man with God, union consummated in heaven by glory, begun on earth by grace. This is that third life of which I spoke to you, and which is the life of the Christian, the life of the man who lives not by bread alone, who lives not by doctrine alone, but who lives by the doctrine which proceeds from the mouth of God: *Scriptum est: Non in solo pane vivit homo, sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei.* This life is also called divine life, for he who possesses it participates in the nature of God: *Ut per haec efficiamini divinae consortes naturae,* [That by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature. (2 Pet. 1:4.)] says Saint Peter; the seed of God is in him, says Saint John: *Semen ejus in eo manet;* [His seed abideth in him. (1 John 3:9.)] and one day he will be, and already even he is like to God, for one day he will see Him, and already, death intervening, he is capable of seeing Him: *Similes ei erimus, quoniam videbimus eum,* [We shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is. (1 John 3:2.)] says again the beloved disciple. And this life is called the gift, the grace of God, because, once more, nothing of what constitutes it belongs or can belong to our nature; the being who should possess by right of nature the elements of this supernatural life would be a God. And the existence, as also the gratuitousness of this supernatural life, whoever denies it is condemned by the holy Books which clearly establish it, condemned by the Church, by the councils which hurled the thunderbolt of their anathemas against the Pelagians of all times, ancient and modern.

And if one were to reject the holy Books and tradition, it is written, this supernatural life, it is written in indelible characters on every page of Christian history, written in characters of blood on the bodies of those thousands of martyrs, written in the works of those thousands of wonder-workers, written on the rocks of solitude witnesses of the virtues of so many thousands of anchorites, written on the modest brow of those thousands of virgins; it emanates, it flows, this supernatural life, from all that the religion of Jesus Christ has touched and consecrated; the stones of the temple distil it with the spirit of prayer; one breathes it at the foot of the tabernacle. None of us, no baptised Christian is entirely a stranger to it. We have found it, we have recognised it, this divine life, all around us. The unbelieving husband has felt this grace from on high in the heart of his Christian wife, the father has admired it in the heart of his pious child. What do I say? There is no one who has not at times been under the impression of this grace, who has not experienced its attractions, tasted its sweetness.

It was a day, after a serious conversation, after perhaps some reverse of fortune, one measured at a glance all the frailty of the goods of earth, all the emptiness of philosophy, all the insufficiency of reason; the grace of God as it were rushed upon us, the heart darted toward heaven; one felt the need of prayer, the need to believe and to love; one as it were touched, felt the existence of another world, of another life than the world of nature and the life of reason; one sought to pass from the sphere of one’s mechanical habits into this sphere of supernatural ideas and habits, happy if one yielded to this inspiration, if one followed this good movement. For, my brethren, I have shown you the existence of a supernatural life; understand the necessity for man of living this life (1).[3]

II (2). Here, my brethren, is what the man of the world says to us sometimes, what he often thinks. You speak to me of three different lives: of the life according to the flesh, of the life according to reason, of the life according to grace. Oh! God forbid, doubtless, that I should cling to that gross life of the senses which assimilates the intelligent being to the unreasoning animal! This ignoble life is unworthy of a cultivated

mind, of a noble and elevated heart; I repel it as an insult: I wish to live the life of the mind, the life of the philosopher. But also, continues this man of the world, you speak to me of a life higher than reason, of a supernatural life, of the life of the Christian. I avow it, I do not seek to rise as far as that. This supernatural order is a gift of God, superadded by His liberality to the primitive destinies of our nature. To tell the truth, this gift embarrasses me; I have no pretension to arrive after this life at a felicity so ineffable, so superior to all my hopes; and above all, here below, I have not the courage to submit to an order of superhuman virtues. I shall be grateful to God for His generous intentions; but I shall not accept this gift, which would be a burden for me. And since all this ensemble of supernatural things has been gratuitously superimposed on the laws and destinies of my nature, I shall hold to my first condition, I shall live according to the laws of my conscience, according to the rules of reason and natural religion; and God will not refuse me, after an honest, virtuous life, the only happiness to which I aspire, the natural reward of natural virtues. — You have just heard, my brethren, the most specious reasoning of naturalism.[4]

Unhappily this reasoning rests on a false base, it is absolutely inadmissible. For the same divine and irrefragable authority of the Scriptures, which reveals to us the existence of the supernatural life, teaches us clearly the rigorous obligation of accepting this order of glory and grace. In destining us to glory and giving us grace; that is, in calling us to ascend up to Him, to penetrate into the most intimate sanctuary of His essence, to live His life; in that, I say, God performed an act of love, but also an act of authority. He gave: but in giving, He wishes it to be accepted; His benefit becomes for us a duty. The sovereign Master does not intend to be refused. For if the clay has not the right to say to the potter: “Why do you make of me a vessel of ignominy?” it is infinitely less admitted still to say to him: “Why do you make of me a vessel of honour?” [Cf. Rom. 9:20–21.]

What then? Rebellious work, you complain that He who kneaded you with His hands, who has every right over you, uses His supreme authority to assign to your nothingness a brilliant place beyond the stars! Humble slave of Him who gave you being, you complain that He draws you from the dust to rank you among princes, among the princes of heaven! The sovereign dominion that God can exercise over you at His will, you complain that He exercises it by love! Unnatural child, you struggle against a father who commands in order to give, you do not accommodate yourself to an empire which is the empire of goodness! Criminal of lèse-majesté, you have broken in the hands of God the sceptre of His power which He held pressed against His heart! Monstrous phenomenon of the moral order, you are indocile to benefit, in revolt against love! Well! the dominion of God will be exercised over you by justice. Wretched beggar of the road, the king had invited you to the wedding of his son, to the eternal banquet of glory; it was for you to set out and to put on the nuptial robe of grace to be admitted; you presented yourself at the feast without being adorned with this prescribed garment; there will be no place for you, even in a corner of the hall, even at the second table; you will be cast out, cast into the exterior darkness where there will be weeping and despair; and there, a prey to suffering, to regret for so much happiness lost, you will have to accuse God only of His love, and yourself of your indifference and ingratitude!

As by a series of physical decompositions the lower elements tend incessantly to pass to a higher being, from a more lowly kingdom to a higher kingdom; so God, by the secret work of His grace, wished to make you pass from your nature, low and crawling, to the participation, the assimilation to His substantially supernatural nature. Rebellious substance, you resisted this work of grace; you will be relegated among the refuse and the rejected, far, very far from the world of glory! Vicious portion of the metal placed in the crucible, you did not let yourself be converted into the pure gold of eternity; you will be cast among the dross and impure residues! That is the Catholic dogma, my brethren. *Noblesse oblige:* [nobility obliges: privilege entails duty] whoever fails in it is guilty. The gift of God, the vocation to glory, by means of grace, obliges: whoever fails in it is guilty, guilty toward the sovereign dominion of divine paternity, which will punish as a slave him who would not be treated as a son.

Necessity for man to live the supernatural life, founded on the right of God who commands, but founded also on the actual impossibility in which man finds himself of holding the middle between the gross and animal life and the supernatural and divine life. For, my brethren, the pretension of naturalism to live the life of reason without participating in the supernatural life is a pretension practically chimerical, impossible. The fact of the divine vocation of man to glory by grace being once established by evident proofs to which reason can oppose nothing, it is to be unfaithful to reason itself not to obey the supernatural religion. The sin against grace becomes a sin against the religion of nature, which clearly teaches this principle: that if it pleases God to reveal Himself by mysterious and unexpected lights, it is our duty to open our eyes; that if it pleases Him to pour out in us superabundant riches, it is our duty to open our heart. Now hear how the justice of God is revealed from heaven upon the impiety of men who hold the truth of God captive in injustice. Saint Paul writes to the most polished people of the world, to the Romans, and he speaks to them of their ancient philosophers: Having known God, he says, they did not glorify Him as God, nor give thanks; and because of that God delivered them up to the desires of their hearts, He abandoned them to the passions of ignominy, to a reprobate sense. [Rom. 1:18–28.]

If such, my brethren, is the vengeance exercised against the ancient philosophers, who yet knew God only according to nature and by the spectacle of visible things, how will be punished the infidelity of those who live in the midst of the lights of faith, and who, knowing God by grace, will not glorify Him accordingly? The justice of God is revealed from heaven: believing themselves wise, they become fools; from the proud enjoyments of the intelligence they fall to the gross pleasures of the flesh; not wishing to spring up to the brilliant regions of glory, they glide over the precipice of the senses. And the pretended sage yields to the passions of ignominy; and he who in public proclaims the most severe principles of the moral order, falling back on himself, soils his soul by evil desires, his body by sin, his hands by iniquity. And thus is accomplished the word of the Psalmist: *Homo cum in honore esset, non intellexit, comparatus est jumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis.* [Man, when he was in honour, did not understand: he is compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them. (Ps. 48:13.)] Man, constituted in glory, did not understand his dignity; he fell, and in his fall he could not stop in a middle region, impossible to inhabit: *Comparatus est jumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis:* he fell down to the level of the unreasoning beasts, and became like to them; and having lived the life of the senses, he was found worthy of death, of the death which consists in being eternally deprived of God, and of the death which consists also in the eternal pain of the guilty sense: *Quoniam qui talia agunt, digni sunt morte.* [For they who do such things are worthy of death. (Rom. 1:32.)]

I stop, my brethren. It is written in the Gospel of this day that there was in Jerusalem a probatic pool, beside which lay a multitude of sick, blind, lame, paralytics, who waited for the water to be moved. For an angel of the Lord descended from time to time into the pool, moved the water, and the first who entered the pool after the moving of the water was healed. (John 5:2–4.)

My brethren, this precious pool is not far from you, it is in you: baptism, as I shall tell you, dug in your heart for ever this well, this fountain of divine grace. But alas! this water has long stagnated perhaps, its virtue needs to be refreshed. Ah! I conjure the angel of the Lord to descend and to move this water by his salutary inspirations. I am a thousand times unworthy of it, but if, by my word, during this holy Lent, I could be that angel! And besides, it is not enough to have the angel who moves the water; a man is needed to descend into the pool after it has been moved. Ah! if my feeble word, if these teachings on grace could help you to descend within yourselves, to penetrate into the mystery of love that your heart conceals, how I should bless the Lord and His holy Mother, who, in granting you this inestimable good, would procure me this consolation! Amen (1).[5]

Translator’s notes

1. The first conference of the series on grace (Lent 1845). As the editor's note explains, the manuscript contains both parts; on the day the preacher gave only the first part (to the end of the section on the existence of the supernatural life).

2. "the doctrine that proceeds from the mouth of God": the preacher renders Matt. 4:4 with *doctrine* where the Vulgate has *verbo* ("word"); kept as his reading, with the Latin given alongside.

3. The reference to the "Avertissement" is to the editor's preface at the start of Tome I.

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[1] (1) Mgr Clausel de Montals, bishop of Chartres. (Editor's note.) The preacher thus begins by addressing the bishop, who was present.

[2] The Thomas attribution is the preacher's; not verified here.

[3] (1) Peroration: I stop, etc. (Note of M. l'abbé Pie.) — We publish the Conferences on grace as they were prepared in the manuscript; but the reader must take account of the annotations of M. l'abbé Pie, which indicate the changes made for the preaching. Thus, on the second Friday of Lent, the orator, no doubt pressed by time, contented himself with giving the first part of the first conference, putting off the second part to the following conversation. And indeed, in the second part of the second conference, he inserted all this second part of the first conference, which he had not been able to give the week before. (Editor's note.)

[4] (2) Second part put off to the following conversation. (Note of M. l'abbé Pie.)

[5] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 20, n. 1. — Avertissement: p. XXIV. (Editor's note.)

n° 21. Second Conference on Grace, Preached on the Third Friday of Lent: The Insufficiency of Human Virtues and the Necessity of the Supernatural Life

1845.

Ut scirent filii tui quos dilexisti, Domine, quoniam non nativitatis fructus pascunt homines, sed sermo tuus hos qui in te crediderint conservat. [That Thy children, O Lord, whom Thou hast loved, might know that it is not the growing of fruits that nourisheth men, but Thy word preserveth them that believe in Thee. (Wisd. 16:26.)]

That Your children whom You love may recognise, O Lord, that it is not the natural fruits of the earth that nourish men, but that it is Your word that preserves those who believe in You. (Wisd. c. xvi, v. 26.)

How beautiful they are, my brethren, how they contain light, unction, sweetness, these words of the Holy Spirit, uttered by the mouth of a sage of the old covenant, and so conformable to the theological dogma of grace of which we seek to speak with you. *Ut scirent filii tui quos dilexisti, Domine:* that Your children whom You love, Lord, may recognise that man does not suffice to himself, that all his nourishment does not consist in the fruits that nature produces, that his mind, his heart need other foods than the natural lights of reason, than the natural affections of the heart: *Quoniam non fructus nativitatis pascunt homines;* but that it is Your word, O my God, that it is Your doctrine, Your grace, that nourishes, that sustains, that preserves those who believe in You by faith, who aspire to You by love: *Sed sermo tuus hos qui in te crediderint conservat.*

My brethren, see how invariable the sacred teaching is, how the Scriptures agree with themselves, how the doctrines of the new law are in harmony with those of ancient times! See above all how the life of grace, the life of faith, the supernatural life has always been necessary, indispensable! "It is written," says Jesus Christ, "that man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Moses had said the same thing in Deuteronomy; and behold the Sage, placed at about equal distance between Moses and Jesus, repeats it still more expressly: "That Your children whom You love may recognise, O Lord, that it is not the natural fruits of the earth that nourish men, but that it is Your word that preserves those who believe in You."

Let us continue, my brethren, to penetrate into our subject. Doubtless it obliges us to rise to considerations which astonish the intelligence, which sometimes surpass it; yet the foundation of this doctrine is simple,

intelligible to all. In our preceding conversation we established that above the life of the senses, which is common to man and to the brute, above the life of reason which is that of the sage, of the philosopher, of the honest pagan, there is a more excellent life: the life of grace and faith, the holy life of the Christian.

My brethren, the necessity of living this life of Christian holiness, this life according to grace, is precisely the subject I come to treat today. Insufficiency of human and natural virtues; consequently necessity of Christian and supernatural virtues: 1° to obtain eternal felicity, 2° to escape eternal misery. Two ideas on which we shall dwell.

I. I told you, my brethren, in our preceding conversation, what is the sublime destination of man: to see God, to see Him eternally, to see Him face to face, to see and love Him as He sees and loves Himself. Such is properly the gift of God; that gift of which the Prophet-king could not think without astonishment: *Haec recordatus sum et effudi in me animam meam; quoniam transibo in locum tabernaculi admirabilis, usque ad domum Dei, in voce exultationis, et confessionis, sonus epulantis;* [These things I remembered, and poured out my soul in me; for I shall go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, the noise of one feasting. (Ps. 41:5.)] that gift which men so easily neglect and lose sight of: *Si scires donum Dei!* [If thou didst know the gift of God! (John 4:10.)] Now in what manner must man live here below to arrive at the term of his magnificent vocation? How must time be employed to acquire eternity? Of what nature must our works be to become meritorious of heaven?

Consider, my brethren, what passes in the physical world. What, tell me, are those waters that rise and spring up of themselves to prodigious heights? Are they those that have their source in the plain, in the valley? No, these waters may be more or less limpid; but they stay, and often stagnate, in the place that saw them born. The ascending, springing waters are those which, having taken birth on the summit of mountains, and descended into the valley or into the very bowels of the earth, rise again as of themselves to the level of their source.

My brethren, this law of nature is the image of a supernatural law. What are, in man, the thoughts, the affections, the works that can rise, raise the soul up to the height of the heavens, to the dwelling of God? Are they the human, natural works, virtues? No, daughters of earth, they are and will remain for ever earthly; they have not in them the energy to rise above the earth; the earth is their principle, it will be their term; reason, nature is their cradle, it will be their tomb: *De terra, terrenus.* [Of the earth, earthly. (1 Cor. 15:47.)] The works, the virtues that can raise the soul up to the height of heaven are those which come from heaven and return as of themselves toward their source: *De caelo, caelestis.* [From heaven, heavenly.] The water that I shall give, says the Son of God, the King of heaven, the water that I shall give, in the heart where I shall have poured it, will become a fountain springing up into life everlasting: *Aqua quam ego dabo, fiet in eo fons aquae salientis in vitam aeternam.* [John 4:14.] Come from God, they lead to Him; descended from the eternal mountains, they will mount up again to them by their own virtue. Hence that cry of David who, sighing after the mountain of the Lord, lifted his eyes to that mountain whence help was to come to him to reach it: *Levavi oculos meos in montes, unde veniet auxilium mihi.* [I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me. (Ps. 120:1.)]

That man, abandoned to himself and to his own forces, that man, by the works and virtues which reason and nature inspire him, is powerless to obtain the eternal felicity that God prepares for His elect; in other terms, that the life and virtues of the sage, of the philosopher, of the honest man, of the good citizen, are without any proportion to the divine glory which is promised us, that, my brethren, is a truth of faith found on every page of the Scriptures: Without Me, says the Lord, you can do nothing: *Sine me nihil potestis facere.* [John 15:5.] We are incapable, says Saint Paul, of forming of ourselves, as of ourselves, a single good thought, and if we are capable of it, it is by divine assistance. [2 Cor. 3:5.] In the order of salvation, says Saint Augustine, neither little nor much can we do it except with the grace of him without whom nothing is done.[1]

My brethren, in this age of false philosophy, where it is incessantly repeated that with his nature and reason man suffices to himself, and can attain all desirable perfection and happiness, it is important to proclaim the doctrines of the Church. Modern naturalism will find its judgment there, as the older errors of which it is the reproduction. Hear the Council of Trent: “If anyone says that man, by works done according to the teaching of nature or of human law and without divine grace, can be justified: let him be anathema! If anyone says that divine grace is given to man in order that he may more easily merit eternal life, as if he could by himself, though with more difficulty: let him be anathema! If anyone says that, without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and His help, man can believe, hope, love or repent, so as to obtain justification and to merit the glory of heaven: let him be anathema!” [Cf. Council of Trent, Session 6, canons 1–3; the preacher paraphrases.] And here, my brethren, reason agrees with faith, as the grave Bourdaloue remarks; for reason dictates to us enough on the one hand that the means must be proportioned to the end, consequently that purely natural actions cannot lead us to supernatural felicity; and on the other hand that supernatural actions worthy of the kingdom of God cannot proceed from a nature as weak as ours, if God does not take care to second it and does not raise it above itself.

On the contrary, my brethren, that the man constituted in grace, the man who has had recourse to the means established by God for justification; that this man, with the help of grace, can do actions, practise virtues which confer on him a rigorous right to glory: this is another dogma of faith, equally founded on Scripture and on the teaching of the Church. The just man who lives by grace receives the spirit of adoption of the children of God; in becoming son, he becomes heir, he has the right to gather his portion as a child, a child of God, heir of the kingdom. It is Saint Paul who speaks, and he says elsewhere: Therefore, my brethren, abound in all sorts of good works, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. For God is not unjust, that He should forget your works and the love you have shown Him. [Rom. 8:15–17; 1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 6:10.]

Then, my brethren, hear again the same Apostle speaking of himself. He acknowledges that what he is, he is by the grace of God: *Gratia Dei sum id quod sum;* [By the grace of God I am what I am. (1 Cor. 15:10.)] but having faithfully used this grace, he awaits with confidence the crown of justice reserved for him after the combat, at the end of his course, a crown which the just Judge cannot refuse him. [2 Tim. 4:7–8.] If anyone says that the just man in the state of grace has not truly and rigorously a right to glory, and that, by the good works done with grace, he does not merit an increase of glory: let him be anathema!

From this doctrine, so clearly established, what practical consequences shall we draw, my brethren? Several present themselves to my mind. I could speak first to you, Christian souls, who, living by the life of grace, do not know sufficiently its price, and by your negligences, not utilising enough the rich fund you possess in yourselves, lose for here below a quantity of merits, and for heaven an immense weight of glory which would have been added to your crown. But in these days of penance it is less to you, Christian souls, that these words are addressed, than to those of our brethren who have forgotten the gift of God.

O you then who hear me! you, my brethren, who belong to the world of grace by baptism, but who, for a long time, since the age of reason perhaps, speculatively and practically, by your ideas as by your works, live only by the life of nature; earthly men, who think and act only in the narrow circle of nature, who have no other horizon than the narrow horizon of nature, who know not the new heavens and the new earth, the heavens of glory and the earth of grace; you for whom the noblest and most excellent half of creation, that of invisible and supernatural things, is as if it were not: my brother, how I pity you, and how I should wish that you might feel at last today the insufficiency of human and natural virtues, the necessity of living a more perfect and more elevated life!

See then, my brother: time escapes you, the years flow by, and you will have done nothing to merit the eternal years! I see well that you are a good father, a good husband, a faithful friend, a devoted citizen; I see that you are a man of study, of duty, of conscience; I see all that, and it is because I see it that I shed

inconsolable tears. If I believed in Virgil's Elysian Fields instead of believing in the heaven of Saint Paul; if my paradise could be the dwelling of the Sages instead of being the dwelling of the Saints, I should have hope for you perhaps. But I cannot deceive myself: if you remain where you are now, not having in you the grace which is the root and germ of glory, your works will have been entirely unproductive for eternity. *Scribe virum istum sterilem,* [Write this man barren. (Jer. 22:30.)] says the Lord. Write on the brow of this man: Barren. For, once more, every fruit that has not drawn from the stem that nourishes it the sap of grace, that has not been ripened by the influences of heaven, will never be served on the table of the heavenly Father. And if the Angels, deceived by an appearance of freshness and ripeness, approached to gather it and carry it into glory, at that instant this fruit would vanish, would dissolve between their fingers, like those grapes of Gomorrha, beautiful and seductive to the eye, which fall to dust as soon as one would carry them to the mouth.

My brethren, you who are just according to the world, become then just according to God, that your justice may be crowned. Perhaps, my brother, you are the man whose city, whose whole country celebrates his beneficence; perhaps you carry to the heroic degree the perfection of human virtues. I praise you, I hope that the grace of God will touch you one day; but in the meantime I shall say to you with Saint Augustine: *Magni passus, sed extra viam:* [Great strides, but out of the way.] you take great steps, but outside the way. If no heavenly principle comes to vivify your heroic works, daughters of earth, they will have all their reward on earth. You hear resound around you accents of gratitude, tears perhaps will wet your coffin, your memory will remain in blessing among men; but what is all that? *Receperunt mercedem suam, vani vanam.* [They have received their reward, vain men a vain one. (cf. Matt. 6:2; Augustine.)] What is that, if, while they praise you where you are no more, you do not find happiness where you are? What do I say? Hear the terrible word of Saint Augustine speaking of the sages and the heroes: *Laudantur ubi non sunt, cruciantur ubi sunt:* [They are praised where they are not, tormented where they are.][2] which leads me to my second reflection: insufficiency of human virtues, and consequently necessity of the supernatural life to avoid hell.

II. If the absence of supernatural virtues entailed for men only the loss of glory, there is unfortunately a great number of them who would be quite ready to renounce the portion of the heavenly inheritance that is to fall to them. You will not make them leave their torpor, and they are quite disposed not to hope for any extraordinary felicity after a decent, suitable life, provided they have not to dread torments either.

Here, my brethren, is what the man of the world, etc. (1).[3]

My brethren, I appeal to yourselves, to your conscience, to your experience. You who live outside religious practices, is it not true that with reason alone, with human morality alone, whatever fine principles one professes, whatever learned and polished education one has received; is it not true that man is powerless to repress all his guilty inclinations, to smother all his evil instincts?

When you have felt those two men of whom Saint Paul speaks, was it not easy for you to recognise that the man according to the flesh can be entirely ruled and governed only by the man according to grace, and that the man according to reason is a master whose empire is very fragile, whose authority is very uncertain? Ah! how many times the master has come to terms with the slave! how many times the mind has made itself accomplice of the flesh! Grave and serious man, man of study or business in the morning, in the evening I find only a light and frolicsome man, a man of pleasure. Philosopher draped in the hereditary mantle of Socrates and Plato when you were in public, at times in secret there remained only a disciple of Epicurus.

Yes, my brother, avow it, not to me, but avow it to yourself: your human virtue, your human holiness, has at least sometimes belied itself; just before men, you are not so in your own eyes; you know in your life more than one ignominious page; you have set foot in the mire; you are not pure of heart; and if sooner or later you do not have recourse to grace, if a pardon from heaven does not descend for you, you have merited the chastisement of the guilty: *Quoniam qui talia agunt digni sunt morte.*

Oh! my brethren, if the voice of grace makes itself heard today to the ear of your soul, *nolite obdurare corda vestra,* [harden not your hearts (Ps. 94:8)] do not go and harden your heart. Take care that, as the price of your long infidelity, grace be not withdrawn from you and given to others who will profit by it more. Meditate the parable of Je sus in the gospel of this day: “There was a father of a family who planted a vineyard, set a hedge round about it, lavished all his care on it, and let it out to husbandmen. And when the time of the vintage came, he sent his servants to receive the price of the vineyard. And the husbandmen, laying hands on the servants, beat some, stoned others, and killed several. The master sent new servants, more in number than the first, and they were treated in like manner. Finally he sent his son, saying: No doubt they will reverence my son. But they, seeing the heir, cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do? He will destroy those wicked men, and will give his vineyard to others who will render him the fruits in their season.” (Matt. 21:33–41.)

This parable, I know, applies to the Jews: privileged people, for whom the Lord had planted a choice vineyard; ungrateful and criminal people, who killed the envoys of God, the prophets, who put to death the Son of God Himself; people on whom weighs the vengeance of the Lord, whose justice destroyed those wicked men, and transferred their inheritance to other nations, according to the word of the Lord: *Auferetur a vobis regnum Dei, et dabitur genti facienti fructus ejus.* [The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof. (Matt. 21:43.)]

But this parable regards you also, my brother. It is a question here of your soul. For for you too the Lord has planted a choice vineyard; He implanted His grace in your heart by baptism. This vineyard, He surrounded with cares, protected by a hedge; He provided for you Christian parents, a pious education. Then, when the time came to receive the fruits, the Lord sent to you His servants, His Angels with their good inspirations, His priests with their words of salvation. Unfortunate man, what have you done? You resisted the envoys of the Lord, you repulsed them, hated them, disowned them. The Lord sent you His Son: His Son whose word resounded in your ears by the Gospel; His Son represented on earth by His Spouse, who is the Church: what do I say? His Son dwelling in person in the midst of you on the altars and in the tabernacle by the Eucharist; His Son who came sometimes, once at least, even into your heart by communion.

Alas! you armed yourself against the son of your Master, you tore His Gospel, ill-treated His Church, disdained His own person; you covered Him with wounds, you killed Him in your heart. What will the Lord do? Ah! if you continue to despise longer His goodness, to resist His voice that calls you, take care! one day His mercy will perhaps tire; one day His justice will prevail; the kingdom of God will be taken from you, and will be given to others who will make better use of it: *Auferetur a vobis regnum Dei, et dabitur genti facienti fructus.*

My brethren, let us forestall this misfortune, this irreparable misfortune. And since God calls us, invites us still by the sweet attractions of His grace, let us go and cast ourselves at His feet, cast ourselves into His arms, at the feet of a judge who pardons, into the arms of a father who embraces. This is the grace I wish you (1).[4]

Translator’s notes

1. Preacher’s attributions to Augustine (twice), Bourdaloue, and the quoted canons of Trent (a paraphrase, not the Latin of the canons) are given as printed; not verified here.

2. “Receperunt mercedem suam, vani vanam”: the Latin as the preacher gives it; the Vulgate of Matt. 6:2 reads *receperunt mercedem suam*; the “vani vanam” tag is Augustine’s, as recalled by the preacher.

3. Footnote (1) in part II refers to the “man of the world” argument printed in n° 20 (see the editor’s note there on the shifting of material between the two conferences).

[1] Attribution to Augustine as given by the preacher; not verified here.

[2] Both Augustine sayings are the preacher's; I have not traced them.

[3] (1) See the second part of the preceding conference. (Note of M. l'abbé Pie.) — That is, the argument of "the man of the world" at the head of part II of n° 20 above, which the preacher gave on this day in place of the later part.

[4] (1) Cf. Appendix I, p. 20, n° 2. (Editor's note.)

n° 22. Third Conference on Grace, Preached on the Fourth Friday of Lent: Jesus Christ, Author of Grace

1845.

Respondit Jesus et dixit ei: Si scires donum Dei! [Jesus answered and said to her: If thou didst know the gift of God! (John 4:10.)]

Jesus answered her: If you knew the gift of God! (John c. iv, v. 10.)

How touching it is, my brethren, the narrative we found this morning in the Gospel! Jesus, wearied with the way, in the greatest heat of the day, sits on the edge of Jacob's well, and asks the Samaritan woman for a refreshing water to quench His thirst. She is astonished and says to Him: How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me to drink, me who am a Samaritan woman? for the Jews have no commerce with the Samaritans. Jesus answers her: If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you: Give Me to drink, perhaps you would have asked it of Him first, and He would have given you living water! … For whoever drinks of this water of Jacob's well will thirst again; but he who shall drink of the water that I shall give him will never thirst again, and this draught which he shall receive from My hand will become in him a fountain springing up to life everlasting. Lord, replies the woman then, give me of this water, that I may thirst no more, and come no more to draw here. (John 4:6–15.)

The sequel of this dialogue is no less admirable, my brethren; and how well it suits our subject! *Si scires donum Dei!* If you knew the gift of God! How often this word escapes from our heart, escapes from our lips, at the sight of so many men, our brothers, our friends, completely strangers to the mysteries of the grace and mercy of God, to the marvels of their divine and ineffable vocation! *Si scires donum Dei!* If you knew the gift of God!

Negligent Christian who hear me, this region of Samaria through which Jesus passes is your soul, long given over to evil doctrines and passions. Wearied with a long road, for He comes from afar, He has made a great journey across spaces and centuries, from heaven to earth, from eternity to Bethlehem, from Bethlehem to Calvary, from Calvary to the altar, quite panting with a thirst which you alone can satisfy, behold this divine Saviour comes to sit beside your heart, and asks you to drink: *Da mihi bibere.* [Give Me to drink. (John 4:7.)] Draw, He says to you, draw from this fountain of your heart, and give Me a little of the love it contains, of that love of which I am athirst: *Da mihi bibere.* And while you hesitate, while you stammer your excuses and astonishment: Ah! replies Jesus, if you knew the gift of God, if you knew who it is that makes Himself a suppliant, perhaps the roles would change, and you yourself would be the first to ask Him to drink! For whoever shall drink of this water of the joys of the world and the pleasures of earth shall thirst again, more thirst perhaps in proportion as he drinks more. But the draught that I shall give him, I, the water of grace that I shall pour into him, will satisfy his thirst for eternity. In our preceding conversations on grace, my brethren, we kept to a more general doctrine; we shall descend henceforth more and more to particular considerations. Jesus Christ, principle and source of this supernatural life, such will be today the object of our conversation. I told you: there exists for man a supernatural life; to arrive at heaven, man must live this life. Today I come to tell you: this supernatural life is none other than the Christian life. The whole secret, to attain glory, the whole secret of grace, is to live as a Christian, it is to have the eyes and heart fixed on Jesus, author and consummator of grace in the world by the general redemption, consummator of grace in hearts by the particular sanctification of each.

I. In the beginning, and when he had just come out of the hands of the Creator, man, according to holy Scripture and according to the doctrine of the Council of Trent, had been established, constituted in what theology calls original justice and holiness. Into that body of clay which the all-powerful fingers had just kneaded, the divine breath had not only breathed a living and rational soul; other gifts than those of intelligence and sentiment had blossomed under the action of that fruitful warmth.

To the riches of nature had come to be joined the riches of grace; noble and powerful by the rights of her birth, the human soul had suddenly seen her advantages swell by a marvellous endowment, and her beauty increased by all the charms of a heavenly beauty. Adorned with that interior vesture of justice and love which is called, in the sacred language, sanctifying grace, habitual charity, man was already no longer the simple creature; he was the child, the friend, the heir of his God. Called to the possession of eternal glory, one saw already shine on his brow an anticipated ray. Intelligence bounded and by nature subject to error, a divine torch had dispelled around it all the darkness of ignorance; will mobile and by nature exposed to wanderings, a help from on high kept it in a precious equilibrium and inclined it even toward the true good; body formed of earth and by nature subject to the common laws of dissolution which reach sooner or later matter, a supernatural safeguard protected it, a maternal providence had traced around it as it were a circle of love. The Angels had received order to guard him in all his ways, to bear him in their hands, lest his foot should dash against the stone of the way; he walked with impunity on the asp and the basilisk, and all inferior nature obeyed him, as in him the flesh obeyed the spirit, and as the spirit obeyed God.

Such was the first Adam, happy here below with the happiness which truth brings to the mind, charity to the heart, immortality to the body; he would have made Eden resound with the canticle of his innocence, until one day, with the same facility with which he cultivated the plants of the garden of delights, the hand of the Most High would have transplanted him Himself into the garden of glory, where faith would have given place to clear vision, less perfect possession to beatific enjoyment, impassibility to torrents of delights! Smiling destinies which adorn the first page of our history! Golden age that lasted but a day! Easy commerce with God, empire over oneself and over all nature! … Subject of eternal regrets and eternal sighs!

But what have I said, my brethren, what lie has come out of my mouth? I feel that around me the stones of the temple have been moved; a voice comes from the Holy of Holies and protests against my erroneous word. I spoke of regrets and eternal sighs; and for eighteen centuries the vaults of the sanctuary have resounded with this exclamation of all Christian hearts: *O felix culpa!* O happy fault! happy fault that earned for us to have such and so great a Redeemer![1]

My brethren, here I have to utter a name before which it would be indeed the place to prostrate oneself to the ground, in the silence of love, in the ecstasy of gratitude; this divine name, this saving name, is the name of Jesus Christ: rainbow after the storm, plank of salvation after the tempest, remedy for all ills, compensation for all losses; let us say better, Jesus Christ, song of victory, cry of conquest. Hear, my brethren, what Saint Paul calls the great sacrament, the profound mystery of divine charity: *Magnum pietatis sacramentum.* [Great is the mystery of godliness. (1 Tim. 3:16.)] Learn the resources from on high for making evil serve the triumph of good, crime the development of love.

Man has fallen; he has lost grace, he has lost all right to glory. Deprived of all supernatural gifts, behold him reduced to his nature, nature weakened, despoiled. Heaven is closed for all; hell, with its flames, will be the portion of the great number. The demon seems to have conquered; his cruel malice has overthrown the plan of divine mercy. The whole supernatural economy is destroyed; a cry of horrible joy goes up from the infernal dwellings. God will have come out of His rest only to make wretched creatures; His despised love will have ended only in an eternal vengeance; and the gift of His grace will have crossed the soul of man only to leave burning traces after leaving it, fatal gift which will have made us hope for a moment such great goods only to beget frightful evils. Such are the ferocious clamours of hell, and thus it claps its hands on the ruin of its rival.

Yet in heaven the Angels too clap their hands and applaud. Adam has fallen, and all his race with him; but another Adam appears, by whom the first Adam is raised up and humanity entire with him. Grace has just been lost in Adam; it is restored in Jesus Christ. Satan triumphs, and his triumph is for him the bloodiest defeat. He applauds himself on the success of his lies, and his lies are going to become realities. If you eat of this fruit, you shall be as gods, he had said. And behold because they ate of this fruit, a man shall be God; and in him, and by him, all men, his brothers, shall be as Gods: *Eritis sicut dii.* [You shall be as gods. (Gen. 3:5.)] There is not even the divine irony which pursues our guilty parents whose sarcasm does not turn its sharp point against Satan: Behold, says the Lord, Adam is become as one of us. Yes, You have said it, Lord: Adam is become as one of You; for I see in the distance of the ages a son of Adam, whom You call, and who is Your Son, equal and consubstantial with the Father and the Spirit: *Ecce Adam factus est quasi unus ex nobis.* [Behold Adam is become as one of Us. (Gen. 3:22.)]

O marvel of love! O ineffable goodness of the Word of God! All relation had ceased between heaven and earth; the thread which united man to the Creator was broken. The water which springs up to eternal life no longer descended from the eternal mountains. The river of grace which its course carries toward the ocean of glory no longer flowed in hearts. All was lost, lost by our fault. A prey to misfortune, eternally we should have had to reproach God only with His love, ourselves with our infidelity and ingratitude. The Word of God, He by whom all things were made, saw our misfortune. This spectacle touched His heart; and, considering that justice was about to prevail, He cast Himself with all His weight into the divine scale, He offered Himself for our ransom. The mediation is accepted; grace will be restored to us, and already its anticipated effects are felt in the very heart of the first culprits. And already Angels and men have said to each other: O happy fault that is to be thus repaired: *O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!*

But let us continue, my brethren, and, in order to understand well all the love and gratitude we owe to Him who will henceforth be the sole author of grace, let us see what it will cost Him to restore it to us, and let us see also with what superabundance He will restore it to us.

When God poured grace into the heart of the first man, He drew it from the treasury of His supernatural providence with the same ease with which He drew the creature from nothing. God said, and grace was made in the heart of Adam, and the right to glory was acquired for him: *Dixit et facta sunt.* [He spoke and they were made. (Ps. 32:9.)] The first infusion of the supernatural life was the easy work of pure mercy. A thousand thanksgivings to God doubtless for His unspeakable gift; but this gift, however transcendent, had cost Him little. It will not be so with the second creation of grace. Justice will have its rights to reconcile with the inventions of mercy. Christ the Redeemer will have to merit, to buy grace, to seek it, pursue it, take it by assault, so to speak, pay for it at the price of all His blood.

Do you see what a wearisome road He is going to travel, this new conqueror of grace: *Fatigatus ex itinere?* [Wearied with His journey. (John 4:6.)] He sprang forth like a giant to run his course; his point of departure is the summit of the heavens. Citizen of eternity, behold Him pilgrim of time; He journeys on earth, bearing the burden of the day and the heat. At last, about the sixth hour, *erat quasi hora sexta,* wearied with the road, *fatigatus ex itinere,* panting with thirst, He goes to sit down. On what couch of rest, or at the edge of what fountain? He sits on the sorrowful bed of the cross, He tastes there the bitter vinegar of suffering and death. And when all is consummated, while the heavens darken, the rocks are rent, a greater marvel is wrought. The side of Jesus opens, and from it springs a source of living water: river of water and blood, in which are washed at once the earth, the sea, the stars and the whole world; fountain opened for all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that is, for all the children of the Church; fountain of grace where sinners come to wash their faults and the just to draw their merits; well of living waters which flow with impetuosity from Libanus, that is, from Calvary, digging in the heart of all who drink of them a spring leaping up to life everlasting.

Ah! here is the place to repeat, with a new accent and a livelier feeling still: *Gratias Deo super inenarrabili dono ejus!* [Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift! (2 Cor. 9:15.)] Thanks, a thousand thanks to the Redeemer God for this unspeakable gift!

My brethren, thus it is that Jesus restored grace to us! You see what it cost Him, and you will soon understand also with what increase of advantages He restored it to us. For in Jesus Christ the divinity, that is, as theology speaks, the substantially supernatural essence, was united hypostatically to the humanity. And by Jesus Christ all men, His brothers and co-heirs, participate superabundantly in the treasures of grace and of glory. Men were dead to the life of grace. Jesus came to give them back supernatural life, but to make it be rendered more abundant than they had ever had it: *Ego veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant.* [I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly. (John 10:10.)]

The divine mercy, excited and as it were challenged by the audacity and success of the tempter, made grace superabound where iniquity had abounded, substituted for the first lost gifts gifts more eminent still than we could ever have coveted or even imagined: *Superabundanter quam petimus aut intelligimus.* [More abundantly than we ask or understand. (Eph. 3:20.)] "Certainly," says Saint Francis de Sales, "in the sprinkling of the blood of Our Lord made by the hyssop of the cross, we were restored to a whiteness incomparably more excellent than that of the snow of innocence, coming out, like Naaman, from the river of salvation, purer and cleaner than if we had never been lepers; so that the divine Majesty, as He has ordained to do, should not be overcome by evil, but overcome by good, and that His mercies, like sweet oils, should remain above all works."[2] But this truth will become more intelligible, if, after having shown you how Jesus Christ is the author of grace by the general redemption, I show you how He is its consummator by the particular application we must make to ourselves of the fruits of the redemption.

II. Jesus Christ, my brethren, is the author of grace, you have just seen it, since grace, it is He who conquered it, who restored it to us. Since sin, there is no salvation for men save in Jesus Christ; because no one can arrive at glory save by the grace which is its necessary avenue: *Gratiam et gloriam dabit Dominus,* [The Lord will give grace and glory. (Ps. 83:12.)] and because grace like glory is found only in Jesus Christ: *Gratia … vita aeterna in Christo Jesu.* [The grace of God, life everlasting in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 6:23.)] There is no other name under heaven by which men may be saved but the name of Jesus. [Acts 4:12.] Every excellent gift and every perfect gift which comes from above and descends from the Father of lights emanates from Jesus Christ; heaven has no other dew to pour on the earth than that of the blood of Jesus: *Per quem maxima nobis et pretiosa promissa donavit.* [By whom He hath given us most great and precious promises. (2 Pet. 1:4.)]

Grace, my brethren, Jesus Christ doubtless merited it for all men; He offers it to us all, and in this consists what I have called the general redemption. But the fruits of this redemption are not applied to us without us, nor in spite of us. The grace of Jesus consummates its work only in faithful and docile hearts, which lend themselves to its operation. What is needed then, my brethren, in the present state, to live the life of grace and thus to arrive at heaven? The answer is easy: one must live the life of Jesus; in other terms, one must be a Christi an and to live as a Christian. This supernatural life that we preach to you is the Christian life, nothing else.

The admirable theology of Saint Paul sees in this world only two men in whom he personifies the two distinct orders of nature and of grace: the first Adam, the guilty Adam, and the second Adam, the redeeming Adam, Jesus Christ. Now, just as it is the union of the whole human race with its primitive stock that makes it guilty and unhappy, it is its union with its second stock that will make it just and happy. It is therefore necessary, continues the great Apostle, that we bear in ourselves the likeness of the heavenly man, as we have borne the image of the earthly man; we must be born again spiritually in the new Adam, as we are born carnally from the old Adam. [1 Cor. 15:45–49.]

See, my brethren, what happens. A child has just been born: he is a son of Adam, heir of the nature of his father, of his vitiated, guilty nature. This child is presented to the Church; she takes him in her arms, plunges him into the pool made fruitful by the redeeming blood: the Spouse has just given a new child to Jesus Christ, heir of grace and of the kingdom of heaven. When the child has grown, he is led again to the Church, who is his mother, the second Eve, mother of all the living. She questions him: What is a Christian? The child answers: He is one who, being baptised, believes and professes the Christian doctrine. Yes, my son, the Church replies: the Christian is you, for you had scarcely been born when already, by baptism, I had inoculated in you the life of Jesus Christ. Now your duty, if you wish to inherit one day the riches prepared for the children of Jesus Christ, is to live in conformity with your baptism, to believe what He taught, to practise what He ordered, He from whom you received grace and whose name you took in becoming Christian.

And if the child, to understand this language better, needs a comparison to clear it up, the mouth that instructs him will find this similitude. See, she will say to him, this shrub that the earth produced without culture, this natural shoot that grew of itself; its fruits were bitter and wild. What did the industrious art of the gardener do? He grafted on this wilding the branches of a nobler, more excellent species; and henceforth the natural sap of the shrub, arriving at the point of junction, corrects and purifies itself, and the fruits it produces are succulent and delicious. For the future all the industry consists in suppressing the bad and lazy branches that may spring up below the graft, and which, uselessly exhausting the sap, would make the upper branches perish or render them almost sterile.

Child, this wild shrub is your nature, a nature whose fruits are bitter; this branch inserted on the stem, which changes its species, renews it, perfects it, is the grace of Jesus, grafted on your heart: *In Christo complantati;* [Planted together in Christ (cf. Rom. 6:5, “complantati”)] precious graft, through which the natural saps are converted into exquisite and delicate saps. There remains to you only one care: it is to watch to cut off all the parasitic branches that would grow below the grace, to cut without pity all the wild shoots of nature. Otherwise the lower part of yourself will absorb all the sap; the branches of grace will dry up, will become sterile; you will produce nothing but earthly things; your thoughts, your works will be of man and no longer of Jesus; they will be of nature and will no longer tend to glory. Incorporated into Jesus Christ, planted, rooted in Jesus Christ, you must live henceforth only by Jesus Christ. Your mind, instead of feeding on the vain dreams of false wisdom, must make its food of the truths revealed by Jesus Christ. Your heart, instead of yielding to its evil inclinations, must submit to the evangelical precepts traced by Jesus Christ. And to believe, and so to practise the truths and commandments of Jesus Christ, His grace will not fail you. Aspire toward it by prayer; go and draw at the sources of the sacraments which contain it. Thus you will live by the life of Jesus, the Christian life, which is the supernatural life, the life of grace, the beginning of the life of glory. Thus you will produce fruits which will one day be served on the table of the heavenly Father.

You see, my brethren, the whole doctrine of grace comes down to saying that one must live as a Christian, that is, that one must take Jesus Christ for chief and for model. Redeemed by Jesus, restored by Him to our glorious destination, we shall obtain the joys of eternity only if we live here below a life conformable to that of our Redeemer. Members of Jesus Christ, the life of our head must become our life; branches of Jesus Christ, the sap of our stem must become our sap. And now I understand why the number of the elect, of the just who live by grace and are called to live by glory, is so restricted, since the number of those who follow Jesus, who know Jesus, who love Jesus, is so small. No man can be saved except by Jesus Christ, and I see multitudes of men for whom Jesus Christ is a stranger. My brother, answer me: in a year, do you think even once of Jesus Christ? You think yourself a bad son on the day you have not thought of your father. And Jesus, that father who gave you the being of nature but also the being of grace, the life of time but also the life of eternity; Jesus, that father who had to die to beget you to life, once more, in a whole year, have you a remembrance for Him?

The world is full of Christians, Christians in name, who know not Jesus Christ. Oh! my brethren, what a misfortune! I am the vine, said that sweet Saviour, you are the branch; the branch can bear fruit only so far as it is united to the vine. Branch detached from your stem, put an end to this violent state. Christian, without Jesus you bear no fruit; you seem to live and you are dead. Oh! my very dear brother, member of Jesus, draw near to your head, that His divine influences may revive your heart, that His life may become again your life. This is the grace I wish you (1).[3]

Translator's notes

1. The Gospel of the day (Friday of the fourth week of Lent) is John 4, the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, as the preacher says.

2. "In Christo complantati": the Vulgate reads *complantati facti sumus* (Rom. 6:5, "planted together"); the preacher's tag is given as printed with my gloss.

3. Francis de Sales and the *Exsultet* attributions: see the footnotes. I did not verify the Francis de Sales passage.

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[1] From the *Exsultet* of the Easter Vigil: *O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!* The preacher gives no source; I supply it.

[2] Quoted as printed; I have not traced the passage in Francis de Sales. The phrase *sucrées* "sweet oils" is the preacher's.

[3] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 20, n° 3. (Editor's note.)

n° 23. Fourth Conference on Grace, Preached on the Sixth Friday of Lent: Oppositions and Agreements between Nature and Grace

1845.[1]

Condelector enim legi Dei secundum interiorem hominem, video autem aliam legem in membris meis repugnantem legi mentis meae. [For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man; but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind. (Rom. 7:22–23.)]

I delight in the law of God according to the inward man, but I feel another law in my members, which fights against the law of my mind. (Ad Rom. c. vii, v. 22, 23.)

My very dear brethren, There is a supernatural life; to arrive at heaven, man must live this life; this supernatural life is none other than the Christian life: such are the three propositions we established in our three preceding conversations. Thereby you know the existence of grace, the necessity of grace, the principle and source of grace. Infinite glory and felicity prepared for man in the heavens; the help of grace given to man on earth to lead him to glory; the incarnate God, Jesus Christ, mediator and redeemer, who merited and procures here below grace for men, while waiting to crown them with the diadem of glory: this is the whole economy of the supernatural order, all the secrets of divine tenderness and charity: *Magnum pietatis sacramentum.*

Now a great mystery presents itself, a mystery more astonishing still than the mystery of love; I mean the mystery, the strange mystery of the indifference, the ingratitude, the rebellion of man toward a law all of love. Man, insatiable in his desires, aspires toward happiness and glory: an infinite glory, an infinite happiness is proposed to him. Man, weak and tottering by himself, has need of a support: an all-powerful help is offered him; what do I say? The eternal heir of glory descends Himself to man, and stretches out His hand to lead and raise him to the fatherland of glory. Oh! doubtless man is going to enter eagerly into this way; he is going to cast himself into the arms of a religion which is only one great benefit, of a religion which commands only to receive, and which, offering at once the means and the end, in promising the gift of glory, already pours the gift of grace; he is going to welcome with transports of gratitude this great mystery

of love: *Magnum pietatis sacramentum.* Error!

Here is another mystery. This man, insatiable of happiness and glory, looks coldly on a future of eternal glory and infinite happiness. This man, ready to receive from every hand, disdainfully rejects the heavenly alms of grace. This man, so eager to pursue the favour of the powerful of the earth, puts aside and repulses the brother who has come to him from heaven to lead him to heaven. Once more: inexplicable indifference, ingratitude, rebellion, opposed to all the laws that govern the human heart: *Magnum impietatis sacramentum:* [great mystery of impiety (a play on *pietatis*, "godliness")] profound mystery of insensibility, hardness, impiety.

Who will tell us, my brethren, who will reveal to us the key of this enigma? Who will explain to us this inconsistency, this contradiction found in man? I shall try to do so, by showing you today, my brethren, what obstacles grace meets in our evil nature, and what intelligences it has preserved in the remains of our good nature. The oppositions and the agreements that exist between nature and grace: that is the whole object of this conversation.

I. Why did God not form the human heart in such a way that it should of itself and always tend to virtue? That is what men sometimes ask themselves. Which is about equivalent to this other question: Why, instead of making intelligent and free creatures, capable of meriting, did God not content Himself with making automata moved by springs? Why does the human soul not produce exclusively, mechanically, by an effect of its organisation, acts of virtue, as the rose-bush gives roses?

My brethren, it was of the essence of man that he should be free; that is, that having before his eyes the law which prescribes him the good and forbids him the evil, he should find in himself the faculty of determining himself, by a free choice, in one sense or the other. Without this faculty, the notion of good and evil, of virtue and crime disappears; there remains only necessity, fatality; conscience, remorse become words void of sense. The good man has no more right to the praises of his fellows and to divine rewards than the vine is praised and will be rewarded for having produced wine and not poisons. Liberty is an essential condition of merit. Eternal glory, says the Holy Spirit, will be the portion of him who could do evil and did it not: *Gloria aeterna erit illi qui potuit facere mala, et non fecit.* [Eternal glory shall be to him who could do evil things, and hath not done them. (cf. Ecclus. 31:10.)]

But at least, you will tell me, the equilibrium should be perfect. Placed between good and evil, man should have received from the Creator an attraction, an inclination at least equal, if not a natural preference for the good; and even the divine hand, whose action is so gentle, whose operation so delicate, could, without annihilating liberty, have guided its creature by an easy slope, and drawn him by a supple chain, and, while preserving to him the merit of cooperation, excited, determined his movement in the sense of virtue.

What you ask, my very dear brother, is precisely what God had done. Man, on coming out of the hands of the Creator, was at once free and inclined toward the good. God, says Ecclesiasticus, showed them good and evil: *Et bona et mala ostendit illis;* but at the same time He enlightened their intelligence, creating in them the science of the spirit, and He imprinted a wise direction on their will, filling their heart with sense and wisdom: *Creavit illis scientiam spiritus, sensu implevit cor illorum.* [He created in them the science of the spirit, He filled their heart with understanding. (Ecclus. 17:5–6.)] Exempt from ignorance and concupiscence, the heart of Adam turned toward God as the needle toward the pole. Adam sinned, and the harmony of his faculties was disturbed; the axis of his heart was inclined like that of the globe. The darkness that God had dispelled around him enveloped his mind, and the still thicker clouds of the passions obscured his heart. Man had revolted against God; by a just punishment, the flesh revolted against the spirit, the senses conspired against reason. Thus were born in one and the same man those two men of whom the Apostle speaks, thus began that great duel which was to last until the end of the ages. For if Jesus Christ by the redemption repaired the essential losses caused by sin, that is, reopened for man the gates of glory and gave him back the

help of grace; it is of Catholic faith, alas! and our own experience makes this dogma known to us enough, that the other consequences of sin were not destroyed. In becoming Christian, one does not cease to be subject to the law of suffering and death, and the hearth of concupiscence is not extinguished either in the water that regenerates us. It is a penalty doubtless; but it is above all a trial, a subject of combat: *Ad agonem relicta,* says the Council of Trent.[2]

Surely Paul had been regenerated in Jesus Christ. Yet hear him in his epistle to the Romans: "I know," he says, "that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. So I approve not what I do, because I do not the good that I love, but I do the evil that I hate. And if I do the evil that I would not, I consent to the law and acknowledge inwardly that it is good; so that it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good, because I find not the means to perform it, though I desire it. I am delighted with the law according to the inward man; but I feel in my members another law which fights against the law of my mind, and which holds me captive in the law of sin that is in my members: unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" [Rom. 7:14–24, abridged and rephrased by the preacher.]

My brethren, which of us knows not these two men of whom the Apostle speaks? Which of us has not felt within himself this law of sin that is in our members? Triple concupiscence, says Saint John: concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of the eyes, and pride of life. [1 John 2:16.] Now how opposed to the action of divine grace are the disordered movements of this corrupted nature! Before all, grace preaches purity, continence: *Quae desursum est sapientia, primum quidem pudica est;* [The wisdom that is from above is first chaste. (James 3:17.)] and carnal nature inclines toward voluptuousness.

Consider what happens, my brethren. How many men seem to have a mind only for the body; in whom reason is extinguished and oppressed; who are drowned and as it were buried in the flesh, in the pleasures of the flesh; whose thoughts are so joined to matter that one can scarcely distinguish them from it! so that the purest thing in them is to breathe, as Bossuet says. How many who never came out of this mass of flesh, or who came out of it for an instant only to plunge back at once! I ask you, my brethren, with what does our youth converse, with what is it occupied, at that age when one blushes at virtue, when one makes of modesty a reproach? And what do the old regret, continues the great Bossuet, when they lament their years gone by, and what do they continually wish to recall with their youth, if not the pleasures of the senses? And this being who is only flesh and blood; this being in whom a body of sin weighs down the soul, grace comes to speak to him of chastity, of innocence! Ah! I understand all the repugnance this language must cause him. Still, if grace attacked only gross vices, but it does not stop there. Grace preaches to men renunciation, abnegation; and man wishes to possess, to amass. He covets all that presents itself to his eyes: *Concupiscentia oculorum.*

Here, my brethren, consider again human society. What common thought, what universal preoccupation agitates, drives and drives back all that crowd you meet, passing and repassing in every direction, traversing the streets of the city or the most secluded paths of the country? to acquire, to possess; to leave one's condition, to obtain honours, places; to build comfortable houses, to distinguish oneself by the luxury of one's clothes, by the choice of one's furniture. What century more than ours, my brethren, is possessed by this concupiscence of the eyes? In these times when all think themselves fit for everything, when nothing is so high that the example of some fortunate upstart cannot make us hope to attain it ourselves with intrigues, patronage, perseverance, luck! And to these men, whose eye is vaster than their heart, grace comes to speak of moderation in desires, of reserve, abnegation, renunciation! Do you understand again all the opposition grace must meet?

But it goes further and penetrates to the most delicate point of the heart; it asks humility, contempt of self. And man is swollen with his merit, idolater of glory. He makes himself the centre of all things; he appraises nothing except in relation to himself; he raises a little throne; he proclaims himself king; he pretends to excel his fellows, to eclipse his rivals. Whoever saw laid bare the play of all the springs of the human heart would

recognise that pride is the universal mover; that almost always it is self-love that thinks, that speaks, that acts: self-love which depreciates this one whose superiority hurts and frightens us, and which vaunts that one whose mediocrity suits us and reassures us; self-love which pushes to evil to obtain the applause of corrupt men, and which sometimes leads to good to obtain the esteem of virtuous men. And to this mortal thus kneaded of pride, thus satisfied with himself, grace comes to speak of humility, of abasement, of oblivion, of contempt of self! Here again, what resistance, what opposition will grace meet?

In other terms, my brethren, grace shows man future goods, eternal, infinite, immense goods; and nature will sacrifice nothing of the present to the future, always ready on the contrary like Esau to immolate its rights to the eternal inheritance for the slightest enjoyment of the moment. Grace proposes to man invisible goods, the goods of another world; and nature throws itself blindly on the sensible, palpable good, on the goods of this world. Grace says, like the Psalmist: Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord; nature says: Blessed is the people whose granaries are always full and overflow with wheat, whose flocks are fruitful and productive, whose dwellings are comfortable, whose cities are peaceful and without riots, whose sons are like young plantations and whose daughters are adorned with the richness of a temple. [Ps. 143:12–15.] Grace says: One God only shalt thou adore; proud nature says: Yes, thou shalt adore only one God, but that God is thyself. Grace says: Thou shalt not covet the inheritance of thy neighbour, nor his field, nor his honour, nor his wife; nature, ambitious, insatiable, says: Thou shalt aspire to possess all that thou seest. Grace says: Thou shalt not be unchaste; carnal nature says: All thy passions thou shalt satisfy. Grace says: Blessed are the poor, for they shall have the kingdom of heaven; nature says: Blessed are the rich, for they possess the enjoyments of earth. Grace says: Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God; nature says: Blessed are those who can satisfy their passions, for the God of man is pleasure. Grace says: Blessed are the meek; nature says: Blessed are the strong. Grace says: Blessed are the merciful; nature says: Blessed are the hard and insensible, they avoid the pains of life.

Thus it is, my brethren, that nature has its creed, its decalogue, its beatitudes, entirely opposed to the creed, the decalogue, the beatitudes of grace. Hence, in those who do nothing to raise themselves above the instincts of nature, that aversion, that hatred for the religion of grace. Hence, in human society, in the bosom of peoples, that incessant struggle, that interminable war of the party of nature ever armed against the party of grace, terrible duel whose outcome will arrive only at the end of the ages. My brethren, have I shown you enough the opposition which reigns between nature and grace? How then to bring the first to cast itself into the arms of the second? Unhappy man that I am, cries Saint Paul, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? And he answers: The grace of God by Jesus Christ Our Lord. [Rom. 7:24–25.] Yes, my brethren, whatever repugnance nature has to let itself be ruled by grace, grace nevertheless is an indispensable need for nature. The heart of man has two poles, of which one repels grace, and the other attracts it. In this hostile fortress which is called nature, grace has preserved precious intelligences by means of which it can reconquer the empire it once possessed. Let us see then the points of rapprochement between nature and grace.

II. When we speak of nature and grace as two enemies, we must not forget however that these two enemies are sisters; these two rivals are twins. Now, whatever incompatibility one supposes, it cannot be that there does not remain in so close a kinship a certain fund of sympathy always ready to awaken. The history of Esau and Jacob is reproduced within each of us. Permit me to recall here this biblical fact, which suits our subject the better in that tradition has always seen in these two figurative personages the personification of nature and of grace.

“Rebecca having become fruitful,” Scripture tells us, “her two children struggled together in her womb; and the Lord said to her: Two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples, issuing from thy womb, shall be divided; the one shall overcome the other, and the elder shall serve the younger. Soon after, Reb ecca brought forth two sons: the first, who was hairy and rough, was named Esau; and the second, who was born holding his brother’s heel in his hand, was named Jacob.” (Gen. 25:22–26.) No need to tell you again, my brethren,

how the first sold to the second his birthright, how the latter inherits the blessings of the first-born, what furious hatred Esau conceived on this account against his brother, who was forced to go away. At the end of twenty years Jacob ventures to return; he advances only trembling, causes himself to be preceded by presents to appease Esau his brother. Esau, at this news, sets out with a troop of four hundred men; his hatred, far from being extinguished, seems to revive and grow young again. At last behold the two brothers face to face: what is going to happen? Jacob, whom his presents have preceded, prostrates himself seven times, waiting for Esau to approach him; Esau runs to meet his brother, presses him in his arms, and, holding him embraced by the neck, kisses him, weeping. (Gen. 33.)

Such, my brethren, is the whole history of the relations between nature and grace; thus their opposition ends by yielding to a secret agreement which nothing can destroy. Daughters of one and the same mother, who is the liberal hand of God, nature and grace were born the same day; the same womb held two nations, two peoples, of whom the elder was to obey the younger. Nature had just come to birth when grace appeared, her younger sister, who held her by the heel. The latter inherited the blessings and the right of primogeniture. Hence war between nature and grace, war prolonged, passionate, but at last war between sisters: that is, war against nature, dissension from which results a violent state, a state of suffering. On the one hand, nature feels her hatred mingled with love; what she repels is lacking to her, is a need for her. Grace, on the other hand, always ready to be reconciled, sends to nature presents, homages, makes advances to her, concessions to win her. The hour of rapprochement will strike: one day when the two rivals find themselves in presence, suddenly the voice of blood will make itself heard, the knots of birth will tighten; instead of two enemies there will remain only two sisters, united in a reciprocal embrace.

That nature always preserves a secret inclination toward grace; that grace, on its side, seeks by a thousand means to slip, to insinuate itself into nature: that, my brethren, is what you will easily understand; it will suffice for that to open the book of your heart.

Nature, as I told you, my brethren, could have had its complete existence and all its integrity independently of grace, purely gratuitous gift, privilege of supererogation, due to the great and immense goodness of God. But after all and in fact, nature having been from the beginning enriched with the treasures of grace, henceforth the memory of those gifts that it once possessed or could have possessed presents itself to it, not only as an absence of goods, but as a loss, a privation, the object of its regrets, the object of its sighs. For example, this child could have been born in the depth of a wood in the obscure cottage of the woodcutter, and perhaps he would have lived there content with his lot, little envious of goods he would always have ignored. But he was born on the throne, and it is a tempest that cast him into misery; under his rags he remembers the purple with which he was clothed, the gilded ceilings that covered his cradle. That glorious past that is no more makes his present condition insupportable; he aspires to mount again to the rank from which he fell.

My brethren, behold man! To speak with a poet, he is a fallen angel who remembers the heavens.[3] Since we have tasted the gift of grace, our nature, reduced to its attributes alone, no longer suffices us; we groan, says Saint Paul, aspiring unceasingly to recover that mantle of heaven which we once wore: *Nam et in hoc ingemiscimus, habitationem nostram quae de caelo est superindui cupientes:* [For in this also we groan, desiring to be clothed upon with our habitation that is from heaven. (2 Cor. 5:2.)] we wish to be clothed, and not naked. For the laws which govern the heart of man do not permit him to love to be stripped, he who, in his insatiable desire for happiness, accepts with so much eagerness every favour, every elevation, every ornament that comes to him by surplus: *Eo quod nolumus expoliari, sed supervestiri.* [Because we would not be unclothed, but clothed upon. (2 Cor. 5:4.)] In this narrow sphere of nature we feel that we are exiled from another more divine sphere: *Dum sumus in corpore, peregrinamur a Domino;* [While we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord. (2 Cor. 5:6.)] and we tend unceasingly to re-enter it.

That, my brethren, is what I call the secret inclination of nature toward grace. Notwithstanding the evil covetousness of the flesh, says the holy bishop of Geneva, man never thinks a little attentively of God

without experiencing a certain sweet emotion which testifies that God is God of the human heart. The intelligence which is always hungry to know, the will which has an insatiable appetite to love, not finding in the world a food that satisfies them, turn of themselves toward the light and the divine grace. As the bird, if the naturalists are to be believed, hatched and fed under foreign wings, at the first cry it hears of its true mother, abandons its nurse to attach itself to her from whom it holds its first origin, by the effect of a secret correspondence which was as it were asleep in the depth of nature until it was excited and as it were awakened on meeting its object; so, says Saint Francis de Sales in his inimitable style, so the heart, though brooded, nourished, brought up among corporeal, low and transitory things, and so to speak under the wings of nature, nevertheless at the first glance it casts on God, at the first impression of His grace, the first inclination which was as it were drowsy and imperceptible awakes in an instant and appears unforeseen, as the spark leaps from the ashes.[4]

Now, my brethren, while nature thus preserves a precious affinity with grace, grace on its side adapts itself, proportions itself, appropriates itself marvellously to nature, comes to meet it, stretches out its hand to it. Nature, left to itself and its inclination, would hardly go beyond a sterile velleity; inclined toward grace, it would never reach it. But grace forestalls it, hastens to insinuate itself among the precious remains of primitive uprightness. God, said the great Fénelon, following in this the thought of Saint Augustine, God mingles the beginning of the supernatural gift with the remains of the good nature; so that man who holds them united together in his own depth does not disentangle them, and bears within himself a mystery of grace of which he is profoundly ignorant. This is what Saint Augustine calls: *Inchoationes quaedam fidei, conceptionibus similes:* [Certain beginnings of faith, like conceptions.] This first gift, confused and enveloped, this secret and formless germ, is the imperceptible beginning of the new man; it is not reason alone nor nature left to itself, it is nascent grace which hides under nature to correct it, to raise it little by little.[5]

The movements of evil nature and those of grace are very opposed; it is true, my brethren. Which of us knows not the admirable chapter of the *Imitation: De diversis motibus naturae et gratiae?* [Of the diverse motions of nature and grace (book III, ch. 54).] Yet, my brethren, it would be an error to believe that grace does not know how to melt, to harmonise with good nature. In the works of God nothing is abrupt, jarring, steep; on the contrary all is prepared, brought about by a sort of insensible transition. In the work of God *par excellence,* could it be otherwise? Just as it is the property of a hand skilful in its art to know so well how to graft the branches of a nobler and more excellent species on a less perfect stem that the knot and the point of junction become imperceptible, and the first sap, allying with the second, is corrected by it, without the eye being able to discern by what hidden cause this renewal is produced; so the divine hand, having wished to graft grace upon nature, has known so well how to mingle, to combine the supernatural gift with the inclinations of nature, that the heart most entirely subject to grace, when it turns back on itself, scarcely distinguishes by what road it has passed from its first dispositions, so imperfect, so remote, to the most lively, most purified, most intimate piety.

The grace of God, my brethren, almost never assaults nature; the miracle of Damascus is a miracle, that is, an exception. But grace takes its time, it spies, it observes the hours and the moments, it seizes the occasions; and this science of opportuneness is one of the great resources of grace, to the point that the most brilliant conversions seem most often only a matter of chance and meetings: yes, but chance, meetings prepared, brought about by Providence, foreseen, skilfully seized by grace. Grace, if I may so speak, lays holy ambushes for nature; it observes, it studies our tastes, our talents, sometimes even our weaknesses, our faults, and it knows how to bend, to take all forms to insinuate itself into us. I will draw them, says the Lord, with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love: *In funiculis Adam traham eos, in vinculis caritatis.* [I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love. (Os. 11:4.)]

This man, for example, was a man of study, of science; he had grown pale all his life over books. One day he opens a volume: the beauty, the majesty of the Scriptures astonishes him; from admiration of the form he is led to taste, to savour the divine unction hidden under the bark of the holy letters. Behold him conquered to grace, and grace has appealed only to his tastes; it is his ordinary passion for study which this time, obeying the God who made the intelligence, and transforming itself at His voice, has put itself at the service of grace: *Creatura enim tibi factori deserviens … et tunc in omnia transfigurata omnium nutrici gratiae tuae deserviebat.* [For the creature serving Thee, the Maker … and then also transfigured into all things, served Thy grace, the nurse of all. (Wisd. 16:24–25.)]

This other seemed to have a soul wholly dried up by business, wholly given over to the cares, the material interests of life; yet one quality remained to him, he was sensible to friendship. Now behold one day he reflects that after all this friend, this so sure confidant in whose bosom he so loves to pour himself out, is a man all of whose qualities have their principle in religion, in piety. Soon the faith of his friend becomes his faith, the religious habits of his friend become his habits. He is conquered to grace, and grace has set in play only the natural springs; it is the human virtue of friendship which, obeying the God who made hearts, and transforming itself at His voice, has put itself at the service of grace: *Creatura enim tibi factori deserviens … omnium nutrici gratiae tuae deserviebat.*

This other had been brought up amid the most afflicting prejudices; he had a profound antipathy to religion, its practices, its ministers. One quality remained to him: he was a perfect husband, an excellent father. Now behold after several years have passed, he reflects that after all this wife whom he cherishes comes back to him more tender, more perfect, more delicate, in proportion as she is more faithful to her religious duties; he observes that his young son, his young daughter grow more beautiful each day with new qualities at once more solid and more lovable, that all the graces shine on their brow with piety. The God of his wife, the God of his children becomes his God. Behold him conquered to grace, and grace has not, to arrive at him, any other avenue than that of nature; it is the conjugal sentiment, the paternal sentiment which, obeying the God from whom emanates all affection, all paternity, and transforming itself at His voice, has put itself at the service of grace: *Creatura enim tibi factori deserviens … omnium nutrici gratiae tuae deserviebat.*

This other had long led a light, perhaps dissolute life; but he had a sensitive soul, and above all he keenly tasted the beauties of nature, he never tired of admiring the spectacle of the created world. Now one day the stars of heaven and the flowers of the fields seemed in agreement to speak to his heart the language of purity; he felt in nature I know not what of exquisite, pure, holy and sanctifying. Behold him conquered, and grace has touched the only string that still vibrated in this soul; it is the beauty of the created world which, obeying its author and transforming itself at His voice, has put itself at the service of grace: *Creatura enim tibi factori deserviens … omnium nutrici gratiae tuae deserviebat.*

This other was possessed by pride, by ambition. A voice makes itself heard: You want glory, look at heaven; you are ambitious, the world is open before you. Xavier becomes an apostle.[6] He is conquered to grace, and grace has invoked only the seemingly evil passions of his nature. It is pride, ambition which, submitting to the yoke of the Almighty and transforming themselves at His voice, have put themselves at the service of grace: *Creatura enim tibi factori deserviens … omnium nutrici gratiae tuae deserviebat.*

Finally this other had resisted all the efforts of grace; this heart seemed intractable, unconquerable. Sorrow has laid its hand heavily on him, its terrible hand. He invoked only nature, he wished only nature, and behold nature, cruel stepmother, overwhelms him with a thousand evils: adversity, sickness, disappointments. One day his eyes meet the cross, and the consoling language of the cross reaches his heart. Behold him conquered to grace, and grace has been seconded only by the sufferings which are the sad sequel of sin. Sorrow, obeying the God who sanctified it on Calvary, and transforming itself at His voice, has put itself at the service of grace: *Creatura enim tibi factori deserviens … omnium nutrici gratiae tuae deserviebat.* Thus it is, my brethren, that grace comes to us by the ways which nature opens to it. I could add that it sanctifies us only

in conformity with our nature, never annihilating our inclinations, but perfecting them, directing them; so that grace asks of us, says Saint John Chrysostom, no other natural disposition than ours, no other complexion than ours, no other talents than ours, and that, in a sense easy to understand, while ceasing not to be what we are, we can become by it all that we are not.

It is true, etc. (See Bourdaloue.)

Peroration. — To help grace … it is the sweetest support of nature during the whole journey of life: *Suaviter equitat, quem gratia Dei portat* (1).[7]

Translator's notes

1. As the editor warns, the end of this conference is abridged and the peroration is only indicated ("Il est vrai, etc. (Voir Bourdaloue)"; "Péroraison. — Aider à la grâce …"); I kept these as printed, without filling in.

2. Attributions to Bossuet, Fénelon, Augustine, Francis de Sales and Chrysostom are as the preacher gives them; not verified here (see footnotes).

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[1] (1) The end of this conference is abridged, and the peroration is only indicated. We reproduce it nevertheless, in order to have the complete teaching of M. l'abbé Pie on grace. (Editor's note.)

[2] Trent, Session 5, decree on original sin (concupiscence "left for the struggle", *ad agonem relicta*). The preacher gives no reference; I supply it from memory, not verified here.

[3] The preacher quotes "a poet" without naming him (the line is often attributed to Lamartine, "L'homme est un dieu tombé qui se souvient des cieux", in *Méditations*; I give this as an identification of mine, not verified).

[4] Francis de Sales (*Treatise on the Love of God*, book I, ch. 18, I think); the passage is quoted as the preacher gives it; not verified here.

[5] Fénelon and Augustine as the preacher cites them; I have not traced the passages. The Latin tag is Augustine's (*De praedestinatione sanctorum*, ch. 2?), as I recall; not verified.

[6] Francis Xavier; the preacher says only "Xavier". My identification.

[7] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 20, no. 4. (Editor's note.) — The Latin tag, "he rides gently whom the grace of God carries", is quoted without source.

n° 24. Ecclesiastical Conference on Holy Scripture, Read at the Meeting of the First District, City of Chartres

June 1845.[1]

Programme. — "To show the excellence of holy Scripture from the literary point of view; to point out its beauties in the historical genre, in the descriptive genre, in the didactic genre, in the oratorical genre and in the poetic genre; and to cite some of the most striking passages in these different genres."

My Lord, To treat in all its extent the question proposed, I should have to present to you nothing less than a complete course of sacred literature. But long works frighten us; were they good, excellent, they would not be in their place here. I have therefore imposed on myself a difficult task: it is not to fall short, on the one hand, in the eyes of those who particularly appreciate laconism, and, on the other hand, nevertheless to fulfil the programme as it has just been stated.

If I have understood well the spirit that dictated the questions on holy Scripture for this year, they all relate to the general Prolegomena, and must consequently be considered from an extended point of view, where the whole is mainly brought into relief, and where details figure only accessorily, by way of example and elucidation. I therefore divide the text of the programme into two parts. To show the excellence of Scripture from the literary point of view: this I shall do first by some general considerations which will form the substance of my subject. To develop in detail the beauties of the different genres, to cite the most striking passages: here I shall barely touch the matter, leaving to those who will be called later to treat successively what concerns the different books of Scripture the care of bringing out, commenting, paraphrasing the

particular beauties of the literary pieces each of these books contains.

I. But first is it fitting, is it respectful, to consider Scripture as a literary work? Have not austere minds already objected to me that after all the design of God, in speaking to men in His Scriptures, is not to please but to instruct, to offer not masterpieces of style and language to admire, but lessons of conduct and examples of virtue to practise and follow. Of what use is it to attach oneself to the form where the substance is so rich? Of what use to seek flowers in a book that was made only to bear fruit?

Such is the difficulty that Rollin puts to himself, and I shall willingly avow with him that it would be to do injury to eternal Wisdom to esteem less the salutary counsels She gives us than the traits of eloquence that escape Her, to neglect the very things She says to us, and to be attentive only to the manner in which She says them.

But if it is an abuse to seek in the oracles of the Holy Spirit only the qualities of the rhetorician or the poet, is it forbidden to taste, to savour the innumerable beauties scattered in the holy Books? God, who lavished them there on purpose, does He not wish them to be felt, perceived? And besides, does not the agreeable, here, lead to the useful? Are the beautiful and the true without affinity? Let us approach some general ideas.

What is the aim of poetry and literature in general? It has been said a thousand times, it is to please in order to instruct. The austere moralist lays down axioms, and proves them with a rigour in some sort mathematical; he speaks the language of reason, he opens before you the most direct and shortest road that leads to truth and virtue. The man of letters, the poet, on the contrary, places brilliant pictures, graceful descriptions beside principles; he assaults imagination, the senses, the passions to range them on the side of reason; he makes you follow a flowery road, sometimes roundabout, but whose varied aspects delight you, astonish you, so that, moved by a secret charm, you pursue your march until, without thinking of it, from marvel to marvel, from enjoyment to enjoyment, you arrive at the goal to which they wished to lead you. To secure the rights of truth and virtue, the philosopher, the moralist affirm, they state the duty; to conquer hearts more surely, the rhetorician, the poet arm themselves with palette and brushes, they employ the legitimate seduction of pleasure.

Hence the advantage Horace attributes to poets over moralists: Homer, he says, tells us what is beautiful and what is shameful, what is useful and what is not, more fully and better than Chrysippus and Crantor: *Quidquid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non, plenius ac melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.* [(Horace, *Epistles* I, 2, 3–4.)] More fully, says Dr. Lowth here, for Chrysippus and Crantor furnish only general maxims, vague precepts; whereas Homer, by his so faithful, so striking paintings of morals and passions, by his pictures so admirably traced on nature, descends to the minutest details of life. More effectively, because instead of arid formulas and algebraic demonstrations, by the charm of verse, the beauty of images, the interest of action, the truth of imitation, the poet attracts, strikes, seduces, astonishes the soul of the reader, disposes it to honest affections and penetrates it, so to speak, with the very spirit of virtue.

In every matter, says Lucretius, it is important to rub the rim of the cup with the sweet honey of the Muses: *Et quasi Musaeo dulci contingere melle.* [And to touch it, as it were, with the sweet honey of the Muses. (Lucretius, I, 936–7, in the preacher's wording.)] Lucretius justified this sentence himself, for his brilliant poem was soon the sole manual of the followers of Epicurus; and Columella tells us that, in the great century of Augustus, the harmonious *Georgics* of Virgil operated, after the long wars, the happiest revolution in all that concerns agriculture.[2] It is that, as our Chateaubriand has said, the sound of a lyre never spoiled anything.[3]

These principles once laid down, I apply them to my subject. When, to instruct us, the eternal Word, as the Church sings, clothed Himself with the sounds of the human voice: *Nos ut doceret induit vocis sonus Verbum Patris,* [To teach us, the Word of the Father put on the sound of voice.] wishing to insinuate Himself more effectively into our hearts, He appropriated the language of men in its highest expression of nobility and

grace, what do I say? He raised it to a degree of perfection it had never attained. It is not a dry doctrine that divine Wisdom has bequeathed to us, She has adorned Her teaching with the richest of all adornments. God proceeded in revelation as in nature, tending to His goal strongly, but disposing all things sweetly.

In the creation of the natural world, it is a general law that the substance and the goal is the useful, but that the form and the means is the graceful and lovable. For example, the goal of the Creator is the fruit, the road is the flower; it is a constant law that the flower produces the fruit, that the useful is born of the agreeable. Morose mind, do not speak ill of flowers, do not mow down flowers pitilessly: do you not see, says Saint Ambrose, that it is they that give the fruits? So in Scripture: the goal is to instruct, to persuade; but the ways to arrive at this goal are beautiful ways, the paths are lovable paths: *Viae ejus viae pulchrae, et semitae illius pacificae.* [Her ways are beautiful ways, and all her paths are peaceable. (Prov. 3:17.)] Nothing is more beautiful than Scripture, nothing is sweeter, more restful: *Pulchrae, pacificae.*

Two books came out of the hands of the Creator, and they have between them a great seal of resemblance; I have just said it, it is the book of nature and that of the holy Scriptures. In both I find the same qualities with the same contrasts, the same majesty with the same simplicity, the same elevation with the same candour, the same energy with the same suavity. David said, speaking of the book of nature: *Delectasti me, Domine, in factura tua, et in operibus manuum tuarum exultabo:* [Thou hast delighted me, O Lord, in Thy doings: and in the works of Thy hands I shall rejoice. (Ps. 91:5.)] Oh! Lord, what charms I have found in the making, in the divine touch of Your hands! Yes, gentlemen, the works of men, however perfect they be, always bear the imprint of the mediocrity that produced them; the most celebrated marvels of art, of civilisation, become tiresome; to first admiration soon succeeds boredom. Nature alone is always new, always beautiful, always interesting: the eternal workman has given to His work so particular a stamp, something so finished, that the eye always discovers a new merit, a new charm: *Delectasti me, Domine, in factura tua, et in operibus manuum tuarum exultabo.* These reflections apply perfectly to the Scriptures. On each page of the sacred text one recognises the imprint of the same hand, the same making, the same touch as in the great book of the world. And, to use a textual translation, the style of Scripture is of a particular *facture* [workmanship], which delights and makes one thrill.

What other book could bear the test of a daily reading? Read the most sublime page of Bossuet and of Saint Augustine; soon you will be so familiarised with the thoughts of these great men as no longer to need to return to this reading. Scripture alone is a beauty always ancient and always new. There one passes a hundred times by the same road and always finds there something new: it is an enamelled meadow where is revealed in each season a flower hitherto unperceived, a sky where appears each day a star hitherto unknown. How sweet are Your words to my palate, O Lord! said David: *Quam dulcia faucibus meis eloquia tua, Domine!* [How sweet are Thy words to my palate! (Ps. 118:103.)] And how true it is, as Saint Paul says, that they distil patience, consolation and hope: *Et per patientiam et consolationem Scripturarum spem habeamus.* When all the rest has become an object of disgust, when the heart is blasé and all other sweetnesses are insipid and without attraction, Scripture is still full of savour and charm; and thereby, when the ear is closed to every other lesson, Scripture is always useful to teach: *Utilis ad docendum;* [2 Tim. 3:16.] useful to correct and to reprove: one never reads the divine text without becoming better, without being enlightened on oneself, on one's faults. And, what is above all peculiar to it, is that it so accommodates itself to the present impression, to the present disposition of the soul, that it seems always to be the balm prepared for your wound of today, the consolation for your sorrow of today, the encouragement for your dejection of today (1).[4]

And after these considerations, I say that Scripture is the most excellent of all literary works. For the aim of all reasonable literature is to please in order to instruct, to move in order to make better, and the Bible, which contains the most sublime of all doctrines, the purest of all moralities, is also, from the point of view of form, the most enchanting and the most touching of all books. Never did man speak like this man, said the Jews on hearing the divine Saviour; the same must be said of all the inspired writers: Never did man, by whatever

name you call him, speak like these men. Never did Homer speak like Job and Moses, never did Pindar speak like David, never did Theophrastus speak like Solomon, never did any mouth speak like Isaias, never did any sage, whether called Socrates or Plato, speak the language of the parables or the beatitudes of Our Lord Jesus Christ, never did Tacitus or Livy speak like Saint Luke and Saint John, never did Demosthenes or Cicero speak like Saint Paul.

There is something in me, said La Harpe, which cries to me so strongly that man did not find this, that if it were possible that this sentiment deceived me, I should not fear to be reproved for my error at the judgment of God. I should say to Him, like Abraham: "You are just, and with the ideas that You Yourself gave to my intelligence could I believe that it was not You who spoke thus?" But happily there is no risk, adds the same critic; and I am sure that this is of God as I am sure that there is a God.[5]

Before descending to a more particular examination of the style of Scripture, I do not wish to omit one last consideration very strong in favour of its literary pre-eminence.

It is known, observes Rollin judiciously, that the most excellent authors, whether Greek or Latin, lose almost all their graces when they are translated literally; each language has its own genre from which it borrows its merit, its beauty. Now there is one book in the world, a unique book, which does not undergo this law, and whose beauty is so absolute, so independent of the changeable form and the diverse shades of idioms, that it subsists almost entire and makes its way, says Bossuet, through the incorrect and half-barbarous phrases of the driest versions: *Illa suavitas, cujus tanta vis est, ut etiam perrumpat ad nos ac penetret inter versionum nostrarum phrases inconditas et semi-barbaras.* [That suavity, of which such is the force that it breaks through to us and penetrates among the unpolished and half-barbarous phrases of our versions.] Here is the sure note, the infallible mark of the superhuman excellence of the sacred books. Allow me in this connection a comparison between the beauty of the moral character of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the beauty of the Scriptures.

As has been remarked, every people, every nation, every tribe has adopted an ideal type of perfection in harmony with its usages, its morals, its maxims. The holiness of the Hindu brahmin is not that of the Egyptian priest; the moral excellence of the Greek is not that of the Jew; there is a long way from the philosophical type to the Pharisaic type, from Socrates and Plato to Hillel or Gamaliel. Yet in the midst of all these national prejudices, of all these ideas of conventional and imaginary perfection, there is one character, a unique character, which borrows nothing from the Greek, the Indian, the Egyptian, or the Roman, which is in direct opposition to the character of its own nation, and which, placed above all these so uncertain and variable kinds of merit, nevertheless obtains the assent of all men and presents itself at once to each as the type of excellence. All prostrate themselves and say: This is the true! this is the beautiful! This unique character is that of Our Lord Jesus Christ, whose moral beauty, soaring above all distinctions of colour, figure, maxims and schools, forms the absolute type of unity to which all the sons of Adam rally.

Likewise all peoples have their own literature, idiom, grammar, rhetoric, national poetry; each language has its conventional beauties, which vanish totally in a foreign language. There is but one book in the world which knows, like manna, how to take on all tastes, and whose beauties shine for all eyes. This book is the Bible, the book *par excellence,* the universal, catholic book, which, having come out of the hands of Him who had originally given to the earth but one lip and one language: *Terra autem erat labii unius et sermonum eorumdem,* [And the earth was of one tongue, and of the same speech. (Gen. 11:1.)] reproduces, by a permanent marvel, the prodigy at which Jerusalem was astonished on the day when all the peoples of the world heard equally, each in his own language, the Apostles tell the greatness of God. [Acts 2:6–11.]

After these general observations, let us pass in review some of the particular resources of the style of Scripture.

The style of holy Scripture is essentially figurative, images abound in it. It is commonly said that this frequent use of figures and images remarked in Scripture is due to the poverty of the Hebrew language, which, lacking abstract words entirely, throws itself of necessity on sensible objects, and converts difficulty into means, obstacle into success, drawing from its very dearth a fruitful source of literary riches. This observation is doubtless well founded; but is it not true to say that independently of the nature of the Hebrew language, Scripture has frequent recourse to images, to figures, because it pleased supreme Wisdom to reveal Herself to men in this manner? Those of our Book s that were written in the Greek language, so different from the Hebrew language, would furnish a great number of proofs of this assertion. But what a choice of images! what boldness in the figures of the holy Books! what superiority over all human compositions! Let us see some examples.

Horace wishes to compliment Augustus, to describe the sweetnesses of his reign; hear what the poetic genre of the Latins inspires in him that is most flattering:

Lucem redde tuae, dux bone, patriae: Instar veris enim vultus ubi tuus Affulsit populo, gratior et dies Et soles melius nitent.

[Give back the light to your country, good leader: for like spring, where your countenance has shone on the people, the day passes more sweetly and the suns shine better. (Horace, *Odes* IV, 5, 5–8.)]

The face of Augustus like spring, the day flowing by with more charm, the sun shining with more brilliance: those are magnificent images, doubtless. But hear other accents; compare the poet with the prophet, the singer of Augustus with the singer of the Almighty. Isaias wishes to paint the marvels of the reign of God: there too it is a question of light, of sun; but what a difference, what other proportions of style!

“The moon shall be covered with shame and the sun at his noon shall blush, when the Lord of hosts shall reign on Mount Sion and in Jerusalem, and shall show Himself in all His glory in the midst of His ancients. — Thou shalt no more have the sun for thy light by day, neither shall the brightness of the moon enlighten thee by night. But the Lord shall be unto thee for an everlasting light, and thy God for thy glory. Thy sun shall go down no more, and thy moon shall not decrease.” (Is. 24:23; 60:19–20.)

Is it not true that Horace is to Isaias what shepherds’ reed-pipes are to peals of thunder?

Let us replace Horace by Homer, and see again how human genius pales beside divine inspiration.

“So when the ploughman has yoked together broad-browed bulls to tread out the whitening barley on the levelled threshing floor, the stalks are broken with ease under the feet of the bellowing oxen. So, driven by the magnanimous Achilles, his firm-footed steeds trample the lifeless bodies and the shields of the brave.” (*Iliad* XX, 495–499.) That is one of the finest comparisons of Homer. Let us compare the metaphor of Scripture: “I have made thee as a new threshing wain with sharp teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and break them in pieces, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them.” (Is. 41:15–16.)

One of the most usual figures of Scripture is repetition: it is doubtless due to the law of parallelism and to the sententious character which is one of the principal forms of the grammar and language of Hebrew; but it is due also to a higher law, since it is often found again in the pen of Saint Luke and Saint Paul. Scripture, says Bossuet, while it is full of rapid and pressing movements, *rapidi, concitatique motus,* returns often on itself, to inculcate more, to make truth loved and tasted. And in this redundancy and synonymy, if one considers the expressions closely, if one meditates them with the spirit of the heart, *mente cordis,* one finds, as Bossuet says again, that between these similar and so to say twin expressions there is nevertheless some diversity, and that the one adds to the other.

And from this results often, continues the Eagle of Meaux, that inimitable sadness, that holy melancholy of the biblical phrase which makes the soul pour itself out, melt, flow wholly into God, movement the sweetest,

effusion the most ineffable of the human heart: *Animi in Deum paulatim defluentis ac veluti liquescentis, quo nihil est dulcius.* [Of the soul gradually flowing into God and as it were melting, than which nothing is sweeter.] Bossuet brings as example the beginning of the Psalm: "My soul, bless the Lord, who pardons all thy iniquities, who heals all thy infirmities, who redeems thy life from death, who crowns thee with His mercy and compassion, who fills thy desire with good things." (Ps. 102:2–5.) What a tint of evangelical sadness in these words of Saint Paul: *Circuierunt in melotis, in pellibus caprinis, egentes, angustiati, afflicti, in solitudinibus errantes, in montibus et speluncis, et in cavernis terrae.* [They wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being in want, distressed, afflicted … wandering in deserts, in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth. (Heb. 11:37–38.)]

The Hebrew parallelism changes at times into opposition, into antithesis. I shall produce only one, which seems to me full of feeling. "My soul," cries David, "praise the Lord … the Lord who counts the multitude of the stars and has a name for each of them: *Qui numerat multitudinem stellarum, et omnibus eis nomina vocat;* and who counts also all the wounds of the heart, and has a balm for each of them: *Qui sanat contritos corde, et alligat contritiones eorum.*" (Ps. 146:3–4 [Vulg. 146:4, 3].) Let anyone tell me whether there exists anywhere a more unexpected and at the same time more touching comparison: the eye of the Lord disentangling one by one in the secret folds of our heart each of our innumerable pains, as He knows one by one all the most remote stars of the firmament; the Lord as fruitful, as rich to bind our wounds as to name the suns! That is what is not of human invention. I could run through with the same advantage the whole sequence of the figures of rhetoric, and show with what superiority they are employed in our holy Books. One last word only on one of the most brilliant figures of language, which is prosopopoeia, which consists, as everyone knows, in personifying abstract or inanimate beings, and sometimes in attributing to a real personage a likely discourse. I do not think there is in the world anything comparable to what follows.

Sisara has just been slain by Jahel. Debora sings the canticle of this deliverance, a canticle of which all the verses, all the words sparkle with beauty, magnificence. One thinks one is present at this frightful death; one shivers at the way Jahel drives the nail into Sisara's temple; one sees his whole body first lift itself, folding on itself by the sentiment of pain, like the worm that is pricked, then fall back by its own weight, stretched and motionless, at the feet of the heroine. At this instant bursts the most unexpected prosopopoeia. It is the mother of Sisara, dreaming of triumphs for him who lies in his blood. Listen:

"The mother of Sisara looked out of the window; she cried out through the lattice: Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why are the wheels of his chariots so slow?" — But soon anxiety gives way to boasting. "The wisest of her ladies answered her mother-in-law, vying with one another: Perhaps they are now dividing the spoils; a maid or two for every man; the spoils of divers colours for Sisara …" (this is indeed here, as Dr. Lowth remarks, the language of a woman: she does not speak of carnage, of blood, of victory, but of what may seduce the light heart of a vain woman; she speaks of slaves, of gold, of rich stuffs. Not content with recalling these objects, she enumerates them, amplifies them, repeats the enumeration). "The spoils of Sisara shine with a thousand colours, enriched with brilliant embroideries, embroideries on both sides, to adorn our heads." (Judg. 5:28–30.)

Then the sacred writer, interrupting this prosopopoeia, silencing, so to speak, this boasting of women, proclaims abruptly the cruel ruin of so many brilliant hopes by this sudden apostrophe: "So let all Thy enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love Thee shine as the sun rising in his strength!" (Judg. 5:31.)

See then how the writer passes from the most glowing, most figurative style to the simplest style: *Quievitque terra per quadraginta annos:* [And the land rested for forty years. (Judg. 5:31.)] And the land rested for forty years.

If the sublime in Scripture results at times from the use of figures, it results still more often from simplicity and concision. Such, on the first page of Genesis, is the so-vaunted word of Longinus: *Fiat lux: et facta est*

lux; [Let there be light: and light was made. (Gen. 1:3.)] and that other: *Fecit … et stellas.* [He made … the stars also. (Gen. 1:16.)] Does not simplicity go also to the sublime in this word of Saint Luke telling the death of Him whom he considers as a God: *Ibi crucifixerunt eum.* [There they crucified Him. (Luke 23:33.)] Only a God can speak thus, without compassion, without astonishment, without phrases, of the punishment of a God.

II. Let us sum up. I have shown by some general considerations, chosen among a thousand others, what the literary excellence of Scripture is; I have indicated the character of its style, its superiority in the use of figures which form the foundation of its language. What I have said applies to all the holy Books. I should like now to seek the application of these ideas in the seventy-two books of Scripture, and in the pieces of different genres they contain. A single word on each of the genres indicated by the programme.

Beauties of Scripture in the historical genre. I stop only at one of the characters of the sacred narrative, at times so lofty, at times so familiar, sometimes so brilliant, more often so naive.

There are for every people two histories: the public history of great events, and the secret history of the causes that brought them about. The history of external facts, with whatever talent it be told, always leaves a profound impression of sadness; it is hardly more than the register of the misfortunes and wanderings of humanity, and, on one side, it is only too true that it resembles a martyrology. But the secret history which lays bare the government of Providence, the merciful conduct of God, the plans of His goodness, of His justice, the definitive result of all things, which is the good of the elect and the punishment of the wicked: that is what rests the heart, what consoles it. Now such is above all the excellence of sacred history; and while profane history often scandalises us, so that the success of the guilty, the oppression of the just provokes blasphemy on our lips; Scripture, by a stroke, by a word, teaches us how God absolves Himself, and how all His ways are just and equitable.

The masterpiece among the historical works made by the hand of man, I mean the *Universal History* of Bossuet, reached this degree of perfection only because it is all steeped in sacred history. What an historian indeed is that Spirit of God who searches the reins and hearts of all the personages brought on the scene! People nowadays pride themselves on writing the intimate life of great men; nothing in this regard can resemble Scripture. The end of Antiochus, told by a profane historian, would be of a nature to divide minds and sentiments; that letter to the Jews where he recalls to them with so much candour and confidence all the good he has always done them, the particular love he has always had for them; those testimonies of repentance, that fervent prayer: here are so many historical pieces in favour of his conversion. Criticism would produce opinions for and against; the judgment of posterity would be at least uncertain, embarrassed. The Holy Spirit has removed the equivocation; he was a hypocrite, who was not to obtain mercy: *Orabat scelestus iste Dominum a quo non erat misericordiam consecuturus.* [This wicked man prayed to the Lord, of whom he was not to obtain mercy. (2 Macc. 9:13.)]

Thus it is that when Judas pleads the cause of the poor and is indignant at the loss of a sum that could have been employed in good works, one would be tempted to do justice to his laudable compassion for the unfortunate; but sacred history, placing beside his specious words the true motive that inspired them, teaches us that it was he who held the purse and that he was a thief, and that the poor put forward were only an evasion of his cupidity: *Hoc autem dixit, non quia de egenis pertinebat ad eum, sed quia fur erat, et loculos habens.* [Now he said this, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the purse. (John 12:6.)]

Allow me to point out here again those brushstrokes which belong only to the Holy Spirit; certainly the trait I point out is superior to all that La Bruyère wrote: “Why,” says Judas, “was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence?” (John 12:5.) That practised eye of the covetous man who appraises on the spot and unerringly the object he covets, and, if I dared so speak, that erudition of an auctioneer, is not that what is

called catching nature in the act? The holy history of the Old and New Testament contains a thousand similar traits.

Beauties of Scripture in the descriptive genre. Who could enumerate all the pictures offered us by the holy Books, from the so admirable picture of creation which we find at the head of Genesis, to the still more admirable picture of heaven and eternal felicity, which shines on the last pages of the Apocalypse? Pictures in all genres. What naturalist would dare to contend with Job for the description of the horse? [Job 39:19–25.] On a thousand occasions one feels that the object can be described thus only by Him who made it, and that the painter is the Creator Himself.

Beauties of Scripture in the didactic genre. What books indeed are the Sapiential books! What divine sense in each of these axioms! What supernatural experience of the things of life and of the heart of men in these venerable parables of the old! I cite a few because of their extreme elegance:

"Cloud and wind, and no rain, is the man who boasts and fulfils not his promises: *Nubes et ventus, et pluviae non sequentes, vir gloriosus et promissa non complens.*" (Prov. 25:14.)

"*Lingua eucharis in bono homine abundat.*" [A gracious tongue abounds in a good man. (Ecclus. 6:5.)]

"*Meliora sunt vulnera diligentis, quam fraudulenta oscula odientis.*" [Better are the wounds of a friend than the deceitful kisses of an enemy. (Prov. 27:6.)]

Horace, in his *Art of Poetry,* establishes that the didactic and sententious genre demands great brevity:

Quidquid praecipies, esto brevis: ut cito dicta Percipiant animi dociles, teneantque fideles.

[Whatever you teach, be brief: that docile minds may quickly grasp what is said and faithfully retain it. (Horace, *Ars poetica* 335–336.)]

I ask, where is this law better observed than in the didactic books of Scripture?

Verba sapientum quasi stimuli, et quasi clavi in altum defixi. [The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails deeply fastened in. (Eccles. 12:11.)]

Beauties of Scripture in the oratorical genre. I shall not make Moses speak, nor the prophets, nor Saint Paul, nor Saint Stephen. Time does not permit. A single word, it is from God Himself:

"It is not since yesterday, nor the day before, that I am eloquent," says the Lord. "Who made and fashioned the mouth of man? Is it not I? *Non sum eloquens ab heri et nudiustertius? … quis fecit et fabricatus est os hominis? Nonne ego?*" (cf. Exod. 4:10–11.)

Finally beauties of Scripture in the poetic genre. Here would come to be ranged the canticles of the Old and New Testament, the Psalms above all. But I shall imitate Saint John Chrysostom, and I shall say with him that it is better to be silent on the matter of the Psalms, when one cannot devote one's whole discourse to it: *Nam si de Davide loquar, et primus et medius et novissimus sit David.* [For if I speak of David, both the first and the middle and the last would be David.]

I shall borrow from this poet-king only one word, which will serve me as conclusion. It is this: *Narraverunt mihi iniqui fabulationes, sed non ut lex tua.* [The wicked have told me fables, but not as Thy law. (Ps. 118:85.)]

Yes, the men of the age have told me their fables more or less gilded, but it was not like Your law, O my God. I have sometimes opened their pretended histories: they were full of lies and saddened my soul. I have leafed through their pretended philosophy: it was full of sophisms and would have degraded my intelligence. I have glimpsed their literature, their poems and their novels: they were hollow and empty of substance, they nourished the mind with chimeras, and carried corruption into the heart. I have lent my ear for an instant to all the foolish productions of the age: *Narraverunt mihi iniqui fabulationes;* but none of all that was like

Your law, like Your Scripture, always true, always holy and sanctifying, always pure and purifying: *Sed non ut lex tua.*

And, wishing henceforth to hear only You, Lord, I have asked You, with Saint Augustine, to despise more each day the productions of earth in order to attach myself only to that book of heaven, which, containing Your thought, contains Your very heart, O my God: *Cor Dei, scriptura ipsius,* until You grant me to read uncovered in the book of life which is Your eternal Word (1).[6]

Translator's notes

1. Quotations are given in the preacher's French and then in English; for Scripture I have given the sense of the preacher's French and added the Vulgate where he gives the Latin. The Horace, Homer and Isaias passages are the preacher's own renderings, which I follow; Homer's verses are from *Iliad* XX, as I recognise them (reference mine).

2. "Mente cordis", "rapidi, concitatique motus" and the Latin on the "suavitas" of Scripture are quoted as given as Bossuet's; not verified here. The Lowth, Rollin, La Harpe and Chrysostom attributions are likewise the preacher's.

3. "Seventy-two books of Scripture": as printed (the older count, 45 + 27).

4. "L'Aigle de Meaux" = Bossuet, bishop of Meaux.

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[1] (1) This conference, not entered in the *Exact Note* of the sermons and instructions, was found among the manuscripts, bearing the n° 5 *bis*. (Editor's note.) It is dated June 1845.

[2] The Columella statement is the preacher's; not verified here.

[3] Attributed to Chateaubriand without reference; not verified.

[4] (1) See above, p. 191, a repetition of the same thought. (Editor's note.) — That is, in n° 18 above (the homily on reading the holy Books).

[5] The La Harpe quotation is as the preacher gives it; not verified here.

[6] (1) See above, pp. 191 and 192, the expression of the same thoughts. (Editor's note.)

n° 25. Discourse for the Clothing of Mlle Natalie Le Chapellier de la Varenne, Preached at the Carmelites of Chartres

Friday, 10 October 1845.[1]

Amen dico vobis, nemo est qui reliquit domum, aut parentes, aut fratres … propter regnum Dei, et non recipiat multo plura in hoc tempore, et in saeculo venturo vitam aeternam. [Amen I say to you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren … for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive much more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting. (Luke 18:29–30.)]

Verily I say to you, no one leaves for the kingdom of God his house, his father and mother, his brothers and sisters, without receiving much more even in this life and in the age to come life everlasting. (Saint Luke, ch. xviii, v. 29.)

In coming today to strip you of the vain adornments of the world and to clothe you with the livery of penance and poverty, I have felt, my very dear Sister, that, to justify in the eyes of this assembly the ministry that is about to be accomplished by my hands, my mouth must before all pronounce this solemn oracle, fallen from the lips of Jesus, our sovereign Master, and reproduced by three of His evangelists:

Verily I say to you, no one leaves for My sake his house, his father and mother, his brothers and sisters, his fortune and his patrimony, without receiving even in this life much more than he has left, and in the age to come life everlasting (1).

Decisive words, which doubtless do not take away from nature the right to be moved, but which take from reason the right to protest: for who will dare to contend in wisdom against a God? Words which establish clearly the doctrine and practice of these sublime renunciations of the world: doctrine which is not addressed to all, practice which is only of counsel; but nevertheless doctrine, practice which become an imperious law for every soul to whom the voice of God has made itself heard, to the point that, according to the same Jesus, whoever lets himself be stopped then by even the most legitimate and most sacred affections is not worthy of Him (2). Words finally whose sequel offers us a consoling conclusion, since they place the compensations beside the sacrifices, and promise to the generous deserter from the world the hundredfold of what he has left, in the present age, and life everlasting in the age to come: *Amen dico vobis, nemo est qui reliquit domum, aut parentes, aut fratres … propter regnum Dei, et non recipiat multo plura in hoc tempore, et in saeculo venturo vitam aeternam.*

Therefore, I shall say to you from the beginning, all of you, my brethren, who have come to assist at this religious spectacle, leave, leave at the doors of this temple your hasty and rash judgments. If you are Christians, if you revere the Gospel, attention and respect! For it is a word of Jesus that this soul has understood, and it is a page of the Gospel that is about to be accomplished.

To the authority of the evangelical teaching behind which my ministry entrenches itself with assurance, there comes to be joined today the authority of one of the most brilliant examples that have been given to the earth, the example of the incomparable virgin of Avila, who, endowed with all the qualities of body and mind, with all the advantages of nature and grace, tore herself from all the attractions of the world to devote herself to the humiliations of the cloister (1).[2] After that, my brethren, do not be astonished, as at an unheard-of event, at the sacrifice of which you are about to be witnesses; this heroism is not new among us. This is not one of those adventurous and uncertain enterprises on which opinions may be divided; the practice of the Saints and the sanction of the Church settled the question long ago.

Therefore, Christian brethren, if you are familiar with the annals of the faith and of Christian perfection, attention and respect! For it is an example often admired that is about to be renewed, it is a page of the lives of the Saints that is about to be reproduced.

And you, courage, my Sister, since you have in your favour such authorities and such examples. But what need have I to encourage you, who have more strength to offer to God your sacrifice than we have ourselves to contemplate it?

If I cast my eyes on this numerous and distinguished audience that surrounds me; if I seek to read on the brows and in the hearts, I soon discern, my dear Sister, three diverse sentiments ready to show themselves. Among those who hear me, some consider your step in itself, and do not find it conformable to reason. Others are preoccupied with you, and are grieved at the unhappy course on which you are engaging. Others fold back on themselves, and lament all that they are about to lose. Now I am at this moment a debtor to all, and I must answer the thought of each.[3]

Suffer, my Sister, that I seem to forget you in order to occupy myself only with the others. Some blame you, I am going to enlighten them; others pity you, I am going to reassure them; others regret you, I am going to console them.

Queen of Virgins, you in whose train the Psalmist had foretold that a troop of virgins would walk in the royal path that you have traced (1), ask of your Son that He inspire me with His grace and wisdom, and that He dispose all hearts to gather the fruit of my words. *Ave Maria.*[4]

I. How cutting the world is, my brethren, and how impassioned are its judgments! It has always blame on its lips; but its bitter criticism is exercised with predilection against all that bears the imprint of holiness and virtue. The world is at times indulgent for the most extreme wanderings of passion, it is inaccessible to the

sentiment of indulgence for the noble efforts of the soul that aspires to a perfection too elevated; and virtue bold enough to cross the limits it has marked for it finds it, in its glorious deviations, more severe and more inexorable than insolent vice which has thrown off the mask and tramples underfoot all propriety. My brethren, I do not come to refute and confound this hostile world: it is not found among you. But I wish to enlighten this world imbued with prejudices, which welcomes and repeats too easily the unjust words it has heard. I wish to show it that the religious vocation is conformable to wisdom and reason, and to bring it, if not to understand, at least to respect the heroism that inspires such a sacrifice. Follow me with attention.

Wisdom, reason, my brethren, is it not to study and observe in all its determinations the will of God? Yes, doubtless. Hear then two certain propositions.

All Christians have one and the same vocation, which is heaven. For all the affair of salvation begins with the grace of baptism, and is consummated by that of final perseverance. But between these two graces common to all the predestined, God opens an infinity of different ways by which His supreme wisdom works the salvation of men in a thousand mysterious manners. Hence this great diversity of states and conditions which divide society. Now here is the principle that I establish, or rather that I suppose at the beginning: it is that, if all these ways lead to salvation, each does not lead indifferently everyone, but only those for whom it was traced by the finger of the sovereign ordainer of our existences. God from all eternity has destined us to a special state, and it is this divine destination that we call vocation. In assigning us a vocation, God prepared for us from all eternity graces conformable to this vocation; He created us with a kind of mind, of character, of temperament, in a word with physical and moral faculties co-ordinated to this end. To fail one's vocation is to attempt against the sovereign dominion of God, to disconcert the order of His Providence, to ravish from oneself almost all chances of salvation, of success and of happiness. And here is, to say it in passing, one of the most lamentable plagues of our age.

Do you wish to know why so many existences missed and as it were aborted, why so many restless and sick souls, why that youth already blasé and disgusted with life, why those fatal alliances, why those dull murmurs of a multitude ever roaring? My brethren, the reason of all these things is that no one is in his place; it is that each has given himself, or given to his children, a vocation of fancy, of interest or of ambition; it is that no one took counsel of God; it is that no one has the grace proper to his condition. And then what can the soldier do, for example, with the graces of the priesthood, the public man with the graces of retreat, the politician with the graces of the man of letters, the scholar with the graces of the artisan, the husband or wife with the graces of celibacy and virginity? And does not human society resemble a monstrous body in which the ear has taken the place of the eye, and the feet the place of the head? Ah! let the world not provoke us on this ground, and let it be sparing of its blame toward the vocations that religion protects; for we should have cruel truths to reply to it, and we could exercise bloody reprisals!

To the first principle I have just established I add a second which belongs to the Catholic faith: it is that, if on the one hand we all have a vocation, among these diverse vocations which divide human society there must be placed the vocation to the religious life. Doubtless this way is not the common way; the greater number is called to remain in the world, to work out its salvation in the bonds of marriage, in the cares of the family, in the accomplishment of the duties of society. But because it belongs to the order of exceptions, the religious vocation is none the less a true vocation of God, vocation founded on the very word of Jesus Christ and on the evangelical counsels. The pre-eminence of the virginal state, the holiness of the monastic life, Christians, do not go and call these truths into doubt, which the Holy Spirit has placed above our controversies. To abstain from every conjugal bond and take Jesus Christ for spouse of one's soul, to vow for ever one's heart to purity and one's lips to prayer, to consecrate oneself to a life of obedience and poverty, once more, Christians of the world who hear me, do not go and hazard your criticisms here: it is the very word of God that you would be combating.

Ah! my brethren, I do not ask you to understand, to taste a state of life which is not that to which heaven has destined you. I know that Jesus said, speaking of these sublime virtues, that they were not the portion of all (1): *Qui potest capere capiat:* let him that can understand, understand (2). And I know too that, even in the heavens, there is a song, there is a canticle which belongs only to those who have not defiled themselves by contact with the world, and that the other elect themselves cannot repeat because it was not granted them to understand its sense, to taste its meaning (3). Once more, Christian brethren, I do not ask you to conceive a vocation which is not yours, which I should be frightened that you could even entirely explain to yourselves, for I should then fear that you had not answered the designs of God on you; but what I ask you is to forbid yourselves a rash and sacrilegious blame, it is to respect before God what He has not given you to taste and to accomplish.

I hear here this answer of the world, of a world even Christian: “It is not,” you say, “the religious vocation in itself that we allow ourselves to criticise; it is certain particular determinations, supported on motives evidently too weak, too uncertain.” My brethren, the world does not condemn the religious vocation in general, so be it; but it spares no vocation in particular, and is resolved to find none that is legitimate and reasonable: is not that coming back to the same point? For if the world asks only the trials, the ordinary precautions of the prudence which must preside over all the great determinations of life, oh! how easy it will be for me to give it satisfaction here and to obtain its assent![5]

What can render a vocation suspect, what can make its wisdom be called in doubt, is, for example, precipitation, or else a certain too ardent enthusiasm, or else a movement of despair and what is called a rash act.

Precipitation: yes, my brethren, it is the enemy of wisdom. And when you ask that the person who wishes to devote herself to God be not too young, that she have glimpsed the world in order to know what she leaves, that she have studied the course she embraces so as not to prepare regrets for herself, I agree with you, and I accommodate myself to your maxims. They are susceptible of some exceptions perhaps, and I avow that I see you derogate from them yourselves sometimes for determinations of the highest importance. For after all, she is young, this child of sixteen, eighteen or even twenty years; he is unknown to her, and also nearly so to you, this stranger to whom you are going to unite her fate; she has never thought of this future that you open before her; she has never defined to herself her tastes, her inclinations, her attraction. You give her a few days to reflect on it, and you have employed a few weeks on your side to examine the matter. This matter is grave, decisive; the happiness of a whole life depends on it. The determination is resolved. Yet you are a serious man, and you will be ranked among those who have taken all the guarantees that prudence demands.

Do you ask only this measure of wisdom for the person who wishes to give herself to God? You ask more, much more; you are right. When it is a question of other courses, I avow that there is a happy ignorance, a necessary inexperience, and I believe it is of the order of Providence and the essential advantage of the world that some clouds hover over the inconveniences and dangers; I acknowledge, to say all, that there is a point of folly inseparable from every worldly establishment. But when it is a question of taking the part of God, you wish, and I wish myself, only prudence, maturity, wise slowness, profound reflection. Unite yourselves then with me, for I find that the most severe conditions are satisfied here.

This generous soul who wishes to withdraw from the world has met within herself, from the earliest age, a powerful attraction toward the solitude of the cloister. This attraction, which mingles for her with the first reminiscences of life, has grown with her; it has become a plan, a resolution. It is long since she heard for the first time in her heart a voice that said: Hearken, O daughter, and incline thine ear: *Audi, filia, et inclina aurem tuam;* forget thy people and thy father’s house, *et obliviscere domum patris tui;* the King of heaven wishes to possess thee for Himself alone, *et concupiscet Rex decorem tuum;* and He has the right to will, He has the right to command, for He is father, He is master, He is the Lord, He is God, *quoniam ipse est Dominus Deus tuus* (1).[6]

Many years have passed since these pressing solicitations of grace. The world offered itself to her; it was disposed to smile on her; she has seen it more than is needed to know it. And although the soundness of her reason, even more than her principles of piety, early disgusted her with the brilliant gatherings in which a frivolous society takes its pleasure, she never ceased nevertheless to fulfil, with a good grace and a naturalness that deceived the most clear-sighted, all the proprieties of social life. On the eve of becoming mistress of herself, she was able to appreciate all the charms of liberty, the sweetness of an almost independent position. She had long since had herself instructed in the obligations of the life of Carmel, she knew its rigours, she was even making the apprenticeship of them, she compared its fatigues with the chain, supple in appearance, but hard enough nevertheless, which is imposed on the children of the world. Yet the same voice spoke always, and repeated at the door of her heart: Hearken, O daughter, and incline thine ear: *Audi, filia, et inclina aurem tuam;* say farewell to thy father's house, *et obliviscere domum patris tui;* the King of heaven wishes to possess thee for Himself alone, *et concupiscet Rex decorem tuum;* and He has the right to will, He has the right to command, for He is father, He is master, He is the Lord, He is God, *quoniam ipse est Dominus Deus tuus.*[7]

Irreproachable on the side of precipitation, who would dare say that her step is the effect of exaltation, of enthusiasm? Has exaltation then this calm and peaceful bearing? Is enthusiasm reconciled with this wisdom, this discretion, this firmness of judgment? Finally, could one suspect here a heart ulcerated, a miscalculation, a disappointment, one of those desperate courses that an ardent nature takes when it recognises that it has been deceived? Ah! exempt from those passions which drag after them agitation and trouble, no bruising has come to touch the serenity of this so pure existence. As she never put her lips to the smiling cup of pleasures, she never drank its bitter dregs. I ask you, my brethren, what natural cause could be assigned for this step so contrary to nature? Let us say it then, this vocation is from heaven; it can be attributed only to that voice which makes itself heard still every day, and which says to this heart, but says it with that strong and powerful accent, with that sovereign and victorious empire which belongs only to divine grace: Hearken, O daughter, and incline thine ear; say farewell to thy father's house; the King of heaven wishes to possess thee for Himself alone; and He has the right to will, He has the right to command, for He is father, He is master, He is the Lord, He is God: *Audi, filia, et inclina aurem tuam, et obliviscere domum patris tui, et concupiscet Rex decorem tuum, quoniam ipse est Dominus Deus tuus.*

Ah! my brethren, let others blame; I admire, and I watch going to God this soul that God calls. Let others blame; I admire this strong and intrepid soul, in an age when all souls are so soft; I admire this self-denial, this voluntary stripping, in an age so selfish and so greedy; I admire this love of humiliation and poverty, in an age so passionate for splendour and fortune; I admire this choice of obedience, in an age so unbridled for liberty. So fair an example makes me blush for myself, for my unfaithfulnesses in the service of God, for my negligence in corresponding to grace. And you too, Christians, blame no more; but pray. Pray that so useful a spectacle may profit you. May this truly manly courage suggest to you a holy shame of your cowardice; may the sight of this cloister inspire you to re-enter the world more humble, more mortified, greater lovers of silence and retreat, more masters of yourselves, more truly Christian, in a word!

My Sister, I have tried to enlighten those who blame you; I am going to reassure those who pity you. I have shown that you have reason on your side; I am going to show that you will find happiness also. Object of the second part.

II. That it is reasonable, that it is even great and glorious, to immolate oneself to God and to make Him the sacrifice of one's whole being when God asks, when He imposes this sacrifice, this some have been able, at a stretch, to recognise. But that one must esteem happy the victim of such a sacrifice, that one can see in this immolation anything else than a fatal vocation, than a sort of tragic necessity, this the world refuses to understand. Thus, my Sister, I see here only eyes bathed in tears; I hear only sighs and sobs; all regard you with a sentiment of profound compassion.

To withdraw from the affections of a beloved family, of a kindred recommendable on so many titles; to tear oneself from the desires of a mother whose every wish has till now been accepted as law; to bury under a new name, which will be unknown to men, the glorious name received from ancestors, a name consecrated by fidelity to orthodoxy pushed even to exile and martyrdom; to leave a comfortable, happy, free position, and exchange so many advantages and enjoyments for a life of retreat, austerity and destitution: my Sister, the world cannot see such a transformation without shuddering. And when, presently, I shall accomplish the ministry that you have asked of me; when, having laid aside the rich garments that befit your birth and your fortune, the brilliant adornment in which the world would have applauded to see you kneeling before the nuptial altar, you shall reappear in this habit of penance which befits the Spouse of a crucified God: a tightening of the heart, a general emotion, signs of tenderness and sincere pity, that is what you will perceive around you, and what will contrast in a singular way with the joy and happiness that radiate in your features.

What! you will say, you pity me! rather congratulate me, then, for behold I am at the summit of my wishes. I was to be pitied in the world, when, drawn by all the powers of my being toward solitude, I could not yet break my bonds; I was to be pitied when, surrounded by all that constitutes happiness, I could not accustom my soul to the use of that felicity which so many others would have envied me. But since I took my wings like the dove, since I flew away into the desert, oh! what sweetness and peace I find there! My pains and my trials? But instead of beginning, they end. Ah! if you love me, congratulate me, for the Lord has filled my soul with a sweet and penetrating joy that I had never experienced. Here is my house and the place of my rest; here I shall dwell, for it is toward this sanctuary that my heart and my flesh have never ceased to aspire (1). Lord God of hosts, how beloved and cherished by my soul are Thy tabernacles! Thy altars, O Lord, Thy altars (2)! Holy livery of Carmel, my happiness and my glory will be to wear you the rest of my life! You are more precious in my eyes than all the adornments of the world; I would not exchange you for all the gold and all the precious stones of the earth. Yes, once more, if you love me for my sake, rejoice and congratulate me; for all my desires are fulfilled, and I long only to see them irrevocably satisfied by eternal engagements.[8]

My brethren, such are the transports of this blessed soul whose sad lot you pity. How often, since she hid herself in the shadow of the sanctuary, have we heard her express these sentiments! And you, her relatives, her friends, to whom it was given a moment ago to enjoy her sweet presence one last time, tell me, did you ever find her more serene, more gracious, more smiling? With what tranquillity she let you see, like the great Apostle to the priests of Ephesus, this face which you must never see again (1)! With what aptness, with what exquisite grace she addressed to each words at once grave and sweet, holy and amiable! With what assurance mingled with feeling she said this last farewell to the earth; and how evident it was to all that she had the intimate consciousness of the happiness for which she was leaving the world! And do not go and say, my brethren, that these sentiments are the fruit of illusion; for, if it could be a question of analysing happiness, I should turn to you, children of the world, and I should ask you yourselves what is then this so solid foundation on which your felicity rests? And what after all is this world from which she withdraws today? Ah! my brethren, the more I consider the world, the more I recognise that the woman who consecrates herself to God receives much more than she gives. I see few happy in this world, and I see perhaps still fewer happy women. O you who are engaged in bonds of another kind, women of Jerusalem, weep not over this spouse of Jesus Christ, but keep your compassion and your tears for yourselves: *Filiae Jerusalem, nolite flere super me, sed super vos ipsas flete* (2).[9]

They are not here, those worldly women who have only horror for the life of the cloister. I would say to them: You who fly from pleasure to pleasure, who refuse yourselves none of the enjoyments that youth, fortune, wit, health, independence procure; tell me, amid this succession of feasts and diversions, in the midst of these homages with which you are surrounded, are you happy? Does there not remain at the bottom of your heart an immense void that nothing can fill? What miscalculations, what bitter disappointments! and perhaps also what weaknesses, what faults, and, by counter-stroke, what remorse, what rending memories!

And do you not complain every day that the world is perfidious, that the heart which wishes to love finds no sure and faithful friends, that the outpouring of your griefs into a heart becomes for you the ordinary source of new and more stinging sorrows, because the consoling charm of the human confidant always changes, and as if imperceptibly, into a seductive ascendancy? Women of Jerusalem, or rather of Samaria, weep not over this spouse of Jesus Christ, but keep your tears and your compassion for yourselves: *Filiae Jerusalem, nolite flere super me, sed super vos ipsas flete.*

As for her, her innocence will find no snares at every step in the defile of life; sheltered from the deceitful caresses of the world, she will not feel its cruel wounds; she will not go losing each day some new fragments, some last remnants of her virtue; her coarse robe of serge will not catch here and there on all the brambles of the way, like the light and floating adornment which seems to flutter around you, an imperfect image still of the frivolity and evaporation of your minds and hearts. Women of Samaria, weep not over her, but weep over yourselves: *Nolite flere super me, sed super vos ipsas flete.*

And you, Christian women, pious, whose life is employed in serious duties, tell me, is the accomplishment of the obligations of your state without difficulties, without anxieties, without torments? Does it grow only flowers under your steps? Are we not in an age when the mother takes fright to see her children grow, for whose virtue she finds no longer shelters sure enough? Do not a thousand too legitimate fears, a thousand desolating apprehensions assail your heart ceaselessly? The word of the Apostle, who promises to your condition an ample harvest of tribulations (1), is it not literally realised for you, for you whom nevertheless the world proclaims, justly, the happiest of wives? Women of Jerusalem, weep not over this spouse of Jesus Christ, but keep your compassion and your tears for yourselves, for yourselves and for your children: *Filiae Jerusalem, nolite flere super me, sed super vos ipsas flete, et super filios vestros.*[10]

Ah! I form for you only this wish: that the world may never be more bitter to you than Jesus Christ will be to His spouse; that you may find in the career which you have entered, and to which God called you, I have the confidence, as many pure and unmixed joys as she will find at the foot of the altars; that at the end of your life you may be able to view your past existence with the same confidence and the same serenity; that you may bear one day before God (and this is possible) the same virtues and the same merits; that you may never be reduced to envy her lot and pity your own. Women of Jerusalem, weep not over her, but weep over yourselves, and over your children: *Filiae Jerusalem, nolite flere super me, sed super vos ipsas flete, et super filios vestros.*

Yet, my Sister, I must tell you, and I shall tell you at greater length some other day, you will find trials in the cloister, you will meet thorns there. I know that in these first days of fervour you experience that the mountain of Carmel is neighbour to that of Tabor, that sacrifices give birth to rewards, that consolations are in proportion to renunciations. I know that you cry out with Peter: Lord, it is good for us to be here, and how sweet it is to pitch one’s tent here (1)! Continue, my Sister, to enjoy these happy thrills of grace. But remember also that the Garden of Olives with its sorrowful agony, Calvary with its crucifixion, are not far from Carmel. Today you are to be united by the first spiritual betrothals to a spouse whom Scripture calls a Bridegroom of blood: *Sponsus sanguinum tu mihi es* (2).

My Sister, in proof of his love, he will imprint on you his likeness; know it well, you are espousing his wounds, his crown of thorns, his cross. But here, my brethren, is the immense difference between the crosses of the world and the crosses of Carmel: it is that the latter are light and sweet, whereas the former are heavy and crushing. Jesus said: Blessed are they that mourn (3); and the spouses of Jesus, taking literally the word of their Spouse, find their joy only in tears. For them, according to the beautiful saying of Tertullian commented by Bossuet, life is a feast of which all the dishes are torments (4). A strange feast according to the world, but one that Jesus judged worthy of His taste, and which He has rendered agreeable to His faithful disciples. The world, in spite of itself, approaches its lips to the chalice of sorrow, and drinks it only with regret and repugnance. The spouse of Jesus seizes this chalice with transport, she savours its bitterness, and

she cries with the Psalmist: *Calix meus inebrians quam praeclarus est* (1)![11]

What makes man unhappy on earth is suffering; the spouse of Jesus Christ implores suffering: *Aut pati, aut mori!* [Either to suffer, or to die!] cried the heroic Teresa. Whereas life is bitter to others unless it is sweetened by pleasures, it was bitter to Teresa, says Bossuet, only when she enjoyed in it some repose. Now when a soul has arrived at this point, from what side can misfortune come to it, since suffering itself makes its joy? Is it not true to say that then it has found, in the expression of the author of the *Imitation*, paradise on earth, this soul for whom tribulation itself is sweet and savoury because of Jesus Christ (2)? And is not this the place to apply that word of Saint Bernard, that sorrow endured for God is itself a great consolation: *Apud Deum ipsa quoque tribulatio, magna quaedam consolatio poterit inveniri* (3)?[12]

Christians, my brethren, you hear it, this soul that you pity has found paradise on earth, at the same time that she has taken the surest road to arrive at the paradise of heaven. Once more, pity her no more; and if tears remain to you, let it be rather to regret her: regrets to which I hope nevertheless to bring some consolation. It is with this that I finish.

III. My Sister, must I forbid the Christian souls whom a lively interest has led to this place to be witnesses of your sacrifice, must I forbid them to regret the edification that your piety promised to the world, the succour that your charity would have poured into the bosom of the unfortunate? And must I forbid this tender family also to regret the sweetness of your presence; must I impose silence on the voice of nature and of blood? No, my Sister; God forbid that I should condemn affections so praiseworthy, regrets so legitimate. I avow that there is here for us all a just subject of sorrow; I do not deny the wound, I wish only to pour into it the balm of consolation.

Yes, doubtless, my brethren, the world had much to gain by possessing in its midst this living example of piety and virtue: an example so much the more effective, so much the more attractive, that this piety had nothing singular, this virtue nothing fierce, that it was full of self-denial, of indulgence, that it knew how to lend itself to everything, to accommodate itself to everything. Sacred vaults of the august Basilica, you will no longer be witnesses of that ardent prayer which you admired so many times! Silent chapel of the Heart of Mary, you will no longer be the confidant of those outpourings of a heart that seemed to cling to the tabernacle! Pious virgins, Christian women, assiduous in coming to present your homage to the Queen of the city, seated on a throne of love from which she has poured for so many centuries such abundant graces, you will no longer find beside you that fervour which sustained, which warmed your own, you will no longer feel the contact of that holiness which made you yourselves better. And you whose misery she relieved, poor old men into whose hand her right slipped often a furtive alms of which her left hand knew not the secret; and you, forsaken young virgins whose innocence she protected; and you, inhabitants of the hamlets that surround the château of her father, who came with such confidence to ask her the remedy of your ills, and to receive at the same time those kind and interested words which refreshed your souls: yes, your loss is great, and I can only be indulgent toward your tears.

Yet beside these losses that I deplore, I perceive a good and advantages infinitely more desirable which console me, which will console you yourselves, Christian souls, who have in view only the interests of religion. The world will always preserve in its midst touching models of piety, inexhaustible resources of charity; one and the same family often offers several, and shows us more than one of those ladies, of those illustrious virgins, who renounce the vanities of the world, or even the engagements of marriage, only to bring succour to the compromised virtue of abandoned youth, to visit it in its hovels, or to gather it into pious asylums. No, these helps will never fail us. But in the divine plan there are other necessities of earth, other exigencies of heaven. And before all, angered heaven demands, and threatened earth calls for, those profound devotions, those generous immolations, which snatch from the hands of God the thunderbolt ready to escape and to set ablaze a world covered with crimes.

My brethren, it is a theology we have learned from the Holy Books, that it is a few just and privileged souls who save cities and empires. In the general government of the world, the balance is maintained only by compensations. Beside the excess of vices that kindle the anger of God, to extinguish it there must be the excess of virtues; beside matter that makes divorce with spirit, there must be spirit disengaged, so to speak, from matter; beside man abased to the brute, and lower still, to the demon, there must be man raised to pure intelligence, to the Angel.

My brethren, while our age is in agitation, while egoism devours all souls, while cupidity and ambition weary, press as it were all the elements to extract gold from them, the eye of God needs to rest on those asylums of peace, of self-denial, where the restless evil that torments the rest of the world does not penetrate. Ah! while, attached, glued to this globe of mud, we study, we perfect, we idolise matter, while we live carried away by the whirlwind of affairs and pleasures, let us rejoice that on the mountain, like Moses of old, prayer lifts its hands to heaven. Far from wishing to tear her from her pious cares, let us go rather, if need be, like Aaron, to support her arms when they are about to fail (1). Oh! no, my brethren, let us not regret her, she who is about to begin to become truly useful to us, by joining her Sisters to ward off the storms that rumble over our heads. Religious houses, it has been said before me, are the lightning-rods of the world. Therefore, when I see the number of holy virgins increase, when I see the old asylums of cenobitic life reopen, then I am reassured and I say: The thoughts that the Lord thinks concerning us are not thoughts of vengeance, but of mercy (2); behold His rainbow shining in the cloud.[13]

Is it not so, my Sister, that you understand my words, and that they answer to the most intimate sentiment of your soul? No, you have not gone out of the world to become indifferent to its salvation and its true happiness. Sometimes a charitable dexterity arranges alliances, marriages, to bring together divided families. My Sister, that is what is being prepared at this moment. For you belong to men, your brothers in Jesus Christ, to the society which nursed you, to the society which raised you. Now there is division between Jesus Christ your new Spouse and men your brothers; it is for you to be mediatrix, to use the sweet and powerful influence that your quality of spouse will confer on you, to effect the rapprochement and the reconciliation. Otherwise I shall say to you as Mardochai to Esther: Do not think that this favour of which you are the object is granted you by heaven solely on your own account; no, it is above all for your people (1). We must all gain by your exaltation. Interest without ceasing your royal Spouse in your nation, in your country, in your family.

For I come to you, family so tender; and I avow that I have prolonged my discourse through fear, apprehension, embarrassment at approaching your grief, a grief which I understand, which I share. But what shall I say to you? If your grief has been deep, your courage has been no less strong; you yourselves presented to God her whom you wept; nature has shed tears, she sheds them still, it is her right and almost her duty; but grace has put in your hearts a foundation of resignation to the supreme will of God.

Weep then, weep, I permit it, provided that you shed what Saint Augustine calls consolable tears (2). Weep, you who are her father. But let me predict it in the face of the altars, soon your grief will be softened, and will be converted into a holy joy: the Lord wishes to render you the hundredfold, from this age, and in the age to come, what He takes from you today; and your angelic daughter will call down on your head more heavenly graces than her sweet presence would have offered you of resources here below.[14]

Weep also, you her brothers, her sisters, whom she still cherishes, whom she will always cherish with so tender a love. Ah! it is not I who would repress your tears; I know too well all that you had to draw from the incomparable treasure of this soul. Weep; but do not go and think that this so justly beloved sister is entirely lost to you, nor that the religious state is for her the tomb of the affections that have till now made her only happiness. Ah! you also, I predict it to you in the face of the altars, one day you will thank God for the grace He does you at this instant. A thousand benefits, a thousand favours, in the order of nature and of grace, will go forth for you from this enclosure. Today the divine protection has been confirmed upon your whole family; God has allowed Himself to establish here Himself a living foundation of prayers for you all. Weep,

but know that in the future, each time that any anguish draws tears from you, it will be in this solitude that you will come to seek consolation. Yes, if at times your heart is swollen with griefs (alas! and who has not often?), at that instant you will be inspired to take the road to Carmel; and nowhere else will you find a relief like that of pouring out your sorrows, through this austere grating, into the bosom of a sister who will become for you as an angel of God, and whose heavenly voice will bear calm and confidence into your soul.

And you, my very dear Sister, ah! shall I tell you to weep also? Yes, my Sister, weep; for grace does not destroy nature, and I shall not be scandalised at your tears. But give yourself above all to the sentiment of joy and gratitude. Behold you are about to say a first farewell to the world, and to give the first earnest-money to Jesus Christ. Ah! my Sister, may the divine Spouse of virgins accomplish in you what He has begun there! may He grant you all the desires of your heart and confirm all your designs! May your holocaust one day be consummated and completed (1)! Doubtless, the step of this day is not decisive, the determination is not irrevocable. The Church, I shall say to you with Bossuet, does not wish you to enter rashly into a vocation so exalted; she stops you at this first step, she orders you anew to try yourself, to examine the divine will. But, I repeat, my Sister, ah! may God grant you all the desires of your heart, and confirm all your designs! May His mercy accomplish in you what it has begun there! May your holocaust one day be completed and consummated, since such is the wish, the sigh of your whole life!

O you, holy Patriarch of Carmel, Elias, cover with your mantle this virgin who ranges herself among your children; may the Spirit of God reveal and communicate Himself to her in all His sweetness, as He passed of old before you under the emblem of a gentle breath (2)! Seraphic Teresa, descend from the heavens, take your heart, and lay it on the heart of her who aspires to participate in your spirit, as she honours herself to take today your name. Land of Carmel, land watered with so many blessings, fecundated by so many virtues, exhale the perfume of all your memories, of all your traditions, under the steps of her who wishes no other patrimony than the glory of belonging to you. All you, my Sisters, mingle your prayers with those of the Angels, with those of the priests of the Lord, and ask that the so touching prayers of the Church obtain their effect, that they have their accomplishment in the soul of her whom heaven sends you, of her whom you have already learned to know and cherish.[15]

You finally, O Mary, O Queen of virgins, you under whose auspices this project was conceived, ah! cast today a look of love on your daughter, who so often made you the confidence of her design. Render her worthy to dwell in this first monastery of France which, for two centuries, has not ceased to see the rarest and most brilliant virtues flourish in the shadow of the glorious mantle of Teresa. Soften for your child her sacrifice. O Mary, you are the Queen of Carmel and the Mother of Jesus: by these two titles henceforth my Sister Marie-Thérèse of Jesus of Mount Carmel belongs to you. Inscribe today these new names in the book of the elect (1), and on that particular page where are read the names of the virgins, spouses of Jesus Christ, of those who will sing eternally a new canticle that no other mouth will be able to repeat (2). So be it (3).[16]

Translator’s notes

1. The “Variant” note, an alternative opening of the manuscript naming Saint Francis Borgia, is given as printed. The Bossuet and Tertullian attributions, the “lightning-rods” saying and the Augustine “Serm. 172” are as the preacher or editor gives them; not verified here. “Ma Sœur Marie-Thérèse” is the religious name of the postulant; I have not verified who she was beyond what the text says. The edition’s “elle qui ettait lsiècle”, near the end, is a misprint for *elle quittait le siècle*.

[1] (1) There exist two manuscripts of this discourse: one full of erasures, in which the citations from Scripture and the Fathers are no more indicated than in the preceding discourses; the other copied clean, with some corrections marked in pencil and the precise indication of the citations. It is this latter manuscript that we reproduce exactly. (Editor’s note.)

[2] (1) Matt. xix, 29; Mark x, 29. (2) Matt. x, 37. (Editor’s note.) — The first (1) and (2) refer to the Gospel citations above. The second “(1)” (after “cloister”) carries the *Variant* printed in the next note.

[3] (1) *Variant.* — “To the authority of the evangelical teaching behind which my ministry entrenches itself with assurance, there comes to be joined today the authority of one of the most brilliant examples of renunciation that have been given to the earth, the example of the illustrious Francis Borgia whose feast we celebrate, and under whose auspices, I know, my very dear Sister, you have wished to place your first initiation into the exercises and virtues of the monastic life. The favour of one of the greatest monarchs of the world, a royal name and almost a throne, a fortune and the habits of a prince, a whole family of tenderly loved children: that is what Francis Borgia left to devote himself to the humiliations of the cloister.” (Note of the manuscript, as printed.) — The feast of Saint Francis Borgia is 10 October, the day of this discourse.

[4] (1) Ps. xliv, v. 15. (Editor’s note.)

[5] (1) Matt. xix, 11. (2) Ibid., v. 10 [so printed]. (3) Apoc. xiv [1–4]. (Editor’s note.)

[6] (1) Ps. xliv, 11–12. (Editor’s note.)

[7] Ps. xliv, v. 14, 13 [as printed; the passage cited is Ps. xliv, 11–12]. (Editor’s note.)

[8] (1) Ps. cxxxi, v. 14. (2) Ps. lxxxiii, v. 2, 4. (Editor’s note.)

[9] (1) Acts xx, 25, 38. (2) Luke xxiii, 28. (Editor’s note.)

[10] (1) 1 Cor. vii, 28. (Editor’s note.)

[11] (1) Luke ix, 33. (2) Exod. iv, 25. (3) Matt. v, 5 [as printed]. (4) Tertullian, *de Patientia*, n° 3; Bossuet, *Panégyrique de sainte Thérèse*. (Editor’s note.) Quotations given as the preacher gives them; not verified here.

[12] (1) Ps. xxii, 5. (2) Lib. ix [sic, as printed; probably Book II], c. 12, n. 1. (3) Bernard, *Praef. in Psal. “Qui habitat”* [as printed]. (Editor’s note.) Not verified here.

[13] (1) Exod. xvii, 11, 12. (2) Jer. xxix, 11. (Editor’s note.)

[14] (1) Esth. iv, 13. (2) Serm. 172 [not verified]. (Editor’s note.)

[15] (1) Ps. xix [4]. (2) 3 Kings xix, 12 [= 1 Kings in modern numbering]. (Editor’s note.)

[16] (1) Apoc. ii, 17. (2) Apoc. xiv, 3. (3) Cf. Appendix I, p. 21, n° 9. (Editor’s note.)

n° 26. First Sermon on the Return to God, the Duty of the Whole of Society

Preached in the cathedral of Chartres, the first Sunday of Lent, 1 March 1846.[1]

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum. [Jerusalem, Jerusalem, be converted to the Lord thy God. (Cf. Osee 14:2.)]

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, be converted to the Lord thy God.

MONSEIGNEUR, Three centuries ago a word, a terrible and menacing word, flew from mouth to mouth and set all Europe on fire. It was one of those magic words in which the power of evil seems to have wrapped itself, one of those words such as we have seen others since, which are called to exercise a decisive empire over a whole great epoch, one of those words that hell draws from its treasures and that make revolutions. The Reformation! the Reformation! this cry resounded from north to south, from Geneva to Paris, from the banks of the Danube to the shores of the Thames; it had passed from the cloister into the tavern, from the palace into the cabin. Inflamed with a common ardour, the monk and the burgher, the elector and the herdsman invoked the Reformation. Now it was against the Church of Jesus Christ that this concert of violent clamours arose; it was the Church in her head and in her members that was harassed by this word repeated a thousand times.

Had time and the weaknesses inseparable from humanity really rendered desirable or even necessary the correction of certain abuses? Had the dust of the world, which infallibly reaches even the most religious hearts, soiled the feet of the Spouse of Jesus Christ? The wise, the saints themselves have thought variously on this point. What is certain is that, while the apostles of the Reformation, shaking and overturning the nations by their scandalous examples and by their still more scandalous decisions, ended only in reforming Christian doctrine and morals to the profit of the passions, the Catholic Church was seen to hold, for half a century, her great and solemn assizes, and, at each assembly, after having anathematised the rashness of the innovators, to proceed spontaneously and nobly to her own reformation.

And if it were objected to me that habits were stronger than laws, and that most of the decrees of the council never passed into practice, I should answer that since then God, who holds the thunderbolt at His orders, has

commanded the wind of the tempest to carry off and dissipate the last abuses that would not have yielded to a peaceful and regular action; and no one will deny that the Church today, after eighteen centuries of existence, has come out of the trial of fire more beautiful, more pure, more holy than she ever was.

I hear well her enemies reproach her for her obstinate fidelity to the doctrine of her Master, her inviolable attachment to the supreme Pastor, her distrust of systems and novelties, her intolerance toward errors and blasphemies; but nowhere do I hear it said that the Church has departed from the spirit of her divine founder, that her pastors have forgotten the virtues and duties of their state. Apart from a few men affected by a morbid preoccupation, who thinks today of speaking of the encroachments, the riches, the excesses, the vices of the Church? Those who do not love her are at least forced to esteem her. And this word Reform, which made the world tremble for several centuries, applied to the Church, would expire today without an echo.

But if the Church gathers on all sides today this avowal that she has no need of reform, can she render the same testimony to the society in the midst of which she is placed? For three centuries that it has made itself more or less the accomplice of the adversaries of the Church, that it has exiled the Catholic faith from its laws and its institutions in order to recompose anew the political edifice with the principles of the innovators, has not society contracted enormous vices? Has not the day come for the Church when it is her right and her duty to use reprisals, and to preach in her turn the reform of this society which has so energetically reformed herself?

Fear not, my brethren: I shall not speak of profane things, but of sacred things; it is not a question here of sedition, but of crusade; I shall not go to ask my inspirations from tribunes, but from prophets. It is they who taught me to preach this holy reform. During this season of penance and fasting, the Church sums up in two words the whole mission and the whole substance of the writings of the prophets: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum;* Jerusalem, Jerusalem, be converted to the Lord thy God. Now, do you wish to know what Jerusalem is in the sacred language? All the commentators will tell you: Jerusalem is the holy nation, the chosen people. And Jerusalem also is every soul consecrated to God. It is therefore to all and to each that these words are addressed: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.* Faithful to this interpretation of the divine text, I come to draw from it today the plan and division of these discourses on conversion.

Conversion, my brethren, is the return to God when we have abandoned Him. Now I say in the first place that all together and in concert we have abandoned the Lord; and that, according to the word of Scripture, we have sinned all in mass, in a body of nation. Hence this first consequence: that conversion is the need and the duty of all. And I say, in the second place, that all, for our part, we have abandoned the Lord, and that, according to the word of Scripture again, each of us has committed his personal iniquity. Hence this second consequence: that conversion is the need and the duty of each. I shall treat today only the first part.

Holy Virgin, Queen of peoples and Queen of our hearts, help me during this holy forty days to spread light and persuasion in souls. It is a question of conversion; and who, if not you, O tender Mother, has the secret of touching and changing men? *Ave Maria.*

One generation passeth away and another generation cometh; but the earth standeth for ever. That which hath been, is the same that shall be; and the history of the past will be that of the future. Nothing new under the sun, and no one can say: Behold, this is a fact which belongs only to modern times, for it has already happened in the ages that were before us. So spoke Ecclesiastes. And if the words of the Holy Spirit needed to be justified, these would be so by an ever-renewed experience. In effect, my brethren, for some days past, as, with my heart filled with the memory of the mercies God had exercised toward our nation, and of the outrages our nation has lavished on Him by a monstrous return, I was preparing to exhort the Christian people to be converted to the Lord; while I was going over in my soul the excess of benefits received and of crimes committed, while I meditated on the evils that have been the sequel of our iniquities and on the still

more terrible evils that would be reserved for us if we did not hasten to appease the divine vengeance, some pages of the sacred book came to show me in ancient days the faithful picture of our present situation. I open the prophet Jeremias; hear the abridgment of the first chapters; we shall then have only to change the names and the times, to develop the matter, and our task will be accomplished.

“The Lord spoke to me one day, and said to me: Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem. Thus saith the Lord: I have remembered thee, pitying thy youth, and the love of thy espousals, when thou wentest after me in the desert. Israel is holy to the Lord, the first-fruits of his increase; all that devour him offend, evils shall come upon them, saith the Lord. Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: what iniquity have your fathers found in me that they are gone far from me? Pass over to the isles of Cethim, and see; and send to Cedar, and consider diligently; and see if there hath been done any such thing, if a nation hath changed their gods (and indeed they are not gods), but my people have changed their glory into an idol. For the price of its unfaithfulness it has gathered misery and shame. Is Israel a bondman, or a home-born slave, that I see him given up for a prey to all peoples? The children of Memphis and of Taphnes have defiled thee even to the crown of the head. And whence has this come to him, but from his having forsaken the Lord his God? Thy own wickedness shall reprove thee, and thy apostasy shall rebuke thee. Of old thou hast broken my yoke, thou hast burst my bands, and thou saidst: I will not serve. Then, after so much pride, thou wast seen basely prostituting thyself on every high hill and under every green tree. In vain I said to thee: Stay on this road of perdition. Thou hast answered me: *Desperavi, nequaquam faciam:* I am desperate, I will do nothing of it; for I have loved strangers, and I will walk after them. In vain, to bring thee back to me, I struck thy children; they understood not the chastisement, and they said: It is an accomplished fact, and we will not give the lie to our fathers. We have departed from God, and we will not come back any more: *Recessimus, non veniemus ultra ad te.* Can a virgin forget her ornament, or a bride her stomacher? But my people have forgotten me days without number.

“It is commonly said: If a man put away his wife, and she go from him and marry another man, shall he return to her again? Shall not that woman be polluted and defiled for ever? But thou, O daughter of Israel, hast prostituted thyself to many lovers; nevertheless return to me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee. Thou hast had a harlot’s forehead, thou wouldst not blush; and henceforth at least call upon me, saying: Thou art my father, the guide of my virginity: *Ergo saltem amodo voca me: Pater meus, dux virginitatis meae tu es.* Be converted, O rebellious children, and I will heal the evil you have done yourselves in withdrawing from me. Behold, we come to thee, Lord; for thou art the Lord our God. Indeed all the hills and the mountains were lying; the salvation of Israel is truly in the Lord our God. Confusion hath devoured the labour of our fathers; they and we, we have covered ourselves with ignominy, because from our youth even to this day we have sinned and we have not hearkened to the voice of the Lord our God.”[2]

Pardon me, my brethren, this long citation; it contains the whole substance of my discourse, in which you may see only a homily on these two chapters of Jeremias.

Among all nations there was one, privileged by the Lord, whose cradle was overshadowed by the branches of the Christian tree. Baptised in Jesus Christ from the day of its birth, it kept long without stain the robe of its consecration. The Church its Mother was also its only nurse, and never had to make it reject the milk of the stranger. And the same faith with which it was imbued during childhood presided over the developments of its adolescence. It received its education from the pontiffs of Jesus Christ, and was initiated by them, and almost on their knees, into the mysteries of the Christian law as well as into the elements of human science, as Paul had been brought up according to the law of Moses at the feet of Gamaliel. So happy teachings bore their fruit, and when there came for this nation the fiery age of strength, when that hour struck, difficult and decisive, in the life of peoples as in that of individuals, it was seen to gather all it had of youth, of impetus, of enthusiasm, to make homage of it to him to whom it had given its faith, and, by a prodigy of chivalrous heroism, to hurl itself across the ocean and the deserts to deliver and contemplate the country of its royal

Spouse: testimony of love, transports of tenderness, which confirmed between France and her God an eternal alliance, an alliance that neither some thoughtless sallies of her first exuberance, nor even the culpable wanderings of her tardy infidelity will ever be able entirely to break.

I have remembered thee, saith the Lord; I have remembered, with a sentiment of compassion and love, the first days of thy adolescence, and the lively tenderness that presided at our espousals, when thou followedst me even into the desert and far from thy enchanting clime: *Haec dicit Dominus: Recordatus sum tui, miserans adolescentiam tuam, et charitatem desponsationis tuae, quando secuta es me in deserto, in terra quae non seminatur.* The Frankish people is consecrated to the Lord, it is the first-fruits of His increase: *Sanctus Israel Domino, primitiae frugum ejus.* The old society had long served paganism before giving entrance to Jesus Christ into its bosom. The nascent peoples had welcomed heresy along with the Gospel, and a drop of the error of Arius had mingled for them with the baptismal wave. Alone, or at least the first among all, the Frankish people arrives at the Church without delay and without a false step; it is Catholic from the day it counts among the peoples; it is the first-born of orthodoxy: a primogeniture which will be its eternal glory and its distinctive character in the eyes of God and of the Church, a right of birthright which has conferred on it a sort of inviolable consecration of which the Almighty Himself has constituted Himself the avenger: *Sanctus Israel Domino, primitiae frugum ejus. Qui devorant eum, delinquunt; mala venient super eos, dicit Dominus.* [All that devour him offend; evils shall come upon them, saith the Lord. (Jer. 2:3.)]

In proof of His predilection, God granted this people the richest of all inheritances. *Beatius est dare quam accipere:* It is a more blessed thing to give than to receive, said Jesus Christ. [Acts 20:35: words of the Lord Jesus, reported by Saint Paul.] To receive is the common condition; to give is the glory and as it were the proper appanage of royalty. Now God has done better for France than to give to her; He willed to receive from her, and this will be her immortal greatness. Rome was predestined to be the abode of Peter; but it is the French sword that conquered Rome to secure it to Peter. The whole universe was to be the theatre of the apostolic labours of Paul; but it is above all the sons of France who formed and perpetuated the family of the apostle of the Gentiles, and it is France that has put at the service of evangelical preaching her name, her blood and her gold. That is why, I repeat, the Lord will always remember France, will always love France, will always avenge France: *Recordatus sum tui, miserans adolescentiam tuam, et charitatem desponsationis tuae, quando secuta es me in deserto, in terra quae non seminatur … Sanctus Israel Domino, primitiae frugum ejus. Qui devorant eum, delinquunt; mala venient super eos.*

I have just related in a few words, my brethren, the history of our nation for nearly fourteen centuries. Doubtless, in this society which was not composed of angels but of men, I perceive the miseries, the faults inherent in the condition of the sons of Adam; I see prevarications and partial infidelities, troubles and passing chastisements. But if the actions are not always irreproachable, the doctrines at least are never touched; and the actions, condemned by the doctrines, end by placing themselves back under their empire. If the life of individuals is not always conformable to their faith, the institutions at least are always based on beliefs; the State does not make itself the accomplice of the citizens; God reigns above this society of which the Gospel is the first end and the sovereign law. Considered as a nation, France, during this long period, remains the faithful nation; her faults are pardonable faults; she pursues her course, she accomplishes her vocation. She is, as was said so long, a land that produces no monsters, or drives them out as soon as they appear. She is a people whose name is for distant countries the glorious synonym of the Christian name; and as for the Christian nations, by a new superlative, they agree to place the kingdom of Christianity above all other kingdoms.

Thus it is that, faithful and devoted to Jesus Christ, France, in reward for her submission to Him who dwells in the heavens, exercises an absolute empire over all the rest of the earth. I see all peoples vying to pay her the tribute of homage and admiration; Europe receives from her its language, that is to say, it submits to her thought and her law. Within, all rights are respected; the prince is obeyed as the lieutenant of God; and,

because the God whom he represents is our Father who is in heaven, he is himself the object of a filial affection, and his sceptre is that of love; the citizens are united among themselves, the great to the small and the small to the great, by the chain of the evangelical precepts or counsels, which render poverty sacred and venerable in the eyes of the rich, authority holy and amiable in the eyes of the weak, and which establish between the diverse conditions an exchange of benefits and gratitude, an equilibrium of dignity and respect.

Ah! my brethren, why not stop here? Why not close the volume at this point of our history? Why must there remain to us some last pages to read, lugubrious and lamentable pages? What then! is it after so many centuries of fidelity and glory that a nation could apostatise? You come too late, O enemies of her God; French society will answer you as that ancient pontiff of Smyrna answered the proconsul: It is not eighty-six years, but fourteen hundred years that I have served Jesus Christ, and He has done me no harm; how could I pronounce a word of outrage against my King who has done me only good? Alas! my brethren, why are we forced to acknowledge it? France has lent her ear, she has given her heart to seduction. And this other people of God has committed the crime of the sons of Juda; it has abandoned the Lord and turned to the idols of the nations. May I not be led to say that it has shared in deicide and attained the last degree to which the guilty will of man can rise, or rather descend! May I not say something more, namely, that it has consummated the crime of Lucifer, by making itself equal to God too, what do I say? by substituting itself for God!

“What use is it to recall these things?” some already object to me. Why? Because it is written on every page of the sacred books: Son of man, go, and tell this people their iniquities and their crimes. Why again? Because these things last always, and what has been done persists, as I shall presently show. Lend me, my brethren, all your attention. I walk on burning coals. I shall wound no one, but I shall tell the truth. I shall tell it with moderation, for I have a horror of exaggeration; and I should come down at once from this pulpit if I had to speak in it for a single moment as a declaimer and not as a minister of the God of charity.

“Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord: What iniquity have your fathers found in me that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain themselves [become their own idol]?” You have just heard from the mouth of Jeremias, or rather from the mouth of the Lord, the two crimes of which we have made ourselves guilty. God reigned in society, we banished Him from it; and the next day, as the altar was empty, we placed an idol on it, it was our proud reason. In other terms, the human mind has committed a double evil: *Duo mala fecit populus meus:* It has abjured God, and it has substituted itself for God. [Jer. 2:13: “For my people have done two evils.”]

I feel, my brethren, that when one brings against a people two such enormous grievances, it is strictly necessary to support one’s accusation with irrefutable testimonies. But you will feel also that when such grievances have once been sufficiently proved, it is strictly necessary to expiate and repair them by a prompt change, by an absolute reform and conversion.

Prophet of Patmos, who with your eagle’s eye plunged into the future of the farthest ages, and you, royal child of Jesse, who unveiled the secret recesses of the hearts of kings and peoples, lend me your inspired oracles. And I saw the reason of man, a brilliant star that had long taken its place among the stars of the heavens, suddenly abase itself upon the earth. A fatal gift had been made to it, a mysterious key had been given to it; it opened the pit of the abyss, and there arose from it a thick smoke which darkened the sun and the air: smoke of heresy, smoke of philosophy, and the names changed, but the smoke thickened every day the more. And to complicate the evil, a spark of jealous ambition had leapt even to the thrones; the kings of the earth took umbrage at the reign of God; and the fatal and lying word liberty, in whose name they were to undergo so cruel a retaliation, this word, in the whole acceptation of its most flagrant contradiction of the truth, had been invoked first by human powers against the power of Jesus Christ, by the magistrates against the Church. For long a secret quivering of the nations, a dull fermentation of the peoples, was heard. At last the cry of war has resounded; impiety has assembled under its standards a thousand diverse soldiers who have forgotten their prejudices of birth, opinion, rank, to coalesce against the common enemy. Disunited on a

thousand other points, they have here but one unanimous thought:

Cogitaverunt unanimiter, simul adversum te testamentum disposuerunt. [They have taken counsel together with one consent; they have made a covenant together against thee. (Ps. 82:6 Vulgate.)]

And who is he, this so dangerous enemy against whom I see these so serried battalions marching? Ah! let others stop to discuss the secondary passions, to deplore the shaking of the counter-strokes and the accidents of the melee. For me, rising above these calamities as if to view only the principal tendency, I shall say with a king, a great statesman, that, in its depth and in its essence, the conspiracy has been woven against God and against His Christ: *Convenerunt in unum adversus Dominum et adversus Christum ejus.* [The princes met together against the Lord and against his Christ. (Ps. 2:2.)] It is God, it is His Christ whose chains they wish to break, whose yoke they wish to shake off: *Dirumpamus vincula eorum et projiciamus a nobis jugum ipsorum.* [Let us break their bonds asunder, and let us cast away their yoke from us. (Ps. 2:3.)] It is against God that the revolt is aimed, it is He whose rights they no longer wish to recognise and whose kingship they no longer wish to bear: *Nolumus hunc regnare super nos.* [We will not have this man to reign over us. (Luke 19:14.)] If the existence of the Supreme Being is still avowed, it is to keep the right to outrage Him and banish Him from the world. Let Him dwell in heaven, so be it! but let Him not meddle with the things of earth, and let His pretended rights not come to attempt against the more sacred rights of man! They have said to God, and above all to His Christ: Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways: *Dixerunt Deo: Recede a nobis; scientiam viarum tuarum nolumus.* [Job 21:14.] And it was done as it was said.

There existed an ancient pact, a long alliance between religion and society; the pact was torn up, the alliance broken: *Et averterunt se, et non servaverunt pactum, quemadmodum patres eorum.* [And they turned away, and kept not the covenant, even as their fathers. (Ps. 77:57.)] God was in the laws, in the institutions, in the customs; He was driven out of them, divorce was pronounced between the Constitution and the Gospel, the law was secularised, and it was ruled that the spirit of the modern nation should have nothing to do with God, from whom it isolated itself entirely: *Et in lege ejus noluerunt ambulare … et non est creditus cum Deo spiritus ejus.* [And they would not walk in his law … and his spirit was not faithful to God. (Ps. 77:10, 8.)] God had on earth majestic temples surmounted by the sign of the Redeemer of men; the temples are pulled down or closed: there one hears, in place of sacred chants, only the noise of the axe or the cry of the saw; the cross of the Saviour is overthrown and replaced by vulgar signs: *Posuerunt signa sua, signa; in securi et ascia dejecerunt eam, incenderunt igni sanctuarium tuum.* [They have set up their ensigns for signs; with axe and hatchet they have cast it down; they have set fire to thy sanctuary. (Ps. 73:4, 6–7.)] God had on earth days that belonged to Him, days of feast that He had reserved for Himself and that all ages and all peoples had unanimously respected; and the whole family of the impious cried out: Let us make the days consecrated to God disappear from the earth: *Dixerunt in corde suo cognatio eorum simul: quiescere faciamus omnes dies festos Dei a terra.* [Ps. 73:8.] God had on earth representatives, ministers who spoke of Him and who recalled Him to the peoples; prisons, exile, the scaffold, the sea and the rivers have devoured them all. At last, they say, there is no longer a prophet, and God will find no more a mouth to make Himself heard: *Jam non est propheta, et nos non cognoscet amplius.* [There is now no prophet, and he will know us no more. (Ps. 73:9.)]

My God, cried Saint Paulinus, when the Barbarians, more greedy of pillage than drunk with impiety, were about to fall on his country, my God, I am ready to give Thee my life; but, I beseech Thee, let me be martyr of Thy name and not martyr of my riches: *Non crucier propter aurum aut argentum.* [Let me not be tortured for gold or silver.][3] O all you who bear on your brow the holy unction that makes pontiffs or priests, kings or prophets, with whatever pretext they arm themselves against you, be reassured: it is because of the name of Jesus Christ that you are an object of hatred; and the Lord, who knows how to discern from accessory cupidities the dominant passion, says to you as to Samuel: It is not you they have rejected, but it is Me, that I should not reign over them! *Non enim te abjecerunt, sed me, ne regnem super eos.* [1 Kings 8:7.] It is done,

all the rights of God are annihilated, only the rights of man remain standing. The first crime is consummated; the nation has declared itself practically atheist. But it is only the first step, a second remains to be taken: *Initium superbiae hominis apostatare a Deo*, the beginning of the pride of man is to apostatise from God, and to withdraw his heart from Him who made him. [Ecclus. 10:14–15.] That is the beginning of pride; but pride does not stop, it mounts, it mounts ever, and it is from its progress that its chastisement is born.

But, before relating the second crime of human pride, let us hear the paternal reproaches of the Lord concerning this first prevarication. Hear, house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. What iniquity then have your fathers found in me that they should go so far from me? *Quid invenerunt patres vestri in me iniquitatis quia elongaverunt a me?* … I had caused you to be born in the fairest kingdom after that of heaven; I had multiplied for you there the most excellent gifts: *Et induxi vos in terram Carmeli ut comederetis fructum ejus, et optima illius.* [And I brought you into the land of Carmel, that you might eat the fruit thereof and the best things thereof. (Jer. 2:7.)] Therefore will I yet contend in judgment with you, and I will plead my cause against the sons of the prevaricators. Pass over to the isles of Cethim and see what is done there; send to Cedar and consider diligently what passes there; and say whether anything like it was ever accomplished, whether a nation has left its gods, and certainly they are not gods; but my people have changed their glory for an idol.

Assuredly, my brethren, it is not that the nations which adore gods of wood or gods of flesh are praiseworthy in persevering in their errors. But in the midst of their superstitions they give us a lesson which the Lord has the right to make us remark; and never have they forgotten themselves to that extremity of evil to which we have gone. Among them the divinity always had rights publicly recognised and consecrated; in their eyes, to despise the gods was always a crime, to build a city without God was always a folly, to draw a circle around the divine majesty or to lower it to the second rank was an enterprise without example. I know, according to the well-known thought of the celebrated Pico della Mirandola, I know that, satisfied to receive their adorations under the figure of their idols, hell had no interest in shaking in the mind of legislators and wise men those first truths which Christian peoples, abusing the lights and graces more abundantly dispensed to them, have been pushed to the point of disowning. But what shame and what misfortune for us to have become more impious than the heretic and the idolater!

Heavens, be in stupor; gates of heaven, be inconsolable! My people have done two evils: they have abandoned me, that is the first of their crimes; but what have they put in my place? That, my brethren, is what remains for me to tell you. I shall frighten your ears, and yet I shall not say all that is true, I shall say only what is necessary to lead me to useful conclusions.

It was long since the usurpation of the divine rank had smiled on the pride of man: *Et eritis sicut dii.* [And you shall be as gods. (Gen. 3:5.)] It was longer still since the tempting angel who proposed this seduction had himself yielded to it: *Ascendam, et similis ero Altissimo.* [I will ascend … I will be like the most High. (Is. 14:14.)] The moment has come; the altar is free, man is going to place his idol on it, and this idol will be himself. Yesterday it was a people of atheists, and the temple was closed; today the temple is reopened, and proud Reason, substituting herself for the divinity she has overthrown, sits upon the ruins of the tabernacle and receives the supreme honours. It had to be so. The Power which deposes God is above God; to her the divine homages.

Sacred vaults of the holy basilica, pardon me for repeating what you have seen. The human mind had made itself atheist, and now it makes itself God. I know that in the first delirium of this apotheosis, the passions of the multitude translated the new dogma in a brutal fashion, and that good taste, and above all skill, soon disavowed the revolting form of the first inauguration. But if the gross symbol disappeared, the thing figured remained, it survived its impure emblem, it subsists still. And for whoever sometimes lays his head between his hands to reflect (I know that it is the small number, that is why public levity will not understand the import of my words), for whoever meditates at times on the spirit of the times in which it has pleased the

Lord to call us to live, there is a striking truth that stands out from the examination of all our institutions, of all our doctrines, and of all that constitutes the modern epoch: it is that a divinity hovers above this scaffolding of atheism, and this divinity is Reason. From the day man abjured his duties to adjudge to himself rights, from the day he declared himself sovereign master of his thought, he has never renounced his religious supremacy, it is dearer to him even than his political sovereignty. Yes, from the day when, making power rise from below upward, we called ourselves the people-king, we certainly meant to become also the people-God. Look around you, and see whether it is not true that this people said to be atheist has arrogated to itself the divine omnipotence.

It has made itself God; for God is the independent Being, and the people has shaken off all dependence. Read the Declaration of the Rights of Man, or turn the pages of the philosophical books of the recent and contemporary school: what you will distinguish there most clearly is that man recognises no power above him, he depends only on himself. He has said what God alone can say: I will not serve: *Dixisti: non serviam.* [Jer. 2:20.] It has made itself God; for God is the sovereignly perfect Being, and the people has declared itself impeccable. Read its history as it takes care to write it itself: you will see that what it does is always well done, that its apparent crimes are either sublime virtues or high necessities, that its excesses must be respected at least as mysteries, and that to reproach it with them is to blaspheme its supreme wisdom. It has made itself God; for God alone is infallible, and the people, since it has refused infallibility to the Church of Jesus Christ, has attributed it to itself. Legislative infallibility: the law, decreed in the name of man and without God, is three times more holy and divine; judicial infallibility: justice, rendered in the name of man, no longer errs, the definitive judgment is irreformable, the brand of infamy admits of no possible rehabilitation, and all that innocence can obtain is to be amnestied. It has made itself God; for God is the great rewarder of men, and the people has usurped the supreme dispensation of rewards: it weaves crowns, decrees apotheoses, and its children, like demi-gods, sit around sovereign Reason on thrones, let us say better, on altars. It has made itself God; for God alone penetrates the depth of the soul, which is an abyss: and the sovereign right of the people reaches consciences, probes the reins and hearts, and if it discovers there, if it suspects there a thought, an engagement, a secret vow, it pronounces exclusions and banishments. It has made itself God; for God alone has authority and jurisdiction over minds, God alone has a right of transcendent paternity: and the domain of the people extends over all beings, rises above that of families: *A quo omnis paternitas* [of whom all paternity… (Eph. 3:15)]; it has the monopoly of doctrine, it regulates in what mould the reason of all the citizens shall be cast, with what effigy it shall be stamped, and every man coming into this world shall be enlightened by the light which it has declared the only true; in place of the Gospel of Jesus Christ it decrees I know not what gospel of the new era, written by I know not what equivocal evangelist; in place of the Catholic and apostolic dogma it decrees I know not what dogma of the modern spirit, obligatory for all; and, whereas all the children of the Christian nation used formerly to let themselves be led without repugnance and by a legitimate impulse to the foot of the cross that saved the world, there will be found a sophist-tyrant to declare, in the face of the universe, that all the sons of the free nation shall go, willy-nilly, to kneel with love before the knife that slaughtered their fathers. Finally it has made itself God, for it belongs to God alone to give a religion to His creature: and the human mind has been seen setting to work to bring forth cults of its own making, and it was easy to understand that its pride could submit to a religion it had made, since, in adoring its work, at bottom it would adore only itself.

What do I say? Open the most recent book of one of the doctors of youth, you will read there these strange words: “I know no other religion than humanity. France would be greatly wrong to seek a religion, since she is herself a magnificent religion.” My brethren, can man push delirium further? And as for the older cults, the sovereign Reason of this same people has been seen to administer and govern more or less arbitrarily the various religions admitted to live in its bosom, to regulate this one, more docile, to decree [appeals] as from abuse against that one, more rebellious, and, standing above all these gods of the multitude, *Deus deorum et Dominus dominantium* [God of gods and Lord of lords (Deut. 10:17)], to hear them, judge them, counsel

them and reconcile them as best it can among themselves: *In medio autem deos dijudicat.* [And in the midst he judgeth gods. (Ps. 81:1.)][4]

I stop here, my brethren. I could accumulate a thousand other proofs of this sacrilegious usurpation of the rights of God to the profit of human pride. I ought to say above all that it is the property of God to love Himself, to adore Himself, to refer all to Himself: and I would show you here the people in the midst of which we live, unfortunately too consistent with the dogma of its deification, making egoism its only morality, placing in itself its last end, and sacrificing honour, probity, conscience, devotedness, genius, to the cult of gold and pleasure; and it had to happen so, practice had to be reconciled with belief, the heart had to put itself in accord with the mind, and, like it, become its own God. O you then, heir of Plato, of Thales or of Pythagoras, philosopher, whoever you are, who would travel among the various peoples to study their institutions, their philosophy and their manners; after having traversed our country in every sense, considered the public spirit in its principles and in the facts that flow from them, write on the brow of this nation these three words which form its whole creed, its decalogue and its cult: I believe in one God, and this God is myself: *Credo in unum Deum.*

I hasten to say it, my brethren, and I shall repeat it another day, for I should be inconsolable to calumniate my country: happily the evil principles of which I have just spoken are not accepted by all; and, still more happily, among those who accept them there are few who are not frightened to deduce and justify their consequences. Whence it results that, in spite of the institutions and the public law, there remain on the one hand a great number of faithful adorers of the true God, on the other a great number of honest souls who are worth more than their principles.

But there remains none the less demonstrated what I advanced, that we have sinned all together, in a body of nation; that the society of which we form part has consummated the two most monstrous crimes ever committed in the face of the sun; and that these crimes persevere in law in the state of principles, and more or less in fact in the state of consequences. Whence I conclude, in finishing, that a general conversion is our first need and our first duty.

Has it never happened to you, my brethren, to shudder with dread on hearing, in Scripture, what appalling calamities the apostasy and impiety of nations call down upon them: *Exurge, Deus, non praevaleat homo:* Arise, O Lord, let not man prevail; *effunde iram tuam in gentes quae te non noverunt, et in regna quae nomen tuum non invocaverunt:* pour out Thy wrath upon the nations that have not known Thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon Thy name. [Ps. 9:20; 78:6.] When it concerns man, God is patient, for here the judge and the guilty are both eternal; and if the impious man is as it were buried in the mantle of his prosperity, be not scandalised at it, for at that very instant his soul appears before the just judge, and the avenging fires are lit for ever. But when it concerns nations, the divine patience has a term, because nations are daughters of time, and it is in time alone that they can be answerable to the sovereign Master. That is why this so frequent warning of the prophets to the holy nation: If you do not do penance, your ruin is infallible.

But has not the arm of the angered Lord already weighed upon us, my brethren? or rather, has not the excess of our iniquities brought with it its chastisement? Is it not a cry that bursts out on all sides around us, that society is gangrened with corruption, that dissolution is near and inevitable? Every day do we not hear the wise alarmed, the strong themselves affrighted? Under the empire of this proud idolatry of ourselves which we have substituted for the humble adoration of God, what has become of beauty of manners and characters, public and private virtues, the spirit of sacrifice and generous loyalty? Each making himself his own God, all disinterestedness has disappeared, all respect for the right of another, all devotion to the public weal. In the midst of this general egoism I see ardent ambitions rise, tyrannies that meet only servile complaisance. The privileged reason of a few taking it upon itself to exercise the divine sovereignty in the name of the reason of all, who could say to what rigour this new divinity pushes a right which it raises the higher the more it calls itself the elect reason of the multitude?

Israel, let thy gods arise and succour thee, these gods thou hast made for thyself! What then! Is this people no longer the Frankish people *par excellence*? Israel, art thou then a slave, or the son of slaves, that I see thee given up for a prey to all servitudes? The sons of Memphis and of Taphnes have defiled thee even to the crown of thy head. And whence has this come to thee, but from thy having forsaken the Lord thy God, when He Himself led thee in the way? Know then and see how evil and bitter a thing it is for thee to have left the Lord thy God. For nearly a century thou hast broken the yoke and said: I will not serve. Then, after this so proud declaration, thou hast been seen, like a base courtesan, on all the high hills, under all the green trees. My people, it is time to stop in the way of shame and perdition; return to me, saith the Lord.

Shall we not hear, my brethren, this invitation of the Lord? Will our society wait, like Antiochus, for the extreme moment of its dissolution, of its putrefaction, to acknowledge, but uselessly then, that it is just to be subject to God, and that it does not befit a mortal to set himself up as the rival of God: *Justum est subditum esse Deo, et mortalem non paria Deo sentire?* [It is just to be subject to God, and not to think equal to God a mortal man. (2 Mach. 9:12.)]

Yes, my brethren, it is against God that we have sinned; it is to God alone that we owe reparation. “But what!” you say to me, “we are not the nation, we are not legislators and chiefs of the people; you speak to us of the crime of the whole of society, it does not rest with us to repair it.” I know it, my brethren; but I know also that, in a very true sense, it is manners that make laws, that it is the public spirit that dictates the public law. A people writes only what it does; laws come after acts. Society promulgated atheist principles only after the spirit of atheism had spread in its bosom.

I say to you then all, and I say to each: It is God, it is Jesus Christ whom we have outraged, whose rights we have disowned, whose salutary yoke we have rejected. Today let us lay down our hatred; let us render to God what belongs, what will belong eternally, to God. Let each of us for his part, instead of yielding to the drift of public idolatry, pay to God his tribute, incline his reason before the reason of God, his will before the will of God! And soon the general crime will be repaired, the right of God will be publicly recognised; Jesus Christ will reign over the whole of society. And with the scandal of the vastest apostasy will cease also the most unfortunate of all situations. For it is impossible to deny that, if the law is the expression of manners, it in its turn reacts upon them, that the effect is transformed into cause, and that the greatest of all misfortunes is that the disorder should have its source in what should serve as rule.

But Jeremias lets me hear your objections, and here is the first. “In vain,” saith the Lord, “in vain, to bring back my people, have I struck their children; they would not understand the chastisement, and they answered me: It is an accomplished fact, we have withdrawn from thee, we shall not return, our self-love is engaged in it.” My brethren, is it not this language that has often resounded in our ears? Yes, the human mind recognises it: it has gathered, as the fruit of its work, only misery. But how give the lie to the work of our fathers? It is an accomplished fact, society has secularised itself, man has divorced from God, he will not return: *Recessimus, non ultra veniemus ad te.* [We are departed; we will come no more to thee. (Jer. 2:31.)] Religion is the source of a thousand goods, that is true; but our honour is in question. Rather all evils without God than all goods with Him and by Him: *Recessimus, non ultra veniemus ad te.*

Ah! my brethren, if I came to tell the men of our age to renounce absolutely their work as human work; if, making myself the apostle of the past, I demanded the return of all the ancient institutions; if, instead of being the priest of God, I became the advocate of some class of society, I might perhaps understand this pride, this interest, this zeal, this obstinacy in defending what you call the work of your fathers. But what matter to the man of eternity the vicissitudes of time, men replacing other men, reversals of fortune, displacements of privileges, social transformations! that has been seen and will be seen in all times. But also what has been preached and what must be preached in all ages is that it is a mad pride in man to wish to do without God, to equal himself to God; it is that, in spite of the proud quivering of the peoples, God will reign over them, it is His right, and if He does not reign there by love, He will reign there by justice and

vengeance: *Quoniam regnavit Deus, irascuntur populi* [the Lord hath reigned, let the people be angry (Ps. 98:1)]; it is that consequently a people which wishes to live and has had the misfortune to dethrone God, must hasten to replace Him on the altars and prostrate itself at His feet.

I ask you to recognise that man is not equal to God; does this avowal demand so great an effort of humility and self-denial?

Jeremias reveals to me a second objection. “I called my people back to me, and my people said: I am desperate, I will do nothing of it; I love strange gods passionately, and it is they I wish to follow. They have said to the wood: Thou art my father; and to the stone: Thou hast begotten me.” My brethren, which of us has not been witness of this lassitude, of this faintness? One avows that it would have been better to serve God, that it would be necessary to return to Him; but one objects the prostration, the powerlessness, the disgust: *Desperavi, nequaquam faciam;* an effort would be needed, and all energy is lost. Besides, one has taken a liking to strange gods, and wishes to follow them; all the affections are glued to matter, the heart belongs to the idols, it has not the strength to detach itself. The public spirit has entered another direction, it will persist in it: *Adamavi quippe alienos et post eos ambulabo.* [For I have loved strangers, and I will walk after them. (Jer. 2:25.)] And the nation thus discouraged falls back upon itself, and, despairing of ever returning to the light, sits down again definitively in the darkness and shadow of death: *Sedentes in tenebris et umbra mortis.* [Ps. 106:10.]

My brethren, hear what the Lord answers: My people, why then wouldst thou make a pact with death? When thou despairest thus of thyself, thou wilt prove that thou knowest neither what remains of life in thy bosom, nor what power there is in my arm and what love in my heart. Can a virgin forget her ornament, and a bride the stomacher she wears on her breast; and would my people abandon for ever the God who makes its happiness and its glory! It is commonly said: If a woman put away by her husband marries another, will her husband take her back again? As for thee, O daughter of Israel, thou hast covered thyself with opprobrium, and nevertheless return to me and I will receive thee, saith the Lord. These words would draw tears from the hardest rocks: *Ergo saltem amodo;* therefore at least now that all thy illusions are flown, lift up thy eyes and see what lies thou hast loved, what passions thou hast caressed; thou hast made other peoples drunk with thy poisons; thou hast taken a forehead that knew not how to blush. Ah! at least today call upon me, saying: O God, Thou art my Father and the guide of my virginity: *Pater meus, dux virginitatis meae tu es;* it was on Thy arm that I leaned for so many centuries, when there shone in me, with my virginal faith, all the generous qualities that the universe admired: devotedness, courage, genius, enthusiasm. Return to me, rebellious people, and I will heal all the evil thou hast done thyself in turning away from me: *Convertimini, filii, revertentes, et sanabo aversiones vestras.* [Return, ye revolting children, and I will heal your rebellions. (Jer. 3:22.)] Yes, I will heal thee, for I, the Lord, have the power to heal the wounds of peoples as of individuals, I have created the nations curable, and my omnipotence has more than once wrought this prodigy. O Juda, prevaricatress, consider thy sister Israel; France, look at thy sister over the sea: *Praevaricatrix soror,* and admire by what marvellous way my arm, my heart, bring her back to me every day.[5]

Courage, it is thus that thou wilt return to thy God; suddenly the spirit from on high will seize thy multitudes, the number of my priests will not suffice for this movement of return, and they will bring me thy children in full arms. *Et afferent filios tuos in ulnis.* [And they shall bring thy sons in their arms. (Is. 49:22.)] Precious instincts which still hide from thee, but which are only asleep, will awaken in thy bosom. And while, with a heart still full of rage and a mouth quivering perhaps with threats, thou seemest to enter on the road to Damascus, the way of persecution, suddenly a secret force will cast thee down. Who art thou? wilt thou ask me. I am that Jesus whom thou persecutest. O France, it is hard for thee to kick against the goad; to make war on God is against nature. Rise up, predestined race, vessel of election, and go, as in the past, to carry my name to all the peoples and all the kings of the earth.

Ah! who will grant me to see those days which the omnipotence of God prepares for us? Who will grant me to see my country accept frankly and without return the supremacy of God and abjure the vain dreams of its insensate rebellion? For the whole question is there. The day we are all agreed on the Gospel, all our intestine divisions will disappear. Who will grant me to join one day the multitude of the new sons of Israel to say with them: Behold, we come to Thee, Lord; for Thou art the Lord our God? Truly all the hills, and the multitude of the mountains on which we have idolatrised, were but lies: *Vere mendaces erant colles, et multitudo montium.* Confusion and shame have not ceased to devour the work of our fathers since we have known it: *Confusio comedit laborem patrum nostrorum ab adolescentia nostra.* [Jer. 3:23, 24.] They and we, we have covered ourselves with ignominy, because from our childhood to this day we have sinned and have not hearkened to the voice of the Lord our God.

May these avowals of the conversion of Israel soon be on the lips of us all, my brethren! This is what I wish you, with the blessing of Monseigneur (1).[6]

Translator's notes

1. Scripture quotations are the preacher's free abridgment of Jeremias 1–3, with Psalms and other texts woven in; the verse references in brackets are mine. The Paulinus attribution, "Pico della Mirandola", and the story of the bishop of Smyrna (Polycarp, "eighty-six years") are as the preacher gives them; not verified here. "The sophist-tyrant" and "the knife that slaughtered their fathers" are allusions to the Revolution; not further identified.

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[1] (1) See *Œuvres épiscopales*, t. I, p. 138: *Lettre pastorale sur le retour à Dieu considéré comme devoir particulier de tous les hommes qui ont intérêt à la conservation de l'ordre* [Pastoral Letter on the return to God, considered as the particular duty of all men who have an interest in the preservation of order]. We have indicated in the Avertissement (p. xxxv) the reasons for which we publish the first drafts of a thought which was to ripen later. (Editor's note.) The heading dates the sermon to the first Sunday of Lent, 1 March 1846.

[2] Jer. i–iii, freely abridged and combined by the preacher; the Latin phrases correspond to Jer. 2:25; 2:20 [*Recessimus*: Jer. 2:31]; 3:4. Not verified verse by verse here.

[3] The saying is attributed to Paulinus of Nola in the tradition (cf. Augustine, *City of God* I, 10); not verified here.

[4] The "doctor of youth" and the quoted sentence are unnamed in the source; not identified here. "Décréter d'abus" = to declare an *appel comme d'abus* [appeal as from abuse], the old French legal procedure by which the State reviewed ecclesiastical acts; hence "decree as from abuse".

[5] Jer. 3:7–8 for the "prevaricating sister". "Ta sœur d'outre-mer" is not named; I read it as England (the Catholic revival there), but that identification is mine.

[6] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 22, n° 12; p. 28, n° 24, 40. — Avertissement: p. xxv [as printed; the Avertissement reference earlier in this file reads p. xxxv]. (Editor's note.)

n° 27. Second Sermon on the Return to God, the Special Duty of the Leaders of Society

Preached in the cathedral of Chartres, the third Sunday of Lent, 15 March 1846.[1]

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum. [Jerusalem, Jerusalem, be converted to the Lord thy God. (Cf. Osee 14:2.)]

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God.

MONSEIGNEUR, It was not difficult for me, my brethren, to persuade you of the absolute necessity of returning to the Lord by a general reform and conversion. We considered the social body in all that constitutes its existence and its life, and we recognised in it germs of dissolution and death; from the sole of the foot to the top of the head, we found in it no sound part; and, going back from the effects to the cause, we were forced to avow that the disorder of ideas and manners has its source in what should serve them as rule, that the vices of modern society are the hideous product of its principles, and that the public law is the

accomplice of public depravity. We said with Jeremias: And whence come so many evils, but from the nation's having forsaken the Lord its God, when He Himself led it in the way of prosperity and glory? *Numquid non istud factum est tibi, quia dereliquisti Dominum Deum tuum, eo tempore quo ducebat te per viam?* [Hast thou not done this to thyself, by forsaking the Lord thy God at the time when he led thee by the way? (Jer. 2:17.)]

My brethren, either I am much mistaken, or this subject that God inspired me to develop during the holy forty days, a subject treated a thousand times, borrows from the times in which we live an interest and importance truly infinite. This conversion that I preach to you, this movement of return to God, the angels of heaven watch with anxiety whether modern society is at last going to understand its indispensable necessity; and, according as it shall be deaf or docile to this call, they prepare either to veil their faces with their wings and shed inconsolable tears over a great ruin, or to seize their lyres and sing the fairest of all the triumphs of divine mercy. Would that I had the authority of the prophets to repeat, with their imposing accent, these words so worthy of being heard: Jerusalem, Jerusalem, be converted to the Lord thy God: *Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum!* But how does a whole nation return to God? I said it, my brethren: the nation is the ensemble of individuals, and every individual conversion contributes, more powerfully than is thought, to prepare and determine the general conversion. Yet, I must avow, among individuals there are some whose conversion has more authority and importance; the lot of a whole people is in the hands of a few whose example becomes its law. That is why, having established previously that conversion is the need and duty of all in general, before showing, as I promised, that it is the duty and need of each in particular, I wish today to treat an intermediate proposition, and make you understand that conversion is the special need and duty of some: I mean of all those who, by reason of some superiority of fortune, of consideration, of intelligence, of authority, have become the chiefs of the society which receives from them its impulse and movement. I attach the greatest price to this conversation, which will be simple and familiar; I shall speak with all the frankness, but also with all the charity, that my ministry comports and requires. *Ave Maria.*

It is written in the Holy Books that God has given to each man a mission, a sort of mandate regarding the eternal interests of his neighbour: *Mandavit unicuique Deus de proximo suo.* [And he gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbour. (Ecclus. 17:12.)] This mission, this duty concerns above all whoever occupies a rank elevated above his fellows, and the elder sons of the age would appropriate the language of the first of homicides if, to the religion which asks of them an account of the soul of their brethren, they dared to answer: Am I my brother's keeper? No, he was not his keeper, he was his executioner. The influential men of a town, of a province, of a nation will have to answer at the tribunal of God not only for their own soul, but for many other souls; they are, by the necessity of their position, apostles of heaven or of hell, means of salvation or of ruin.

If the great, the rich, the learned abandon religion, they give the signal of an apostasy which will soon be universal. Sheltered under their name and protected by their examples, have we not seen, as the illustrious bishop of Clermont already complained in the presence of a court which had need of these lessons, impiety become an air of distinction and glory, a title of honour and consideration, a merit which supplied for all other qualities and conferred on obscure men a privilege of familiarity with the princes of the peoples? Hence for the great a new duty which they have contracted toward religion and society, a duty of rigorous justice which consists in the reparation of the evil they have done. It is the chiefs of the nation who brought impiety into credit, and gave birth to all the evils that impiety drags in its train; it is for them henceforth to impress the movement of return to religion, and to give back to society all the goods that religion brings with it.

But I hear a voice rise and say to me: Do not all the men who have any worth proclaim unanimously today that the time of unbelief is past, and that religion is a profound need of our epoch? Does not the young man hardly out of the schools make his debut with a pamphlet on the philanthropic and religious question? Yes, my brethren, I am willing to acknowledge it, society has made a great step, minds have advanced. It is

repeated every day, in a certain middle sphere as in a higher one, that religion is indispensable to keep the lower classes in order. We hear the names of God, of Providence; people speak of morality, of religious morality; sometimes they even venture the names of Jesus Christ and of the Gospel; they go farther, they set to work, they write books on moralisation, they vote millions for penitentiary reform. The child, the poor man, the workman are the object of the most circumstantial dissertations, of the most touching cares. What then is lacking to this crusade of the chiefs of society, and what would be needed for their efforts to be crowned with success?

What is lacking I shall say first; what would be needed it will be easy for me to say afterwards. What is lacking to these new apostles is: 1° conviction, 2° practical example. Whence it comes that their teachings are ineffectual: 1° because, being purely human, they are not blessed by God, and 2° because, being inconsistent and interested, they are not acceptable to the multitude. What would be needed, then, what is indispensable to the success of the enterprise, would be that all who wish to reform society in the name of God and of the Gospel should begin by drawing near to them themselves, sincerely, practically, entirely. That is the ensemble of ideas that I come to develop and which will complete our preceding conversation.

I. More than once, my brethren, we have had the satisfaction of meeting grave and serious men, truly preoccupied with the lot of humanity, desirous of being useful to their fellows, bringing to the work of social regeneration a will and a devotedness worthy of all praise. They had seen, on the one hand, that the superior conditions are on the eve of being invaded by the passions of the multitude; on the other, that the evil instincts of the multitude are infinitely harmful to itself. They had understood that a dike must be found to oppose to this overflow; and, after a thousand other attempts, they had at last convinced themselves that they must ask religion for its support, our ministry for its concurrence. Or at least (for since society has been secularised, the apostolate has become lay) they showed themselves disposed to do with us, perhaps even in our place, what we have done so happily for the people in other ages; and they begged us to lend them our ascendancy over souls, to invest them with a portion of our spiritual priesthood. But soon we experienced a profound surprise. These men so ardent to bring into play all the resources furnished by the Christian faith, we were forced to acknowledge, did not possess this faith in their soul. The Gospel of Jesus Christ teaches the poor man the love of his unhappy condition, him who possesses not the respect of property, the child dependence on his parents, the guilty the necessity of repentance, all the laws of probity. In all this, the Gospel is excellent, say they; we shall make use of the Gospel. But is Jesus Christ the Son of God? Is Christianity a supernatural institution? Is the Gospel a book come down from heaven, or only the last effort of human wisdom and reason? Must the miracles by which it tends to establish its divine origin be admitted? What is to be thought of the mysteries it proposes for our belief? Useless questions. The Gospel is excellent as it is for the multitudes: let us not discuss its religious value; let us be content to use it, whatever it be. As for us, we shall abstain from examining the substance of the thing. We have received an education which places us above the need of religion, and besides, our interests forbid us the restless and turbulent passions that we wish to repress in the common conditions. So reason these men. They have the Gospel in the hand and not in the heart; they teach, but they do not believe.

Still, if the inconvenience stopped there: the private incredulity of the apostle is an interior fact which may be dissembled, which is suspected, but which is not demonstrated. Unhappily religion has certain exigencies that are going to make manifest the weak side of these instructors of the people.

The Gospel, which is thus appealed to for the reform of the multitudes, prescribes duties whose accomplishment is visible, and refers to public and solemn acts. It wills that the Christian interrupt once a week bodily labours, to consecrate a whole day to religious exercises as well as to the repose of his wearied limbs. It wills that the Christian on this day go, in company with all his brethren, to prostrate himself before the altars and take part in the great and supreme action of worship, which is sacrifice. It wills that on this same day the Christian, who lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of

God, go humbly to hear the word of the priest which falls from the sacred pulpit. It wills that once a year at least this sinful man go to lay his faults at the feet of Jesus Christ, in the heart of a heavenly confidant, [and] sit at the thrice-holy table where a God makes Himself the food and sustenance of His creature. It is to these sensible practices, to these exterior and visible duties that all the virtue, all the efficacy of the evangelical morality is attached; without the accomplishment of these observances, the Christian religion no longer guarantees any of the fruits that are asked of it.

So be it, say the most reasonable among these new apostles: who wills the end must submit to the means. Since we ask of the Gospel its results, let us leave it free to prescribe all its practices which are at least relatively good; at need, we shall recommend them ourselves. But for our own part, as we have not said our last word concerning the real and absolute value of the Gospel, we shall abstain from all those troublesome observances, fallen into desuetude for most men of our condition.

And in fact I remark that these men, so zealous for the reform of their fellow-citizens, never mix with them in the most important religious circumstances. God forbid that I should pierce the wall that hides from me, and must hide from me, their private life. But there is a patent fact: they are not met with in the temple, they never give the example of public prayer; Sunday sees them shut up in their study, where they write on questions of social regeneration; evangelical preaching cannot bring to their ears any of its teachings, enlighten their minds with any of its rays, strike their hearts with any of its graces. Needless to say that they never approach the sacred tribunals, and that they sit no more with the poor man at the divine table than they constrain themselves to share with him the black bread of his misery or his seclusion. But apart from that, these men have devotedness, interest for humanity; sometimes they are generous, compassionate; in a word, they are true apostles to whom nothing is wanting, unless it be to believe and practise what they preach.

After that (see what is the hardening of the human heart!), how does it come that the multitude does not let itself be docilely taught and persuaded by the cares of so touching a proselytism? How does it come that so many statistics, reports, so many philanthropic pamphlets, so many annals of beneficence, so many costly creations, such important sums allotted by the budget, have not renewed the face of the moral world? What! twelve poor fishermen changed the universe; and we shall see the most considerable men, the most distinguished publicists of a country, undertake the work of regeneration with learned books and immense resources without obtaining the improvement they have in view! And, on the contrary, these same men will be taken a little more often than in the past from their moralising lucubrations and their domestic cares; the magistrate and the notable by the necessity of hearing and judging, the advocate by the function of justifying and defending crimes every day more multiplied and more monstrous. Would it be possible that such praiseworthy efforts had so little success, and that public perversity were irreformable to that point? Who can explain this mystery?

My brethren, do not think that my words are stamped with irony or bitterness. In these difficult days, which succeed violent crises provoked by wrongs common to all conditions, surely we have better to do than to address mutual reproaches; it is to enlighten one another, reciprocally, charitably, on the true needs of society. I dare say it, no one does more justice than I to whoever interests himself in the cause of the unfortunate. In this age of egoism and concentration, every man who consecrates his vigils, his reflections, his life to the holy occupation of softening the lot of his brethren has claims to public gratitude. And even when this man errs in the means, religion owes him still blessings and encouragements. But does she not owe him also warnings and counsels, and will it not be permitted her, as a proof of her sympathy, to bring her lights and teachings?

Now I say that this sort of apostolate exercised by the men of the world, this apostolate destitute of conviction and practical example, is condemned to sterility and impotence. And among a thousand other reasons I insist on this: 1° it cannot be blessed by God, inasmuch as it is purely human and does not tend directly to His glory; 2° it is not acceptable to the multitude, inasmuch as it is inconsistent and interested.

The first condition of success for an apostle is the grace of God. We sow, we plant, says Saint Paul, but it is God who gives the increase. The labour is man's, the result is God's. Now God does not grant and need not grant His grace except so far as it will produce fruits that tend to His glory. Would it be conceivable that God should put His supernatural grace at the service of any interest other than His own?

I see a Christian apostle: what does he propose to himself? The glory of God, His reign on earth, the triumph of truth. He wills that God be known, that God be loved, and that men, by the accomplishment of their duties toward God, arrive themselves at happiness and glory. That is his end. What are his means? Those that God Himself has furnished him. To lead men to their end, God gave them a religion; He sent His Son upon the earth; the latter left a Gospel, a book which contains a faith, a law. The apostle believes, and that is why he speaks; he has a conviction which he wishes to pass into the heart of his brethren. Little confident in his own strength, he prays unceasingly the Lord to crown his labours. And if he attains his end, he will not think he has himself won a conquest; in his eyes he remains an unprofitable servant, an instrument without value; it is God who has spoken by his mouth. Here, my brethren, I understand that God makes fruitful the ministry of man, the devotedness of man; for this man speaks not in his own name but in the name of God, teaches not for himself but for God.

I see an apostle according to the world: what does he propose to himself? The glory of God? he does not even think of rising so high. The triumph of truth? what is truth? he has hardly ever thought of it. He wills the tranquil conservation of order and of a state of things of which the better part is secured to him; he aspires to form a society composed of honest people rather than of Christians and saints; he desires the greatest possible sum of happiness for all, without the acquired felicity of one having anything to fear from the scarcely sketched felicity of another: that is his end. What are his means? All indifferently that philosophy or religion suggests to him. Human means he prefers; but if he recognises their insufficiency and inefficacy, he resigns himself to employ what are called religious means. For the rest, he has personally no faith in their supernatural power; he employs them as happy means that have acquired ascendancy over the multitudes; he employs them until, having by them attained his end, he can abandon them and cast them off for ever. And if he arrives at his ends, it is not to God that he attributes the merit, but to himself; he has not laboured for the interest of God, but for his own.

Now, my brethren, is it possible that God should bless and make fruitful such an apostolate? that He should put the treasure of His grace at the disposal of him who, on the one hand, proposes in no way what is the end of grace, that is to say the glory of God and the sanctification of souls; and who, on the other hand, has no faith in the divine efficacy of the means to which grace is attached, and who will arrogate to himself all the success and all the fruit really due to the assistance of the Holy Spirit? No, evidently no. The apostle here is only a man, he proposes nothing but what is human; God has nothing to gain from it, God will not intervene.

I add that this apostolate, which is sterile because, being wholly human, it is not blessed by God, is sterile again because it is not acceptable to the multitude, inasmuch as it is inconsistent and interested.

When an apostle teaches me what he believes, his word has an accent of persuasion which penetrates me and makes his own conviction pass into me. When an apostle preaches to me what he does, his example has a power of drawing which determines me and pulls me after him. That is the great secret of the omnipotence of the Catholic apostolate. The apostle believes; he speaks, he is believed. The apostle preaches; he acts accordingly, he is imitated. Francis of Assisi believes in Jesus Christ who said: Blessed are the poor; he believes it, and, in proof, a voluntary deserter from wealth, he distributes his fortune to the unfortunate and devotes himself to poverty. The multitudes hear him, see him; his word, his example are without reply. But let the multitude be able to suspect that the apostle does not believe what he teaches, does not practise what he preaches, from that moment his apostolate has lost all virtue. That is what renders, and will for long still render, useless all the efforts attempted today in the name of society for social regeneration. What do we see? The father wishes to moralise his son, the rich man wishes to moralise the poor man, the honest man wishes

to moralise the guilty; but each wishes to moralise another in the name of a doctrine in which he does not believe, of a religion to which he does not conform. Let us take an example.

Who has not often admired the estimable preoccupations of eminent men of our epoch, who have as it were vowed their existence to the happy thought of making the chastisement of the guilty serve their amendment and of transforming the prison into a sort of monastery? Society has descended into its own conscience; it has asked itself whether it had done enough for the criminal, whether it was not an accomplice in his faults. It recognised that the prison was a school of vice, where the soul that had been only touched by evil soon lost all remnant of modesty, where the young heart that had found in itself as yet only a first perverse thought was not slow to put itself on the level of the consummate perversity of the companions of its captivity. Society was moved by this state of things; it meditated a reform, it attempts to carry it out, and here is what it has already done. It began by separating the guilty from the guilty, so that the corruption of one might not be increased by all the corruption of the other, and that these debased and degenerate souls might not work with a sort of emulation at a mutual demoralisation. I know that opinions are divided on the expediency of this sequestration and isolation.

The wise have objected that, to be borne with resignation and with fruit, this solitude would demand in the captive the virtue of an anchorite, the long habits of oraison, of prayer, of interior life, of a Trappist or a Carthusian; that for a soul far from being accustomed to live alone with God, nothing is more frightful than to be alone with oneself, with one’s crime, with one’s sterile and impotent remorse; that isolation then inspires a despair, a sort of frenzy and rage which leads to the most abominable vices and the last refinements of corruption.

The objection is strong. It has been sought to answer that isolation, absolute solitude, is not a direct and necessary condition of this system of reform; that the sole thought of the reformers is to separate the guilty from the guilty, to cut off from him a dangerous society; but that, apart from this, their care, their desire, is to put him in relation with all those of his fellows whose commerce can be useful or agreeable to him. The priest, the man of God, it is said, will enter each day into the cell of the recluses; the Brother of Saint John of God or of the Christian schools, the Daughters of Charity will appear to him several times a day, like angels from heaven, bringing him the food of his body and never withdrawing without having furnished some useful food to his soul. The magistrate, the publicist, the philanthropists will not disdain sometimes to penetrate into this retreat. Even luxury and wealth will be seen to descend there, which adorned themselves the evening before and danced for the profit of misery. In a word, society will depute to this tarnished soul that it wishes to rehabilitate all that it contains in its bosom of intelligent and generous devotedness.

I am willing to believe in the reality of these promises and engagements, and I will also suppose that the unfortunate who is the object of so many eager cares has worthily responded to them. Society has sent him the priest; the priest has spoken to this soul, he has spoken to it in the name of God, and as the envoy of heaven far more than of the society whose mission is rather equivocal and suspect in the eyes of the unfortunate. The word of the priest has entered into this heart which let itself be penetrated by it. The Christian truths have subjugated him by their authority, conquered him by their sweetness. He has taken seriously the fact of a God come upon earth, of a God-Man, of a poor God, of a God judged, condemned, of a God dead for sinners, of a God who makes profession of pardoning. He has understood the necessity of faith in the revealed word of Jesus Christ, the necessity of the salutary practices prescribed by Jesus Christ, and which make souls partake of the merits of His cross and His blood. He has poured into the heart of a merciful judge the secret of all his faults; instead of the one he denied before human justice and which human justice punished, he has confessed a thousand, and received their pardon. He has been seen, he whom men cast far from them, advance toward the altar, sit down for the first time perhaps in his life at the table of a God, of Him who said to the thief on the cross: Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise. Perhaps the pontiff of Jesus Christ has come to join in this feast, and, in the presence of the magistrates and

of all the souls that take an interest in the regeneration of the guilty, has called down the gifts and strength of the Holy Spirit on this reconciled soul.

The success is complete, the sick man is cured. What do I say? Amid the rigours of human justice he has found the gift of divine grace; his chastisement has become his salvation, the prison has been for him the school of faith and piety, and I am all but ready to say: Happy fault that procured him such a benefit! Rejoice, all you who labour for the amelioration of your brethren; behold one of them who was dead has come to life again: *Mortuus erat, et revixit; perierat, et inventus est.* [He was dead, and is come to life again; was lost, and is found. (Luke 15:24.)]

But who would believe it? This man whom society had separated from its body, and whom it declares today worthy to re-enter its bosom, who would believe it? at the moment he receives the kiss of reconciliation, it is against herself, against her who calls herself his benefactress, that he must be put on his guard. It is she who is going to become for him a snare and a danger, a stone of stumbling and scandal. The captive has become free again, he leaves the prison where he has left both the iron chain he found there and the heavier chain of corruption he had brought there; he leaves freed from his evil passions, provided with the solid principles of religion, armed with unshakable resolutions of virtue. But what is not his astonishment when soon he perceives that these principles of religion with which society reformed him, society is totally indifferent to; that these salutary practices by means of which his tarnished soul began to flower again, society is absolutely a stranger to! He begins to reflect; he goes from miscalculation to miscalculation, from disenchantment to disenchantment. They were right, then, those who, more perverse but also better informed, told him that religion was a means like another, exploited by the fortunate of the world to make those who lack everything accept their position. In fact, these same men who took so lively an interest in his conversion, on Sunday he meets none of them around the altars; these same men who sent him the priest to instruct and change him, for their own part have no relation with the priest. To tell all, it is evident that society, the chiefs of society, believe not a word, and above all practise not a syllable of all that persuaded his mind and converted his heart.

And then in what frightful perplexity, in what strange hesitation does not this man find himself! What is he going to become? One of two things: either this man has drawn from the teachings of the priest and from the sacraments of the Church a faith so robust, a religion so solid, that in spite of the contradiction he perceives he will remain faithful to God, and will resign himself by virtue to occupy honestly, humbly, the last rank in a society whose heights are inhabited by prosperous vice and triumphant imposture. And then, I dare say, this man is a phenomenon, if this miracle should some day happen. Chiefs of the people, lower your eyes, come down from your thrones, make place for him who is worthy to command you. The prison begets souls more strongly tempered than all those formed in the family or in the public schools.

Or else, and this is what will infallibly happen, the temptation will be too strong for this unfortunate. He recognises that his simplicity was deceived; that society, more refined than he, abused what remained of honest in his soul. Who knows? Perhaps in the trouble in which his indignation wanders he suspects the priest of having made himself the accomplice of the fortunate of the age, and of having accepted the frightful ministry of preaching to the unfortunate a religion which the others will not hear from his mouth. He falls back into scepticism and doubt; he begins to hate more strongly than ever this society against which he had been armed hitherto only by misery, but which he finds today vile and contemptible by its trickery and sacrilegious egoism. It is done, and the perversity of this man will be worse henceforth than in the past: *Et fiunt novissima hominis illius pejora prioribus.* [And the last state of that man is made worse than the first. (Matt. 12:45.)]

My brethren, and what to answer this man? And when he judges, he, in his soul and conscience, that if the God preached to him were the true God, He ought not to be only the God of convicts, but also the God of honest people: what to say to him? Who will make him believe that the God of heaven has rights to exercise

only behind bolts, and that His jurisdiction stops at the threshold of the prison? No, good sense protests, and says that if religion is true it must be true for all and applied to all.

Sister, said a Black man to a venerable religious of our town who lived in the colonies, Sister, why then do the truths which it is thought good that the Father, the priest, preach to us Blacks, the whites never wish to hear? Have the whites no soul? is there no heaven or hell for them? My brethren, it is because the philanthropy of our age has nothing to answer to this reasoning that all its efforts are struck with sterility. I have taken as example what concerns the reform of the guilty; I could say as much of all the other attempts we witness. The rich man finds it good that the poor man have religion; the adult finds it good that the child have religion: but, I beseech you, at what rate must one be taxed to have the right to do without God, and at what age is one emancipated from the sovereign Being? Have the rich, the learned, the notables, then no soul, and is there heaven or hell only for the poor, the children and the women?

My brethren, it has often been said that France is a light and frivolous nation: I know nothing of it. But what is certain is that France is the country of logic and good sense, that an inconsistency does not last long there, and that the conclusions of the principle or the example laid down are soon and inevitably deduced by the multitudes.

That is why, let us say in passing, France has never been and never will be heretical. Heresy is a halt, inconsistent, in the revolt of the human mind against divine revelation. To deny the infallibility of God on one point and to recognise this infallibility on others is a contradiction with which a German or English mind can accommodate itself, for a time at least; a French mind cannot. Thus France has passed without any middle from faith to universal scepticism, from orthodoxy to the most absolute rationalism. France is the country of good sense and logic: that is why she is not slow to do justice to all false principles, all truncated truths, all fragmented doctrines. Now one will never succeed in making such a people believe that, if there is a God, He established a religion solely as a curb of the small for the profit of the great. No, once more, a religion that offered to some only rights, privileges, exemptions, and imposed on others only burdens and duties, would not be a religion come from heaven; it would have been invented by some cupidity on earth, concerted by the egoism of a few who would have coalesced to secure sacrilegiously their happiness, by chaining in the name of God the passions that might have troubled their felicity.

I sum up all I have said so far. The most praiseworthy efforts attempted by the chiefs of society have been fruitless, for want of conviction, for want of practical example, and because these purely human efforts could not be blessed by God, and because, being inconsistent and interested, they were not acceptable to the multitude. I have shown what is lacking to this apostolate, which is to have pointed out in advance what it would need; I shall nevertheless say it again in a few words which will express my thought still more clearly and present it in a new light.

II. Men of our age have been heard to hold this desperate language which is found in Jeremias: We have cured Babylon, and she is not healed. Let us abandon her to herself, let us renounce her cure, and perhaps the excess of the evil under which she will soon succumb will put us beyond the reach of all the fears her first corruption inspired in us. Ah! my brethren, woe to him who would let enter into his heart this abominable policy which is that of Satan! Woe to him who would think to prepare for himself an easier and surer domination by perverting the generations! Tyrants have been seen to make this infamous calculation; but, after an instant of torpor, soon popular fury was rekindled and devoured the corrupter.

The Wise Man has said it: Where the wicked reign, there are only ruins of men on every side: *Regnantibus impiis, ruinae hominum.* [Prov. 28:12.] And he has said again: A roaring lion and a hungry bear are a feeble image of the cupidity of the wicked prince set over a poor people: *Leo rugiens et ursus esuriens, princeps impius super populum pauperem.* [Prov. 28:15.] But it is written also that a frightful vengeance and dark designs dwell in the heart of impious peoples as of their masters. And besides, there is a God who watches

from the height of the heavens, and who is not slow to pour contempt on these tyrants: *Qui effundit despectionem super principes.* [Who poureth contempt upon princes. (Job 12:21.)] Those who brutalise my people, saith the Lord, shall find perdition, and I will break the head of the enemy princes who say: There is no God but ourselves in the world: *Qui pessimant plebem, inveniant perditionem.* [source not identified] They have reigned, and not by me: *Ipsi regnaverunt, et non ex me;* they were the first of the people, and I never saw them at the foot of my altars: *principes extiterunt, et non cognovi* [Osee 8:4]; they made themselves their god of their gold and their power, a fragile and perishable divinity. One day they fell asleep, and at their waking they found nothing of their riches and authority in their empty hands. Have you seen this people whose merchants are princes, and whose traffickers shine with such lustre that there is nothing more magnificent on earth: *Cujus negotiatores principes, institores ejus inclyti terrae?* [Is. 23:8.] But because they have despised my name, they will feel the strength of my arm, and they will be no more spared than the kings and the powerful who succumbed for having forgotten me, and above whom they will have risen only to be cast down from higher and with greater noise: *Vos autem sicut homines moriemini, et sicut unus de principibus cadetis.* [But you like men shall die, and shall fall like one of the princes. (Ps. 81:7.)] Israel, thy masters are faithless; if they see injustice, they run to take their share of it, all aspire to offices, pursue rewards; all souls are venal, therefore I will cast them from my face, and I will restore thy judges as they were before, and thy counsellors as of old: *Et restituam judices tuos ut fuerunt prius, et consiliarios tuos ut antiquitus.* [Is. 1:26.]

No, no, my brethren, expect nothing from impiety, nothing but your ruin and a universal disaster. You who rejoice in possessing some social superiority, do you wish to keep it? Bring back to God the people whose chiefs and models you are. In default of any other consideration, the instinct of self-preservation makes it for you a rigorous duty. “We have tried it,” you say; “society had undertaken the work of regeneration, we did not succeed.” And I answer you: The principle must be kept, it is good, but it must be completed by the employment of really efficacious means; remedies must be substituted for palliatives, and, for your part, you must draw near to God, but draw near sincerely, practically, entirely.

I say first sincerely. The name French signifies frankness. [*Franc / franchise*: the preacher plays on the name of the Franks.] It has often been said of France that she has the faults of youth; I do not associate myself with that reproach, but assuredly she has its qualities, and in particular uprightness. As long as we were religious we were so with all our heart; we went to God with all our mind, all our soul, all our strength. All our institutions, our laws, our doctrines, our habits led us to Him. The day when, having let ourselves be intoxicated by the enchanting draught poured out by the hand of the sophists, we raised the standard against God, we did it openly, in the face of the whole world, and with that incredible confidence which is found in the thoughtless sallies as in the noble actions of youth. My brethren, shall we leave this road of frankness, and enter a road of trickery and duplicity? Shall we give the people the right to say to us … (it is one of our statesmen who brought this grave accusation against the present epoch), shall we give the people the right to say to us that we are playing it a great comedy, and that, having no doctrine, we wish to govern it by a doctrine? Much has been said of times, already ancient, in which religion would have been hypocritically made to serve the interests of society. We must understand each other. To show much religion when one really has much; when one has in the heart a sincere conviction, to wish to communicate this conviction to others; to make oneself the apostle of one’s faith, the propagator of one’s thought, is that hypocrisy? I ask the dictionaries: no. There may sometimes be excess, indiscretion, at least in the eyes of certain people: so be it! but to profess openly a doctrine one believes, even to seek to gather the legitimate benefits of that doctrine, will never be called a hypocrisy, a disloyalty. On the contrary, to teach a little religion when one has none at all, to wish to secure the benefits which result from a doctrine one has not in the heart, to inspire in others from interest and calculation sentiments one does not share, would not that be hypocrisy and duplicity? Yes. And if it is so, modern society, when it lays its hand on its conscience, can it absolve itself entirely of hypocrisy? No.

I know, and Scripture teaches me, that there is a just judgment of God in this, and that His Providence punishes the peoples who reject the empire of religion by subjecting them to the reign of falsehood and hypocrisy: *Qui regnare facit hominem hypocritam propter peccata populi.* [Who maketh a hypocrite to reign for the sins of the people. (Job 34:30.)] But it is none the less true that hypocrisy is the worst of all vices, the most foreign to our national character, and that it is impossible, in any conjuncture, to admit it as a necessity. If then, as all the eminent men of our age recognise, the people needs a faith, a Christian doctrine; if, on the other hand, as I have demonstrated, a people cannot recover and preserve its faith, its doctrine, except by the concurrence and example of its chiefs, it must be concluded that this faith, this doctrine is necessary to all. It is necessary consequently, my brethren, whoever you are, it is necessary from today, if you do not yet believe, to examine, study, pray, in order to believe; to believe, in order to have the right to teach afterwards; to make oneself an adept in order to become an apostle, a sincere apostle. Outside that, it would be imposture, and which of you is not revolted at the mere thought of being an impostor?

I said in the second place that it is your duty to draw near to God practically. The Gospel teaches us that the Saviour of men began by doing, and taught afterwards: *Coepit facere et docere.* [Acts 1:1.] To see a mote in another's eye when one has a beam in one's own, to impose on others a burden one would not touch with a finger, is what Jesus Christ called Pharisaism *par excellence.* My brethren, is modern society exempt from this Pharisaism? I leave that question to its conscience. Doubtless, Jesus Christ added: The scribes and the Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses; do therefore what they say, and do not imitate what they do. But this wise counsel was not to be heard by the multitudes, and a people which finds around it examples contradictory to the obligations preached to it will never let itself be effectively convinced.

My brethren, O all you who are animated with the noble desire to see the principles of religion and morality flower again in hearts dried up by doubt and corruption, ah! I beseech you, join to your speculative efforts the demonstration that will result from your works. And, to come to some quite practical application, you wish to moralise the lower classes: tell me, do you know anything more moralising than the institution of Sunday, as the Catholic Church prescribes it? Find the secret of leading all the inhabitants of a town, of a province, every Sunday to Mass, of drawing them to the foot of the Christian pulpit from which the doctrine and morality of Jesus Christ will be explained to them. Let that last six months, and, I dare affirm it, behold a town, a whole region regenerated. Now this marvel, it rests only with you, men of the world who are at the head of affairs, of commerce, who occupy the places, the functions, it rests only with you to work it; you will do this miracle when you will. I know that your example for evil is more powerful, obtains its effect more quickly than your example for good. Nevertheless, let all the chiefs of society observe Sunday religiously, assist with faith and piety at the sacrifice of the altars, hear with docility and respect the evangelical word! the day will not be slow to come when the multitudes will walk in their footsteps, and soon floods of Christians returned to God will inundate the too narrow enclosure of our temples.

You wish to moralise the people: I am going to teach you yet another infallible means, the success of which is inevitable. Do you know anything more moralising than confession? Is there anything that rehabilitates more entirely the degraded soul that no longer dared to look at itself? Is there anything more curative for the past, more preventive for the future? Do you know anything more moralising than communion? Is there anything that raises human dignity higher, that makes the small feel better that, in spite of their inferiority, God has honoured them too much for them to be able to think themselves branded by the inequality of ranks? Find the secret of leading a whole population to the tribunals of reconciliation, and from there to the eucharistic table; let that happen only once, and, I dare affirm it, behold a town, a whole region regenerated. Now this marvel, my brethren, men of the world, it rests only with you to work it, you can do this miracle when you will. Let all the great, let all the chiefs of society come humbly to avow their faults, and then feed on the manna that heaven sends them in this land of exile and which will be so sweet for them, and soon their example will be generally followed, and the priests of Jesus Christ will scarcely suffice to fulfil the ministry

of souls and distribute the eucharistic bread.

Finally I said that it is the duty of eminent men to draw near to God entirely. There are things that are not susceptible of being divided, shared: such is religion. Like God, whose expression on earth it is, it is one, and cannot be split, diminished; it is the seamless tunic, it is all of one piece. To want a little religion is to want the impossible. In this matter it is all or nothing. The Gospel contains not a single chapter that is a superfluity and that can be cut off at will. You appeal to religion, you have need of it; take it such as it came from the hands of God. Do not think that God permits you to retouch His work, to remake it according to your ideas. Now this is one of the failings of our age: religion is wanted, but one reserves the right to make a choice among the various dogmas, the various practices; one constitutes oneself judge of what is useful and what is not in the work of Jesus Christ. What happens? It is that, as one receives the law of God only with restrictions and reserves, one gathers none of the fruits one might expect from it, because God does not give His spirit by halves and by fractions: *Non enim ad mensuram dat Deus spiritum;* [for God doth not give the Spirit by measure (John 3:34);] or at least the Lord imitates our parsimony, and grants us His grace only in a feeble and insufficient proportion.

One sometimes asks why what still remains of religion among us does not produce more results. Here is the answer to that question in a word of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which is not in the Gospel, but which Saint Clement has preserved for us: *Quia, ut ait Dominus, si obliqui in me inceditis, et ego in vos obliquus incedam.* [For, as the Lord says, if you walk crookedly toward me, I too will walk crookedly toward you.][2] Jesus Christ saw around Him enemies who were openly bent against His person, apostles who were sincerely devoted to Him; but also timid, cautious spirits who indeed believed that He was the Son of God, but did not avow it aloud, who feared to compromise themselves. To these Jesus Christ said: If you come to me obliquely, I too will go obliquely to you. Now, my brethren, this word of Our Lord defines entirely the times in which we live. Our position relative to God, our march to tend toward Him, is essentially oblique. In law and according to the public principles, we do not go to Him at all; in fact and according to private inspiration, sound reason, necessity, previous habits, we go to Him a little.

See a man of our age, and judge whether all his life he is not drawn in two contrary directions, and whether consequently his manner of going to Jesus Christ is not perpetually oblique. He was born perhaps of a father who did not believe and a mother who did, but certainly of a father who did not practise and a mother who perhaps practised. During his education he saw that the religion of Jesus Christ was taught up to first communion, and that it was no longer in question afterwards; on leaving college he saw that religion was spoken of in the churches and combated in the public courses; in the world he met some estimable and esteemed men who observed religion, but the greater number of influential men who took no account of it. He saw that the public power professed an absolute neutrality, a perfect indifference. If, after this spectacle of perpetual contradictions, some religious sentiment still remains to him, have I not reason to say that it is a religion little assured, which advances only hesitatingly, never head-on, whose march is uncertain, ambiguous, embarrassed, always pulled in one direction, in another?

And if that is the history of the individual, it is above all the history of the ensemble of individuals: we go to God obliquely. Now, in return, God comes to us only obliquely, that is to say, as we fulfil only a feeble part of our duties, we gather only a feeble portion of the benefits of religion. The help of God is still dispensed to us enough not to die, but not enough to live; we languish, we drag along. Man needs religion like air, with full lungs. In this too rarefied atmosphere of spirit, of religious sentiment, in which we have placed ourselves, we live, always near dying; we move, always near stopping; we exist, always near being no more.

Scripture teaches us that in the temple of Solomon, besides the openings made all around, there were in the vestibule of the sanctuary six oblique windows. Well! modern society has closed and condemned all the other openings of the temple; it has preserved only the oblique windows: whence it results that the light of heaven does not fall on us plumb, but reaches us broken, diminished; divine grace must slant, must deviate to

insinuate itself into us through I know not what window of suffering left with regret.

Ah! my brethren, shall we remain for ever with God in this equivocal situation, in this false and ill-defined attitude? And here again it is the duty of the great, of the first of the peoples, to give the example, and to accept entirely and without reserve the religion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. What then, my brethren, since it is quite certain that God is our master, that He will be eternally above us, what merit could there be on our part in disputing with Him and in rendering Him only a part of what is due to Him? what shame could we fear in the avowal of our complete subjection and in the testimony of our entire submission to His law?

O you, Christians my brethren, who have long since understood the doctrine that I teach this day, you who occupy a distinguished rank among your fellow-citizens and whom we see constantly, faithfully accomplish your duties toward God: I shall not address to you, in the name of religion, praises and felicitations; what you do, I know, you ought to do; but we live in an age when it is great to do one's duty. One day, numerous elect whom your example will have won to grace and led to heaven will bless you more eloquently than I. And this will be, after the happiness and glory of seeing God, your chief subject of glory and felicity through all the ages of ages.

And you all who hear me also today, you who have a pre-eminence over your brethren, you have a great mission to fulfil, a restoration to accomplish: to replace God on the altars of the fatherland, and for that to make Him enter again into all hearts. The work of your fathers, you say sometimes; ah! it is precisely that I recommend to you, this work which lasted fourteen hundred years and which an instant of delirium came to interrupt for a time. The day the Catholic Church, in the person of Saint Remigius, baptised the French nation in the person of Clovis, she said to him: Fierce Sicambrian, bow thy head; adore what thou hast burned, burn what thou hast adored.

Alas! my brethren, we too are the sons of an age that burned the Gospel and adored idols. Sons of this age, fierce Sicambrians, bow your heads, adore this cross that you have burned; burn these idols of falsehood that you have adored. But for you this will not be to break with the past, it will be to adore what for fourteen centuries your fathers adored, to reject what for fourteen centuries they rejected; it will be to become again the men of your country, the children of God and the masters of the world. The day the sons of France know how to kneel, God will give back to them the sceptre of the universe. So be it (1).[3]

Translator's notes

1. Identifications flagged as mine: "the illustrious bishop of Clermont" (the preacher gives no name; the allusion is to Massillon's preaching before the court, which I have not verified); "the Black man" and "the venerable religious of our town" are unnamed. The "saying of Our Lord preserved by Saint Clement" is as the preacher gives it; not verified here. "The statesman" who made the accusation of "playing a comedy" is unnamed. The six oblique windows of Solomon's temple are as the preacher gives them (cf. 3 Kings 6:4, which speaks of "oblique windows"; the number is not verified here).

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[1] 15 March 1846, the third Sunday of Lent.

[2] The saying is attributed by the preacher to "saint Clément"; I have not verified the source here.

[3] (1) Cf. Appendix I, p. 22, n° 14; p. 24, 5°. (Editor's note.)

n° 28. Third Sermon on the Return to God, the Duty of Each One in Particular

Preached in the cathedral of Chartres, Passion Sunday, 29 March 1846.[1]

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum. [Jerusalem, Jerusalem, be converted to the Lord thy God. (Cf. Osee 14:2.)] Jerusalem, Jerusalem, be converted to the Lord thy God.

MONSEIGNEUR, To forestall the ruin of a people by revealing to that people its iniquities and its ruins, to speak with courage to the chiefs of society and recall to them energetically their duties: assuredly, my brethren, if there is anything clearly expressed in the divine Scriptures, it is that such is the mission entrusted by the Lord to His prophets and His apostles. The priest is charged, like Paul, to carry the name of the Saviour before the peoples and the first of the people. Be not astonished if the man of God, if the man of Eternity, is not so absorbed by the thought of the permanent fatherland that he does not keep a sincere affection for his temporal fatherland and does not seek to secure its happiness by bringing it back to the truth.

Was not the God-Man Himself seen, He who was born in heaven and amid the eternal splendours, to shed bitter tears over Jerusalem, His fatherland here below, over Jerusalem unfaithful to the visitation of the Lord and struck with blindness concerning her most precious interests? Oh! my brethren, may my preceding discourses have made you understand that the first need of our country is religion; that the only remedy for all the evils that overwhelm us is religion; that the true defenders and true restorers of society will be truly religious men; and that, according to the thought of Saint Ambrose, which applies no less to our country than to the holy nation, those alone among us have abdicated the love of the fatherland who are seized with hatred or envy against Jesus Christ: *Sed ipsi se caritate patriae qui Christo invident, abdicarunt.* [But they have abdicated the love of the fatherland who envy Christ.][2]

Yet, my brethren, however great, however holy the names of nation, of fatherland may be, above all when this fatherland is France, they are found only in passing on the lips of the priest. For after all kingdoms end as they began; their whole role is accomplished here below. Yes, my brethren, there is in the eyes of faith something greater, more precious than empires: it is souls, the souls for whom empires are established: to the point that, when a nation has become unfaithful to its vocation, which is to lead the generations to God, Saint Augustine no longer wishes it to keep this name of nation, but that it be considered as any aggregation whatever of individuals; it is a sort of company of business, of commerce, which should no longer be called a people, a denomination too noble to be thus profaned. Yes, there is in the eyes of faith something more elevated, more illustrious than all the glories here below: it is the souls for whom are established all the distinctions of power and of social hierarchy: to the point that, when the great of the earth have forgotten their mission, which is to facilitate for men the way to heaven, the same Saint Augustine, in his *City of God*, no longer wishes them to be called the kings and shepherds of peoples; they are mercenaries and speculators, and the name of great no longer suits those who concentrate on interests so small.

Yes, I repeat, in the eyes of faith there is something more important than kingdoms, more august than thrones: it is souls. And what matters the longer or shorter duration of societies, what matters the temporal safety of nations, provided that souls, immortal souls, are saved? Sooner or later the day will come when all distinctions of peoples, ranks, authority, powers will have ceased, and above the smoking ruins of the universe there will remain only God and souls, the eternal God and immortal souls. It is because he is placed at this point of view, and lives in the presence of these great truths which are the object of his continual meditations, that the priest, hovering above times and places, makes little account of all earthly and perishable things, save in their relation to the eternal good of souls. And at this moment when I speak to you, my brethren, it is because all the rest fades and disappears from my eyes that, forgetting to what nation you belong, in what condition you are placed, making abstraction of all that forms the passing envelope of the immortal principle you hold in your bosom, I come to speak to you of what constitutes you properly and essentially, of your soul; of your soul which is to be given back to God by a sincere return, by a prompt conversion.

Imperious necessity for each of us to be converted to God, and to be converted promptly. That is the whole object of this discourse.

Merciful Heart of Mary, you whom none ever invoke in vain for the conversion of sinners, draw from your inexhaustible treasures, and place on the lips of your unworthy minister some of those words which penetrate

to the depth of souls and conquer them to grace. *Ave Maria.*

I. Have you never heard, my brethren, a strange thing which is said only among Christians, among Catholics, and which is heard nowhere else? A person approaches mysteriously; joy radiates on his features, overflows from his heart; and he says to you: Oh! rejoice with me, my father has been converted. Another approaches and says to you: My son has been converted, my mother has been converted. This happy news spreads among the children of God, who repeat it to one another in a low voice, with discretion, while the angels of heaven make it the subject of their joy in the heavens. Sometimes the rumour of it reaches even into society, and men of the world are heard to repeat it in a tone more or less indifferent or astonished. But what does this mean? Is it a question of an infidel, a heretic returned to the truth; of an impious man, a persecutor enlightened, softened by grace? Such striking changes are sometimes seen, and one understands that opinion is moved by them. But this father, this husband, this mother, this son of whom you speak, are they not persons justly esteemed, who have moreover always kept the faith of their baptism and preserved most of the external signs of orthodoxy? What does conversion signify here, and what then is this phenomenon so ardently desired, so happily obtained? I am going to tell you.

It is true, this man had the qualities that make an honourable citizen, and if all duties were reduced to those which concern society and the family, it seems that he left nothing to be desired. But have you not read at the head of the elementary book of Christians that God created man to know Him, love Him and serve Him, and thus obtain eternal life? Ah! know it, the last word of our existence is not pronounced so long as it is a question only of domestic or social virtues: those are qualities some of which are found even in the beasts of the fields and in the lions of the desert. There exists between the soul and God a mystery of more intimate virtue. When God, coming forth from His eternal rest, after having prepared for six days this magnificent dwelling, introduced into it His privileged creature, when, bending over the body He had just formed of earth, He breathed into it a spiritual and living soul, He assured to this soul a sublime destiny, and He imposed on it sacred duties to arrive at this destination.

Have you ever thought, my brethren, what your soul is? Yesterday it was not, and soon it is to be plunged into the splendours of the infinite Being. For the soul, the short space of life is the passage between non-existence and eternity; the earth is a bridge, an arch cast between nothingness and the bosom of God. But not every way here below leads the soul to this supreme goal; God Himself has traced the road. Now it is from this road that the man whom you judge faithful in all the rest had strayed; it is from this path that he had departed, so that, accomplishing all the other accessory conditions of his existence, he failed the first and essential condition, he did not go to God: a turning aside, a deplorable aversion, to speak the language of the Scriptures, a wandering that would have drawn him toward abysses of misfortune. And when we say with so much joy that this man has been converted, we say that he has re-entered the way from which he should never have departed, that his heart has resumed its true and natural direction: conversion, return, which replaces him on the road of a happiness without end.

That, my brethren, is what conversion is. Conversion means movement of return toward an object from which one had turned away. This man had turned away from God, he has come back to Him; he had strayed in the defiles of life, he has at last found himself again on the true way: *Perierat, et inventus est.* [He was lost, and is found. (Luke 15:24.)] Do you wish to understand still better what conversion is? Conversion means also change: and what greater change can there be than to pass from the state of death to the state of life? Now this man who has been converted, he was dead and he has risen: *Mortuus erat, et revixit.* Understand well in what this death and resurrection consist.

What is the principle that animates the body? It is the soul. Let the soul separate from the body, there remains only a corpse. And what is the principle that animates our soul? It is God. Let God withdraw from the soul, it may still have the name of life, it has no longer the reality. When the blood ceases to circulate in some part of the body, that part is instantly paralysed; if the blood of Jesus Christ ceases to circulate in the soul, instantly

the soul perishes. Do you see this tree whose sap has been diverted? its foliage soon falls, its branches droop, the trunk dries up, and tomorrow it will be cut down and cast into the fire. Do you see this soul that grace no longer vivifies? it languishes and withers, and tomorrow God will say to His angels to join it to the bundle destined for the eternal brazier.

Now this man whom you proclaimed an estimable man on every point, he had lost the life of grace, he had lost the right to eternal life, he had slept for long this sleep of death. And when we say with so much joy that he has been converted, we say that he has found God again, the blood of Jesus, grace, and with grace the principle of immortality. That, my brethren, is what conversion is. Conversion means change, and this soul has been changed, transformed, transfigured; it was dead, hideous, shapeless; it has recovered life, brightness, health: *Mortuus erat, et revixit.*

But are these ideas too abstract? Do you wish to know better still what conversion is? I am going to tell you in a more precise way.

God has attached the salvation of man to a certain ensemble of duties, all as rigorously prescribed as one another. It is the evangelical doctrine that he who sins in one point of the law becomes instantly guilty of the transgression of all; that he who omits the accomplishment of an obligation will have the same lot as those who commit iniquity; that one single grave action or neglect constitutes the soul in the state of damnation, and exposes it to eternal rigours if God called it to His tribunal.

Now this man whom you proclaimed an estimable man in every point, what he lacked was to accomplish as faithfully the ensemble of his religious duties as he was really exact in the accomplishment of his human duties; to call things by their name, he did not go to confession each year according to the law of God and of the Church, he did not communicate at least at the time of the Paschal solemnities; rather grave omissions were met with at times in his life: omission of prayer, omission of the sacrifice; faults even of which he alone had the secret and from which a life honourable in the eyes of men is not always exempt, had long weighed on his wearied conscience. And when we say with so much joy that this man has been converted, it is that this man, touched interiorly by grace, has gone to lay his heavy burden at the feet of the priest, has gone to sit at the eucharistic table, and that today his soul, disengaged from the iniquities that soiled it, adorned with the splendours of divine grace, enriched with the precious faculty of acquiring ceaselessly new merits, finally dyed with the adorable blood of the Lamb, no longer dreads the passing of the exterminating angel, but on the contrary awaits with confidence the call of the supreme Rewarder.

That, my brethren, is what conversion is. To call it by its most precise name, conversion is confession followed by an entire renewal of life; and this man has confessed and he lives as a Christian, he fulfils its duties and possesses all its advantages.

Now, my brethren, conversion being thus defined, do long arguments need to be given to establish that it is for you an imperious need and duty? Are there not here men who have turned away from the road that leads to God? and have not these need to put themselves back on the true path? lost, must they not find themselves: *Perierat, et inventus est?* Are there not here men who are in the state of sin? and have not these need to be changed entirely? dead, must they not revive: *Mortuus erat, et revixit?* Are there not here men who do not go to confession, and who, not confessing, are necessarily in the disgrace of God? and have not these need to be reconciled? separated from God, must they not draw near to Him?

Yes, my brother, man of the world, you who are justly esteemed by your fellow-citizens, you are not just before God, you have need to be converted; you, my sister, woman of the world, whose wit and qualities are praised, you are not thereby perfect before God? there is a great omission in your life, you have need to be converted. You owe it to God, you owe it to yourself. You owe it to God. And to omit all other considerations, it is a duty toward His infinite mercy which ceases not to recall you to Him.

What an admirable subject of meditation, my brethren, is this inexhaustible goodness, this untiring patience with which the Lord awaits us, ever ready to receive us as soon as we throw ourselves into His arms! Ah! given over to the presumptions of our affairs or our pleasures, stunned by the cares and distractions of life, we do not think of it. But the day when, recollected within ourselves, we begin to reflect; the day when, coming out of our lethargy, we begin to see things as we ought always to have seen them, what astonishment, what surprise seizes our soul! what torrents of tears flow from our eyes! what regrets! what bitter sorrow! Ask it of Augustine.

O my very dear brother, the God whom you have forgotten during the fairest years of your life is the God who, having given you being by an act of His love, died on a cross by a prodigy of His mercy, to give you back heaven and the grace that leads to it. The God whom you have abandoned is (by what names shall I not call Him?) a physician ever ready to pour balm on your wounds, and who, while the sick man revolts against him and repels him, hides patiently at his bedside, until the excess of the evil gives him the right to approach the wound and heal it. He is a shepherd as courageous as tender, who abandons ninety-nine faithful sheep to run after the strayed sheep; who is not stopped by the brambles of the desert; who has no rest until, having loaded on his bleeding shoulders this poor fugitive, he brings it back at last to the fold. He is a father who goes every day upon the roads, who sits upon the mountains to see whether his son is not returning; and who, from as far as he perceives the prodigal, runs to meet him, throws himself on his neck, pardons him all, except his persistence in wishing to excuse himself, thinks himself too happy to find again him whom he had lost, and celebrates as a feast the joy of his return.

My brother, the God whom you have forgotten for so long a time and to whom you have not yet returned is that Jesus who passed by doing good, healing all ills, relieving all misfortunes; that Jesus whose goodness toward the guilty went so far that the weak were scandalised at it; that Jesus whom His heart led by preference into the house of sinners; that Jesus who forgave much in favour of much love; that Jesus who absolved her very one who had been taken in the crime; that Jesus who wearied Himself seeking His poor creature, who sat down, tired with the journey and thirsting far less from the heat of the day than from the ardour to reconquer a soul that was dear to Him; it is that Jesus who has done what no friend does for his friend, who has shed all His blood for you; it is that Jesus who has opened in the bosom of His Church a fountain of pardon, a fountain ever gushing, where souls can wash as many times as they have contracted stains. My brother, my sister, the God whom you have forgotten for so long a time and to whom you have not yet returned is the God who finds His glory, who makes His greatness consist, in pardoning; it is the God who bears with you in spite of your infidelities, who awaits only your return to come back to you, and who, if you come to repent of the evil you have done, will Himself repent of the severe thoughts which His justice had for an instant conceived. This God whom you have abandoned is that God who makes the delight of the Angels and the elect in glory, the God who pours a river of peace into just souls on earth; it is the God whom you knew and cherished in your childhood, the God who sometimes gave Himself to you, and who then brought into your heart a joy, a happiness that you have never found again since; it is the God into whose bosom you were cast from your entrance into the world; it is the God in whose arms your father, your mother fell asleep with the sleep of the just. My brother, my sister, count, if you can, all the stars of heaven and all the sands of the sea: perhaps then I shall tell you all the rights of God to your love.

Now it is this God whom you have for long afflicted, by keeping yourself obstinately far from Him; it is this God whom you outrage, by resisting His laws, by despising His wills. My brother, you have ideas of order, of justice; you are susceptible of attachment, of gratitude. Where then will you find anything that can justify this revolt and this independence, this ingratitude and this injustice? And have I not reason to say that you must be converted, that you owe it to God, that you owe it to Him on all titles at once, since He is for you a master, a saviour, a father, a friend? O equitable man, you who would be afflicted to ignore the rights of anyone whatever, I am that Jesus whom you have persecuted for so long: is it not hard for you to struggle

against the goad of my love? Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Christian soul, return, return at last to the Lord thy God: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, revertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.*

If you owe it to God to be converted, my brethren, you owe it also, you owe it above all to yourselves. For after all, my brethren, the happiness of God is not in question in the affair of our salvation; and if His great mercy desires it, nevertheless the interests of His glory are not engaged in it. What do I say? whatever happens, God will always be glorified: homage to His goodness in the happiness of the elect, homage to His justice in the misfortune of the reprobate; rewarder in the one, avenger in the others; the alleluia of the heavens and the blasphemy of the hells are only different strophes of one same hymn to the God who must make His glory consist in punishing evil as in crowning good. And the prophet of Patmos has taught me that at the same time that a cloud of heavenly perfumes, which are the prayers of the Saints, will surround the throne of the Lamb, there will be seen to rise also before Him the smoke of the torments of the damned for ages of ages, a testimony of His justice which will penetrate even into the eternal sanctuary of His love.

Therefore, Christian brethren, if it is true that in converting yourselves you will answer the liveliest desire of the God of mercies, it must nevertheless be avowed that you will labour above all for yourselves, for your eternal interest and also for your present interest. Jesus Christ our divine Saviour said, with that simplicity of expression which contains in two words the most important thought that we can have before our eyes: *Porro unum est necessarium:* one thing is necessary. And what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Everything has prospered for you on earth: health, fortune, honours, friendships; you have raised your house, secured your future, established your children; you have acquired a name in science, in letters, in the magistracy; you have incorporated yourselves into a condition superior to that in which you were born; the revolutions that trouble the fortune of others have only advanced and served yours; all your desires are satisfied, all your wishes fulfilled.

Religion advances, and says to you, with that grave and solemn voice whose high wisdom only thoughtlessness and levity do not understand: *Porro unum est necessarium:* now one thing is necessary; and this single thing is the only one you have neglected. And what will it profit you to have obtained all that was the object of your ambition if your soul is not saved for ever! You have advanced the happiness of your own; you have pushed to a perhaps heroic degree the perfection of human virtues; you hear resounding around you accents of gratitude; one day perhaps inconsolable tears will wet your coffin; your memory will remain in blessing among men: *Porro unum est necessarium:* now one thing is necessary. For what is all that, if, while you are praised where you shall be no more, you do not find happiness where you are? What do I say? Hear the terrible word of Saint Augustine: They are praised where they are not, and they are overwhelmed with torments where they are.

Yes, my brethren, one thing is necessary, it is to avoid eternal misfortune, to arrive at happiness without end. Now it rests only with you. Be converted to me, saith the Lord, and I will be converted to you. Let the sinner repent, and I will remember his faults no more, and his iniquity shall be forgotten. Ah! my very dear brother, it is toward heaven, toward infinite and eternal felicity, that I invite you to return, when I press you to return to God. Heaven is the fatherland of innocence, but it is far more still the fatherland of repentance. When I lift my eyes to that holy mountain, I see there in the first rank great sinners converted; the first places even seem reserved there for penance: David, Magdalen, Peter, Paul, Augustine. My brother, my sister, a throne is prepared there for you, a shining throne; be converted, and an eternity of happiness will be assured to you.

But, at the same time also, you will find again from this moment what you have entirely lost for long years, peace and tranquillity of soul. Who hath resisted Him and hath had peace? asks the Holy Spirit. Who? assuredly it is not you, my very dear brother? Is it not true that with all the elements of happiness you are not happy? that, living in harmony with all others, you are not in accord with yourself? that there is at the bottom of you a struggle, a war? that this rod of the Lord of which the prophet speaks, this rod that ever watches, has been as it were planted in the midst of your soul? For you no pure and unalarmed enjoyment, your sweetest

moments are mixed with fear and trouble. That is why this inequality in your humour, this alteration on your brow, this sadness and, what is more insupportable, this unspeakable weariness of which you are the prey. That is why the diversions, the pleasures of others are for you insipid and without savour. Do you wish that everything around you should take again that I know not what smiling and happy outward look that once communicated calm and joy to your soul? Ah! my very dear brother, become again what you were then, and everything will grow fair to your eyes as in the past.

Oh! who could tell the transports of a soul returned to God after long wanderings! Hear the ineffable accents of gratitude that escape from the breast of Augustine. In what terms he thanks the Lord, with David, for having broken his chains, for having loosed his bonds! How Monica, his tender mother, becomes a thousand times dearer and more venerable to him! How Ambrose is a sacred being, an angel of heaven, something more in his eyes! How he remembers the least circumstances, the least particulars of his conversion! With what complacency he describes that garden where he walked his uncertainties, that fig tree under which he had cast himself on the ground and from which he heard the divine voice saying to him: “Take up and read”! In the holy intoxication, in the sacred delirium of his soul, he invites the whole creation to join him: one would say a prisoner delivered from a dark dungeon, who salutes with transport this sweet light of heaven, this fair nature he has not seen for long. Everything is as it were new to him; it seems that he wakes from a long reverie, and that, at last come out of distractions and chimeras, he finds himself again amid the realities he has known, he has loved of old. His conversion, his change has changed all that surrounds him. The renewal of his soul has produced a universal renewal around him.

That, my brethren, is what the joys of conversion are, while the paths of crime are rough and difficult. Yes, he who does iniquity is the enemy of his own soul, he who commits sin is the slave of sin. My brother, have pity then on yourself by drawing near to God: *Miserere animae tuae, placens Deo.* [Have pity on thy own soul, pleasing God. (Ecclus. 30:24.)] No, expect no remedy for the interior evil that devours you so long as you have not given back your heart to God. God loves you too much to allow you to taste any happiness far from Him. This sad felicity is the portion only of some souls, despaired of for heaven, and to whom the just judge must needs abandon here below some rewards of their human qualities, before the avenging fire punishes eternally their obstinate impenitence. As for you, the mercy of God will not cease to say to you in a thousand ways and under a thousand different forms: Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Christian soul, return to the Lord thy God.

To take up again in a few words all I have just said to you, Christian brethren who live far from God, you must be converted. You owe it to God, to His infinite mercy; you owe it to yourselves, to your eternal happiness and your present happiness. But it is not enough that you be resolved to be converted; I add that you must be converted promptly. Object of the second consideration.

II. There are few men, my brethren, who have resolved to die in the state of sin; or rather there are few, infinitely few, if there are even any, who do not keep the secret hope, who have not even a more or less fixed intention, to return to God. But what pretexts for temporising! what hesitations, uncertainties! How to follow through all the subterfuges this equivocal will which makes a weapon of everything against the definitive step asked of it? I hear this one say, for example: I shall be converted, but I have years still before me, nothing presses. I hear that one say: Ah! to be converted, but it is my most ardent desire! make me really converted, I will bless you as a saviour; but conversion is a grace, and, in spite of all my wishes, I feel that the moment of this grace has not yet come for me.

Let us stop here, and take up these two reasons that are alleged to delay conversion.

You have time, you tell me, nothing presses; you have years before you. And I answer: No, you have not the time; for see what the delay makes you risk on the one hand, see what on the other it makes you assuredly lose.

You have time: you are very powerful, my brother, if you can say this word with truth. To have time: I thought these two words could never be associated, since time is the most fugitive thing, the most impossible to fix, to retain. You have time: I thought the Lord, who promised man pardon, had not promised him the morrow. You have time: the Wise Man at least does not counsel you to fall asleep on this assurance; for he tells you not to delay to be converted and not to put it off from day to day, seeing that you know not what the day that is to follow will bring. You have time: Jesus Christ did not hold this language to you, when He told you that He would come suddenly like a thief. You have time: and if, this very night, I knock at your door and ask your soul of you again, what will be your eternal lot? You have time: and do you know what you risk when you temporise thus? do you know what eternal stake you hazard? You have time: ah! if you think you have it today, you will think you have it always; by dint of living, one persuades oneself that one will never die; one has seen others die around one and has survived them; what reason why one should not survive all those with whom one still lives? You have time: you will say it still under your white hairs, you will say it to those children, those tearful friends who, to spare your sensibility, will not dare declare to you that time is about to end for you. You have time: you will say it still when time, spreading its wings, flies far from you and casts you back into the bosom of immense eternity. You have time: your lips will still murmur these words, and you will be at the feet of the Judge. Alas! alas! and after having had time only to sin, you will become eternal only to suffer.

You have time: he too ought to have had time, that man, that friend whose loss you weep, and whom death came suddenly to surprise without his having been able to think of settling his conscience. They too ought to have had time, those who, careless and distracted, travelled yesterday with the speed of the thunderbolt, conducted by a terrible element which suddenly devoured the web of their days, as it devours the arid distances. You have time: and I tell you that if you put off still to profit by the time of mercy, there will come for you no other time than that of vengeances.[3]

But I am willing to be mistaken. No; you will not die without having realised your projects of conversion. Nevertheless, I shall say to you, if you do not risk eternity, see then all that you lose by your delays. And, before all, why prolong thus a state which is for you a source of anxieties, sadness, perplexity! Your life will be long; ah! I beseech you, make it useful and fruitful. Now your life will be truly useful only if it bears fruits for heaven; and it will bear fruits for heaven only so far as you are constituted in the grace of God. For it is the doctrine of Jesus Christ and of the Church that the tree must necessarily be good to produce good fruits, that every evil tree produces evil fruits.

Understand then, my brethren, all that you lose, you who put off from year to year returning to God: *Ut quid perditio haec?* [To what purpose is this waste? (Matt. 26:8.)] Why deprive yourselves for eternity of the merit of so many actions which prepare above your heads an immense weight of glory? You are not a spendthrift, my brother, when it concerns your temporal fortune; without being miserly, you are what is called a positive man. And when it concerns your eternal fortune, when it concerns your most intimate interests, oh! how badly you manage your affairs! how many funds lost! how many bad debts! how many interests and revenues neglected, which you will never recover! It is of faith: all that has been done in the state of sin is dead, will not revive. Ten years, twenty years, thirty years of your life, you will have lived more or less as a Christian, and all those years, for want of a definitive effort to constitute yourself in the friendship of God, will have been entirely sterile, unproductive for eternity: *Scribe virum istum sterilem:* Prophet, write on the brow of this man: Barren. [Jer. 22:30.]

And you, women of the world, who have in you the spirit of faith, of piety even, but who do not accomplish its practices, those above all that regenerate the soul, ah! how cruel you are toward yourselves to lose the price and merit of so many virtues, of so many sorrows perhaps! *Ut quid perditio haec?* What a loss it is to lose so many riches, to remain poor in the midst of so much abundance! My sister, it is not soon, it is not tomorrow, it is today that you must be reconciled with God. And henceforth, regenerated in the bath of grace,

you will be the good tree, planted by the water-side, whose leaf does not fall and which yields its fruit in due season; and all that you do shall prosper, and all your works shall be recorded in the book of life.

“To be converted,” you answer, “ah! it is the most ardent wish of my heart; convert me, and I will bless you as Augustine blessed Ambrose. But conversion is a grace, and until now it has not been granted me.”

Ah! if you are really in this disposition, my very dear brother, your conversion is near. Yes, doubtless, conversion is a grace which comes from God: and presently our lips are going to open again to ask it of Him, this grace: *Converte nos, Deus salutaris noster.* [Convert us, O God our saviour. (Ps. 84:5.)] Convert us, Lord, it is said elsewhere, and we shall then be truly converted. But conversion demands also the concurrence of our will; grace cannot do all alone. Now it is on the side of the human will that the obstacle, the delay is always found. God! but His most express will, is it not your sanctification? God! ah! how often He has offered you His grace without finding on your part anything but refusals. Ah! for you also, as for Jerusalem, how often He has willed, and you have not willed: *Quoties volui … et noluisti!* [How often would I … and thou wouldst not! (Matt. 23:37.)] How often you have heard His voice speaking to you, inviting you, calling you with love. Alas! and you have hardened your heart.

But at last, you say, you are awaiting the moment of grace: and I tell you that this moment has arrived; that so many others who were converted did not yield to a movement stronger than that which you resist; that if you are not converted today, you will never have more pressing motives to be converted. You await the moment of grace: and I find that this moment has come; and I find the proof of it in your disgusts with the world, in your attractions toward God, in the examples, the prayers that I notice around you, in the inspiration that God gives to me myself at this instant.

Yes, my brother, the moment of grace has come for you; witness this disgust that for long it has made you conceive for the vanities of the world. Grace seldom proceeds by those powerful blows that cast down the sinner like Saul on the road to Damascus. But if ordinarily it does not break the bonds that fetter the heart, it is that, by a slower and gentler action, it loosens them and weakens them insensibly. That is what it has done with you who hear me. Is it not true, my very dear brother, that you are very far today from thinking and feeling as you thought, as you felt at another epoch of your life? Is it not true that those passions so strong, so impatient of all yoke, have been singularly appeased? If I had asked you, some years ago, to break for God habits, affections which you then thought eternal, with what energy you would have resisted this impossible step! Today what most captivated your soul has become for you indifferent or odious.

My brother, you await the moment of grace: and it is grace that for long has spied out, welcomed all the occasions to detach your heart from the earth; it is grace that arranged those mishaps, those ruptures, those disgraces which you think blows of misfortune, and which are blows of grace; it is grace that charged envy, black sorrows, to trouble and weaken the passions that dominated you; it is grace that permitted revolutions to reach you. You are, you tell me, one of the victims, one of the wounded of our last upheavals. You have lost your place, your salary, a part of your fortune. Yes, but God wishes thus to make you find heaven. Grace, it is she who has led you where I see you now, and who has made use of everything, of your very faults, to advance the work of your conversion.

You await the moment of grace: but it is she who, not content with filling your soul with disgusts for all the rest, sends you these attractions, these sudden illuminations, these lively desires. For some time, have you not thought, have you not often said, that there are happy only those who belong to God? How often, in thinking of the years of your adolescence, when God and virtue, piety and innocence filled your soul; how often, at the memory of the holy lessons of your mother, of her wise counsels; how often, at the memory of the emotions, the impressions you felt of old, your eyes have filled with tears, tears of regret but also tears of desire! How often, having entered this temple which you perhaps thought only to cross, you have felt there the invitations of grace, I know not what that aspired in you toward a good you no longer possess! You await

the moment of grace, my brother: but grace at this very moment fills your whole soul, it overflows from your heart, and if you yielded to its empire, your conversion would long since have been completed.

You await the moment of grace: but it is she who for some time multiplies around you the examples and the prayers that must at last determine your return to God. There are times in which God seems to hide Himself from the eyes of men; times in which His grace seems to have lost all its efficacy, in which His spirit seems to have abandoned the earth: *Et erat sermo Domini pretiosus in diebus illis.* [And the word of the Lord was precious in those days. (1 Kings 3:1.)] Then the priest labours all night, and gathers nothing but his weariness. The Spouse of Jesus Christ seems to have become barren, she brings forth no more. Secret and mysterious suffering, that God lays upon His Church; impenetrable designs of Providence, which will bring forth the glory of God from the bosom of this trial.

But, my very dear brother, it is no longer in these days of complete barrenness that we live. By the divine mercy, the fountain of miracles has been reopened; the oracles are not mute in Israel; new effusions of grace come every day to console us. Yes, yes, my brethren, while all human powers seem conspired against God, while proud reason flatters itself with having dethroned Jesus Christ and detached the multitudes from the Gospel, God by a secret operation resumes His work and brings hearts back to Him by thousands. We see prodigies that our fathers did not see.

And without speaking of what passes among neighbouring nations, no century has perhaps seen more conversions than ours; conversions of men of all ranks, of all social positions. The warrior who has grown old in camps takes the floor in the high assemblies of politics and makes known before the whole country his belief and piety. The magistrate, the scholar, the statesman are met mingled with the artisan and the workman at the foot of the altars. No, grace has lost nothing of its power; it ferments secretly still in the bosom of the masses: like those currents of the mysterious fluid [electricity] whose existence science has established, it furrows, it traverses in every sense the social body.

You await the moment of grace, my brother: but grace has never knocked more efficaciously at the door of the heart. She goes to seek, without one’s being able to suspect by what way, those who seemed to keep farthest from her. Learn from me what you do not suspect. This friend, this accomplice perhaps, whose blame or mockery you dread, grace solicits him as she solicits you; what do I say? He is further advanced than you, he has secretly been reconciled with God and with his own conscience; and he whom you fear awaits only your conversion to let you know his. You await the moment of grace: but grace has made a thousand conquests around you, and you will soon be the only one who resists her. Your worthy wife, your children, your brothers, your friends have all obeyed grace; they profess, they practise the faith, the religion.

My brother, but all that is yours is God’s; evidently you cannot separate yourself here below, nor for all eternity, from those you love most. Those with whom I see you make but one heart and one soul have given to God this heart and this soul; my brother, but already you are a Christian, you are just in what makes the half of yourself. But, without your perceiving it, you have made the greater part of the way, there remains only a slight distance to cross, and while I beseech you to have done, the Angels, for whom what will soon be already is, have begun in heaven that feast which is celebrated there each time a sinner has returned to God.

And if so many examples have not yet conquered you, how could you struggle longer against so many prayers that are made ceaselessly for you before God, at the foot of the altars of Mary? My brother, you await the moment of grace, and a thousand hearts ask it ceaselessly for you, and it cannot be that they have not obtained it. Around you filial tenderness, maternal tenderness, conjugal tenderness have coalesced with Christian charity to do a holy violence to heaven and to your soul. No, the son of so many tears, the husband, the father, the soul who is the object of so many wishes cannot remain longer unfaithful. My brother, but the whole Church prays for you; but God has put into the heart of those who are almost strangers to you a secret inspiration which leads them to intercede for you.

My brother, my sister, you await the moment of grace: and I tell you with assurance that this moment has come. This hope, it is not only around me, it is in me that I find it, it is in my priestly heart. My brother, you whose white hairs I am accustomed to revere, you whose family virtues I know, you whose noble and loyal soul I have often appreciated; my brother, you in whom I love the benevolent and devoted fellow-citizen, the upright man, the friend of his country; my sister, you whom I have not been able to appreciate myself, but whose qualities and misfortunes have moved me more than once, let me tell you: God has interested my heart in your salvation; He has excited toward you, personally and by name, the little apostolic zeal that lives in me. How often, I, priest of Jesus Christ, priest of Him who came to save souls, how often I have carried your name to His altar! how often I have mingled this name with the oblation of the adorable sacrifice! how often, holding in my hands the holy and adorable Victim who lives and reigns for ages of ages, I have asked Him to give me souls, and in particular yours! Ah! said the angel Raphael to Tobias, I seemed to eat and drink with you; but I use an invisible food and a drink which men know not.

Yes, my brother, and what I say of myself I say of all my brethren in the priesthood: I could seem to you like one of yourselves in the relations of common life, sitting at your hearth or your table; but there is for the priest another food, another drink. The soul of the priest hungers, thirsts for your soul; it is this thirst Jesus wished to quench when He sat on Jacob’s well and conversed with the Samaritan woman. God forbid that our zeal should ever be indiscreet and importunate! But, shall I tell you? yes, for one gladly lets it be said that one is the object of an incessant thought of devotedness and love, more than once, in thinking of what you lack, my soul has felt, like Paul’s, the throbbings, the assaults of a zeal that had difficulty in containing itself. Silver and gold I have none, I would say with Peter; but what I have I would give you in the name of the Lord Jesus. What I have in my priestly hands is pardon, reconciliation, it is grace, it is glory, it is peace, joy here below, it is the eternal felicity of heaven.

My brother, let me stretch out my hand to you and tell you to rise and walk: *Surge et ambula.* [Acts 3:6.] And what have you to fear from us? You have nothing to teach me. I must avow it to you, for by dint of moderation I should miss my aim; I should hinder your confidence, I should embarrass your repentance, if you could think that I believe you without sin and that I find in your return nothing that should cost you. No; I know what the human heart is; I know that the most honourable life before men is not without stain before God; I know that sin has in a manner its domicile in our corrupt nature, that virtues do hardly more than pass through it like amiable guests, agreeable strangers, whereas evil is there to stay; I know that, far from God and His sacraments, there are necessarily weaknesses, that to those of youth succeed those of mature age and that old age itself is not always exempt from them; I know these things, and the tender interest I bear you has not reasoned from the hypothesis of your innocence and impeccability: for I am the priest of Jesus who came to pardon, to efface, to forget. My brother, you await the moment of grace: and I feel that it escapes from my hands and wishes to pass into your soul to heal and save it.

Angels of the sanctuary, you know it, I have asked only one thing of the Lord, and I shall ask it of Him again every day of my life, which is to save souls. O divine Jesus, give to others fortune, power, successes, glory, but to your priest give souls: *Da mihi animas.* [Give me souls. (Gen. 14:21.)] Let others seek the brilliance of science, the triumphs of speech; Lord, take from the lips of your priest every eloquence that would not save souls: *Da mihi animas.*

Lord Jesus, sometimes when I enter your temple to pour out my prayer there, the magnificences of your dwelling, this majesty rival of that of the temple of the heavens, come to dazzle my eyes and inflame my admiration. But soon, taking refuge in the depth of the sanctuary, I understand at your feet that after all of this temple itself there will not remain stone upon stone, that one day nothing will remain of it but the souls that will have been sanctified in it, the only stones destined to compose the structure of the eternal Jerusalem. And then I forget all the other splendours of the basilica to think only of souls, and to beseech you, Lord, to bring them in crowds to these fountains of salvation that you have opened in the temple: *Da mihi animas.*

At the entrance of this admirable church I have often considered with tears a touching representation sculpted by our fathers. On one side is the bosom of Abraham, or rather the bosom of God; on the other, the precipice of hell. Between these two extreme terms a crowd of men of all conditions advance, alas! almost all toward the fatal goal, almost none toward the happy term. Yet above these unfortunates one sees clouds of Angels who, with arms outstretched and mouth open, by gesture and voice, strive, while there is still time, to frighten, to recall, to seize again these unhappy ones, some of whom are already on the brink of the precipice. In effect, some obey; terrified, they open their eyes, turn back the head, resume the direction shown them; and scarcely have they advanced a few steps when, fearing doubtless that they may retrogress, the Angels rush upon them and bear them in their arms and on their wings even before the throne of God.

O Angels who watch at this moment beside the sinners who hear me, continue this touching office: but permit me to say it: if that is your function, it is also ours. And even you cannot do all alone. After the Angel had descended to move the water of the pool, a man was needed to plunge the sick man into it. Angel of heaven, you need the concurrence of the priest of earth. Faithful guardian, speak, speak to this soul that my voice has not perhaps shaken; I, priest, shall content myself with stretching out the hand and absolving. Then, reconciled by our care, this soul enlaced as it were between the arms of the Angel and of the priest, we shall bear it into the bosom of Abraham, into the bosom of God.

You, O blessed spirit, your task will be accomplished, you will remain in the glory which is your fatherland. The priest will come down again to the land of exile and begin the same ministry anew. But may he one day share your lot, enter heaven with a soul reconquered, and, this time, remain there in its company and in that of the Angel with whom he will offer it to God. So be it (1).[4]

Translator’s notes

1. The sculpted representation at the entrance of the cathedral (the bosom of Abraham and the precipice of hell) is not further identified here. Patristic attributions (Ambrose, Augustine on “nation” and “kings and shepherds”, and “they are praised where they are not”) are as the preacher gives them; not verified here. “The mysterious fluid” I gloss as electricity (my reading).

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[1] (1) This sermon bears in the manuscript the title: *Third sermon on conversion*. — A marginal note, in the hand of Mgr Pie, indicates that it was preached twice in the cathedral of Poitiers: first at the Lenten retreat, in 1850; then at the retreat of the jubilee, in 1876. (Editor’s notes.)

[2] The Ambrose citation is as the preacher gives it; not verified here.

[3] The allusion to those who “travelled yesterday with the speed of the thunderbolt” is apparently to a recent railway accident; not identified here.

[4] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 22, n° 15. (Editor’s note.)

n° 29. Sermon on the Resurrection

Preached on Easter Day in the cathedral of Chartres, 12 April 1846.[1]

Numquid qui dormit non adjiciet ut resurgat? [Shall he that sleepeth rise again no more? (Ps. 40:9.)]

Shall he who sleeps not awake? (Ps. xl, v. 9.)

MONSEIGNEUR, Is it not on this day that is accomplished, as far as it can be accomplished here below, the word which the prophet of the new covenant once heard: Behold, I make all things new: *Ecce nova facio omnia?* [Apoc. 21:5.] In effect does not everything seem today to have been renewed? Only yesterday it was a tomb, Jeremias and his songs of death; the tabernacle was empty, the sacrifice had ceased, the bells had lost even that mournful voice which they do not refuse to other mortals when they go down into the grave. The men most indifferent to Christian dogmas underwent in spite of themselves some touch of the mysterious impression that attaches to these days so fruitful in memories; the crowd, ordinarily light and careless, was

grave and silent. And behold, this morning I know not what newness has changed the face of all things; I know not what unaccustomed light has given the holy place an aspect wholly different: it is like a ray of life driving out the darkness of death; the walls of the temple and the faces of Christians seem rejuvenated. The Alleluias, long mute, have begun to resound under the sacred vault. The whole Catholic universe has sung at once: Christ is risen, alleluia! In her ecstasy of happiness, the Church interrupts herself at each word of the Gospel narrative, she breaks and cuts all her sentences with this cry of joy: Alleluia!

Then, this evening, she puts in our mouths this hymn so naively joyful, this rhymed history of the resurrection, which the organ repeats with the choir-boy, and to which all answer with so much enthusiasm and jubilation by the refrain of the triple alleluia; and this song of congratulation to Mary, which follows so well that of condolence for her sorrows, this song which an Angel composed for earth and which is as it were a fragment stolen from the poetry of the heavens: Queen of heaven, rejoice, because He whom you were worthy to bear is risen as He said (1).[2]

Ah! how I pity them, my brethren, those who are insensible to this language and these pomps of the Church! How I pity them, if there are any, the men who remain strangers to what is renewed and reproduced in these days in the living Jerusalem of Christians! For us, not content with taking part in all the transports of this solemnity, we shall wish above all to penetrate its mystery.

My brethren, said the holy abbot of Clairvaux, sometimes we speak against vices, we treat questions of morality, and this kind of discourse is very useful: *Et genus illud sermonis perutile.* But on feast days, and above all in the principal solemnities, it is better to attach oneself to the mystery which the day consecrates, so that the mind may be enlightened and the sentiment excited. For how will you celebrate what you do not know? And how will you know it if it is not announced to you? Therefore, continues Saint Bernard, let those who are skilled in the law not take it ill if we content ourselves with presenting to the less learned minds the simple food of the exposition of the mystery. The most learned themselves will gain from it; for, besides the charity they will exercise in condescending to the need of their brethren, they will be able to gather for themselves a precious nourishment, if, by attentive meditation, they express from these common dishes the delicate and subtle juice which escapes less formed minds.[3]

These wise reflections of the holy doctor, my brethren, I accept for myself as for you; and I hope that you will religiously receive the considerations I come to present to you on the mystery of the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, considered in itself, which will be the first point, considered in its consequences, which will be the second point. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is an incontestable fact on which our faith rests; the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fruitful principle from which several particular consequences flow.

O Mary, permit me to implore your assistance, in congratulating you with the Church on the happiness that the appearance of your risen Son brought you this morning: *Regina caeli.*

I. David, speaking in the person of Christ, said, eleven centuries in advance: My enemies have devised my ruin, and they have said: When shall he die, and his name perish? *Quando morietur, et peribit nomen ejus?* [Ps. 40:6.] But, resumes the royal prophet, shall he that sleepeth rise again no more: *Numquid qui dormit non adjiciet ut resurgat?* My brethren, between the success of the impious, who had succeeded in immolating Jesus Christ and applauded their triumph, and the victory of Jesus Christ seizing again the life that had been snatched from Him and foiling by His resurrection all the plots of hell, what moments of solemn expectation! what high questions in suspense! what sentiments of anxiety, hesitation, dejection in the most faithful hearts! Let us transport ourselves to this decisive moment, when the most important affair that ever was was about to be resolved.

The redemption of the world, awaited for four thousand years, seemed at last to touch its term. The days marked by the prophets had come; the weeks counted by Daniel were about to expire. Bethlehem had seen the marvels announced by Micheas. A man who called himself the Son of God and the Desired of the nations

had spread for three years his doctrine with his benefits, teaching what no mouth had yet taught, doing what no power had ever done. Questioned as to what he thought of his Master, Peter had answered Him: I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God, who are come into this world. At last the fatal day has come. This man on whom rest such great hopes is in the hands of his enemies; he is judged, condemned, fastened to a cross. His body is put in a sepulchre; and, so that all surprise may be impossible and that the prediction which this man, still alive, had made concerning his resurrection may not be accomplished, the public power places a good guard near the tomb, and has the stone sealed with the seal of the nation, so that any rash enterprise becomes a crime of State, one of those crimes punished at once with capital penalty.

The enemies of Jesus have come to their ends. For long they had said: When shall he die, and when shall his name be effaced from the memory of men: *Quando morietur et peribit nomen ejus?* Behold him dead at last, and soon his name will be forgotten and will vanish in the obscurity of the tomb, where he is legally and irrevocably buried. Around the sepulchre, as lately at Calvary, I think I see those shakings of the head, I think I hear those ironical provocations: Vah! thou that destroyest the temple … Well! this man who was to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days, if he is so powerful let him come out of the tomb, and we shall believe in him! Jesus remains motionless; his enemies clap their hands; they lower an eye of complacency on the vigorous and well-armed guards, on the inviolable seals, on the enormous stone rolled to the entrance of the monument. The Galilean is vanquished, and all who believed in him will be confounded. Great God! was this then the issue reserved for this lamentable affair? and will nothing come to trouble the sacrilegious joy of the wicked? Shall he that sleepeth rise again no more? *Numquid qui dormit non adjiciet ut resurgat?*

Alas! shall I say it, if I turn to the most faithful disciples of the Crucified, I find in their dispositions nothing that reassures me. It is true, their master was regarded by them as the Son of God; they had seen him work prodigies which belong only to omnipotence from on high; before their eyes he had raised the dead. It is true again, all that has happened these two days is only the exact accomplishment of what had been predicted. Jesus had not ceased to speak to his own of the torment reserved for him, the indispensable prelude of his glory. It is true finally, the hour assigned by him for his resurrection has not yet struck. For Jesus, answering the Pharisees who asked of him a prodigy in the heavens, had said: This guilty race seeks a sign, and none shall be given it but the sign of Jonas the prophet; and as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, and he will rise again the third day. Only yesterday, during his interrogation, Jesus declared that after destroying the temple of the Lord he would rebuild it in three days. The third day has not yet come; his disciples have therefore no reason to despair.

Yet, if I consider them, how shaken my faith is, and what hesitation seizes my soul! What? The question is nothing less than this: Was Jesus the Son of God, or did he falsely give himself out as the Messias? Will his death have been the redemption of the world, or simply the just punishment of a seducer? Will the teaching that came from his lips be the Gospel called to regenerate the universe, or is it nothing but a vain doctrine destined to perish with its author? The solution of all these questions tomorrow’s dawn will give; and these men do not even think of the possibility of this resurrection on which so many consequences depend.

If some holy women go to the sepulchre on the third day, it is not to contemplate there the miracle of the living and risen God, but to embalm the body of a just man whom their sensitive soul makes them revere even in the tomb. If these women bring to the weeping Apostles the news of the prodigy, they see in it only vain dreams and a subject of fright. Finally if two of the Apostles, less cast down than the others, run to the sepulchre and return to confirm the attestation of the holy women, at that very instant other disciples are seen making so little account of these united testimonies that they go away from Jerusalem, conferring among themselves on their deceived hopes. Hear them conversing with the mysterious stranger who has come to join them. Decidedly, in their eyes, there is here only a lost cause; Jesus was a man, a prophet mighty in work and word; but their expectation has been deceived, and the redemption is once more deferred. Ah! cries Saint

Augustine, moment for ever memorable, when the Fathers of the faith were not yet faithful: *Patres fidei nondum fideles;* when those on whose word the whole universe was to believe and hope had lost all conviction and all hope![4]

But is it indeed that all is lost? Will the hour of the resurrection not strike? Shall he that sleepeth not be able to find life again: *Numquid qui dormit non adjiciet ut resurgat?* And while I speak, already the sepulchre has seen its prey escape it. The Lion of Juda, having finished his sleep, has broken the gates of death. By the terms of his prophecy, which spoke of three days and three nights, it seems that he could have slept some hours more. But who will chain his arm? who will stop his flight? The sentinels were witnesses of the prodigy, and were mute and as if dead with fright. An envoy has come down from heaven and sat upon the overturned stone. Women, says this Angel whose look is piercing as lightning, and whose garments are white as snow, women, why seek you the living among the dead? You seek Jesus of Nazareth; he is not here, but is risen, as he said: *Surrexit enim, sicut dixit.* [Matt. 28:6.] Soon Peter and John run to verify the marvel, and it is only after seeing the empty monument and the winding-sheet laid on the stone that they begin to believe a prodigy whose prediction they had forgotten: *Nondum enim sciebant*, [for as yet they knew not,] says Saint John. [John 20:9.]

But already Jesus has appeared to Magdalen and to the holy women; already he journeys with the pilgrims of Emmaus who end by recognising him in the breaking of bread. While it is told that he has been seen by Simon Peter, in spite of the closed doors behold him suddenly present in the midst of the eleven Apostles assembled; he shows them his hands and feet covered with scars, he lets himself be seen and touched; and as the Apostles are stupefied and do not yet believe, he eats with them and proves to them thus that he is not a phantom. Thomas, who was not witness of this apparition, does he persevere in doubting? soon his conviction cannot resist the test to which Jesus submits. Then Jesus reappears on the shore of the sea of Tiberias, where he gives the investiture to Peter, as he had given, in a preceding apparition, the general mission to the Apostles.

For forty days these prodigies are renewed. Hear Paul, the converted persecutor, writing to the Corinthians when several years had already passed since the miracle: My brethren, he says to them, I have taught you what I have learned, and, above all, what is the principal substance of the Gospel, namely that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he was seen by Cephas, and after that by the eleven, then by more than five hundred brethren at once, then by James, by all the Apostles, and last of all by me, who am the least of all.

My brethren, and if all these testimonies could still leave some doubt; if you would believe neither the Angels, nor the holy women, nor the Apostles, nor the disciples, nor Paul, I would tell you: The resurrection of Jesus Christ is written in ineffaceable characters in history. Read the annals of the world, and, running through the years that preceded and those that followed the death of Jesus Christ, compare the human race with itself; see what transformation, what brilliant revolution; and say whether such an effect has not necessarily had a cause. These men who changed the face of the earth, evidently they had a power from on high; these men who preached, and at whose voice the universe received the Gospel; these men naturally timid, incredulous; these men who ran knowingly to meet torments, evidently an incontestable fact had been needed to persuade them and give them the virtue to persuade the human race.

Now this fact on which rests all the evangelical preaching, all the truth of the Christian faith, is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They saw it, they heard it; and that is why they expose themselves to death rather than be silent. The resurrection is written in bloody characters on the scaffolds where so many martyrs perished. To thousands of witnesses who affirm a fact and who let themselves be butchered rather than deny it, will you dare oppose some interested denials, some sleeping witnesses who were paid to lie? The resurrection of Jesus Christ and the evangelical preaching, these two facts closely, essentially united to each other, my brethren, I defy any human power to be able to shake them. Let us say then with Saint Paul: *Nunc*

autem Christus resurrexit: but now Christ is risen [1 Cor. 15:20]; therefore he is God, therefore his religion is divine. The question is resolved; the proof is without reply. Up to this day faith could hesitate, hope could be timid; the disciples could await with disquiet the result of the promises of their Master. But today when his word is accomplished, today when he is risen as he said, no more doubt, no more uncertainty. Ah! Lord, we had confidence assuredly, we hoped; but after all we were in spite of ourselves in perplexity; we feared we had flattered ourselves too much. And that is why, now that we are assured of the prodigy, that is why from our breast for an instant oppressed by the restless sentiment of expectation there escapes a cry of joy which we cannot restrain: Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen as He said: therefore He is the Son of God; therefore His religion is divine; therefore Christians are the sons of the truth.

Jesus Christ is risen: ancient sabbath, let thy splendour fade before the ever memorable day of this prodigy, which shall henceforth be, for all generations, the day of the Lord. Jesus Christ is risen: holy Church, place at the head of all your feasts this solemnity of solemnities. Christian people, hasten and immolate praises to the paschal victim; repeat that admirable duel between death and life; celebrate with Mary the sepulchre of the living God and the glory of the God who rises again. My brethren, are there here men who doubt the Christian religion? I say to them with assurance: Take in hand the Gospel, read and compare the four diverse accounts it contains concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ; weigh, study the characters of ingenuousness, of veracity that distinguish them. Take then in your hands the history of the world, and meditate the great fact of the moral transformation of the universe which was effected eighteen hundred years ago; after that, answer me whether faith does not become for you a visible and palpable thing, as it was for Thomas. Tell me whether the least foundation can remain for unbelief.

But if the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the incontestable fact on which our faith rests, it is also a principle from which flow several other more particular consequences, of which it remains for us to speak. II. Jesus was still wrapped in the swaddling-clothes of infancy; and if already his future ignominies were announced, already also were prophetically outlined the magnificences that were one day to blossom from his glorious sepulchre. And the old man Simeon did not fear to declare that this child was set for the resurrection of many in Israel. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, principle of resurrection for all Christians, that is, my brethren, what it is easy to demonstrate: principle of resurrection for bodies, principle of resurrection for souls, principle of resurrection for peoples. Let us develop these ideas briefly.

Shall he that sleepeth not rise again: *Numquid qui dormit non adjiciet ut resurgat?* Do you see him, this man marked at birth with the seal of Jesus Christ, this man who has always conformed his life to the law of Jesus Christ, who has abstained from forbidden pleasure so as not to infringe the precepts of Jesus Christ; do you see him, after a long life of virtues and privations, stretched on a bed of pain and agony; do you see him bend and incline toward the tomb; do you see him fall asleep with the sleep of death? Will the sepulchre be the only and last asylum of this existence that is ending? Children, wife, friends, are your tears eternal, your regrets without softening? *Numquid qui dormit non adjiciet ut resurgat?* Is there not in the very bosom of this dissolution a germ of resurrection and life? Shall he who sleeps never return to the light? Ah! says Saint Paul to you, that nature in you be afflicted, so be it; but let your sadness not be like the sadness of those who have no hope.

What! continues the Apostle with a rigour of dialectic such as is found in the schools, if it is preached that Jesus Christ is risen, how is it that some among you deny the resurrection of the dead? For if there is no resurrection, Jesus Christ is not risen; and if Jesus Christ is not risen, our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain also. And as for us, we render a false testimony in the name of God by attesting against God Himself that He raised up Jesus Christ, which is an imposture if the dead do not rise. If Jesus Christ is not risen, your faith is chimerical, for you are still in your sins. Therefore they that are fallen asleep in Jesus Christ are perished. And if in this life only we have hope in Jesus Christ, we are of all men the most to be pitied. But, resumes the apostle with triumphant assurance, but Jesus Christ is risen, the first-fruits of them that sleep:

Nunc autem Christus resurrexit a mortuis, primitiae dormientium. [1 Cor. 15:20.] And as death came by one man, by one man also shall the resurrection come; and as all die in Adam, all shall be made alive in Jesus, each one in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, then they that are of Christ: *Primitiae Christus, deinde qui sunt Christi.* [1 Cor. 15:23.]

My very dear brethren, how reassuring this doctrine is for us! how consoling in what concerns those who have gone before us into the tomb! Children of a risen God, we shall die only to rise like Him. What do I say? His resurrection is the beginning and the pledge of ours, our resurrection will be the completion and perfection of His. The head is risen in Jesus Christ; the body will rise like its head. Jesus Christ cannot be divided between life and death. Now Jesus Christ is complete only with His members, who must share His condition: *Primitiae Christus, deinde qui sunt Christi.*

Children, wife, friends, weep no more: yet a little while, and Jesus will draw near to this coffin as to that of Naim, and will say: Young man, I say to thee, arise, and he who was dead will rise. Yet a little while, Jesus will bend over this monument, over that of Bethany, and, stretching out his hand, will say: Lazarus, come forth, and this Lazarus will live again. Women, why seek you the living among the dead? Why seek you in the tomb him whose soul has long dwelt in glory, and whose body will soon come out of the dust of the tomb? Holy Church of Jesus, wipe the tears of thy children: their sepulchre like that of thy God will be a glorious sepulchre; I am mistaken, it is no longer a tomb, it is a cradle; there is no longer a winding-sheet here, they are swaddling-clothes. Sion, thy dead shall live, and thy beheaded sons shall lift up the head. Awake, and give praise to God, you who lie in the dust; for behold the dew of this day of the resurrection of Christ is a dew of light which descends even to your dark abode: *Quia ros lucis ros tuus.* [For the dew of light is thy dew. (Is. 26:19.)]

Resurrection of Jesus Christ, principle of the last resurrection of men. Resurrection of Jesus Christ, principle of the spiritual resurrection of souls. I told you with the angel of the Apocalypse, my brethren: many have the name and appearance of life, and have no longer the reality. There is for the soul a secret life that can fail long before the exterior and sensible life of the body. Now the resurrection of Jesus Christ is for souls an ever new source, an ever living principle of resurrection. Among Christians, some, without having lost grace, are weak, languishing, asleep, according to the word of Saint Paul: *Ideo inter vos multi infirmi et imbecilles, et dormiunt multi;* [therefore are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep (1 Cor. 11:30);] others are entirely deprived of grace, their soul is dead, already it even exhales a fetid odour. *Numquid qui dormit non adjiciet ut resurgat?* Shall he who sleeps not awake? Shall some not come out of their torpor, others from their lethargy?

I address myself first to you, Christian brethren, to you who for long years have been accustomed to accomplish all the duties that religion imposes on you. I do you no injury in telling you that you also, you first, must have your part in the mystery of the resurrection. It is the doctrine of the great Apostle, doctrine written on every page, let us say better on every line of these truly divine epistles; it is, I say, the doctrine of the great Apostle that the two elements which constitute the Christian life consist in dying with Jesus Christ and in rising as Jesus to the heavenly life: that is the whole substance of the spiritual doctrine. Christians, you bury yourselves with Jesus each time that, by the laborious baptism of penance, you expiate the faults that escaped your weakness, each time that, by an exact and careful discussion of your conscience, you seek to strip yourselves of some of your imperfections. And you rise with Jesus when, by participation in His adorable body and blood, and above all by participation in His spirit and virtues, you appropriate to yourselves, you incorporate in a manner His supernatural and divine life, the new man.

Yes, my brethren, as Jesus Christ is ceaselessly in the midst of us, renewing on the altars the mystery of His passion and resurrection; so the whole life of the Christian is a continual mystery of death and rebirth: *Renascens perpetuo moriendo vivit.* [Being born again, he lives by perpetually dying.][5] Each day for the Christian is a day of Pasch, that is of passage; each day must advance for him that happy phase which

transforms the old man into the new man, the earthly man into the heavenly man. But it is above all on these anniversary days of the resurrection of Jesus Christ that our soul must take its flight and rise toward a higher sphere. If you be risen with Christ, says the Apostle to us, seek the things that are above, mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth.

My brethren, O you who languish ever amid the same imperfections, you who perhaps disfigure your virtue by so many weaknesses, you who languish, who sleep in a religion you have made for yourselves, and where holy habits are fatally allied with faults that have become for you a second nature, ah! shall the paschal mystery work nothing in your souls: *Numquid qui dormit non adjiciet ut resurgat?* Shall he who is lukewarm not be inflamed? Shall he who drags himself painfully not find wings again? Pious souls who weep over the inequalities of this heart too often still sensible to the attractions of the world; women, why seek you the living among the dead? Why seek you amid distractions, spectacles, dissipations this soul that has taken a generous flight toward perfection? She is risen, she is no longer here, she is no longer in this low and obscure region of equivocal piety; behold, henceforth she will go before you in the ways of the most austere and most perfect fidelity. Go to the foot of the altars, go to the tribunals of reconciliation, go to the eucharistic table, go under the thatched roof of distress, go to the bedside of pain, go wherever there is a duty of charity or an obligation of state to fulfil, there you will find her henceforth. The mystery of Pasch has worked in this soul; she has advanced one step, she has mounted one degree toward heaven. May each year determine in her thus a movement, an effort: having shared in the grace of the resurrection of Jesus, one day she will leave the earth only to follow Him into glory.

And you, Christian brethren, you who slumber and have been buried for long in sin, will you not, in face of the empty tomb, in presence of the resurrection of Jesus, come forth from your tomb, you also? Will you dwell for ever in the dust of iniquity? Shall he who sleeps not awake? Shall he who is dead not rise again to life: *Numquid qui dormit non adjiciet ut resurgat?* It may be thirty years that you have languished in your infirmity. You are under the weight of a long habit of forgetfulness of God; you have become strangers to Jesus Christ, who knows? perhaps you are blind from birth; you have never known the sweet convictions of faith, never tasted the delightful joys of piety. What matter? Has He who knew how to raise Himself not the strength to bring you back to light? Has He who has the power to change stones into children of Abraham not the power to soften your heart?

Ah! my very dear brother, the Church your mother, during the holy forty days, has neglected nothing to recall you to life. Like the inconsolable widow of Naim, she has not ceased to cry to Jesus to implore your resurrection. By the mouth of her ministers she has not ceased to speak to your heart; she has presented to you all the considerations, all the truths that could exercise some empire over your mind; she has in a manner assaulted all the powers of your soul. Today she makes a last effort, she engages a last combat. Will grace not be victorious? Will you continue to struggle against her? Will this day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ not be the day of your resurrection? Have you not slept long enough? It is not three days that you have spent in the belly of the monster, in the sepulchre of sin; it is ten years, twenty years, thirty years perhaps. Alas! alas! my brother, *quis revolvet ostium monumenti?* [who shall roll back for us the stone from the door of the sepulchre? (Mark 16:3)] who then will come to overturn the stone that closes to me the door of your heart?

O divine Jesus, it is not enough that you are risen, you must complete your triumph. No, you do not yet live again entirely, since there are still souls buried in sin. Lord, these souls once belonged to you, they still belong to you in some part, you have left there traces of your sojourn, pious movements stir within them; in these days they have felt a recrudescence of the Christian spirit, they are shaken. Lord, lift, lift the stone, cast it far away, and rise triumphant over these hearts too long numbed by the cold of death. The old man Simeon said it of you when you had just been born: you are set for the ruin, but also for the resurrection of many in Israel. Today that you are risen, work then this prodigy of raising the souls that are dead.

But while I speak, my brethren, this prodigy has already been wrought. Yes, there are in this city, in this audience, happy Christians in whom the word and grace of Jesus Christ have not been empty and barren. There are fathers, there are husbands, there are mothers, there are sons who have disengaged themselves from the shroud of death, who have put off the winding-sheet of sin. O venerable wife, O pious daughter who still perhaps carry in the vase of your heart prayers mingled with tears to beseech Jesus to bring back to Him a being dear to you, ah! you do not yet know the marvel that has been accomplished. And while you ask yourself: *Quis revolvet ostium monumenti?* who then will roll away the obstacle? already the divine hand has overturned it. And instead of continuing to send up your sighs to heaven, hear the holy Angels who henceforth forbid you sorrow and say to you: Women, why seek you the living among the dead? You ask the change, the return of a son, a friend, a father: but he is risen, he is no longer here, he is no longer found in the tabernacles of sinners. Here is the bath of penance where he came to purify himself; here are the cloths of the sepulchre that he has shaken off. This very morning he has preceded you at the holy Table, and it is there that you shall see him later sit down with you. At this instant when I speak, his heart is flooded with joy; he is relieved of an intolerable burden that crushed him; he feels himself renewed, risen.

Perhaps, by some reserve which religion authorises, she who carries with such tenderness in her arms him who is still weak in the faith, perhaps it cannot yet be said of this Christian as of Jesus: *Surrexit et apparuit:* he is risen and has shown himself. But what men do not yet see, the Angels have seen; and soon the sweet odour of Jesus Christ which fills this regenerated soul will betray itself. I affirm it, the resurrection is complete. When Jesus Christ wished to convince His Apostles of the reality of His return to life, He sat down and ate with them. I affirm it therefore: there is not here a mere phantom of resurrection, for this Christian has sat down at the table of Jesus, and has shared in His banquet.

O divine Saviour, multiply, multiply around us these strokes of your power, let us say better, these strokes of your love. My brethren, my brethren, you who have resisted until now, will you not imitate the example given you? How long will you be cruel toward yourselves? The grace of Jesus presses me to insist with you; I know not what tells me that God wishes to conquer, at this very instant when I speak, some more souls for whom only a last shaking is needed. My brother, my sister, we have our hands full of pardons; our divine Master has given us full power to loose; we have the key that opens. Tell me, why defer the acceptance of an incomparable benefit? why grow another year older far from God? why lose again so many occasions of merit? why prolong the already so long chain of ingratitudes and infidelities?

Once more, what obstacle stops you? Human respect? Oh! learn from me what you do not know: this friend, this accomplice perhaps, whose look and mockery you dread, is like you solicited, worked upon by grace. What do I say? more advanced than you, he has been secretly reconciled. And he whom you fear awaits only the moment of your conversion to let you know his. Human respect, I shall tell you again presently, is an anachronism; for as the public spirit sinks and there is soon nothing respectable left around us, the Christian, the man of faith and conviction, grows and becomes day by day the object of more respect. What have you then to fear? Is it of our ministry that you distrust and take umbrage? And do you not know that we have no other ministry to exercise than that of mercy? You had nothing to teach me that I do not know. I must avow it to you, for I might hinder your confidence, I might embarrass your repentance and your avowals, if you could think that I believe you without sin and that I find in your return nothing that should cost you. No, I know what the human heart is; I know that the most honourable life before men is not without stain before God; I know that sin has in a manner its domicile in our corrupt nature, that virtues do hardly more than pass through it, amiable guests, agreeable strangers, while evil is there to stay; I know that, far from God and His sacraments, there are necessarily weaknesses, that to those of youth succeed those of mature age, and that old age itself is not always exempt from them. I know all these things, my brethren, and this knowledge has in no way disconcerted my devotedness and zeal, for the tender interest I bear you had not reasoned from the hypothesis of your innocence and impeccability. On the contrary, I am the priest of Jesus, who came not for

the just, but for sinners; and the sentiment that carries me toward you is the desire, the need to efface, to pardon, to rehabilitate.

O Jesus, triumph on this day, triumph again over the death which you conquered of old. From the four winds let your spirit come, and breathe upon these dry bones, and let those who lay on the ground rise up on their feet. My people, saith the Lord, I will open your graves, and bring you out of your sepulchres, and I will lead you back into the land of Israel, and you shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall have put my spirit in you, and you shall live, and you shall have found at last the rest of your souls.[6]

Resurrection of Jesus Christ, principle of the resurrection of peoples. My brethren, the enemies of Christianity have sometimes been heard to clap their hands and prognosticate its approaching ruin. In presence of some defections, some reverses, they set to reckoning the times, and counting the weeks of years until the annihilation of the Church of Jesus Christ! prophets of falsehood, mathematicians of imposture! As if the God of Christians were not a God who has triumphed over death! As if He who raised Himself were powerless to raise His Church! But what have I said: raise His Church? What! she is then dead, the Church of the Saviour!

Oh no, my brethren, God keep me from that blasphemy. She is imperishable, as her divine Master is henceforth immortal. But, by a secret mystery of Providence, and in conformity with the prediction of Jesus Himself, the Church is subject here below to trials and vicissitudes. Jesus sleeps at times, and the bark is then tossed and almost swallowed by the waves; but shall he who sleeps not awake: *Numquid qui dormit non adjiciet ut resurgat?* Does He not know how to command the winds and the tempest? Does He not bring back from the gates of the abyss with the same ease with which He leads to them?

Yes I avow it, my brethren, the days in which we have been called to live have been days of humiliation and opprobrium for the Church of Jesus Christ. There are ages, and ours is such, when this illustrious stranger who journeys through time toward eternity, and who asks of empires only the right of passage, is neither brutally assailed on the road by the sword of the Neros, the Mahomets and the Robespierres, nor led and protected by the sceptre of the Constantines, the Charlemagnes and the Saint Louises. In those times the Church is subjected to the cruellest of all trials, made to drink the bitterest of all chalices. She is covertly fought, dismembered piece by piece, impoverished day by day. She perceives that men conspire against her, that they meditate her ruin, that they divide her spoils in advance; but, as they throw on her shoulders in derision some shreds of purple, she has not the right to complain, and she is forced to bear her pain in silence.

No, divine Jesus, your Passion is not finished; it is renewed every day against your Church, that is to say again against you. A tomb has been prepared for you, it is no longer a question save of burying you in it with honour; guards are commanded to watch you there; Pilate will give the seals of the State to seal you there legally, authentically. Lord, and pious souls, in these sad days, know only how to carry tears and perfumes to your sepulchre; and we, your priests, can do almost nothing. *Numquid qui dormit non adjiciet ut resurgat?* Shall he who sleeps not awake? Lord, will there not soon be a morning when we shall see the stone overturned, the sepulchre open, the guards driven off by fright, an angel who will say to us: Why do you come to seek the living among the dead? He is risen, He reigns, He triumphs, and He who seemed dead will live for ages of ages.

But while I make these wishes, have they not already begun to be realised? Would it be true, and would not all the eminent and serious minds of this century begin to recognise it, that the prostration, dissolution, the symptoms of death betray themselves, reveal themselves at every instant in all parts of the social body, and that there remains conviction, power, life, in a word, only in the Church, only in religion? that it is around the altars that the only force which remains standing amid the universal prostration has taken refuge? Might not he who seemed to sleep, the religious sentiment, have revived in the bosom of society? My brethren, this work is perhaps little sensible still, it is despised by human power and wisdom; but, I dare affirm it, the day

approaches when to be a Christian will be to be of one's age, when not to be one will be to belong to the evil days of the past.

In those days, says the prophet Zacharias, after having wandered from system to system, wearied with groping and trials, the peoples will return to seek the living God in Jerusalem; they will ask of the Church her treasure of truth, of charity, her inexhaustible sources of self-denial, of devotedness. Egoism gnaws us; curiosity devours us; ambitions have no longer a curb; all existences are compromised; where then to find a point of support? We have asked it in vain of all parties, of all human principles. In those days, continues Zacharias, men will be seen, of all tribes and all tongues at once, distraught and undeceived of all the rest, seizing the Christian man as he passes, clinging to his mantle, and saying to him: We will go with you, for we have learned that God is there and is only there: *In diebus illis, apprehendent decem viri ex omnibus linguis gentium fimbriam viri Judaei, dicentes: Ibimus vobiscum; audivimus enim quia Deus vobiscum est.* [In those days, ten men of all languages of the Gentiles shall take hold, and shall hold fast the skirt of a man that is a Jew, saying: We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you. (Zach. 8:23.)] O you, my very dear brother, who have the happiness to possess faith in your heart, who have the happiness to believe and practise, ah! do not have the weakness to think that you need to dissemble your faith as a shame. In this century of doubt, a man of faith is the subject of the astonishment and esteem of all his fellow-citizens; they, ever trembling on the uncertain ground of doubt, admire how you remain firm and intrepid on the solid rock of your unshakable conviction; they feel in you a strength, a power beside which they acknowledge themselves weak. There are here a great number of distinguished men of the city: I would boldly take their voices, and all those who are sincere would tell me that, if there is a man they aspire to resemble, it is the Christian, man of faith, of living faith, the man of conviction, of practical conviction. Yes, this man, he is in the city the one by whose mantle all would wish to hold, saying: We will go with you; you are in the truth, and the truth is only there. Outside it there is only lie and deception, miscalculation and chimera. Yes, such is the secret thought of all; now to have come to that is to have taken a great step, an immense step; it is to be on the way of resurrection. My brethren, the years are man's, but the centuries are God's. And the same century which has seen so many truths diminished, contradicted, condemned, so many errors privileged, accredited, sanctioned, will not end before the truth of the Lord which abides for ever has resumed its supreme and eternal empire.

O Jesus, complete your work. You can, O mighty King; you know how to raise nations as well as individuals; you can, and you will: *Positus est hic in resurrectionem multorum.* [He is set … for the resurrection of many. (Luke 2:34.)]

The nations? Ah! shall he who sleeps not awake? And in our days, do we not see accomplished the word of the prophet: *Et venient populi multi, et gentes robustae, ad quaerendum Dominum in Jerusalem?* [And many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem. (Zach. 8:22.)] Have not the most eminent minds of learned and erudite Germany been brought back to the faith, and do they not relate to us in admirable terms the conclusive and irresistible motives of their conversion? And among that grave and sententious people, has not error itself been heard to proclaim that there was a future for science and civilisation only in Catholicism, and that sooner or later it is there that Europe would return to cast anchor?

And you, celebrated island, which the Church once heard with complacency called the land of the Saints: ah! do not the times seem to approach when your eyes will open again to the truth? Francis de Sales hoped to see them. Bossuet believed, and said that the wise concurred in this sentiment, that the days of your blindness were run out and that it was time henceforth that the light should return. Alas! and you are still wrapped in the fogs of heresy, a thousand times thicker than those that rise from the bosom of your seas and weigh on your cities. But with what joy we learn that the strong studies of your doctors bring them back each day into the arms of their mother the holy Church. With what transports we welcome the happy news that the holy seduction of Catholicism spreads among your children, with almost as much rapidity as the contagion of

error once did. Lord Jesus, complete, complete this great work, whose import is immense. You can, O mighty King, you can and you will, for you are set for the resurrection of peoples: *Ecce positus est hic in resurrectionem multorum.*[7]

My brethren, shall I pronounce another name in connection with which lamentations could not equal the misfortunes? Ah! unfortunate Poland, Catholic Poland, we are not insensible to the loss of your independence and nationality; we know too well what Europe and the Church owe you not to deplore that you have ceased to be counted among the peoples; but there is for you a greater evil still; and we shall not cease to be moved over your faith which is ravished from you, over your children who will henceforth suck the milk of error, wandering sheep whom no shepherd any longer leads into the pastures of truth, and who will be lost in the abysses of seduction! Several millions of Catholics detached from orthodoxy by the dark manoeuvres of tyranny, which has corrupted the sources of faith, prepared cowardly bishops, proscribed fidelity and crowned apostasy: behold a wound ever bleeding, an ever new injury: *Numquid qui dormit non adjiciet ut resurgat?* Shall he who sleeps not awake? Fertile land where the race of Christian heroes germinated, and from which came the salvation of Europe and of the Church, has the last word been said on your future destinies? Yes, humanly your cause is lost; but a cause lost in the eyes of men is far from being so in the eyes of religion. And this Jesus, to whom God has given all nations for inheritance, will say to us presently: I was dead, and behold I am living for ever and ever: *Et fui mortuus, et ecce sum vivens in saecula saeculorum.* [Apoc. 1:18.]

O Jesus, you whose glorious resurrection we celebrate with so much solemnity, hasten, hasten in us, hasten around us the resurrection of all principles of order, of holiness, of religion, of virtue. Oh! how we need to be changed, reformed, or rather transformed, renewed. In place of egoism, make devotedness live again; in place of cupidity, make love live again; in place of the morality of interests, make the morality of duties live again; in place of torpor and indifference, make conviction and faith live again. Bring back to you, Lord, bring back by a gentle and easy slope the heart of men and the spirit of peoples. Or else, if need be, take that thundering voice which commands the fires of the thunderbolt and the waves of the sea. But after the storm, make your rainbow shine at once in the cloud.

Pour out, O Saviour of men, pour out upon us that peace which you announced to your disciples each time you appeared to them after your victory over death. Sustain the weak in faith, remove from their path every stone of scandal and stumbling. Cover with your blessings this faithful people; keep up the flame of your love in these hearts that you have visited today; recall often to your banquet those who have sat at it; cease not to invite those who still delay to yield to your voice.

Lord, bless the flock; bless the pastor: we once dared to praise him in presence of the Christian assembly; but the excess of his goodnesses has come to stop praises on our lips and command us silence. Give, Lord, give such apostles to the people whom your love wishes to save; preserve this ardent and brilliant flame in the midst of your Church; sustain this voice which has become among us the voice of the whole episcopate; grant him on earth those sweet joys which the sentiment of duty accomplished bears into the soul. Surrounded by these priests who are united to him like the strings to the lyre, by pious faithful who venerate in him the triple authority of character, of holiness and of white hairs, give him long years for our consolation and for your glory. And one day, sheep and pastor, gather us all under one same crook and in one same fold of which you will yourself be the eternal Pastor. So be it! (1)[8]

Translator’s notes

1. Identifications flagged as mine: the “celebrated island” is England; “that grave and sententious people” is left unidentified; Poland is named by the preacher. The Bernard, Augustine, Francis de Sales and Bossuet attributions are as the preacher gives them; not verified here. The Easter-evening hymn (“this rhymed history of the resurrection”) is not identified.

[1] (1) A marginal note on the manuscript indicates that this sermon was preached in the cathedral of Poitiers in 1862 and in 1868. (Editor's note.) 12 April 1846 was Easter Sunday.

[2] (1) Cf. t. I, p. 200. (Editor's note.) The *Regina caeli* ("Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia"), the Marian antiphon of Eastertide, is traditionally said to have been heard from an Angel.

[3] The Bernard passage is as the preacher gives it; not verified here.

[4] The Augustine phrase is as the preacher gives it; not verified here.

[5] The Latin is as the preacher gives it; the source is not identified here.

[6] Ezech. 37, freely rendered.

[7] The "celebrated island" is not named; it is evidently England. The Francis de Sales and Bossuet attributions are as the preacher gives them; not verified here.

[8] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 22, n° 17. (Editor's note.) The "pastor" is the bishop (Monseigneur) to whom the sermon is addressed; he is not named in the text.

n° 30. Instruction for the Confirmation Tours: On Religious Practice

25 May 1846.[1]

MY DEAR CHILDREN, Presently the heavens are going to open, and the miracle of which Jerusalem was once witness is going to be renewed. The Spirit of God is going to descend and rest on your heads; what do I say? He is going to penetrate your souls, and enrich them with all His gifts.

Very different from those new Christians of whom the holy Books speak, those Christians who did not even know whether there was a Holy Ghost, you, my children, have been carefully instructed in this truth from your earliest childhood. You have learned from your mothers, and later from your pastors, that there exist in God three persons, equally divine, equally adorable; that the third of these persons, produced by the Father and by the Son, is called the Holy Ghost: the Holy Ghost, whom the Scriptures also name the Spirit of God, bond of love that unites the Father to the Son and the Son to the Father, and who on that title is called by Saint Augustine the heart of God. Now this same Spirit of love who resides in God, it has pleased God to send Him toward us, to send Him into us, to give Him to us, to communicate Him to us, so that by Him we may be united to the divine persons, as they are united among themselves, and that, as they are but one God, we may make but one with God.

These are, my children, truths as consoling as they are sublime, which our reason would not have revealed to us, but which the Christian faith teaches us, and which we have believed from our earliest age. In thus descending secretly into our souls by the ministry of the bishops, successors of the Apostles, as He once descended visibly on the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost brings us the most precious benefits, the most inestimable gifts: gift of wisdom and understanding, gift of counsel and fortitude, gift of knowledge and piety, gift of the fear of the Lord. Your souls, loaded with all these gifts, I picture to myself at this moment like the trees of your fields when, in season, the branches bend under the weight of fruits, or again like your granaries when, in a year of abundance, they are filled to overflowing on all sides, according to the expression of a prophet who had passed his youth in the occupations of the fields. But, as a storm, a fire, can devour in an instant all the fruits of the labours of a long year, the demon, sin, can drive the Holy Ghost out of our hearts in an instant, and with Him all the treasures with which His presence had enriched you.

Ah! how much it is to be feared that you have been rich thus for a moment only to deliver to your enemy more abundant spoils! When I think of all that awaits you in the world, what a sentiment of fear seizes me! It is written, in the first pages of the Holy Books, that God, considering His creature and seeing that all his thoughts were directed to evil, repented of having made man; and that, touched with a profound grief, He said to Himself: My spirit shall not remain in man, because he is flesh.

My children, when I fix my eyes on you and on the age in which you are called to live, when I think of your own weakness and of the seductions you will find around you, ah! I too find in the bottom of my heart only a

lively sorrow, I am tempted to regret the favour of which you are today the object; for, it is scarcely possible for me to doubt it, the Spirit of God will not remain in you. To preserve Him you would have to be angels, alas! and you are only men; you would at least have to have strong and intrepid souls, alas! and you are only feeble children whom the least breath stirs, and who, turning to all winds like those mobile instruments placed on your roofs, will infallibly obey the wind of those doctrines of irreligion or at least of indifference, which has never blown with more violence than in our days, and which carries off all souls in its fatal direction. Ah! Lord, for what ages hast Thou reserved us? Must it be no longer permitted us to make illusions for ourselves even for an instant, and must we be reduced to shed tears and utter sad presages on a day when we would wish to give ourselves up only to joy and hope!

Yet, my dear children, it must be said: if you do not persevere in the way of salvation, it will be your fault. The Holy Ghost, who has descended today into your soul, has clothed you interiorly with His strength. It would be a sacrilege and a blasphemy against the sacrament that has just been conferred on you, to believe what the world is pleased to say, that religion is no longer practicable today. It is against this error that I come to forewarn you. If you are lost, it is because you will it, because, however great, however numerous the difficulties, the temptations that are reserved for you, the Holy Ghost who has descended into you holds in reserve graces still greater and more abundant, and He has today taken the engagement never to refuse them to you, and on the contrary always to grant them in the opportune moment.

But what, then, what after all is this piety to which we ask you to be always faithful? What does it contain that is so difficult? What has it that is so impracticable?

Piety, this so precious gift of the Holy Ghost; piety, this treasure profitable to all things, says the Apostle to us, and which has promises for the present life and for the life to come; piety, what is it exactly, and what idea must be formed of it? Is it true that it can no longer be accommodated to our habits, that it is a thing so onerous that no one can any longer bind himself to it, a way of being gone out of fashion, which suited the usages and manners of our fathers, but to which we can no more return than to their language or their ancient costume? Piety: but is it true that one can no longer practise it without becoming singular, odd, eccentric; without abandoning most of the obligations of one’s state, of one’s family; without renouncing the most legitimate joys of life; without devoting oneself to a sad, wearisome, morose existence?

My children, I know it, it is under these sombre colours that the world paints piety to you: it makes it ugly, difficult, complicated, exacting, to make you reject it the sooner. But the world deceives you; and I wish to tell you in a just and precise way what God asks of you, so that you may understand well on this day that fidelity to God is possible for you, that it is even, in a certain sense, sweet and easy.

Piety, what is it then? It is the accomplishment of the religious duty, to which is added a certain sentiment of the love of God, livelier, more tender, and the habit of certain useful or salutary practices.

Piety is therefore religion, and something more. Now understand well what religion is, and what piety adds to it.

The religious duties which are rigorously imposed on us, and the observance of which is strictly necessary to arrive at heaven, are neither so numerous nor so onerous as is sometimes supposed. For, supposing the observance of the duties which probity imposes on us, of those duties without which one is not an honest man, and which everyone prides himself on observing; supposing besides the instruction in the Christian faith in which you have been brought up from the cradle: what remains then positively and formally prescribed by religion, and wherein does the religious man differ from him who is not? I am going to tell you in three words; for the religious duties are reduced to three, the accomplishment of which entails the accomplishment of the whole Christian law.

The religious man is he: 1° who prays each day; 2° who observes the day consecrated to God once each week; 3° who accomplishes at least once a year the paschal duty. Yes, I avow, these three things are indispensable, but are they then impracticable?

They are indispensable. For, my children, has one ever been able to regard as a religious man him who does not pray? Religion consists before all in establishing a commerce and relations between the creature and its Creator. And of what nature are these relations? Is it not by prayer that man raises himself to God? Where prayer ceases, where the heart becomes indifferent and the lips mute toward God, does not all religion disappear at that very instant, since there is no longer homage rendered to God, and the creature separates itself as far as it is in its power from its Creator? And besides, is not the first need of man to obtain grace, the help of God, and to triumph over obstacles, difficulties, and to live according to the laws of virtue and holiness? Now where prayer ceases, where no petition, no aspiration, no desire rises toward God, what means remains of conquering evil and practising good, since divine grace, without which we are incapable even of having a good thought, is entirely disdained and despised, and the creature seems to declare loudly that she has no need of her Creator?

Ask it of all countries, of all ages: everywhere a voice will rise to tell you that there is no religion without prayer. The idolaters themselves, the pagans, so long as they kept some remnant of religious spirit, failed not to offer the tribute of their prayer to the divinity as they pictured it. Everywhere and always, not to pray has been something monstrous, impious; but above all, without prayer it is impossible to believe oneself and call oneself a Christian. The Gospel on every page commands us prayer. In the first centuries Christians were recognised by their fervour in prayers; it was said: he is a Christian, for behold he prays. Among the barbarians, among the infidels, to become a Christian is called to embrace prayer, to be of the prayer.

My children, have you lived among men who do not pray, and have you been able to compare them with those who pray?

The former, who think only of the earth, who are bent only toward the earth; the latter, who rise to the thought of heaven, who carry their eyes and glances toward heaven. The former, who have no other resource, in misfortune, than rage and despair; the latter, who amid adversities take refuge in the bosom of God. The former, who perceive nothing beyond this life but the horror of death and the worms of the sepulchre; the latter, who have cleared for themselves beforehand, by the aspirations of their soul, a way toward eternity.

Ah! my children, you will pray: God wills it, Jesus Christ orders it; but besides, far from this obligation being a burden, nothing is sweeter, nothing more necessary to man. The heart of man is made to pray, as the eye to see, as the ear to hear. Prayer is the outpouring of the soul into the bosom of God. You will pray, my children: and your days, begun by morning prayer, will be holy and virtuous; and your nights, consecrated by evening prayer, will be peaceful and pure. You will pray: ah! the day on which you did not pray, that day would be ill-omened, would be fatal; on that day the demon, the enemy of your salvation, would obtain some great victory, would bring some great ravage into your soul.

But there is a day specially consecrated to prayer, a day on which the soul that has grown cold during the rest of the week must find again the fervour of prayer: it is the day called the day of the Lord, it is Sunday. The observance of Sunday, that is the second rigorous obligation imposed on every religious man: an indispensable obligation, but, I must say again here, an obligation far from being intolerable, and which is on the contrary perfectly accommodated to our nature.

To consecrate one day each week to God is what has been done everywhere and always, without distinction of time or place. Everywhere the profaner of the days consecrated to the divinity has been designated as a man without religion, he who did not betake himself on these days to the temple to pay there with his fellow-citizens the solemn tribute of prayer and sacrifice: so much is the law instituted by the example as well as by the commandment of God, from the first days of the world, a law become universal. But among

Christians above all the observance of Sunday is an essential point: on it depends the accomplishment of all the rest of the Christian law.

Do you see this man who observes Sunday? Perhaps the painful labour to which he is subject, the cares, the torments of life had made him neglect his duties toward God during the six other days; perhaps his soul was in a way letting itself be oppressed by the body, by the love of gain. But behold religion imposes a truce on his work; today, instead of being bent toward the earth, he lifts his eyes to heaven, he comes to the temple, he assists at the sacrifice of a God who immolates Himself for him, he hears the divine word and gathers the teachings of the Gospel; his faith, his hope, his love revive. Sunday has corrected, repaired in him the forgetfulnesses, the infractions of the week; all that slept in his soul has awakened.

On the contrary, see this man for whom Sunday is a day like the common days. Tell me: if this man believes in God, does he not act as though he did not believe in Him? What does he do on earth? He works, he eats, he sleeps, he is merry if he is happy, more often sad. What a useless life! one is so useless … And what an end! And what an eternity! He was not a dishonest man, you tell me … I believe it. What did he lack? To observe Sunday. But is this obligation of sanctifying Sunday so difficult besides? Sunday! but if religion had not established it, it would have to be invented. Man has need of rest, but he is inclined to abuse this rest; a rest is needed that is not idleness, for idleness is the mother of all vices. What has God done? The same day on which He prescribed to man to rest from the servile works that fatigue the body, He commanded him to give himself to the spiritual works that sanctify the soul. Make of Sunday a day of rest, but of rest sanctified … by this you gather the advantages without incurring the dangers; you escape the scandals and orgies which the day of rest brings back each week when it is not consecrated by religion.

Yes, Sunday would have to be invented if God had not created it. It is the day on which the bonds of family are knit again, on which man enslaved by the hard necessity of labour recovers his liberty, on which he who is shut in a workshop sees again the light of the sun, can salute that nature which presents itself the other days as an enemy. My children, you will sanctify Sunday: you will thereby accomplish a rigorous duty and you will be the happier for it even here below.

The third religious duty is to accomplish each year the paschal duty. Here again it is a rigorous condition without which one is not truly and practically a Christian. It is impossible to make a pact, an arrangement with religion, and be exempted from this law, even while observing all the rest. The word of Jesus Christ is formal: only what is loosed by the priest is loosed. And if the Christian eat not the flesh of Jesus Christ and drink not His blood, he shall not enter into heaven. This necessity, moreover, is only too well founded.

You are young, my children, but you know life enough already to know that man is, by his nature, inclined to sin; that days, weeks, months cannot pass without our soul’s being soiled with some stain. A fountain was therefore needed in which we could purify ourselves. Let us open the Gospel: it is clear that Jesus Christ has ordered us to communicate: Unless you eat my body and drink my blood, you shall not have life, the true life in you. Now which of you would dare approach the holy Table without having first confessed? And has the Church acted tyrannically in fixing, or rather reducing, to once a year this obligation of purifying the conscience in order to approach the eucharistic table?

Ah! here again, is it then an intolerable burden? … My children, several of you made this year your first communion. Tell me, what was the cause that made you so happy? Was it not to have unburdened your heart of all that weighed on it? … Was it not to have been fed with the Bread of angels, so delicious? … Well! this is what religion will ask of you that is most heroic and most difficult all the rest of your life: it is to come to shake off, once a year at least, chains that would oppress you, it is to approach the God who rejoiced your youth. The man who confesses and communicates at Easter has his conscience in peace; the minister of heaven declares to him that all goes well for him; he is at rest …

Behold then, my children, to what the principal obligations of the Christian life are reduced. Behold what is necessary and suffices to render our whole existence agreeable to God: prayer each day, which will unite us to God; the observance of Sunday, which will revive the fervour perhaps slackened during the week, and strengthen the bond that attaches us to God; the paschal duty, which will repair, which will expiate the faults, the inevitable sins committed during the year, and will give us, as pledge of the heavenly pardon, the Son of God Himself who will descend into us to be our strength, our support in the future …

Once more, what is there then in that so onerous, so intolerable? Ah! what would be intolerable would be to pass the days without praying, never to pour one's heart into that of God; in a world where everything is deceitful, lying, not to have a confidant, a friend. How I pity those who never pray … dried-up earth that is never refreshed by the dew of heaven!

What would be intolerable would be weeks and months flowing by without time's being divided by days of rest. How monotonous life becomes! There all the days are alike, and no feast leads you to the foot of the altars. See how sad they are, when you come out of church on Sunday, when you return to your families escorted by your friends, those who watch you pass from the threshold or the windows of their houses! How lugubrious their face, and how the clouds with which their brow is laden contrast with the sweet joy that radiates on all the other faces! Finally what would be intolerable would be to pass one's whole life without unburdening oneself of the remorse that follows sin. The most honest men according to the world have their secret iniquity. What an insupportable weight! What a misfortune not to be able to be relieved of it, to remain branded in one's own eyes, and never to receive a formal assurance of pardon!

You see then, my children, that religion asks of you only favourable, practicable things; it asks only what is asked for your own interest, even temporal and human. And, with the grace of the Holy Ghost, it will rest only with you to be faithful all your life to these duties of Christian piety. I know, and I have said, that to these indispensable and necessary duties of religion, piety aspires to see the Christian add something more. You know it, my children: in all things one must aim a little beyond the mark to reach it. But above all, in matter of sentiment, in matter of affection, it is impossible to be bound to stop at a precise and calculated point. To order a child to love his mother only to such a degree, for example, to be content with greeting her each day, spending an hour with her each week, and sitting at her table only once a year: would not that be to prescribe limits where love wills none? to constrain, to sadden the heart that does not accommodate itself to these categorical prescriptions?

Well! my children, the only love to which no limit should be imposed is precisely the only one that men undertake to limit, the love of God. Here one calculates, one gets informed of the strict duty; and one rules that one will stop there, not only oneself, but also that all those who depend on us will do no more. What injustice!

Ah! my brethren, let be, let be this young man, this young virgin whom their heart inclines toward the sweet habits of piety, let them mingle with their labours tender prayers repeated several times a day; let them on Sunday sing holy canticles, enrol under the banner of Mary, follow the sorrowful stations of Jesus Christ crucified; let them approach on solemn feasts the table where the bread of the elect and the wine of virgins are received. Ah! often it is not doing enough to do just enough; often it is a certain superfluity that protects and preserves the necessary. Without these flights of piety, without these practices, take care! perhaps religion itself, less amiable because it will be drier and barer, less easy because its acts will be rarer and will demand more effort; perhaps, I say, religion itself will vanish entirely.

Let be, let be these hearts naturally borne toward God, go to Him in their own way, freely and without constraint. Ah! parents who hear me, far from being an obstacle to the piety of your children, may you give them the example of it!

In happier times …

May you all, my brethren, have here below one same faith, one same practice, to have in the heavens one same eternal happiness! (1)[2]

Translator's notes

1. The text ends abruptly ("Dans des temps plus heureux …") as printed; the editor's note says the development "is not always completed in this instruction". The text breaks off with ellipses at several points in the original; I have kept them. The reference "t. I, p. 591" for the instruction on Sunday is as printed.

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[1] (1) The development of the thought is not always completed in this instruction; it has nevertheless seemed to us worthy of being preserved, as a summary of several preceding instructions on prayer (t. II, p. 102), on Sunday (t. I, p. 591), on the paschal duty (t. I, p. 152). (Editor's note.) The date is 25 May 1846.

[2] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 22, n. 19; p. 26, n. 40 *ter*, 1°, 3°, 5°, 8°. (Editor's note.)

n° 31. Sermon for the Feast of Saint Teresa

Preached at the Carmelites of Chartres, 15 October 1846.[1]

Quasi ignis effulgens, et quasi thus ardens in igne. [She shone as a flaming fire, and as frankincense burning in the fire. (Ecclus. 50:9.)]

She appeared like a flame that sparkles, and like incense that evaporates in the fire. (Ecclus. l, v. 9.)

MY VERY DEAR SISTERS, It is written, and Saint Paul has said in several places of his epistles, that God distributes His gifts diversely, that heavenly grace takes on different forms and communicates itself to men in particular proportions and in conformity with special ends: so that the sovereign Priest has made some apostles, others prophets, others evangelists, others pastors and doctors, so that, in accomplishing their ministry, they may concur, each in his own manner, in the work of the perfection of the saints and build up the body of Jesus Christ.

Now, in this distribution of supernatural offices, the spirit, which breathes where He will and as He will, is now more reserved, now more lavish. Sometimes He heaps on one same head so many gifts united that it is impossible to decide by what proper name and by what dominant attribute the ministry of this privileged soul is to be defined. Dazzled by so many riches which it sees assembled, praise knows not what it should extol the more, nor to which of so many qualities it should by preference attach itself. And the panegyrist, embarrassed by a matter which its very abundance impoverishes, would surprise himself, if he were only a rhetorician, regretting in his hero more merits than a discourse can bring out.

Such, I avow, my Sisters, is the difficulty that presents itself to me at this moment. After having studied in the silence of meditation the life and writings of the incomparable Teresa, when I wish to undertake to compose her eulogy, and apply myself, as the masters of eloquence command, to fix two or three principal points around which all the other parts of the discourse come to be placed, I soon recognise that these ideas, however fruitful they be, are far from containing the whole substance of my subject, rebellious by its extent; and outside of those first aspects which captivated me, other neglected aspects reveal themselves on all sides to my sight and come to thwart the plan of my work.

Shall I then complain to the Holy Spirit that, in raising Teresa above ordinary holiness, He has placed her above all my discourses, and that He has prepared the despair of eloquence in this miracle of grace? For after all, my Sisters, in what college of Saints has your Mother not her marked place? Among virgins: and is she not eminent among all those who have acquired the privilege of following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth? Among solitaries: and is she not the daughter of the desert, the brilliant and fruitful flower of Carmel? Among confessors: and has she not often rejoiced to have been found worthy to suffer outrage for the name of Jesus? Among martyrs: and did she not endure torments all her life, and did she not succumb at last under

the sword of love? Among doctors: does not the whole Church go to draw light and unction in her ineffable writings? Among pastors: did she not govern souls and direct Saints? Among apostles: had she not the solicitude of a great number of Churches, in the bosom of which she had reformed, founded holy houses? Among prophets and wonder-workers: did she not inherit the double spirit of Elias and Eliseus, stealing from the future its secrets, from the tomb its victims? Among Angels finally: fellow-citizen of the Saints and domestic of God, had she not from here below all her conversation in the heavens?

Virgin and solitary, confessor and martyr, doctor and pastor, apostle and prophet, and, to say all, angel and seraph, how contemplate so many rays that shine at once on the brow of this woman? What do I say? of this woman: yes, she was one by the delicacy of her mind and the sensibility of her heart. But she who said to her daughters: I cannot bear that you pass for women in anything whatever, and I wish you as strong as the strongest men, did she not realise in herself what she asked in others? No, I affirm it, never has the feminine character, while remaining itself and keeping its inimitable stamp, participated more in the virile qualities.

My Sisters, whither do I let myself be carried? I aspire to contain my ideas, and behold they overflow; to trace them a sure road before the departure, and behold they escape me and rush forward. But I shall have my excuse in the very nature of my subject, which does not admit of common rules. For how seize what is so subtle? What art could ever fix, for a single instant, to paint it and reproduce it, the gleam that scintillates or the smoke that evaporates? Now, and this is the use I wish to make of the words of my text, Teresa appeared on earth like a flame that shines and like incense that exhales: *Quasi ignis effulgens et thus ardens in igne.* Her lights, her ardours, that is my whole subject (1).[2]

O Mary, how I need you to descend into this virginal soul of Teresa, and recount its marvels! Be my guide and my help. *Ave Maria.*

I. The Apostle declared as many as three times that it does not belong to women to teach in the church; and in that he made himself the interpreter of the divine law which attributes to their sex the inestimable advantage of not showing themselves in public, and of edifying only by silence, dependence, modesty, retirement. But the Holy Spirit Himself led Teresa out of the beaten path and excepted her from the general rule. For, although she did not raise her voice in the holy assemblies, it may be said that she taught in the Church, since her writings will be eternally ranked among the most precious monuments of sacred science.

Science, Christian brethren, and our century has made a sad experience of what I am going to advance, science, which is a gift of heaven, too often here below turns only to the profit of hell. Science, I love to say with Bossuet, yes, it is the light of the understanding, the guide of the will, the nurse of virtue, the soul of truth, the companion of wisdom, the mother of good counsels, in a word the food of the mind and the mistress of human life. But as it is natural to man to corrupt the best things, this science, which has deserved such great praises, is most often spoiled in our hands by the use we make of it. It is she who has risen against the science of God; it is she who, promising to enlighten us, blinds us rather by pride; it is she who makes us adore our own thoughts under the august name of truth. I should never have done, continues the great Bossuet, if I wished to recount all the evils born of the love of sciences, since a blind desire to know ruined the first woman with all her posterity. Let us stop with Saint Bernard to point out three abuses of science. There are some, says this holy doctor, who wish to know in order to know; and it is a base curiosity: *Quidam scire volunt, ut sciant; et turpis curiositas est.* There are some who wish to know in order to make themselves known and become celebrated; and it is a dangerous vanity: *Quidam scire volunt, ut sciantur ipsi; et turpis vanitas est.* Finally there are some who wish to know in order to sell their science; and it is a shameful traffic: *Quidam scire volunt, ut scientiam suam vendant; et turpis quaestus est.* Now, my very dear Sisters, Jesus Christ, who illuminated the mind of Teresa His spouse with the most brilliant clarities of science, preserved her from these three dangers which science almost always meets. 1° To know in order to know: is this not one of the numerous disorders of the times in which we live? To read with no other aim than to amuse oneself; to study with no other result than to take complacency in the knowledge one acquires; to instruct

oneself from curiosity and self-love; to idolise in oneself one's science: that is what I discover in the bottom of the heart of the children of Eve, ever allured by the promise of the seducer who says to them: You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil: *Et eritis sicut dii, scientes bonum et malum.* Yes, good and evil. Do you see this woman of the world intoxicated with the persuasion that she knows much, all athirst to know more every day? nothing escapes her desire to know. Her restless ardour bears her at first equally toward what is permitted and toward what is forbidden. In her pretension to universal knowledge, she makes it a duty to be no more a stranger to the austere truths of Christian doctrine than to the seductive fables of a voluptuous literature; and this wit, theologian as much as romantic, appreciates and judges with the same assurance the masterpieces of the pulpit as those of the theatre, runs through with the same rapidity the *Imitation of Jesus Christ* and the light sheets of the night before, skims all the surfaces, and, for all the fruit of her labour, rests in the satisfaction of knowing a little of everything.

For the rest, solely occupied with adorning her intelligence, she totally neglects to order her life. Serious instruction has never resolved itself for her into useful and practical conclusions; if she knows the good, it is to know it and not to believe it, to discuss it and not to accomplish it: unlike evil, for which the passage from mind to heart is shorter and easier, study closer to practice. Thus the affection bearing by preference toward the fruits of forbidden science, soon they are the only ones on which she feeds. She passes her whole life in an idle science which will never contribute to her solid felicity; a superfluous science, to which a simple life employed in handling wool and spindle would be a thousand times preferable; a science which the Holy Spirit calls a very evil occupation that holds captive the children of men: *Pessimam hanc occupationem dedit Deus filiis hominum, ut occuparentur in ea.* [God hath given this painful occupation to the children of men to be exercised therein. (Eccles. 1:13.)]

O virgin of Avila, would it then be also a simple diversion of mind that you sought in science? Do you thirst only for emotions, and want only agreeable pastimes? To this first discernment, which leads you to the sources of truth and virtue, what lamentable illusion I see succeed! I perceive in your hands those frivolous books where contagious weaknesses are ingeniously written, chimerical histories that excite as many real passions as they tell of imaginary ones, and that soon put the reader on a level with the hero. O you whom I thought one of the wise virgins, with what pernicious oil you fill your lamp, and do you not already feel your virtue weaken, and your attraction to piety decrease? Teresa, Teresa, on what road of perdition you are engaged! Lately you wished to go to martyrdom, and you are going to hell. One day this horrible gulf will open before you, and you will see with dread the place that was prepared for you.

My Sisters, it is not failing in respect to the memory of your Mother to tell of her wanderings. She was on the point of taking a liking to fables and falsehoods. A light and dissipated relative, the inexperience of tender age, the sallies of a lively and petulant nature led her to the gates of the abyss. But as her heart was honest, as she had not entirely abandoned prayer, soon the light dawns for her; she obeys grace. It is done, and for ever she has renounced all study, all science of which God is not the principle and the object, of which virtue is not the fruit, of which heaven is not the term.

The fear of the Lord, says the Holy Spirit, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding: *Ecce timor Domini, ipsa est sapientia; et recedere a malo, intelligentia.* [Job 28:28.] Profound truth with which Teresa was penetrated, and which our century glories in disowning, which calls philosophy every science of evil, which places at the head of its most precious conquests the free profession of error, and which goes to seek in all the centuries the doctors of falsehood and the apostates from truth to crown them as the emancipators of the human mind: *Ecce recedere a malo, intelligentia.* Yes, to depart from evil, that is wherein understanding consists; to fear the Lord, avenger of truth, that is true philosophy: *Timor Domini, ipsa est sapientia.*

The just and elevated mind of Teresa understood it. She bade an eternal farewell to the fascination of trifles; she renounces knowing evil, and wishes now only to attach herself to knowing good. And although she had

received from nature and education the advantages that can enliven and polish a well-made mind, she wishes now to apply her intelligence only to the truths of the Christian faith. Even then she will take care not to imitate curious minds, who, even in religion, seek only to feed on a vain speculation, like those insects seen playing around a torch. She knows that this light of heaven is not given to us solely to rejoice our sight and charm our understanding, but to guide our steps and direct our affections.

Hear her. She cannot bear that Jesus Christ should be treated as Herod did, that He should be regarded as an object of curious researches, as a text for delicate questions, agreeable dissertations. Like a wise architect, she makes of science a foundation on which she builds the edifice of her perfection; her faith becomes the basis of her life; her readings turn to virtue; her meditations resolve themselves into affections and prayers. Let others know for the pleasure of being learned; Teresa knows in order to become better. Far from taking complacency in science, she despises it whenever it is reduced to a vague theory and does not tend to practice and action. She detests narrow minds, because they are little apt to virtue; but she cannot tolerate that her daughters amuse themselves with studies foreign to their state. She prefers, she tells them, that they have the holy ambition to appear simple and ignorant rather than wish to be rhetoricians. What admirable rules she has traced for them concerning the respect with which one must stop before the unfathomable depths of the Scriptures, warning them no less against the pretension to theological knowledge than against the taste for worldly studies!

A person of renowned devotion, and of a fairly cultivated mind, had obtained from Teresa to be received in her monastery of Toledo; the eve of the day fixed for the entrance, she comes to see her and says on parting from her: “My Mother, I shall bring also a Bible that I have.” “A Bible that you have, my daughter,” the Saint immediately answers; “no, no, do not come; we have no need of you, nor of your Bible; we are poor ignorant women who know only how to spin and do what we are ordered.”[3]

Teresa, whose glance was so sure, had judged, and she was not mistaken, that she had to do with one of those curious minds who know in order to know, and also with one of those vain minds who know in order to appear: *Quidam scire volunt ut sciantur.* A second abuse of science against which Teresa was always on her guard.

2° It is rare, my brethren, that a soul smitten with that subtle and delicate pride of the intelligence of which I have just spoken knows how to contain it within itself. With difficulty does this smoke concentrate, turn, fold back upon itself, until it is absorbed and devours itself in the hearth where it was formed. Almost always it makes an outlet for itself, and escapes by more or less repeated leaks.

Science, moreover, by its nature, is not destined to remain hidden. A lamp is not lit to be put under a bushel, said the divine Saviour. Whoever has been enlightened by a ray of truth must apply himself to reflect this light in the intelligence of his fellows. It is therefore a just and legitimate ambition of science to show itself. But, as it is also a just gratitude of men to refer the praise to him by whose mediation the truth has been reflected in their minds, it results that knowledge is a perilous gift, [exposed] to the marks of public favour.[4]

Now, says Bossuet, who certainly had the right to speak of it, if the strongest heads are often moved by an incense so delicate and so penetrating, how much more that of a young girl in whom the reputation for science is the more applauded the more it is extraordinary in her sex. Modest and Christian ladies will kindly hear from my mouth the continuation of the words of the illustrious doctor. The greatest misfortune of persons of their sex is that ordinarily the desire to please is their dominant passion. And if they display with so deplorable a success that beauty which merely colours the surface, when it happens that they feel in the intelligence some more considerable advantages, how eager one sees them to make them shine in their conversations, and what is not their triumph when they imagine they charm everybody?

My daughters, says the same pontiff elsewhere, speaking to religious who instructed youth (1), flee as a poison all curiosities, all amusements of the mind; for women have no less inclination to be vain through

their mind than through their body. Often the readings they make with so much eagerness turn into vain adornments and immodest attire of their mind; they read from vanity as they adorn their hair … Hence, concludes the same doctor, it is the principal reason why, if I mistake not, they are excluded from the sciences: because, even if they could acquire them, they would have too much difficulty in bearing them; so that if this application is forbidden them, it is not so much, in my opinion, from fear of engaging their mind in too high an enterprise, as from that of exposing their humility to too dangerous a trial.[5]

My brethren, here is the miracle of the hand of God in the illustrious virgin whom I celebrate. And although it is a great prodigy to see Teresa so learned, it is still something more surprising to see Teresa so modest not make use of her science to make the doctrine of Jesus Christ shine.

This prodigy is the more admirable in that Teresa had in herself and in her natural temperament an excessive inclination toward things and men of wit. But what an absolute empire did grace not take over nature, while respecting in her the bearing and forms of an imagination as rich as fruitful, of a diction as piquant as correct! Teresa, enlightened by the lights from on high, aspires only to bury the gift of God; and, far from placing herself on the candlestick of the Church, she needs the command of the Church to determine her to write. She makes profession of being a daughter of obedience. What she composed by order of the priest she destroys and burns on a simple wish of the priest. Do you see Abraham immolating on the pyre, at the demand of God, the only son whom God had promised and given him? happily an Angel comes to suspend the sword and snatch the precious victim from the flames.

My brethren, for an author a work conceived and brought forth with pain is a much cherished child. But Teresa knows no bounds to obedience. I may be deceived, she says, in following the direct revelations that come to me from heaven, I shall never be deceived in obeying the minister of heaven. What she had begun at the voice of Jesus Himself, she is going to annihilate at the voice of the same Jesus speaking through the mouth of the guide of her soul. With such a preservative science has no more dangers. Lest the greatness of the revelations should puff up my heart, says the great Apostle, there was given me an angel of Satan to buffet me. My brethren, so that the greatness of the revelations, that the visions, the multiplied ecstasies and all the outpourings of divine favours might not be fatal to Teresa, God put beside her the angel of obedience, faithful guardian of humility, sure protector against the assaults of pride.

But these incomparable books of Teresa, let us open them, and see what imprint of humility they bear on every page. In this century when the writer adores his thought as his own, and as coming from his own depth, and not because it is the image and expression of truth, we all have need, my brethren, to consider a great intelligence which puts things back in their order, and which, rendering to God the glory that is His, bears witness that it has no other role than that of instrument. What hast thou that thou hast not received? says the Holy Spirit to you. Has the cut and polished metal which sends back and projects far bundles of light the right to glory as if it were the source of light?

The preaching of the truth is a glorious office doubtless, but it is only an office: *Ministerium verbi,* the great Apostle tells us. [Cf. Acts 6:4.] The manifestation of the Word is entrusted to us as a ministry and does not become our property and our empire. When Jesus Christ gives to one of His privileged creatures the science of His doctrine, when He reveals to her new and precious insights, what does He do else than place in this mind a mirror of the truth and perfection that is in Him? Now, says the great Bossuet again, is not all the function and all the honour of the mirror, if it has any, in faithful representation?

Yes, you know it, O Teresa, the God who commanded corporeal light to shine out of darkness; the God who placed the sun in the visible firmament and gave it the function of lighting the universe through all the ages; the same God communicates, when it pleases Him, a ray of His truth and of His own face to certain hearts, but it is that they may make shine in all eyes His image and the face of Christ Jesus: *Qui dixit de tenebris lumen splendescere, ipse illuxit in cordibus nostris ad illuminationem scientiae claritatis Dei in facie Jesu.*

[Who hath said that light should shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ Jesus. (2 Cor. 4:6.)] You understood this doctrine, O virgin of Carmel: that is why there is not a syllable of your writings that is not a testimony rendered to God and to truth, to Jesus Christ and to His pure doctrine; not a word that is stamped with the desire to appear and shine yourself.

My brethren, it has been said of a great man of this century (I repeat this word with regret, for I have compassion on great men: the vulgar demand too much of them; genius is so difficult to bear that one must applaud oneself when its deviations do not go so far as to falsify its route entirely; the prince of the Angels did not know how to stay in the truth, and his eyes lowered themselves with complacency on himself) — it has been said of a great man of this century that all his works begin with I and end with me. Whatever be the case with this severe judgment, I can say with assurance that all the works of Teresa begin with Jesus and end with Jesus, and that she is never found in them herself. She was not of those who wish to know in order to shine; she knew only to humble herself and to make the glory of God and of Jesus Christ His Son shine. I am mistaken, she knew also to conquer souls by her science. 3° You have not forgotten, my brethren, that Saint Bernard speaks of a third class of learned men, who wish to know in order to make good use of their science. My brethren, we live in a positive century, in which knowledge is directed only to gain, in which intelligence has become the humble servant of cupidity. Who will draw men out of this blindness? Who will make them hear those bitter words which Bossuet already accented with just indignation? “It is an unworthy spectacle,” said he, “to see the gifts of the mind serve temporal interests. I know nothing more servile than those low souls who regret all their vigils, who murmur against all their science, and call it sterile and unfruitful when it does not make their fortune.” How I pity those men and also those women of our epoch, who prostitute their admirable talent, and go to ask of all the passions a little gold that the grateful passions always grant them! Cowardly and interested souls, come and be instructed in the school of Teresa, and know that thought, this divine flame that hovers in the heavens, is not made to fall into this unworthy traffic; and that if ever it is put into commerce, it must be for a more sublime end, that is to say to negotiate the salvation of souls. If Teresa had willed it; if, instead of harnessing her brilliant and rapid imagination to the chariot of faith; if, instead of subjecting her magnificent intelligence under the yoke of truth, she had darted into the vaporous regions of chimeras and above all into the ever fertile fields of the passions, the world would assuredly place her in the first rank among women authors. But what a frightful renown, that which is secured here below to talent only so far as it skilfully poisons souls and demolishes virtue in hearts! And with what frightful rigour must genius, if sacrilegiously diverted from its end, be chastised in the eternal flames!

Glory to you, O Teresa, glory to you who never abused talent, and who employed your mind only to sanctify, to save men. To all to whom Jesus has entrusted some talent, He said: *Negotiamini donec veniam:* Trade till I come. [Luke 19:13.] But legitimate commerce is done by exchange, which is founded on equality. Glory then to you, O Teresa, who with science, this coin come down from heaven and struck with the effigy of the Word which enlightens every man coming into this world, laboured only to acquire for heaven souls created in the image of God.

Ah! my brethren, who could tell how many elect owe to Teresa, to the writings of Teresa, their salvation and their eminent glory in the heavens? It is not I, it is grave authorities who affirm this precious efficacy of the works of the angelic virgin. I know of no writer, in these latter times, whose doctrine the Church has so extolled. Ecclesiastical tradition designates to us, in the series of Fathers and doctors, some men whose name represents a whole branch of sacred science. Is it a question of the mystery of grace, and in general of dogmatic theology? the name of Augustine is law, and his sentiment decisive. Is it a question of the literal interpretation of the Scriptures? I perceive Saint Jerome armed with his infallible commentaries. If I interrogate scholastic theology, which consists in deducing from the faith by reasoning certain principles, instantly the whole school rises and salutes Saint Thomas Aquinas as its master and angelic doctor. But, if it

is a question of that science which unites the soul intimately to God by oraison and which is called mystical theology, three centuries already elapsed pronounce by acclamation the name of Teresa. Teresa! John of the Cross and Peter of Alcantara were seen, both crowned by the Church, to come and take lessons and be inspired by her examples. Teresa! she led into the ways of perfection and of the evangelical counsels bishops, theologians, thousands of solitaries and virgins. Teresa! some passages of her writings having been turned aside to a dangerous sense, the great Bossuet was seen to discuss their meaning with as much regard as if it were a question of the text of the most revered Fathers, of the most authoritative doctors.

Teresa! her doctrine is the theology of oraison and prayer, it is the theology of love. The whole Christian religion can be reduced to two words: He loved, *dilexit,* that is the whole faith of the Christian; thou shalt love, *diliges*, that is the whole law of the Christian. Now the writings of Teresa are only the development of this dogma of love, the commentary and application of this precept of love (1) …[6]

So much for the substance of the writings of Teresa. And if I had to give my opinion on the form, I should say that she spoke with infinite wit of the most elevated things of the spiritual life, and that she employed the richest gifts of nature to tell the mysteries of grace. I find under the pen of Teresa the solid gravity of Saint Jane de Chantal with more elevation and warmth, and at the same time the fruitful imagination of her celebrated granddaughter with more ingenuousness and abandon. By gathering these so disparate traits I should approach the portrait of Teresa. Teresa is the natural wit of Sévigné added to the supernatural knowledge of her holy grandmother.

Teresa! Ah! this very morning the Roman Church asked God for all her children a participation in her heavenly doctrine: *Da nobis caelestis ejus doctrinae pabulo nutriri.* [Grant that we may be nourished with the food of her heavenly doctrine.] I am a priest and, on that title, minister of the holy word; and, this morning at the altar, I asked God to be nourished with the heavenly doctrine of Teresa. Above me the Holy Spirit has placed a bishop charged to rule this Church and feed this flock; and this bishop, like all the bishops of the Catholic world, they who are the depositaries of the faith, and, united to their head, the infallible judges of doctrine, this morning at the altar, they all asked God that He would deign to feed them, nourish them themselves with the heavenly doctrine of Teresa: *Caelestis ejus doctrinae pabulo nutriri.* Finally, above the bishops, Jesus Christ has placed the pastor of pastors, the head of the Church, the bishop of all souls; and this first pontiff, this morning, formed at the altar this same wish, and desired to be nourished, he, the supreme pastor, to be nourished with this heavenly food of the doctrine of Teresa: *Caelestis ejus doctrinae pabulo nutriri.* He to whom Jesus Christ said: Feed my lambs, feed my sheep, implored of a woman, of Teresa, the nourishment of doctrine.

O Teresa, from the height of the heavens, see today the whole Church at your feet, the Church which asks of you your lights, which aspires to be nourished with your doctrine. What an admirable triumph! What science has ever received such homages! But above all, and you find the proof of it in the heavens where you are surrounded by the blessed whose happiness is your work, what science has ever produced such fruits!

II. My very dear brethren, I have spoken to you of the lights of Teresa; I have accomplished only half my task, it would remain for me to speak to you of her ardours. I have shown you her intelligence: that was doubtless already showing you in great part her heart, for she was endowed above all with the spirit of the heart; I should have to show you her conduct and her life. The eulogy of Teresa, too, might be made in two words: *Diliges,* thou shalt love, that is all her writings; *dilexit*, she loved, that is all her history. But I do not wish to abuse your attention and that of this audience. I shall finish, another year, the eulogy of your Mother (1).

But have I not said enough already, my very dear Sisters, for you to have great fruits to gather from my words? Ah! nourish yourselves unceasingly, you above all, O daughters of Teresa, make unceasingly your food of the heavenly doctrine of your Mother, doctrine of oraison, doctrine of self-denial, doctrine of union

with God, doctrine of love.

And you, Christian brethren, you, women, virgins of the world, ask God that He make you share in the doctrine of Teresa. This doctrine is not addressed only to religious, it can profit all Christians. Renounce, like Teresa, all science which does not lead to God; cast into the fire, like Teresa, all books that do not speak of Jesus. Like Teresa, have no heart but to love God and all that must be loved in God. How I wish, my brethren, that you could carry away today into your souls some of the perfumes of Carmel! Saint Teresa remarked that, in the different towns, all persons given to oraison were fond of the houses of her religious. That is always true. Every soul which in this century gives itself to the holy exercises of prayer feels a secret movement of affection that draws it near to the daughters of Teresa. It comes from time to time to warm in itself the sentiment of prayer near this hearth of oraison. Yes, my brethren, it is to have profited to take pleasure in it and to have come for some moments to mingle one's prayer with the prayer of Carmel.[7]

O Teresa, one day when you still sought with too much pleasure the conversation of men, a voice from heaven said to you: My daughter, I will that you converse no more but with Angels. From that day, by your prayers, by your counsels, you changed into angels all those who had the happiness to be known to you. Yes, you obeyed the heavenly voice, you conversed no more but with angels. They were named Alvarez, Salazar, Avila, Francis Borgia, Peter of Alcantara, John of the Cross, Louis of Granada. The world called them so; heaven saw in them only angels.[8]

O Teresa, by your prayers, by your writings, by your examples, by the prayers, by the examples of your daughters, enlighten, touch, sanctify, perfect our hearts, the heart of these Christians, the heart of these priests, mine so unworthy, so needy, for which I ask of you, on this day, an effusion of your spirit of prayer, a portion of the heavenly food of your doctrine. May all the faculties of my soul, may all the powers of my being aspire henceforth only to this blessed union with God!

Finally, O Teresa, and it is this last wish that I lay at your feet: hear the cry of my soul in favour of this sacrifice which is to be consummated in two days in the secret of this sanctuary (1). Receive in your arms, and press to your heart her whom our daily prayers have accompanied in the exercises of her novitiate, her who is to become until death your daughter, and who will walk in your company in the train of the Lamb for ages of ages (1). So be it (2).[9]

Translator's notes

1. The Bossuet attributions, the Bernard triad, the Teresa anecdotes and the list of her "angels" are as the preacher gives them; not verified here. The "great man of this century" whose works "begin with I and end with me" is unnamed in the text and not identified here.

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[1] The heading prints "13 octobre 1844" and the table of contents "13 octobre 1846"; the preacher's own register (Appendix I, n° 27) gives Thursday 15 October 1846, the feast of Saint Teresa, which I follow.

[2] (1) Bossuet (*panégyrique de sainte Catherine* [as printed]) has furnished the divisions and the substance. (Note of M. l'abbé Pie.) Bossuet's panegyric of Saint Teresa exists as well as that of Saint Catherine; I give the title as printed and have not verified it.

[3] Anecdote as the preacher gives it; not verified here.

[4] The sentence is as printed, and appears defective (perhaps a clause is missing before "aux marques de la faveur publique"); I have supplied only the bracketed word.

[5] (1) Sermon on the obligations of the religious state, third point. (Editor's note.) Bossuet quotations are as the preacher gives them; not verified here.

[6] (1) Developments: intuition of the mystery of the Trinity … of the Heart of Jesus Christ, etc. … outpouring of love. (Note of M. l'abbé Pie.)

[7] (1) If we consult the *Note exacte de mes sermons et instructions*, M. l'abbé Pie had not the occasion to keep his promise. (Editor's note.)

[8] The "voice from heaven" anecdote and the list of names are as the preacher gives them; not verified here.

[9] (1) At the Carmelites, the public ceremony of the taking of the veil is preceded by the private emission of the vows. — See farther on, p. 461. (1) Mademoiselle Nathalie le Chapellier de la Varenne. (See the following discourse.) (2) Cf. Appendix I: p. 24, n° 27. (Editor's notes.)

n° 32. Discourse for the Taking of the Veil of Mlle Natalie Le Chapellier de la Varenne

Preached at the Carmelites [of Chartres], Thursday, 22 October 1846.[1]

Et audivi quasi vocem … dicentium: Alleluia … Gaudeamus et exultemus … quia venerunt nuptiae Agni, et uxor ejus praeparavit se. [And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude … saying: Alleluia … Let us be glad and rejoice … for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath prepared herself. (Apoc. 19:6–7.)]

And I heard as it were the voice of a multitude, saying: Alleluia! Let us rejoice and exult, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his spouse hath prepared herself. (Apoc. c. xix, v. 6 and 7.)

Is it not a marvellous thing, my Sisters, that the Word of God, forgetting in a manner the happiness He finds in His nature and in His commerce with the divine persons, should descend to seek joys and feasts upon earth; and that, as once that king of Israel who was to be, even in his wanderings, the figure of the divine Wisdom, not content with this substantial love or embrace which maintains, in the bosom of the Trinity, as it were the nuptials of a perpetual alliance, He should still come to take spouses in a foreign nature and among the children of men?[2]

Once more, my Sisters, is not that a great marvel? And is it not nevertheless a reality of which faith does not permit us to doubt, and on which the whole Christian religion rests? For forty centuries the divine Word sighed after that instant in which it would be given Him to unite Himself to human nature. And behold a chaste Virgin has appeared on earth: she was the one predestined from all eternity in the designs of the Father. At this sight the Word leapt for joy, and the weight of His love drew Him from the heavens. The Angels interrupted their concerts to the glory of the intimate relations of the adorable Trinity, to celebrate those of the Word with Mary and with human nature. Eternity heard a new canticle, and its accustomed trisagion was silent for an instant at the nuptial hymn of the Lamb and His spouse. And I heard as it were the voice of a multitude, saying: Alleluia! joy and exultation! for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his spouse hath prepared herself: *Et audivi quasi vocem dicentium: Alleluia … gaudeamus et exultemus … quia venerunt nuptiae Agni, et uxor ejus praeparavit se.*

But neither this first mystery, nor all those which followed the mystery of the Incarnation and were as its near and necessary dependencies, could satisfy the insatiable desire of Him whose divine happiness had not sufficed. The Word has always kept the same inclination; having once sought virginal purity with so much ardour, He has always for it the same transport. And when a virgin who has prepared herself by long exercises comes to present herself before His altars, He welcomes her with tenderness. Heaven, this time again, forgets its joys and accustomed songs to celebrate the marriage of the Lamb with His new spouse. And I hear as it were the voice of a multitude saying: Alleluia! Joy and exultation! for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his spouse hath prepared herself: *Et audivi quasi vocem dicentium: Alleluia … Gaudeamus et exultemus, quia venerunt nuptiae Agni, et uxor ejus praeparavit se.*

My very dear Sister, a whole year has passed since the day you contracted the first betrothals with this divine Spouse of virgins. Since then, of how many favours have you not been the object, and by how many signs has God not testified that He accepted the holocaust you destined for Him? Your health so marvellously restored, so solidly sustained, that it may be said you have found the remedy and the end of your sufferings in the very austerities of the cloister; a sweet joy which has not belied itself for a single instant, and a complete exemption from those sadnesses which sometimes come to assail the strongest vocations; an aptitude so

singular for all the exercises of the religious life, that it seemed you had brought with you the spirit of Saint Teresa and were initiated beforehand into the practices of Carmel: so many consoling proofs that you are in the way to which God Himself called you.

My Sister, a thousand thoughts and a thousand sentiments abound and press in my heart. What things to say to you, and what things also to say to all this audience! The day you stripped yourself of the livery of the world to clothe yourself with the holy habit, I neglected you in a manner, and thought myself indebted above all to the witnesses of your sacrifice. Today it is to you that I wish to speak principally; it is the dignity of your holy state that I wish to make you know. I attach myself to two reflections that arise from my text: *Venerunt nuptiae Agni:* the marriage of the Lamb is come; on this day you become the spouse of Jesus Christ: *Et uxor ejus praeparavit se:* and his spouse hath prepared herself. In what does the duty of a spouse of the Lamb consist? That is my whole subject; I shall be able only to touch on it.

Let us implore the lights of the Holy Spirit through the mediation of her who marches at the head of all the spouses of the Lamb, because she is at once their spouse and their mother. *Ave Maria.*

I. In reading two admirable passages of Saint Paul where he represents to us the economy of the Church in the diversity of operations that make the harmony of this mystical body, I have often been astonished, my Sisters, to find in them no mention of your name, your title, your rank and function in the Church. He speaks of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and doctors, and several other hierarchical degrees and functions; and he omits those chosen virgins who were to be, in the new law, according to the prophecy of the Psalmist, led to the King, those virgins whom he himself calls, in a place of his epistles, the betrothed of Jesus Christ. But this omission of Saint Paul is repaired by the virgin disciple, and as the Church of earth is only a faithful image of the Church of the heavens, let us learn what his eagle's eye saw in glory.

He saw there millions of thousands of Angels, and they were round about the throne: *Angelorum millia millium, in circuitu throni.* He saw there twenty-four ancients: they were the Apostles and the first founders of the Churches, and their thrones surrounded that of the Lamb: *Et in circuitu sedis, sedilia viginti quatuor, et super thronos viginti quatuor seniores.* He saw there four mysterious animals, which figured the four evangelists, and they were round about the throne: *Et in circuitu throni quatuor animalia.* He saw there twelve times twelve thousand elect of the twelve tribes of Israel, and a multitude of other elect of every tongue, every tribe and every nation; and they stood in the presence of the Lamb: *Stantes in conspectu Agni.* Among this crowd he remarked some who had washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb: these were the martyrs. These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and therefore they are before the throne: *Et ideo sunt ante thronum Dei.* [Apoc. 4:4, 6; 7:4, 9, 14–15.]

So far, my brethren, I see that it is the common condition to surround the throne of God and of the Lamb, to stand before this throne. But see now the privilege: And I saw the Lamb standing on Mount Sion, and with him a hundred forty-four thousand elect having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice harmonious as the voice of many waters, strong as the voice of a great thunder; and the voice which I heard was sweet as of harpers harping on their harps. And they sung as it were a new canticle, and no man could say the canticle but those hundred forty-four thousand. These are they who were purchased from the earth and from among men, to be the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb. These are they who were not defiled, and they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, for they are virgins: *Hi sequuntur Agnum quocumque ierit, virgines enim sunt.* [Apoc. 14:1–4.]

To stand with the Lamb, to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes, such is, here below and in the heavens, the great prerogative of virgins, of which Saint Augustine will explain the mystery to us, and from which we shall conclude with him that they are the true and special spouses.

In effect, says the holy doctor, to follow Jesus Christ is to imitate Him as far as is permitted to men: *Hunc in eo quisque sequitur, in quo imitatur;* and consequently to follow Jesus Christ everywhere is to imitate Him in

all that He does. From this principle it is easy to conclude that to follow Jesus Christ everywhere is the privilege of virgins. For if Jesus is meek and humble of heart, if He is submissive and obedient, if He is simple and poor in spirit, if He is merciful and charitable, all the faithful, both those who are virgins and those who are in marriage, can follow Him in their own way in all these ways. They can even follow Him to that noble trial of charity of which He Himself said that there is none greater, I mean martyrdom.

But there presents itself another path in which all cannot accompany Him. For, my Sisters, this spotless Lamb walks by a virginal path: *Ecce ille Agnus graditur itinere virginali.* Begotten virginally from eternity, His mother in time was a virgin. Even nuptial holiness had no rank beside Him either in His birth or in His life. The guardian of His childhood, that just man whom He called His father, was a virgin. John, His beloved, who rested on His breast, and in whose favour He made His testament from the height of the cross, was a virgin. Even to His sepulchre, says Bossuet, He willed to find virgin, so much love had He for virginity! And in heaven His tastes have not changed. And as on earth He honours all the other states, but keeping them at a distance, if I dare say so; so He gives a place to all the virtues around His throne, but with Him, in His intimacy, in His familiarity, He admits only virgins.

And I saw the Lamb standing on the mountain and with him a hundred forty-four thousand elect having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice harmonious as the voice of waters, strong as the voice of thunder; and the voice which I heard was sweet as the sound that skilful fingers know how to draw from a lyre. And they sung as it were a new canticle; and no man could learn the canticle but those hundred forty-four thousand. These are they who were purchased from the earth and from among men to be the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb. These are they who were not defiled; they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, for they are virgins.

Do you understand now these words, my Sisters? What is this canticle at once so brilliant and so harmonious? It is, answers the great Bossuet, the canticle of virgins, whose love is strong as death and tender as their soul. The canticle of virgins is a new canticle, for virginity belongs only to the new covenant; a canticle that bursts like thunder and which is nevertheless so secret and so rare that no one hears it or follows it save those who sing it, because it is of virginity that the Saviour said: All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given: *Non omnes capiunt verbum istud, sed quibus datum est.* These are virgins, and, because of this, they follow the Lamb everywhere: *Hi sunt qui cum mulieribus non sunt coinquinati; hi sequuntur Agnum quocumque ierit, virgines enim sunt.*

Do you begin to conceive, my Sisters, all the prerogative of virgins? But Saint John gives me still an opening to a beautiful thought. And to explain it, let us penetrate with Bossuet into an admirable doctrine of the Saints. It tends to prove that virginity constitutes a particular aptitude for the union of the soul with God, and that consequently virgins are the true and special spouses of Jesus Christ. The Fathers represent virginity to us as a kind of mean between spirits and bodies; and Saint Augustine, speaking of sacred virgins, says that they have in the flesh something that is not of the flesh: *Habent aliquid in carne, non ex carne.* Spirits, bodies: those are two opposite extremes; virginity is the mean that participates in both. It is in the flesh, and by that it belongs to men; but it has in the flesh something that is not of the flesh, and by that it touches the Angels and God.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa has told us the same thing. It is, he says, virginity that on the one hand makes God not refuse to come with men; and it is she on the other hand who gives men wings to take their flight toward heaven. She is the sacred bond of the familiarity of man with God, and she by her mediation accords and reconciles two extremes irreconcilable by their nature: *Quae adeo natura distant, ipsa intercedens sua virtute conciliat, adducitque in concordiam.*

And now I understand how virginity was at once necessary to determine and efficacious to advance the mystery of the Incarnation. For what was the Incarnation? It was the Divinity espousing flesh. But the

disproportion was so great! Was not the Divinity to make a misalliance? There was need, yes, there was need of the mediation of virginity which, having something spiritual, alone could prepare the flesh to be allied with the Word: *Quae adeo natura distant, ipsa intercedens sua virtute conciliat, adducitque in concordiam.*

And now also I understand why the Word has always kept the same tastes and the same inclinations. I have the key, it seems to me, to all those places of Scripture where I read that among all others He seeks virgins for His spouses; that He has for them such a predilection that, although He loves the others, He seems to forget them, calling the Christian virgin His only dove, His all-fair, His beloved. To pretend to His union, the others may spread out a thousand riches, virginity always carries it. The others can prepare feasts for Him, but He makes His nuptials only with virgins. He welcomes the roses, but He rejoices only among the lilies.

Yes, I understand all that, since the alliance of the Word with man demands virginity as the mutual point of approach, and these spiritual nuptials can be celebrated only in the sanctuary of a heart placed, by its purity, in a certain middle region between matter and spirit, between earth and heaven: *Quae adeo natura distant, ipsa intercedens sua virtute conciliat, adducitque in concordiam.*

And now also, my Sisters, you will understand that this doctrine of Saint Augustine, of Saint Gregory of Nyssa and of Bossuet was already the doctrine of Saint John, who represents virgins to us as a class apart. These, he says, have been purchased from the earth by heaven: *Hi empti sunt de terra.* It is an intermediate species, levied from the rest of human nature to be the first-fruits offered to God and to the Lamb: *Hi empti sunt ex hominibus, primitiae Deo et Agno.* These alone are the true spouses; they have left their name and bear the name of the Spouse and of His Father: *Habentes nomen ejus et nomen Patris ejus.*

That is why, holy Church of Jesus Christ, you have always attached so much importance to all that concerns Christian virgins. How beautiful it is, Christian brethren, to read, in the ecclesiastical monuments of the first centuries, with what authority and in what terms the most illustrious doctors, the grave Tertullian, for example, wrote on the consecration of virgins by the Catholic Church: *De velandis virginibus!* [On the veiling of virgins.] The veil that was given to virgins even then makes the matter of a whole work of the priest of Carthage. How beautiful to see with what solemnity, with what apparatus, the greatest pontiffs, such as Ambrose, for example, lent their ministry to the ceremony of their consecration; with what zeal, with what predilection they laboured, both by their writings and their discourses, to render these virgins worthy of their sublime vocation! One day when a virgin had forgotten the holiness of her state, and profaned the veil that religion had put on her brow, the suave Ambrose was heard, animated with a holy indignation, to pronounce one of his most eloquent homilies , from which I detach a few words, because they express all the pomp with which virgins were then admitted into the Church.

What! cries the incomparable bishop, did you not remember that holy day of Paschal Sunday on which you presented yourself at the divine altar to receive the veil! In the midst of so great and so solemn an assembly of the Church of God, amid the burning tapers of the neophytes, among the new children of the heavenly kingdom clothed in white robes, you advanced like a royal betrothed. The pontiff addressed you, and said to you: Hearken, O daughter, and see; hearken, O virgin, and forget thy people and thy father’s house, and the King shall desire thy beauty, for he is the Lord thy God. On that day of your consecration, after these words and great praises given to your chastity, you were covered with the sacred veil. At that moment, all the people, who had run to this spectacle of your nuptials with the Spouse, all the people signing your contract, not with ink but with the Spirit, cried unanimously: Amen. They were not only witnesses, as Roman law requires; they were the countless witnesses of the Church, the Angels and the armies of heaven, the college of priests, who sanctioned by their presence, their prayers and their tears your sacred engagement.

How then, continues the bishop of Milan, how have you not always kept present to your mind that virginal habit, your solemn entrance into the church amid the choirs of virgins? How had you not before your eyes those torches that lit the holy vigils? How did your ears not ring with the songs, the spiritual hymns, the

recital of the lessons and heavenly oracles? Ought you not to remember that place, separated by barriers, where you sat in the church, and where religious and noble ladies approached in emulation to kiss your hand? Could you forget so many useful precepts written on the walls?[3]

My Sisters, I quote with happiness this long passage of the holy bishop: it is filled with a perfume I love to breathe; I think myself transported into the midst of the scene he describes. Ah! what is lacking at this moment to your consecration, that it may have the character of solemnity which such ceremonies had in ancient times? Our illustrious pontiff, our Saint Ambrose, whose heart is so lively interested in your sacrifice, presides here by desire. I ask you to forget me; it is he who speaks, it is he who blesses. Kept far from us for some days by the interests of the Church, he prays, he solicits the Spouse of virgins to accept your heart, he asks of Jesus that from the height of heaven He put on your finger, as He once did on that of Teresa, the ring of His divine alliance. Ambrose then is here.[4]

See all this senate of venerable priests, the so tender pastor (I should repeat again the name of Ambrose or pronounce that of Bernard), the suave pastor whose cherished sheep you were so long, the guides of your soul, finally the whole clergy of the city ranged around the nuptial altar. See, in the sanctuary, your parents mingled today, and not without reason, with the priests of the Lord; because, says Saint Ambrose, when a man gives his daughter to an ordinary spouse, he does the office of a father, but when he gives her to Jesus Christ, he does the office of a priest. He from whom you received life, and whom his profound but resigned grief has not allowed to come, has written to you that he substitutes his children, who would bring you his blessing. See your sisters dear by nature, who, their eyes wet with tears, will not dispute with God what God asks of them. See these noble and religious ladies who were bound to you by equality of condition, by esteem of virtue, by the knots of friendship, and who, regarding you with respect, henceforth revere in you a sacred character. See all these Christians, all these faithful souls, who were long edified by your examples, and who fill the enclosure of this temple.

See around you the choir of virgins, and her whom you call your mother, sweet name you could no longer pronounce for a long time, and those whom you call and who have become your sisters. See above you the choir of Angels and all the multitude of the heavenly court, Elias the patriarch of Carmel, Joseph the virginal spouse so dear to Carmel. See, hear: around you, above you, all prepare to sign the contract, not with ink but with the Spirit, and to say: Amen.

But, what do I say? Already the most intimate mystery has been consummated in secret. According to the rite of the nuptial blessing in the Church of Spain, her fatherland, your foundress wished that the sacred engagements should be pronounced in the recollection of the family, and that the pomp and solemnity should be reserved for the ceremony of the veil placed by the Church on the head of the spouses.

I wish to say it to all who are here: only five days have passed since that precious instant. This temple, which a tender multitude fills at this moment, was empty and silent; nothing in it announced a feast. I had the happiness of offering the holy Victim on this altar, and the Church authorised me to recite touching prayers concerning the sacrifice of another victim. The holy mysteries ended, while Jesus Christ rested in the heart of His spouses and in the heart of her who aspired to become one; while I prayed, and behind me two hearts which had had the strength to come to pray too were agitated by a thousand sentiments dominated by that of resignation and faith: suddenly the silence is broken, behind the holy enclosure the virgins are heard setting out, they lead the betrothed singing a canticle to the glorious Virgin raised above the stars. Soon the voices recede and are lost in the distance. An absolute silence begins again in this temple, while the alliance is celebrated in the place of the monastic assemblies; finally the bell is heard: all is consummated. The Spouse has pronounced the last word, she has vowed herself to Jesus Christ to be poor, chaste, obedient in the enclosure and under the law of Carmel, “and this until death”: words she repeated as many as three times: “until death.”

Meanwhile, as if to take part in what was being accomplished, all the bells of the great church shake at the summit of their dwelling. It was the anniversary of the consecration of this magnificent cathedral, dedicated to Mary six centuries ago, in the presence of King Saint Louis and an infinite multitude. A precious coincidence; for the temple is made for souls, and the dedication of a heart, living temple of which Jesus Christ takes possession, has still more price than the dedication of a material temple. Besides, in associating itself with this solemnity of the cloister, the holy basilica seemed to me to celebrate its own work. It is under its vaults, in the mysterious half-light of the apse of its sanctuary, at the feet of its revered Madonna that this piety prepared for the cloister was conceived and has blossomed. And I avow that, in spite of my ever renewed admiration, the basilica is a thousand times dearer to me for the virtues it brings forth than for all the marvels it displays; and I love it more on account of a virgin whom it has given to Carmel, brilliant flower that will be the ornament of the heavenly Jerusalem, star destined to shine through the perpetual eternities, than on account of all the rubies with which it sparkles and all the splendours with which it gleams.[5]

That, Christian brethren, is what happened some days ago. Already she whom you see is united to Jesus Christ by eternal bonds. And today, as the last sign of her alliance, she is going to receive from the Church the veil of spouses: veil of modesty and fidelity, says Tertullian, which must hide her face from all eyes and hide from hers every face other than that of Jesus. Admirable prayers are to accompany this mystery; the world is not pure enough, its ears are not chaste enough for it to hear them. But you, O spouse of Jesus Christ, you will say them with love. Ah! be happy, my dear Sister, that you will see nothing profane henceforth with these eyes which aspire to contemplate God face to face. The veil I am about to give you will fall from your brow only on the day you see your Spouse unveiled in heaven.

But I promised to indicate to you in a few words the duties of the spouse. Let us breathe a moment.

II. The duty of the spouse, in general, is to love the spouse to whom she has been united. Your duty then, my Sister, is to transfer to Jesus Christ all the affection of which you are capable, it is to love Him with all your mind, all your heart, all your soul, all your strength. The duty of the spouse is to conform her character to that of her spouse. My Sister, you have become the spouse of the Lamb: need I exhort you to imitate His sweetness? and is it not in advance the seal that distinguishes your virtue? I shall not dwell on these general ideas. But I should have liked to say: the spouse to whom holy Church unites you at this moment is an afflicted spouse, you must console Him; He is an angered spouse, you must appease Him. I shall only present you these thoughts and leave them to your meditation.

My Sister, what human mouth could tell how much God is offended in the world! In this age in which we live, in this age when all ideas are confounded, I see on all sides God forgotten by some, hated by others, feebly compensated by those who love Him. The life of most men, of those to whom the world renders a testimony of esteem, is only a long omission, a perpetual forgetfulness toward God: *Obliti sunt Deum.* [They forgot God. (Ps. 105:21.)] The Spouse whom you take, my Sisters, almost the whole of society makes profession of being indifferent to Him. What do I say? Your Spouse, ah! every day He is pursued, blasphemed; one would say He is the common enemy. He is the father, the friend, the benefactor of all men; men render Him only ingratitude. He is the victim of the most gratuitous hatred that can exist, and yet of the most tenacious, the most persevering hatred. All enmities of nation, of family have an end. Jesus Christ, your Spouse, for eighteen centuries is still as energetically fought, repelled, and the hatred of His enemies is equalled only by the love and pardon of His heart.

Now, my Sister, your Spouse, thus afflicted, it is for you to console Him. For, I must tell you, even among those who serve Him, there are few who feel keenly the outrages of which He is the object. His Church is oppressed, and they do not see it. His temples are deserted, and they are not desolate. His name is blasphemed, and they do not weep. You, O spouse of Jesus Christ, will feel, will share all these sorrows. Ah! it is in evil days that you contract alliance with Jesus; it is amid tears that your nuptials are celebrated; it is to find alleviation that He makes you His spouse. Behold then, my Sister, one of your duties: to console, to

compensate Jesus Christ by your ardent love, by the outpourings of a tender and inexhaustible piety.

I said also: your Spouse is an angered Spouse, and it is your duty to appease Him. My brethren, have you not often shuddered, as I have, in reading in Scripture those words by which the Angels seem to excite the Lord to avenge Himself on His enemies? *Effunde iram tuam in gentes quae te non noverunt. Exurge, Deus, non praevaleat homo. Usquequo, Domine, improperabit inimicus?* [Pour out thy wrath upon the nations that have not known thee. Arise, O God, let not man prevail. How long, O God, shall the enemy reproach? (Ps. 78:6; 9:20; 73:10.)] What power, my brethren, can oppose a dike to this torrent of the divine wrath? I know none other than that of prayer, of the prayer of consecrated virgins. Ah! how ungrateful we are toward them! We live only sheltered by their protection, we owe to them the remnant of peace we enjoy, and we render them in exchange only persecution.

Ah! my Sister, I ask you on this day, as Mardochai commanded Esther, to present yourself often before the face of the King, and to pray to Him for your people and for your country. Your foundress, Saint Teresa, loved France much. All the events of our country excited her zeal; she was alarmed on learning that heresy threatened us with its ravages, she was saddened at the death of one of our kings, foreseeing that one of his next successors would make error mount the throne. My dear Sister, enter into these sentiments of your Mother; enter into them with still more vivacity than herself; pray for your people and for your country. Study, like Esther, to render yourself agreeable to your Spouse, to exercise a more powerful empire over His heart and disarm His threatening arm.

Ah! Jesus, I see that You are girded with Your sword, and that You have drawn the arrows from Your quiver. But lay aside, O Jesus, lay aside this warlike apparatus which does not befit this feast. Lay down Your arms at the feet of this spouse. Lord, the nation that furnishes You souls so holy, so pure, do not fight her, do not treat her as an enemy, pardon her in favour of the great love that is still born in her bosom.

My Sister, I have spoken already too long. You are impatient to receive the veil which the ministry of the Church is about to bless for you, and behind which you will henceforth live buried with Jesus Christ. I must tell you, and you know it already, my Sister: this house into which you have entered has not ceased to be one of the most renowned asylums of the spirit of Saint Teresa, which it drew at the very school of one of the companions of this holy virgin. They are two saints, the venerable de Bérulle and the blessed Acarie, who were inspired to found this house of Chartres, by the devotion they had to Mary, Queen of this city for so many centuries. It was after communicating in the grotto of the Martyrs, after venerating the ancient image of Mary and her holy garment, that your first Mothers entered the house prepared for them: a house so long embalmed with the virtues of Carmel, alas! and which no longer encloses the voluntary captives of Jesus Christ, but those whom society has removed from its bosom. Lamentable effects of the upheavals of our century! Yet, my Sisters, the place to which Providence has led you is not itself without memories. You continue here the work of prayer which the greatest of our bishops, Saint Ivo of Chartres, had established at your gates, seven centuries and a half ago. I love to read in our ancient monuments this charter which seems to have become that of your foundation. Often, says the holy pontiff, occupied with procuring the salvation of our flock and with preparing for ourselves a favourable judgment on our last day, we had thought and sought in what fashion, in this city or outside its ramparts, a pious assembly of faithful souls might offer to God the homage of a life employed in regular exercises and worthy of Him. Now at last the great and inexplicable mercy of God our Saviour has no longer deferred the efficacy of our desires, and has put at our disposal the church of Saint John in the Valley, a place assuredly opportune: *locum scilicet opportunum,* and altogether suitable for an institution so holy, being somewhat removed from the tumult of the city: *Et tam sacris institutionibus aptissimum, utpote a populari strepitu civitatis aliquantisper sepositum;* and He has so enlightened and disposed some of our brethren that they no longer wish to live for themselves, but to apply themselves in retirement to become a certain beginning of the creature of God.[6]

My Sisters, and we know that during the rest of his episcopate the great Ivo, who always regretted the canonical life, who complained that pastoral occupations rarely let him taste the sweetness of the interior spirit and scarcely allowed him to recite the hours at the appointed times; we know, I say, that the learned and immortal pontiff had no sweeter consolation than to come and breathe apart in this monastery, where he willed that his body should be buried, and where he still rests, hidden and unknown for several centuries.

Providence, my Sisters, has taken up again under another form the work of Saint Ivo: the bones of the pontiff have leapt in the tomb, and his soul has rejoiced in the heavens, because your presence in these places will henceforth not cease to fulfil the ends he had proposed. In this opportune place and very fit for so holy an institution, as being somewhat removed from the noise of the city, there will still be found hearts that no longer wish to live for themselves but for God, and to become from here below a certain beginning of His creature.

Courage then, my Sister: you will live on holy ground, among the traditions and living examples of holiness.

And you, O pious family, dry, dry your tears: she whom you think you lose for ever, learn from Saint Ambrose that on the contrary she is secured to you all. A virgin, says this holy bishop, is the undivided property of all her own: *Virgo, individuum pignus parentum.* Everything else will one day be the object of a division among you; everything ends by being divided among the children of the world, interests, and too often hearts also, whose affections weaken in being shared. A portion of your inheritance will always remain intact and will be your common good: it will be this virgin, spouse of Jesus Christ, who will always belong to you all, who will take interest in the prosperities and sorrows of all, who will pray and intercede on behalf of all: *Virgo, individuum pignus parentum.*

O you who live the life of faith, reflect what great honour heaven does you on this day, what glorious alliance it contracts with your family. The honour of this union rebounds on you all; you will feel yourselves drawn nearer to Jesus Christ by this spouse whom He has taken from among you. One day you will gather from it inestimable fruits. Allied with Jesus Christ on this earth, you will not be separated from Him through eternity. In entering your house today, He brings salvation to it. Your names, written today on a heavenly contract, will pass from there into the book of life. This is grace, etc. (1).[7]

Translator’s notes

1. Saint Ambrose’s passage, the Bossuet, Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa and Tertullian attributions, and the Ivo of Chartres charter are as the preacher gives them; not verified here. The “illustrious pontiff”, Ambrose “by desire”, is not named in the text.

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[1] (1) A marginal note of the manuscript indicates that the first part of this discourse was preached a second time in 1863, on the occasion of the taking of the veil of Mademoiselle de Bizemont at the Carmel of the Incarnation of Poitiers. (Editor’s note.) 22 October 1846 was a Thursday.

[2] The “king of Israel” who in his wanderings figured divine Wisdom is, I take it, Solomon (his foreign wives); the preacher does not name him.

[3] The Ambrose passage is as the preacher gives it, on a fallen consecrated virgin; not verified here.

[4] The “illustrious pontiff”, Ambrose “by desire”, is evidently the bishop of Chartres, absent on Church business; he is not named in the text. That identification is mine.

[5] The cathedral of Chartres was dedicated in 1260 in the presence of Saint Louis; the preacher says “six centuries ago”. The “five days” before 22 October bring us to 17 October, the anniversary of the dedication; I give the day count only as the text implies it.

[6] The Ivo of Chartres charter is quoted as the preacher gives it; not verified here. “A certain beginning of His creature” echoes James 1:18.

[7] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 24, n° 28. (Editor’s note.)

n° 33. Sermon on Almsgiving, Preached at Orléans for the Poor Assisted by the Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul

30 December 1846.[1]

Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem. [Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor. (Ps. 40:2 Vulg.)]

My Lord,[2] Almost all the holy doctors of the Church, and in particular three of her most illustrious orators and greatest theologians, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Peter Chrysologus and Bossuet, have agreed in saying that poverty is one of the great mysteries of Christianity: *Ecce mysterium vobis dico* [Behold, I tell you a mystery (1 Cor. 15:51)]; a mystery the world has not understood, a mystery that Christians themselves do not understand generally enough, a mystery whose ignorance has made the rich proud and hard, and the poor murmurers and rebels. Blessed, those men of genius have cried, blessed is he whom the Gospel has enlightened, to whom faith has opened the understanding concerning the poor and the beggar! *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem!*

Whether or not that be the literal sense of the psalmist's words, supported as it is by such authorities, I adopt with confidence this interpretation, which expresses the lively and profound sentiment with which I am penetrated, and which I am going to try to make pass into your souls. Blessed is he who regards the poor and the beggar by the torch of the evangelical doctrine: *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.*

When, holding in our hands the Gospel and the annals of the Church, we cast a glance around us, my brethren, we are not long in recognising that the august character impressed upon the brow of the poor man by the religion of Jesus Christ has been entirely effaced under the hand of modern society. The spirit of beneficent institutions has changed; the supernatural principle of almsgiving has been lost from view; and as the essence of virtue consists less in the outward act than in the motive that inspires it, in spite of the important sacrifices and the praiseworthy efforts of which we are witnesses, we are forced to proclaim that true Christian charity has grown weak, and that soon perhaps it will have disappeared from our midst.

I do not speak of the selfishness and hardness of some who know public calamities only to congratulate themselves on being strangers to them, men shut up in their abundance, from whom the misfortune of their brethren draws no sacrifice, but brings on the contrary that more refined and keener enjoyment which results from contrasts, and which the poet, the pupil of Epicurus, celebrated: *Quibus ipse malis careas, quia cernere suave est.* [It is sweet to see what ills you yourself are free from. (Lucretius, *De rerum natura* II, 4.)] I leave aside those new disciples of a school which atheism has resuscitated in the bosom of our society, and whose number, alas! swells every day. I speak only of benevolent souls, generous and sensitive hearts; and I say that the poor man, if he is still among us an object of compassion, is no longer an object of religion and of love.

I open the books of the publicists; I interrogate the general spirit; and I find hardly anywhere any longer the notion of the poor man according to Jesus Christ. The world considers the poor man as an abject and contemptible being; and the Catholic Church spoke to me of the eminent dignity of the poor. The world considers the poor man as a burdensome being, as one of the charges of society; and the Church spoke to me of the precious usefulness of the poor. Almsgiving, work of faith that honours God in the person of the poor; almsgiving, work of hope that awaits and will receive its reward from God relieved in the poor man: such are the considerations I wish to recall to your minds. The first of these thoughts will suffice to fill this discourse.

These truths, I know, my brethren, you are worthy to hear. If Christian charity were to flee from the rest of the earth, it would find a refuge, an asylum in this city of Orléans. And I hope that my words will also be an encouragement for that Society so devoted, for those men of good will who, placed under the patronage of our incomparable Vincent de Paul, have learned from him the happy secret of allying Christian charity with French generosity, philanthropists according to the Gospel, and for whom to visit orphans and widows in

their affliction is a religion pure and undefiled.[3] Let us invoke the lights of the Holy Spirit through the intercession of Mary. *Ave Maria.*

I. Poverty, my brethren, is a social fact that must be recognised and accepted. Since sin, and the passions as well as the chastisements that follow upon them, troubled the primitive harmony of the human family, there have always been and there will always be poor. No city, no government, of whatever form, has not had its own. The promised land itself, which acknowledged God for its head, and in which every citizen possessed his inalienable inheritance, the enjoyment of which, or at least the near recovery, was guaranteed to him by an admirable legislation, the promised land had and was to have its poor. The Lord had declared it solemnly: *Pauperes non deerunt in terra habitationis tuae* [The poor shall not be wanting in the land of thy habitation (Deut. 15:11)]: the poor shall not be lacking in the land of your dwelling. And Jesus Christ, He whom we shall presently hear proclaim "Blessed are the poor", did He not pronounce this oracle, that there would always be poor among us: *Pauperes semper habetis vobiscum?* [The poor you have always with you. (Matt. 26:11.)]

And ever since, in spite of all dreamy theories and all lying utopias, poverty, which is one of the principal forms of suffering, is a constant and permanent fact in the bosom of human societies, a fact that is often (whatever may be said) the result of no fault on the part of those who undergo it, but which belongs to the providential plan and to the general economy of the divine government of things here below. And if ever a people, puffed up by its power, and taking account only of brilliant outward show and splendid surfaces, dared to deny the existence of poverty in its bosom, instantly a thousand private misfortunes would come out of their retreats to protest, with the Holy Spirit, against this lying programme of universal felicity and ever-growing prosperity. O people, those who wish to persuade you that you do not suffer are the strangest of all impostors: *Popule meus, qui beatum te dicunt ipsi te decipiunt.* [O my people, they that call thee blessed, the same shall deceive thee. (Isa. 3:12.)]

But here, how are we to justify Providence, prodigal mother toward some, cruel stepmother toward others? Why these favours granted to the fortunate elder sons and refused to their brothers? My brethren, let us not judge by appearances: *Ecce mysterium vobis dico;* behold I am going to reveal to you a mystery; or rather it will be the three great orators I have cited, whose reasonings and words I shall only summarise and sometimes borrow; you will thank me for reproducing the accents of those three golden mouths: Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Peter Chrysologus, and Bossuet.[4]

There are among us, my brethren, two very different societies, the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of Jesus Christ. These two cities, as Saint Augustine speaks, have a politics and precedences directly opposed to one another. By an admirable reversal of the order established by men, the poor, who are last in the world, are first in the Church; the spouse assigns the ranks and distributes the places in her house, in conformity with this sentence of the Bridegroom: *Et erunt novissimi primi, et primi novissimi.* [And the last shall be first, and the first last. (Matt. 20:16.)] To you then, O rich, the honours of the world, to you the titles, the sumptuous dignities of the earth, to you that power and that passing glory which God delivers even to His enemies, and which the poor will nevertheless respect in you, because they are a participation, such as it is, in the power and glory of God. But to you, O poor, the far more solid honours of religion, to you the far more precious dignities and privileges of the Church, to you the seal of resemblance with Jesus Christ, which the rich will have to recognise and venerate in you. That, my brethren, is the last word of the Gospel on the question of the poor; and it will be easy for me to show presently that this question has never had any other real solution. Let us understand the whole of the magnificent plan of Jesus Christ for the liberation and exaltation of poverty.

The greatness of the poor man and the dignity of the indigent, ah! my brethren, it is not in the annals of human philosophy, nor in the history of nations, that we shall find the titles to them. Among the most polished peoples outside Christianity, the poor man was considered an abject and contemptible being, toward

whom (ask the sensitive soul, nevertheless, of the poet of the *Aeneid*) even compassion was a weakness; a sad refuse of humanity, doomed to tears and to insults. In this regard, what dreadful sufferings! what hideous sores hidden under the brilliant mantle of ancient civilisation!

But, O poor, rejoice, cries Bossuet: a Companion is coming to you, but a companion so great and so admirable that it will henceforth be better to be poor in His company than to be master and all-powerful in the assemblies of worldlings. O poverty, here is the day of your rehabilitation and ennoblement. Long had you sighed for this deliverance that had been promised you. David had saluted from afar the deliverer of the poor, the emancipator of poverty: *Quia liberabit pauperem a potente. Et animas pauperum salvas faciet, et honorabile nomen eorum coram illo.* [For he shall deliver the poor from the mighty… and he shall save the souls of the poor… and honourable shall their names be in his sight. (Ps. 71:12–14 Vulg.)] What a revolution foretold! The poor man set above the rich, and his name in honour! The times are come. The hour has struck.

Hear, O poor, hear the words an Angel addresses to you in the middle of the night: Fear not, for behold I bring you tidings of great joy; for today there is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. O poor, you hear it well, it is to you that this happy news is brought: *Ecce evangelizo vobis;* it is to you that a Saviour is born: *Natus est vobis hodie Salvator.* And the proof that He is above all the Saviour of the poor is that you are going to find Him poor Himself; you will recognise Him by the marks of His poverty: He will be clothed in miserable swaddling-clothes, and, for want of a cradle, laid in a manger: *Et hoc vobis signum… invenietis infantem pannis involutum et positum in praesepio.* [And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. (Luke 2:10–12.)]

And you, O rich of the earth, until now so disdainful toward the poor, come, come with me to contemplate this new spectacle. The solemnities we are celebrating, my brethren, serve my design wonderfully. I have told you, it is a mystery that I announce to you, the mystery of Christian and evangelical poverty. Now this mystery, to be understood, has need of being set over against the mystery of Bethlehem. Wishing to establish the pre-eminence of the poor, Bethlehem is the necessary point of departure of my subject. This stable, this manger, these rags, this straw: I have need of all of it; these are my exhibits. And as the orator of ancient times sometimes prepared a stroke of eloquence by bringing his client before the judges and the spectators, I too can produce at this moment him whose cause I plead, and show you the poor man in a state well fitted to inspire in your hearts not only pity, but respect and love.

Do you see him, my brethren, this poor little new-born child, lying on the straw, under this miserable shelter which he owes to the compassion of some other miserable ones? Do you know him, my brethren, do you understand him, this poor little indigent? *Beatus qui intelligit.* And if you have understood him, this poor one of Bethlehem, gathering now around him all the poor and indigent of the earth, and showing you both pictures at once, I shall ask you: Do you understand them now, these poor, these beggars? Do you understand them, these brothers, these members of the poor God? Yes, from this straw, from this manger of Bethlehem, there go forth rays of glory which are reflected and shine, like a holy aureole, around the brow of all the poor. In consideration of this poor God, the name of the poor will henceforth be honourable: *Et honorabile nomen eorum coram illo.* During his mortal life the great ones of the earth will prostrate themselves at his feet and bring him gold of Arabia: *Et vivet et dabitur ei de auro Arabiae.* But he will survive himself, in a way, and in the person of the poor he will remain, until the end of the ages, the object of the respect and the blessings of men: *Et adorabunt de ipso semper et tota die benedicent ei.* [And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Arabia, and they shall always adore of him; they shall bless him all the day. (Ps. 71:15 Vulg.)]

For let us penetrate further into our subject. On a Sabbath day, the poor man who had been born at Bethlehem, having grown up, entered the synagogue, went up into the pulpit, and had the book of the prophet Isaiah given to him. And opening the book, He in whose hands are all destinies fell upon this passage: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, and He has anointed me and sent me to evangelise the poor: *Spiritus Domini… unxit me, evangelizare pauperibus misit me.* [Luke 4:18.] The object of the mission and the preaching of

Jesus Christ is the poor; and the Holy Spirit has conferred on Him a function, a consecration appropriate to this ministry. And as the anointing of Jesus Christ is the effusion of the Word upon His humanity, the Word will not unite Himself to human nature in just any state, but to human nature in the state of poverty.

You had resolved, O my God, in order to save men, to espouse their nature. But, remarks Saint Peter Chrysologus, here are two suitors who come to offer themselves to You: on one side, humanity rich, powerful, happy; on the other, humanity poor, abject, despised. Which of the two will You choose? The first You reject, You repudiate, You want none of it, and to the end You will treat it with rigour. It is the second that will fix Your choice and will have the honours of this alliance. So that, my brethren, it is poverty, and not riches, that has been, in Jesus Christ, anointed and consecrated by the divinity.

So that it is not enough to say that God became man; the Incarnation can be defined by a more precise term, and it was so defined by Saint Paul when he said that God became poor: *Qui propter vos egenus factus est.* [Who for your sakes became poor. (2 Cor. 8:9.)] So that I might be permitted to say that God has espoused poverty, since He has made it His own, incorporated it, in the unity of His person, in a manner a thousand times more intimate than all imaginable unions and alliances.

Now, say here in concert my three doctors, Jesus Christ having become poor, this alliance with poverty is entire and without restriction. And, far from Jesus blushing at the kinship He has given Himself, wherever He meets poverty, and in whatever state it presents itself to Him, He welcomes it, He avows it, He recognises it as having the honour of belonging to Him. God became man, and by that title all men are His brothers. But God became a poor man, and by that title also the poor have with Him a more intimate alliance, closer relations.

What do I say? They have with Him such a resemblance that, in the language of the divine Saviour Himself, it is a sort of identity. He holds Himself represented by this poor man. He was hungry on earth, and He protests to us in the Gospel that it is He, still, who is hungry in all the needy; He was cruelly bound, and He feels Himself still bound in all captives; He suffered and languished, and He declares to us that He still suffers and languishes in all the infirm. Whatever is done to the poor man, He holds as done to Himself; whatever is refused to the poor man, He holds as refused to His own person. So that, says the eloquent priest of Marseilles, Salvian, so that there is only one poor man in the world, Jesus Christ, who begs in the person of all the poor: *Solus tantummodo Christus est, qui in omnium pauperum universitate mendicet.*[5]

And now, O Jesus, now that You have honoured poverty to the point of clothing Yourself in her livery and deifying her in Your person, is there need of anything other than Your life and Your examples to establish that the evangelist of the poor has come and that the writing of Isaiah has been fulfilled? Yet I wish to follow You up that mysterious mountain where You begin to open Your divine mouth, after having been content until then to open those of Your prophets: *Aperiens os suum, dixit.* [Opening his mouth, he said. (Matt. 5:2.)]

Listen, my brethren, to the first preaching of the Messiah; behold He makes the opening of His Gospel. Remembering, says Bossuet, that His commission expressly bore that He should evangelise the poor and the wretched, that is, bring them good tidings, it is to them first that He addresses His word: Blessed, He says, blessed are the poor, blessed those who love poverty, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs! What! and what language is this? Poverty blessed? Poverty become queen? Was anything like it ever heard? And what more unexpected news could Jesus Christ bring to the poor? Felicity and glory: I thought them unhappy, He proclaims their happiness; I thought them despised, He sets them on a throne: *Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum.* [Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:3.)]

And since the day when Jesus Christ raised this throne to poverty, she has never come down from it. The Church of Jesus Christ, this kingdom of souls, will be called the city of the poor; the poor will be its first citizens, its first magistrates, its first ministers. It is to poor men, to miserable fishermen, that Jesus will give

the care of peopling His Church with the poor; and the rich will enter it only after stripping themselves of their riches and clothing themselves with the character of poverty, the only one that can confer on them the right of citizenship in this kingdom. And until the end of the ages poverty will have as many panegyrists and advocates as the Christian faith counts apostles and pontiffs; wherever the Gospel is announced, the good news brought to the poor will be heard.

My brethren, for half a century there have been found men, enemies or rivals of the Catholic priesthood, who, constituting themselves ex officio the defenders of the poor, have pretended to plead his cause against the Church, and have boasted of having been the first on earth to exalt the dignity and uphold the interests of their unhappy brothers. I do not wish to put these men on trial, nor to inquire where so many theories that we have seen born and die have ended; but is there in history a lie comparable to this unheard-of assertion: that the Church has not understood the poor man, has done nothing for the poor man? Ah! I call to witness all the Christian ages; and, in order not to weary your attention, and yet to show you that the Church has not been for a single instant unfaithful to the doctrine of her founder Jesus Christ, the God made poor, the evangelist of the poor, the liberator of the poor, asking testimony from centuries and climates separated by immense intervals, I shall interrogate Paul, the apostle of Jesus, Lawrence, the deacon of the time of persecution, Chrysostom, the pontiff of the metropolis of the converted empire, Bossuet, the great man of our country and almost of our time, and you will tell me whether, in this long succession of ages, the Church has ever ceased to understand and to proclaim the divine pre-eminence of the poor.

Paul has gathered abundant alms which he destines for the poor of Jerusalem. A disciple of Jesus Christ, he knows that there is more happiness in giving than in receiving.[6] But his faith teaches him also that those to whom he is about to offer this tribute are, in their quality of poor, the principal members of Jesus Christ and the first dignitaries of the Church; and as the priest, before beginning the first mysteries, asks the prayers of all present that his sacrifice may be accepted, Paul writes to the Christians of Rome, and conjures them to help him by their prayers to God, that those who are first in Jerusalem may accept the offering he is about to carry them. Admire, my brethren, with what religious importance this great Apostle treats this affair, and how honourable the poor are in his eyes. He prepares to give alms as one prepares to go up to the altar. The very name of alms does not seem to him fitting; it is the gift, the offering of his faith as much as of his humble and obliging charity: *Obsequii mei oblatio.* [The offering of my service. (Rom. 15:31, Vulg.)] That is how the most illustrious apostle of Jesus understands poverty and indigence: *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.*

But the apostle can give alms only in passing; he is absorbed by the ministry of the word and of prayer. The Church has her deacons, instituted to be the guardians of her treasures and the dispensers of her largesse. Now behold, on behalf of the emperor Valerian, the prefect of Rome goes to find the deacon Lawrence: “I do not come,” he says to him, “to persecute you and invoke against you the rigour of the edicts. I know that you have great treasures; the most clement emperor has need of them, and asks them of you. It is said that, according to your law, you must render to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s. Now certainly your God does not coin money; He brought no silver into the world; He came into it only with His doctrine. Give me then your silver, and be content to be rich in doctrine.”

For a diplomat of the third century, this language was rather advanced and not unskilful. “It is true,” replies the deacon, “the Church is rich, and the emperor has no treasures comparable to those I take care of. I shall show you the best part of them; only give me a little time to put everything in order.” Three days later Lawrence summons the prefect, who hastens with impatient curiosity. But what is his astonishment when, introduced into the vestibule of the church, he sees a crowd of old men, blind men, cripples, lepers, orphans, widows and virgins! “What!” Lawrence says to him, “does this spectacle offend you? Here, however, here is the treasure of the Church; here are her pearls and her diamonds; she has no more beautiful necklace, nor more precious dowry; it is by this that she pleases her Spouse: *Hoc est monile Ecclesiae; dotata sic, Christo*

placet. [This is the necklace of the Church; thus dowered, she pleases Christ.] Such are the riches of the Church; you can make use of them profitably for the advantage of Rome, of the emperor and of ourselves." The pagan understood nothing of this language; for the Gospel had not opened his understanding concerning the poor and the beggar: *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.*[7]

Protected by the sceptre of the Constantines and sheltered in a manner under the imperial purple, did the Church, in admitting into her bosom the great and the rich of the earth, diminish anything of her religious love for the poor? Hear the most illustrious of the bishops of the second Rome. Amid the floods of eloquence he pours out on his immense audience, Chrysostom on every occasion and ceaselessly brings back the poor; and do not suppose that he simply appeals in their favour to sentiments of beneficence and compassion, and seeks to excite a natural sensibility. No; it is an act of religion that he asks; it is under its evangelical features that he presents almsgiving. In turn he establishes that it is a prayer, that it is a sacrifice, that it is a sacrament, that it is a redemption, a jubilee and a universal remission, that it closes the door of the abysses, that it opens the door of the heavens. Let us gather some of his words:

Jesus Christ, says the eloquent patriarch, dwells in our midst in two ways: in the Eucharist and in the poor. For the same truth that said: This is my body, and by its word made the fact certain, said also: You saw me hungry, and you did not give me to eat. The same truth that said: This is my blood, said also: You saw me thirsty, and you did not give me to drink. You then who regard it as a glorious privilege of the priest to touch the chalice of the blood of Jesus Christ, will you not esteem something very great also this faculty of presenting to Jesus Christ the cup that He is to carry to His mouth? Though you are only a layman, Jesus Christ is not difficult; He does not refuse to receive this cup from your hands, and He asks to find in it only a little cold water.[8]

Men of the world, sometimes jealous of our ministry, do you not know that it depends only on you to share in our title of sacrificers? For there are in the temple two altars of sacrifice, the table of the eucharistic oblation, and the table of the oblations for the poor. Bring your gifts to this second table, and by this charity exercised with faith you will become our coadjutors, and you will confer on yourselves that priesthood and that ordination of which Saint Paul spoke: *Coadjutores meos, qui se ipsos ordinaverunt in ministerium in sanctos.* [My coadjutors, who have ordained themselves for the ministry to the saints. (Cf. 1 Cor. 16:15.)] In truth, concludes the illustrious pontiff of Byzantium, whoever serves the poor man, that man is a priest, since he serves Jesus Christ. That, my brethren, is how Chrysostom understood the poor and the beggar: *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.*

Do you want a sure proof that this vigour of the evangelical doctrine has never grown soft? A voice, worthy of being heard even after that golden mouth which has just opened, will answer it as a faithful echo after thirteen hundred years have passed. It is, in the heart of the capital of the most powerful and most civilised of all modern kingdoms, the greatest man of the greatest century of our history; it is Bossuet expressing the most exquisite substance of the Gospel in an incomparable discourse which I might call the most magnificent and the most precious armorial [catalogue of coats of arms] of poverty. He perceives in his audience all the grandeurs of the earth, men who bend, in a manner, under the burden of titles, dignities, privileges. God forbid that he should contest the nobility of their origin and the richness of their escutcheon; he honours in them what has been an honour among all peoples, what Saint Paul commands us to honour: *Cui honorem, honorem.* [Honour to whom honour. (Rom. 13:7.)]

But, apostle of the Gospel and minister of the Church, he teaches them that within the temporal society of which they are the masters and lords there is a society of spirits, a kingdom of souls; and in this society, in this kingdom, he declares to them that ranks are reversed, that there the humble and the little ones of this world are the illustrious and the privileged, that to them belongs by right the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, and that the rich will obtain a place there only inasmuch as, having been here below by their charity the servants of their servants, these will receive them with themselves into the eternal tabernacles.[9] And

setting against titles and genealogies other titles and other alliances: No, cries the great pontiff, let poverty no longer be despised, let her no longer be treated as a commoner. It is true that she was of the dregs of the people; but the King of glory having espoused her, He has ennobled her by this alliance.

My dear poverty, said Saint Francis of Assisi, the most ardent, the most transported, the most desperate lover of poverty perhaps ever in the Church, my dear poverty, however low your extraction, I cannot but esteem you since my Master united Himself to you. And certainly he was right, continues the great bishop of Meaux. If a king marries a girl of obscure origin, she becomes queen; there is murmuring for a time, but in the end she is acknowledged; she is ennobled by the marriage of the prince; her nobility passes to her house; her relatives are called to the finest offices, and her children are heirs of the kingdom. So, after the Son of God has espoused poverty, although it be resisted, although there be murmuring, she is noble and considerable by this union. The poor, from that time on, are the near kinsmen and the privileged friends of the Saviour, the members of His family, the great officers and dignitaries of His kingdom.

That, my brethren, is how, in the age of distinctions and privileges, the Catholic Church proclaimed the distinctions and privileges of the poor: *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.*

After that, my brethren, let heedless publicists of the present century, following some economists of the last, dare to write that the cause of the poor man, the cause of the people, awaited their advent with impatience, and had never been defended before them; to this unspeakable assertion I have nothing more to answer, I believe I have sufficiently avenged the Church. Yet if I open the most recent books of these advocates of the poor, ah! what is my astonishment when I find that this much-vaunted philanthropy has turned into a frightful disdain and an unheard-of hardness! Shall I say it? my brethren, these modern doctrines that carry man so high, that exalt human dignity with so much exaggeration, these doctrines are profoundly the enemies of poverty. The people that has raised itself above every superiority, even divine, and has put under its feet every religion and every worship, the people that has decreed itself a place on the altars and knows no other divinity than itself: *Ita ut in templo Dei sedeat, ostendens se tamquam sit Deus* [So that he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself as if he were God (2 Thess. 2:4)]; this people-god knows that happiness is one of the attributes of the divine nature, and it disowns, it rejects those of its members who cannot sustain to the end the divine personage it arrogates to itself. Society hides, it dissimulates the poor man.

Soon it is insinuated that poverty is only the result of vice or folly. Then it is added that he who stoops to receive alms keeps of the human only the figure; that in making the sacrifice of his independence he abdicates humanity. From this it is concluded that almsgiving is something immoral, an attack on human dignity. And if they dare not say that the only alms to be given the poor man is to lend him a dagger, at least, while throwing him the bread necessary to his subsistence, they will teach him, by abominable doctrines, to leave no heirs of his misery behind him. That is how the modern friend of the people understands the question of the poor and the beggar. I turn my head away in horror, and turning back toward Jesus Christ and toward the age-long teaching of His Church, I cry: *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.*

The Church! who does not know her tender and religious solicitude for the poor? She considers and she salutes the divine figure of her Redeemer in this poor man in whom you wish to see of the man only the face. It is she who taught kings and emperors to wash the feet of the poor. She has been at all times their nurse and their mother. As long as she had treasures, she was prodigal of them in their favour; her goods were their patrimony, and in the distribution she made of them she set the poor on the same level as the priests. She built for them magnificent hôtels-Dieu (for it was indeed her God she believed she honoured in them); she created for them the Daughters of Charity (for that is assuredly a creation); she taught the great ones of the world, and above all Christian ladies, not to be content with sending some relief from afar to poverty, but to visit it themselves in its retreats, to serve it with their own hands, and with those delicate attentions, those forethoughts of tenderness which the sentiment of faith inspires, which shows Jesus Christ under those rags.

If she attempted, the Church, what do I say? if she succeeded, in the days of Saint Vincent de Paul (and this example is unique in history), if she succeeded for some time in suppressing mendicancy, it was, said the great Bossuet again in the two sermons he delivered on this occasion at the General Hospital, only with the design of removing from poverty the curse that vice and idleness bring upon it, and of restoring to it the sacred character of evangelical poverty. For the rest, never did the Church impose silence on the unfortunate man who asked for bread, otherwise than by her largesse. And today, poor, indigent, a beggar herself, she does not cease to solicit public charity, to awaken faith concerning the dignity of the poor, a dignity, alas! so misunderstood since Christianity is itself misunderstood. And at this moment it is she, the Church, who animates these young men, these devoted Christians who have so perfect an understanding of the needs and rights of the poor man and the beggar; it is she who inspires me to encourage them, to encourage you all, by these words: *Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem.*

I must acknowledge here, my brethren, and it is a testimony it is very sweet for me to render to my fellow citizens: our province and our city of Chartres occupy one of the first ranks among all the provinces and all the cities of France for generous beneficence. Those of our brothers whom we do not have the happiness of meeting in the fulfilment of the same religious practices, at least we have the joy of meeting them in the exercise of the same charity reproducing itself under diverse forms. And if I dare not say that all the inhabitants of Chartres have one and the same mind, at least I can say, to the glory of this city, that all her children have one and the same heart. That is why there are no serious and deep divisions among us. Since misfortune knows us and blesses us all alike, we are very near to knowing and embracing one another.

For myself, my brethren, having to speak to you on this day and on this occasion, I have thought I ought to apply myself less to exciting your charity, always ready to exercise itself, than to reviving in you the spirit of faith which must give life before God to that charity. Ah! my brethren, I beg you, do not lose, or at least diminish, the fruit of your alms; do not give them in any other spirit than the Christian spirit; do not consider as a common and natural work what is in itself so holy and religious an act. Remember that the sacrifice of Cain was without value, because God, who searches the reins and the hearts, perceived not in his soul the sentiment which alone could give price to the offering of his hands. Presented with faith, with love, your offering, like Abel’s, will be more exquisite, more choice. The share of the poor is never better than when it is considered the share of God.

But before ending, I must forestall an objection which you have certainly made to me, and to which you await an answer. The poor man, you say to me, such as you have just represented him to us, the poor man, object of a sort of worship, is that then the poor man as we know him, as he has become in our days? Can I regard him as the image of Jesus Christ, this proud, murmuring, exacting, dissolute and impious poor man?

My brethren, here is my first answer.

The obligation we have to honour and succour the poor is the closer the more they resemble Jesus Christ and are livelier images of Him, because this obligation is founded particularly on that relation and conformity. Now in Jesus Christ there were two things, an extreme poverty and an infinite holiness. Among the poor, some are images of Jesus Christ only by participation in His indigence; others are so also by participation in His virtues. When therefore both these images are found together, there is the closest obligation, and it is to those that we owe the preference.

And, my brethren, they are not yet wanting among us, the virtuous poor, the poor according to the Gospel, the poor in whom nothing comes to dishonour the resemblance with Jesus Christ. This is that old man who was upright and Christian all his life, and who has just seen swallowed up in a bankruptcy the modest fruit of his long toils, the sole subsistence of his old days. This is that young widow who works untiringly to feed poor children who, in losing their father, lost every resource: a weeping family that asks for bread, and to whom the poor mother can often give only tears. These are those orphans, boys and girls of tender age, who

have not yet been able to forfeit our beneficence; innocent creatures in whom nothing can prevent our faith from recognising the little poor one of Bethlehem, the divine beggar of the roads of Egypt.

My brethren, too often the bad poor are the pretext of the bad rich. If your faith wants poor in whom it can venerate Jesus Christ, come to the aid of religion; she will form them for you; from this moment she will point them out to you. And if it costs you to penetrate into their retreats, generous Christians have devoted themselves to this office, and they offer to go for you, to serve or relieve Jesus Christ in the mangers and the stables. You rich seek good poor; and we, we seek good rich, who will help us to pour out something other than tears over the suffering members of Jesus Christ.

That is my first answer; but I have a second to make you, and God is my witness that I make it without bitterness. There is much talk of the demoralisation of the poor. My brethren, as much as you and more, religion is afflicted by all those vices which dishonour in the poor a character holy and venerable in her eyes. Certainly we do not pretend to canonise vice in poverty: our aim would be sadly missed. Scripture teaches us that the proud poor man is an abomination before God; and religion would perhaps deliver him up to the severe justice of men, if she did not know that it is the rich who have made and who make every day the vices of the poor.

Rich men (I do not speak to you, my brethren, who are here; I speak to those who never come into our temples, and who are the first to cry out about the vices of the poor), rich men, tell me, what examples have you given the poor man for half a century? Do you wish that a religion which is not good for you should be good for them? And if by your examples and your doctrines you take from the people their religion, what do you want him to be, the poor man without religion, the poor man who never comes here to learn from the doctrine of heaven the secret of his condition? You philosophise about the vices of the poor; and I marvel at their virtues, at their patience, at their moderation. I admire by what secret power those who die of hunger, and who believe in nothing, are stopped on the slope of crime.

Ah! my brethren, how rash and imprudent our century has been! how guilty toward the poor! It believed it could do without God in order to govern the poor. It believed it could supply for the teachings of faith by I know not what morality, I know not what cult of interests and utility. That is to say, our century has excited in the poor man that ardent thirst for gold and well-being which needed to be tempered; that is to say, it has bent the mind and senses of the poor man toward matter, when religion on the contrary put all her industry into raising him up to supernatural ideas. But see the difference in the consequences. The materialist and sensual poor man sees in his poverty only the hideous realities that strike the eyes; he sees only his rags, and burns to exchange them for the purple; he sees only his chains, and aspires to seize the sceptre in order to break the heads of those who are happier than he. On the contrary, the poor man who has understood the doctrine of heaven, the Christian poor man, sees in his poverty the living image of the manger and the cross of Jesus Christ; the Gospel pours a sweet ray of light upon his indigence, it ennobles his rags, it divinises his suffering, it shows him from now in the order of religion, and later in the hopes of eternity, immense compensations for his unhappy condition.

Ah! my brethren, let us not then speak so bitterly, let us not be such pitiless censors of the vices of the poor, for the poor are what we have made them. Alas! and shall I say it? they are what we ourselves are, with this difference, that the brilliant varnish of education and the respect that attaches to fortune hide and dissimulate in the rich disorders which show themselves in all their ugliness in the poor. My brethren, let us pity the poor for their faults, and accuse ourselves of them. If the seal of resemblance with Jesus Christ is no longer on their brows, it is because we have torn it from them. Let us hasten, my brethren, let us hasten to give it back to them. This must be the whole object of our cares and our efforts.

Yes, doubtless, in our days the cause of the poor has become as it were one of the attributions of the public power. Magistrates busy themselves with the indigent, and they busy themselves with a zeal which religion

must applaud. There is no doubt that God rewards their loyal and generous intentions. Nevertheless, let it be remembered, my brethren, Christianity alone can make good poor, poor resigned to their condition; because it distributes, with the bread that nourishes bodies, the bread of doctrine that appeases the hunger of souls and moderates their desires. Let our moralists and our philanthropists go, books in hand, into the retreats of misery; let them exhaust their eloquence in proving to the poor man that he ought to be happy in poverty: the poor man will look at them with indignation, and will beg them not to add insult and irony to his ills. The priest, on the contrary, or the devoted Christian who is inspired by the charity of the priest, will visit the poor man on his pallet, and will speak to him of the manger, of the cross; he will say to him with Jesus: Blessed are the poor! and the poor man will shed tears of tenderness, and will bless Providence for the rank in which it made him be born: this we have been witnesses of a thousand times.

Ah! my brethren, why can I not make all the poor understand how much they owe to the Christian religion, and how ungrateful they are toward her and cruel toward themselves when they despise and neglect her! Why can I not gather all the wretched of the earth, and lead them with the shepherds of the Gospel to the manger of Bethlehem! Why can I not also lead there all the rich with the three kings of the East! We are told to moralise the poor; and we, we feel keenly that it is above all our dogmas that the poor man needs, our consoling dogmas; and we would wish only to make the dogma of Christmas well understood, once only, by poor and rich, the dogma of a God made poor. The poor would henceforth love their condition, which they would know they share with a God. The rich would henceforth treat with respect, with love, the poor, in whom they would see the images of a God. And the fair days of the primitive ages, the days of the charity of the rich and the virtues of the poor, would return upon the earth (1).[10]

Translator’s notes

1. Quotations attributed to Bossuet, Chrysostom, Peter Chrysologus, Salvian and Francis of Assisi are as the preacher gives them, largely paraphrased; I have not collated them with the originals. The Orléans/Chartres discrepancy is as printed.

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[1] (1) The *Œuvres épiscopales* contain three instructions on the same subject, but treated from another point of view: first and second instruction (t. II, pp. 80 and 611) “on the urgent necessity of almsgiving in times of public distress”; third instruction (t. IV, p. 377) on “the character and merit of works of beneficence accomplished according to the thoughts of faith”. (Editor’s note.)

[2] The heading says Orléans, and the opening speaks of “this city of Orléans”; but near the end the preacher speaks of “our province and our city of Chartres” and “my fellow citizens”. Both are as printed; I do not resolve the discrepancy. The bishop addressed is not named.

[3] Cf. James 1:27.

[4] Bossuet’s sermon on the eminent dignity of the poor in the Church is evidently the principal source of what follows; I have not collated the passages.

[5] Salvian of Marseilles; the Latin is as printed. I have not traced the passage.

[6] Acts 20:35.

[7] The Lawrence story and the Latin line are as the preacher gives them; I have not traced the wording.

[8] Pie gives this as Chrysostom’s; I have not traced the passage.

[9] Cf. Luke 16:9.

[10] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 25, n° 30; p. 26, n° 38 *bis*. (Editor’s note.)

n° 34. Sermon on the Prodigal Son Applied to the Wanderings of the Human Mind

Preached in the cathedral of Chartres, the fourth Sunday of Lent, 1847.[1]

Mortuus erat et revixit, perierat et inventus est. [He was dead, and is come to life again; he was lost, and is found. (Luke 15:32.)]

Although all the words that came from the mouth of Our Lord Jesus Christ are equally filled with that divine wisdom that was in Him, yet there are in the Gospel pages more particularly fertile in useful applications, in salutary developments. To name the parable of the Prodigal Son is to name what the Holy Books contain that is most touching, most fitted to convert the sinner and bring him back from his wanderings. What heart is hard enough to resist this untiring tenderness, this inexhaustible goodness of a father so merciful and so indulgent?

Nevertheless, my dearly beloved brethren, obeying the thought that has presided over all our discourses and all our writings since we were sent to you, knowing that all the evils that overwhelm us are the fruit of our doctrines, today again we propose to combat less your passions than your errors, or rather it is in the disorder of ideas that we shall continue to attack the disorder of actions. The parable of the prodigal son is ordinarily applied by sacred orators, and applies itself of its own accord, to the wanderings of the heart; I shall apply it in this discourse to the wanderings of the mind. I do not pretend to develop this page of the Gospel in its literal and natural sense; I use it to render more sensible a truth of which I wish to convince you. The subject is immense, and I hasten to enter upon it. The schism of reason from faith; the return of reason toward faith: such is the subject of this homily.

Pray with me the Queen of heaven, that I may fulfil, in a manner useful to your souls, this difficult task which I have imposed on myself. *Ave Maria.*

I. “A man had two sons”: *Homo habuit duos filios.* [Luke 15:11.] My brethren, natural man and supernatural man were brothers; children of one father, their interests were confounded; they lived on one and the same fund of truths, common inheritance, undivided property. Neither of the two had had boundary-marks set to distinguish his domain from the other’s. This domain, I admit, had two very distinct origins, and was composed of two very different parts, reason and faith: the one, original endowment, property proper and patrimonial to man, necessary complement and integral part of his nature; the other, a paternal dowry generously granted, a purely gratuitous gift, freely constituted. But the entire inheritance came from the father; by whatever title it was, man enjoyed it, and gathered its fruits without distinction. Born of reason or of faith, gathered from the tree of nature or of grace, what did it matter? They were his, and so he lived happy in his father’s house, and found everything in abundance: *Et omnia mea tua sunt.* [And all I have is thine. (Luke 15:31.)]

This happy confusion dated from far back, or rather it had always existed, and, it must be said, nothing had been provided for the moment when an exact partition might be claimed. During this long common family administration, on the one hand doubtless reason had not always refused to labour in the interest of faith; but on the other, and above all, the revenues of the domain of faith had immensely profited the domain of reason. Divine traditions had insinuated themselves into the philosophy and morals of peoples. The sacred books had slipped even into the study of the learned and the legislators of paganism; and above all common sense and public reason had become penetrated, impregnated with evangelical wisdom; institutions had been formed under the empire of Christian ideas.

Thus it was, when one day reason no longer wished to live in the company of faith; she grew weary, disgusted with that intimate community which had lasted since the origin. The human mind dreamed of independence; it wished to enjoy what it called its rights, to break every alliance with the Gospel, to emancipate itself from a tutelage it regarded as a tyranny. Do you hear him, this prodigal of the sacred parable, who says to his father: “Father, give me the portion of the inheritance that falls to me by right”: *Dixit adolescentior patri: Pater, da mihi portionem substantiae quae me contingit.* [The younger said to his father: Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me. (Luke 15:12.)]

Who is he, this prodigal? He is a young man, the younger of two brothers. And certainly it is an act of youth that he is consummating at this moment. Youth doubts nothing. This young man is perhaps you who hear me;

you, my brother, whose eyes had scarcely opened to the light of day when your soul had blossomed in the still more luminous rays of faith, you who received at once the benefit of existence and that of divine grace, you for whom the cross of Jesus had preceded the alphabet-book, you whose intelligence awoke bearing within it, by a happy mystery and almost without knowing it, that inestimable treasure of a reason already enlightened and sustained by the Gospel; yes, it is you who, after living happily in the holy house of your father, sitting at his table, sharing with him all his goods, it is you who, one day, having become a young man, grew weary of this happiness. On that day you rejected as vain prejudices all you had learned on your mother's knees or at the school of the ministers of the Church; you said to faith: Take back all that belongs to you, and leave me only the principles of truth engraved in me by the hand of nature. It is on this wholly personal fund that I wish henceforth to live, it is by this sole light that I wish to judge of everything; I wish to use and enjoy only my own resources.

That, perhaps, is what you have done, my brother. But at least, I can assure you, that is what human society, taken as a whole, has done in recent centuries. For three hundred years, peoples have been great adolescents (for, unlike individuals, peoples pride themselves on growing younger with time; they glory in despising the wisdom and experience that age ought to bring them, and in invoking only modern ideas: Young Germany, Young Italy, Young France: *Dixit adolescentior patri*), peoples are, I repeat, unsettled adolescents who have said to God their Father: Father, give me the part of the inheritance that comes to me; I wish henceforth to suffice for myself with the portion nature assigns me; keep for yourself all that surplus which is called religion, revelation; I have need only of my legitimate share, that is, of that reason which is the consequence of my creation, and without which my being would have been only sketched.[2]

The human mind has held this language: it has held it by the mouth of Luther, promulgating the principle of private interpretation; by the mouth of the philosophers and modern legislators, decreeing the emancipation of thought and the deification of reason: Father, give me the portion of the inheritance that falls to me by right: *Pater, da mihi portionem substantiae quae me contingit.*

What will the Father do in this circumstance? Will He not address just remonstrances to this imprudent young man? My brethren, one is astonished at the facility with which He yields to the desire of His son: *Et divisit illis substantiam.* [And he divided unto them his substance. (Luke 15:12.)] The young man asks for his share; the father gives it to him. Alas! it is only too true: whether it is a question of a people or of an individual, when an idea of independence has germinated in the head or heart of youth, when once it has dreamed of emancipation, all remonstrances are useless, all resistances only increase the desire. Time alone, experience and misfortune can undeceive it. But for the present moment, it will be as if impossible to forbid it what it asks. This rash act will cost it dear, will be expiated by many sufferings and tears, no matter; the father sees that it must be. He does not argue, he carries it out generously, and though he foresees the use that will be made of it, he gives the prodigal his share: *Et divisit illis substantiam.*

Thus God seems to have acted toward the human mind, on the day when it asked for the portion of inheritance falling to it. Certainly, as I said at the beginning, the partition might have been long and difficult. Faith had important and complicated accounts to settle with reason: to how many restitutions might she not have laid claim? What recoveries to exercise! what properties to reclaim! The human mind wishes to be governed henceforth only by reason and philosophy, and to owe nothing to revelation and the Gospel. It is it that asks for the annulment of the contract. But where are the exact deeds, and, if I dare so speak, the primitive inventories drawn up before the act of partnership between these two parties, which establish in a precise manner what reason brought, what she possesses as her own, and what she owes to the influences of divine revelation? The basis and the most necessary elements for this calculation and this partition are lacking; here was matter for an eternal lawsuit. But the father of the great family does not stop at these petty disputes. The human mind asks for its share, and he abandons it as great as possible; and emancipated reason, which thinks it enters into possession only of what belongs to it in strict justice, *portionem quae me contingit*,

in reality receives its inheritance enriched, fecundated, increased with the most abundant juices and the most precious substance of faith; so that, thinking to live only on its own resources, it turns out that its means of existence will be prolonged for a time only by value borrowed and preserved from the supernatural domain. The human mind has asked for its share, and it carries off more than its share: *Da mihi portionem substantiae quae me contingit. Et divisit illis substantiam.*

Let us pursue the evangelical narrative. Very few days after, the young man, having realised and gathered together all that he possessed, set out on a journey to a far country; that, again, is youth. To adopt a course in a few days, to alienate the patrimonial fund and convert it into money, to leave the domestic hearth and go off into the wide world: it is the faithful picture of the young man who has at last shaken off tutelage. He takes pity on the tranquil industry and sedentary life of his poor father, an old man prudent to excess, who is governed only by the traditions and memories of his ancestors, who does not know how to turn his property to account, who "dares not travel, timid to the last degree"; behold him, he is going to run after fortune, and see the country. Meanwhile this money, by means of which he was to acquire so much more, goes from day to day; thus far the young traveller knows no other commerce than pleasure. I see well what he squanders and I do not see what he gains; his resources are swallowed up in his debaucheries, and soon he and the accomplices of his disorders have absorbed everything: *Et ibi dissipavit substantiam suam vivendo luxuriose.* [And there wasted his substance, living riotously. (Luke 15:13.)]

O human reason, who could better express the vicissitudes of your destiny since the day you separated your interests from those of faith? Consult history since the sixteenth century, my brethren. Do you see that apparent flight of the human mind toward unknown regions? It has gathered all its resources, *congregatis omnibus;* and behold it darting far from the beaten paths. Under the regime of faith the human mind seemed to sleep; it was stationary, reserved, timid; the very terms movement and progress were unknown. Man set free is going to make his faculties tell; he is going to march from conquest to conquest: *Peregre profectus est in regionem longinquam.* [He took his journey into a far country. (Luke 15:13.)]

Conquests in the theological order: the human mind engages in new roads; it gives birth to new dogmas, new symbols, or at the least new negations, and in a short time it travels so far that after a century and a half only it will take, from the pen of Bossuet, several volumes to write the detail of the circuits and peregrinations of free examination, and that today the most voluminous compilation would be insufficient to tell all its journeys. A hundred folios would not henceforth contain the complete history of the variations of the Reformation: *Peregre profectus est in regionem longinquam.*[3]

Conquests in the philosophical order: every morning brings a new system, each sets himself up as master; books swarm with a desolating fecundity, the disciples become leaders in their turn: the number of schools subdivides and fractions infinitely, until it equals the number of individuals, so that the most attentive study is lost in the maze of these enumerations: *Peregre profectus est in regionem longinquam.*

Conquests in the order of the sciences and arts: the human mind steals from nature her secrets, from God His thunder, from heaven its most remote stars, from the entrails of the earth the date of its formation. Fixed by a marvellous art on light and multiplied leaves, man casts his thought to all the centuries. What do I say? borne on the wings of the winds and on the chariot of the thunderbolt, man moves himself like his thought, and travels with the same rapidity; neither ocean nor mountains any longer oppose barriers to him; he can consult, in a few days, the monuments of all peoples and all ages, interrogate times and spaces: *Congregatis omnibus, peregre profectus est in regionem longinquam.*

So, since it separated itself from faith, the human mind has displayed an immense activity. But the moment has come to ask it for an account of the results obtained. For after all, says Saint John Chrysostom, the merit of the merchant does not consist in the sterile enumeration of the countries he has traversed, of the cities he has visited, but in the values he has gathered and the merchandise he has brought back.[4] Doubtless, amid so

many excursions, the treasure of wisdom and morality has grown. All this movement must have ended, for society, in a certain and incontestable good. Ah! why say it? *Et ibi dissipavit substantiam suam vivendo luxuriose.* In the matter of useful truths, instead of amassing anything, the human mind, since it conquered its independence, has known only how to squander this inheritance which it wished to govern by itself; it has pledged, sold and foolishly spent even the last remnants of it. The reign of reason has hitherto been only a long debauch of mind: debauch of mind in heresy; debauch of mind in philosophy. Vagabondage, common libertinage of thought and will, ruinous party of pleasure between intelligence and heart: that is the history of three centuries of emancipation: *Devoravit substantiam suam cum meretricibus.* [He hath devoured his substance with harlots. (Luke 15:30.)]

And if you ask me the proof of what I advance, it will be easy for me to furnish it, and to show that in this far country where man took refuge on leaving his father's dwelling, the cruellest moral famine makes itself felt today, and, by repercussion, even material distress is at its height: *Et postquam omnia consummasset, facta est fames valida in regione illa, et ipse coepit egere.* [And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country, and he began to be in want. (Luke 15:14.)]

This country inhabited by the human mind is the country of doubt and scepticism; the bread of truth is entirely lacking there: *Facta est fames valida in regione illa.* Hear the great-grandsons of Luther utter cries of fright. All the substance of the sacred books has been successively devoured by the corrosive action of private interpretation; in the field of the evangelical sects everything is ravaged by free examination; not a dogma is left standing; a clean slate of beliefs and doctrines: *Facta est fames valida in regione illa;* and a hunger that is impossible to appease, a murderous hunger gnaws the entrails of Protestantism: *Et ipse coepit egere.*

Hear the sons of Voltaire, the chiefs of the modern world, the men placed highest in the ranks of that unbelieving bourgeoisie to which the government of societies has fallen: their cries of alarm are no less piercing. All the substance of truth and of the natural law has been successively annihilated by the dissolving action of rationalist incredulity; the foundations of the earth are shaken; even the voice of evidence is no longer heard; the great realities which public good sense had always sufficed to justify, the rights of society, of the family, of property, are boldly attacked; in the field of morals, of philosophy and of politics, everything has been overthrown by the spirit of negation; not an affirmation is left standing; a clean slate of convictions and principles, and reason at bay calls on all sides for help: *Facta est fames valida in regione illa, et ipse coepit egere.*

And as every lesion in the religious or intellectual order is not long in reacting on material society, behold suddenly that in the fairest and richest country in the world, on a land covered with harvests, in a land where all the granaries overflow, where workmen's wages are ever rising, where the nation swells from day to day the budget of its beneficence, in the midst of all the elements of well-being, it nevertheless happens that appetites have been so excited that we tremble before a thousand famished cupidities, a thousand insatiable greeds: on every side there is a frightening hunger: *Facta est fames valida in regione illa, et ipse coepit egere;* and wealth itself, in face of so many demands and above all of so many sinister forebodings, begins to enjoy no longer and already feels itself in indigence.[5]

And if by chance you were, my dearly beloved brethren, of those who do not know how to see and do not know how to hear what is passing around them, I would say to you: hear at least what is passing within you. Tell me: what has your reason taught you, since you listen only to its voice, and have closed your ear to the voice of faith; what has it taught you, if not to doubt? In the first days of your wandering, rocked by the hand of sophism, you fell peacefully asleep in the arms of falsehood, and on waking you found at your bedside another sophism and a spare falsehood. Since the day when the creed that religion had taught you ceased to be your creed, what other creeds you have successively admitted and rejected! How many vague gleams you have pursued, thinking you had at last found the light! how much road you have travelled! But what remains

to you after all these circuits of your intelligence? Your mind and your heart, equally prodigal, have devoured in common dissipation all the inheritance they had carried from the paternal house. You have squandered and you have amassed nothing. Where are the knowledge, the convictions you have acquired on the most important matters? on the divinity, on yourself, on your nature, on your destinies? So many premature questions to which you have no answer. The whole edifice of doctrine has been demolished in your soul, and nothing has been rebuilt in it. You are in an absolute dearth of principles, of sentiments, of hopes; and, as this state is against nature, in this region of doubt and darkness your mind and your heart together are dying of inanition: *Facta est fames valida in regione illa, et ipse coepit egere.* Thus, my brethren, the human mind thought to enrich itself by separating from faith, and has known only how to impoverish itself; it pursued fortune, it has fallen into the most extreme indigence.

But at least, you say to me, if the human mind has not increased but rather squandered its inheritance, at least it has shaken off a yoke that weighed on it, and it enjoys its independence: for want of wealth, it has liberty; that is a treasure which cannot be bought too dear; it is the lasting and definitive conquest of our modern times; and after all it is an enjoyment that compensates for many others.

The evangelist is going to answer us. This same young man, who could not accommodate himself to the sweet and easy subjection to which he was bound in his father's house, now behold him forced to take a cruel course. He went, the Gospel tells us, and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his farm to feed swine. And there the unfortunate young man longed to fill his belly with the husks the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. Ah! my brethren, here again, what a picture full of truth! He dreamed of independence, and behold him in servitude; he was a son, and behold him a hireling! Such is the condition of the human mind when it rejects the yoke of religion: it thinks to free itself, and it becomes a slave; instead of a father it finds a master, and what a master! Let me explain.

Faith is the filial submission of human reason to the paternal authority of God; it is the adhesion of the mind to the truth taught by him who is its very source; now such a submission, such an adhesion has nothing but what is noble and glorious: *Mihi autem adhaerere Deo bonum est.* [But it is good for me to adhere to my God. (Ps. 72:28 Vulg.)] What do I say? In the language of all peoples, the condition of the son is called a free condition, in opposition to the condition of the slave. But consider this man whose reason no longer wishes to adhere to the supreme reason and the infallible authority of God: *Et abiit, et adhaesit uni civium regionis illius;* [And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country (Luke 15:15)] he has gone out of the paternal house; he goes into a far region, into the country of heresy, unbelief, doubt, atheism, and there he attaches himself to one of the citizens of that inhospitable and barbarous country.

This man who has rejected the sweet authority of Jesus Christ and the Church has given himself to Luther or Calvin, has delivered himself to Voltaire or Jean-Jacques; or, if you permit me something more contemporary, this man who would not believe the teaching and promises of religion has attached himself to one of the citizens of the fatherland of falsehood, who has thrown him into a ship and sent him to a chimerical Eden, on a desolate shore where he found only ruin and despair (1).[6] His thought, whose free rights he claimed so loudly, he disputed its homage to God only to offer it to a sectarian, a sophist or an ideologue. The intelligence of this man no longer wishes to adhere to the Gospel, it adheres to all the most disgusting productions; it no longer adheres to the sublime mysteries and reasonable dogmas of religion, it adheres to the stupid mysteries, the absurd dogmas of heresy or unbelief.

This man of the people has been told that he compromises the honour of his own reason by going, in the temple which is the house of God, to hear the word of the priest who is the minister of God; and behold that sovereign and independent thought whose rights he wishes to maintain against the divine supremacy, he sells, he delivers to I know not what village savant who, under an ignoble roof, beside a table where the wine flows, amid the clamours of debauch, becomes the oracle of all who surround him, engrosses, confiscates in a manner their thought and subjects it to the authority of his blasphemies and impieties. And the emancipated

villager, who pursues the pastor and his teachings with a coarse disdain, eagerly gathers and seems to drink every word that falls from the lips of the corrupter of the district; and if he no longer believes the catechism and the Gospel, in exchange he believes the most manifest lies, the most flagrant counter-truths, the most antiquated inventions, the maddest calumnies from the most impure books. That, my brethren, is what masters the human mind gives itself when it rejects the paternal authority of God: *Et abiit, et adhaesit uni civium regionis illius.*

The evangelist adds: *Et misit illum in villam ut pasceret porcos.* [And he sent him into his farm to feed swine. (Luke 15:15.)] My brethren, the human mind, when it followed the inspirations of faith, when it worked under the eyes of God, consecrated its labours to a noble task; it aspired only to develop beautiful sentiments, to raise souls, to excite virtues. If it had recourse to the charms and legitimate seductions of form, its aim was always to please in order to instruct, to move in order to make better. In a word, so long as the human mind respected its author it respected itself, and would have blushed to degrade itself to the point of working in the interest of evil instincts and gross vices. But since it has gone away from its father, and attached, delivered, sold itself to the spirit of falsehood, do you know, my brethren, what occupation this master, this impure tyrant has imposed on his slave?

Answer, children of this age. What is human thought today, if not the humble servant-maid of the most ignoble inclinations? So many thousands of books produced every day, what do they do other than throw an obscene fodder to sensual appetites and unclean passions? *Et misit illum in villam ut pasceret porcos.* Do you see him, this man, this poet, this publicist, mercenary writer, hired man of letters, who has sold his thought; do you see him working like a vile artisan to furnish public corruption with its daily food, measured, stipulated, paid in advance? Do you see him going to seek his descriptions and pictures in the most hideous dens, in the most secret and inaccessible entrenchments of vice, and spreading out today all those mysteries of abominable, monstrous perversity whose impudent tales a society, at times elegant and polished, devours with frenzy. That, that is what human thought has become under the empire of the tyrant to whom it attached itself; that is to what employment, to what ministry it has been condemned: *Et misit illum in villam ut pasceret porcos.*[7]

Shall I add a last touch to this picture? Yes, my brethren. It is said that the unfortunate young man envied, but in vain, the lot of the unclean animals. Ah! is it not at this desperate end that the human mind has arrived? It has squandered, destroyed, annihilated all principles, all convictions, all hopes; it has made itself the slave of falsehood, the courtier of every guilty instinct, of every evil concupiscence. But there is one frightful reality which it has not been able to destroy, and that is death, inevitable death, which presents itself to its eyes. Now what is there beyond death? Terrible question that often escapes from the depths of its being.

Ah! if man could at least flatter himself that he resembles the vile animals; if, after having lived their gross life, he could die their everlasting death, how tranquilly he would fall asleep in that dreadful hope! But in vain he seeks to convince himself of the resemblance of his destinies with the destinies of the beast; he cannot attain this sad certainty: *Et nemo illi dabat.* [And no man gave unto him. (Luke 15:16.)] In vain has impiety cast into the bosom of the new generations this horrible axiom: When one is dead, all is dead. Impiety has expressed its desire, but it cannot prove this dogma of annihilation; the human conscience is neither convinced nor reassured: *Et nemo illi dabat.* There is more: the last remnant of truth which philosophy flatters itself with having saved is the avowal of the spirituality, and consequently of the indestructibility, of the human soul. And thus is verified the word of the great Bossuet, who, having perceived with his eagle's glance this last effort of guilty reason, had prophetically signalled its impotence: "What have they seen, those rare geniuses, what have they seen more than others? They have not even wherewith to establish the nothingness they hope for after this life, and that miserable portion is not assured to them": *Et nemo illi dabat.*[8]

My brethren, since he left his father's house, has our prodigal endured misfortunes enough? He has squandered his inheritance in debauchery, he has sold his liberty to a tyrant, he has lost his honour in an ignoble employment, and he has not even been able to find a fatal and desperate rest in nothingness; frightful spectres rise before his gaze beyond the tomb. After showing you reason falling from precipice to precipice since she made schism with faith, I would like, in order not to weary your attention, to sketch in broad strokes a more consoling picture, the return of human reason toward faith. Let us rest a few moments.

II. Entering at last into himself, the unfortunate young man says: How many hired servants in my father's house have bread in abundance, and I here perish with hunger! Poor child, he had to travel the whole long road of misfortune and be reduced to the last extremity before remembering that he had a father. He had so thoroughly believed he should never again need to return to the paternal house! He had said to it so sincerely an eternal farewell, that, tossed about by fate, he exhausted every other course, resigned himself to the most painful sacrifices, endured the most cruel distress, found himself even face to face with death, before being brought to this so natural reflection: But after all, there is a remedy for my ills, my misery is my own work. I have a father, a father in whose house nothing is lacking; even the hired servants have bread in abundance; and I, I who am the son and not the slave, here, with the cruel master to whom I sold myself, I perish with hunger: *Quanti mercenarii in domo patris mei abundant panibus: hic vero fame pereo.* [Luke 15:17.]

My brethren, three centuries have passed since reason took her flight far from the dwelling of the Father of the family. I have shown you what an immense circle of misfortunes she has described since that lamentable day. At last the human mind begins to enter into itself, and, at intervals at least, it is carried back to the memory of the paternal house. This great prodigal who lacks everything, who is plunged in moral indigence, in the most absolute intellectual distress, who is witness of his daily decay and rapid dissolution, at times at least reflects within himself, and says to himself: But this dwelling of my father that I left, this holy house of the Church from which I exiled myself, this rich asylum of faith that I abandoned, still subsist. There has been preserved and maintained the abundance of doctrine, of help, of consolations, of joys, of hopes in which I once shared; there is still set the same table at which I used to sit; there the little ones, the humble, the ignorant are nourished with the bread of truth, and all the principles that sustain life are lavished on them; while I, in this ungrateful and sterile country where nothing germinates but doubt and negation, I die of weakness and hunger.

You hear here, my brethren, the language of the Reformation. Read all the productions that have come for a quarter of a century from the pen of enlightened Protestants, gather the accents that fall from their pulpits, lend your ear to the cries that resound in their universities: it is a perpetual avowal that the mind of man, left to itself, has fallen into indigence and no longer knows where to find support; it is a perpetual regret at having separated from the Catholic Church; it is a perpetual envious glance at the intact deposit of doctrine preserved in the house of the Father of the family, from which they had the misfortune to exile themselves.

And after hearing the avowals, regrets and sighs of heresy, do you wish to gather the accents that fall from the lips of philosophy? I allow myself only one citation in this regard; here it is verbatim, borrowed from one of the leaders of present-day teaching: "Let us play the proud as much as we like, philosophers and reasoners that we are today; but which of us, amid the agitations of the modern movement, or in the voluntary captivities of study, in its harsh and solitary pursuits, which of us hears without emotion the sound of those beautiful Christian feasts, the touching voice of the bells and as it were their maternal reproach? Who sees without envy those faithful pouring out in floods from the church, returning from the divine table rejuvenated and renewed? The mind remains firm, but the soul is very sad. The believer of the future, who holds none the less to the past, then lays down his pen and closes his book. He cannot help saying: Ah! that I were with them, one of them, and the simplest, the least of their children!"[9]

And you yourself who hear me, my very dear brother, ah! in the course of your existence, above all since the first effervescence of your passions has calmed, since you have known life in what it has of the real and no

longer with the smiling and poetic colours youth lends it; my brother, have you not met some of those hours of silence and reflection when you saw uncovered the nothingness of all human ideas, of all chimerical theories, when you felt the hunger and need of more solid doctrines, when there awoke in your soul the delicious memories of childhood, the sweet prayers of your young age, the ineffable contentment you found at the foot of the altars and even in the humble confession of your faults; and did you not cry out: Ah! how many others, less favoured than I with the gifts of Providence, the benefits of education, the riches and culture of intelligence, but who have remained more faithful than I, find in abundance the food of mind and heart in my father's house; while I, I feel myself failing: *Quanti mercenarii in domo patris mei abundant panibus; ego autem hic fame pereo.*

"I will arise," says the prodigal of the Gospel, "I will arise and go to my father": *Surgam et ibo ad patrem.* [Luke 15:18.] My brethren, whatever ravages heresy and impiety have caused among us, to whatever extremity of indigence the human mind has been reduced, it has only to say: I will arise, I will leave the gloomy region in which I have buried myself, and I will return to my father; from that moment it is on the eve of recovering its first dignity and all its most flattering rights. But what it costs the human mind to retrace its steps! Who knows? perhaps it will prefer to die in its distress than to return and knock at its father's door.

A monthly Review, worthy of the highest interest, seems to have made itself, in our midst, the interpreter of this inward hesitation, of this almost furious torment of human reason, which sees itself dying and will not ask for life again from its true source. Yes, says this publicist, I avow it, man is, in the full nineteenth century, poorer in science, in certitude, in morals, in sentiment than he ever was in the least advanced ages of humanity. Already life, already death besiege him with their mysteries; to whom will he address himself? Will he return to his educators, the men in black robes? Will he go and hand his thought, his intelligence, to a priest of the past, from whose hands he has torn himself for ever? No. Yet for three hundred years philosophy has lured us with vain promises which it will doubtless keep one day; but meanwhile private existences are devoured in a frightful malaise; and is not the time come to say to present society, which is the fruit of this philosophy: Either sum up your science, your lights, your progress, your conquests, and give each of your citizens principles that can guide them; or else let them throw themselves back into the arms of the ancient religion that sufficed them for so many centuries?[10]

Et surgens venit ad patrem suum: [And rising up he came to his father (Luke 15:20)] and rising, the young man set out to return to his father. Ah! how happy is he who has the strength to tear himself from heresy or unbelief, and return to the paternal dwelling where faith and truth reside. *Surgens:* a great effort is needed; when the evil is in the ideas, it is more tenacious there than in the heart. The mind once perverted returns more hardly than the will. *Et surgens, venit ad Patrem.* They have risen, and they have come to their Father, those distinguished men of studious England and learned Germany who have abjured error and taken refuge in the bosom of the Catholic faith in which their ancestors had been nourished. They have risen, and they have come to their Father, those men full of loyalty and frankness whom we see every day in our midst abjure the doubt bequeathed to them by the preceding generation, and bring to the foot of the Catholic altars the homage of their intelligence. My brother, my brother, you too will rise, and you will go to your Father; you will not remain eternally in this region of intellectual abandonment, of moral isolation.

I am still very far, you say to me, the road is very long. Ah! the prodigal of the Gospel too is still very far when his father sees him, and, moved with compassion, runs to meet him, falls on his neck, embraces him and presses him to his heart. My brethren, since the day when the great schism was consummated, when the mind of man went away from faith, religion has not ceased to pursue this unhappy fugitive and invite him to return. He was still far off, and already she was running to meet him; more than once she thought to embrace him, alas! and her expectation was deceived. More than once, as Jacob sent presents to Esau to soften his heart, more than once truth made advances to straying reason, she wished to appease it with presents. Let us read the project of reunion of the Protestants with the Catholics as it was concerted between Bossuet and

Leibniz; and let it be said to me whether this is not the father of the prodigal who thinks he perceives from afar his son on the way back, and who rushes to meet him.

O you, my brother who hear me at this moment, you are still very far from believing, you tell me; it is far from certain you will arrive at the act of faith: *Cum adhuc longe esset.* [While he was yet a great way off. (Luke 15:20.)] My brother, you will not make the whole road. God, His light, His grace run to meet you; for my feeble part, I am charged to smooth the difficult way of your return. Set out, and the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth and of love, will soon fall, will as it were rush upon you, illuminate your intelligence with a sudden light, touch your heart with an all-powerful grace; and truth will be reconciled with you in the kiss of love: *Cecidit super collum ejus, et osculatus est eum.* [He fell upon his neck and kissed him. (Luke 15:20.)]

Do you see him, this tender father, this merciful old man, absorbed in the joy of seeing again and embracing his son? “Father,” the young man says to him, “I have sinned against heaven and before you, I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” He had prepared longer excuses; he wished to add: Father, treat me henceforth as one of your hired servants. But the father will not hear this language, and does not permit him to finish his speech. His son will always be his son, and he wills that all the insignia of his dignity as son be restored to him at once. The precious robe is brought back, which fortunately he had left in the paternal house, and which the father in his foresight had carefully kept; a ring of honour is put on his finger; a joyful feast is prepared, the father wills that the whole family rejoice; for his son was dead, and behold him come to life again, he was lost, and behold him found.

Thus, my brethren, will one day be celebrated the wedding of the return of our great prodigal, the human mind, which will return, I affirm, to the paternal house; thus already the father welcomes all those who return to him from the region of darkness. Hear them, those men wearied with sophisms, disgusted with the hollow ideas and vain subtleties of human philosophy, on the day they reopen their eyes to the lights of faith; hear them cry out: Father, since I wished to follow the voice of my reason, my reason has only led me astray and conducted me into abysses. Henceforth I wish only to believe and I no longer wish to reason. Treat my understanding as a hired servant and no longer as a son. My only philosophy will be to listen and obey. But the father of the great family does not suffer this language which wounds his heart. For if he is the author of faith, he is also the author of reason, and he is equally jealous of the rights of both. In his house his son will always be his son, and will not be a slave.

Jesus Christ, a prophet tells us, was reserved to gather up the scattered inheritances, that is, the remnants of true philosophy disseminated, the sound maxims scattered and wandering here and there, the debris of reason confused, mixed, altered. Far from the Gospel having killed philosophy, it is the Gospel that gave philosophy back to men. But once more the human mind has pledged, sold, squandered the inheritance of philosophy; foreseeing religion has gathered, saved the dispersed remnants of this inheritance, and once more God holds in reserve His Christ to accomplish the same work, and to reconstitute wisdom and even natural philosophy for the profit of reason, the day reason comes to throw herself into His arms: *Et servavi te ut possideas hereditates dissipatas.* [And I have preserved thee… that thou mightest possess the inheritances that were destroyed. (Cf. Isa. 49:8.)] Fear nothing, O mind of man: in the house of God, in the house of your Father, you will not be a slave, but you will recover on the contrary all your rights, all your original privileges preciously preserved. In the kingdom of religion there are magnificent domains for the intelligence; and faith not only permits but requires that reason have her appanage, which she declares sacred and inalienable.

Bring, bring then to this wearied and suffering reason, to this reason covered with tatters and rags, bring her the rich robe in which she was clothed at the beginning, instead of this staff on which she drags herself painfully; put into her hands a sceptre of honour; and so that her feet, which have grown weary on the roads of falsehood, may no longer be torn by the brambles of the way, give her back the sandals of which they were stripped. Prepare an abundant feast; this day is a day of joy; for behold the finest work of the hands of God, the mind of man, has returned to Him who formed it; it was dead, and behold it restored to life; it had

strayed, and behold it found.

And you, O my elder son, you, Christian ever faithful, ah! do not murmur at my transports nor at my condescension. This prodigal, who has not ceased to be my son, has not ceased either to be your brother. You, it is true, have never abandoned me, you have never neglected a single one of my commandments. With you, I confess, my love is more exacting and more austere; it awaits the observance of counsels as much as of precepts; it counts on your pious belief in the least teachings as much as on your faith in defined dogmas; it spares you nothing of the rigour of discipline and the regularity of practices. Therefore, my son, you are always with me, and I have nothing in my treasures that is not yours.

But after this one, who is your brother, has come back from so far, after he has been so long abused, led astray by falsehood, ah! do not be astonished if I treat with consideration his mind, which cannot lay aside all its prejudices in one day, if I do not show all the light at once to his eyes, which could not bear it. I beg you, make no difficulty about entering the banqueting hall and sitting beside your brother, since after all he has come back agreed with you on all the principal and necessary points, and has entered the way of salvation: *Quia salvum illum recepi.* [Because I have received him safe. (Luke 15:27.)] You have understood my language, O faithful Christian, and far from murmuring any longer, you enter the banqueting hall with transport, you shed tears of happiness at seeing your brother again beside you, you treat with regard him who is infirm in the faith, and you offer to God lively thanksgivings, because your brother who was dead is restored to life, your brother who was lost is found: *Quia frater tuus hic mortuus erat, et revixit; perierat, et inventus est.* [For this thy brother was dead, and is come to life again; was lost, and is found. (Luke 15:32.)]

Ah! my brethren, will it be given us to be witnesses of this great reconciliation of the human mind with revelation, of philosophy with the Gospel? One day, on re-entering the paternal house, will it be given us to hear there that delicious symphony, that admirable concert of reason and faith? *Et cum appropinquaret domui, audivit symphoniam et chorum.* [And when he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. (Luke 15:25.)] Already distant echoes have sent us back some first essays and as it were preludes of these sacred harmonies, and our ear, ever attentive, awaits and asks impatiently for the resumption of this concert, executed with more unity and ensemble: *Symphoniam et chorum.* When the intelligence of man vibrates under the fingers of God, when faith and reason unite their accents, nothing is comparable to this harmony, rival of the harmony of the heavens.

My dearly beloved brethren, this day will come, and it is not far off; God owes Himself this triumph, and has permitted the human mind to depart so long from the paternal house only to see it re-enter it, confounded at its wandering and its misery. From the height of heaven, in His infinite foreknowledge, with His eye to which all is present, this father of men, the author of human reason, saw that the prodigal, in completing the circle of his misfortunes, would describe, if I may so speak, a re-entrant curve. Out of respect for his liberty He let him depart; but His love did not cease to watch over him, even amid his wanderings, and He knew that the very excess of his disorders would one day bring him back to Him, more faithful henceforth and more humble (1).[11]

Translator’s notes

1. Quotations ascribed to Chrysostom and Bossuet, and the long citations from an unnamed professor and an unnamed Review, are as the preacher gives them; none could be traced from the text alone.

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[1] (1) This sermon was preached, with slight modifications, by Mgr Pie on 17 December 1850, in the church of Saint-Porchaire at Poitiers, during the exercises of the retreat of the jubilee. It would be difficult to distinguish in the manuscript the primitive text from the subsequent additions; we therefore publish the sermon on the Prodigal Son as it was prepared for the audience of Saint-Porchaire. (Editor’s note.) The heading dates the sermon 1847 (the fourth Sunday of Lent in 1847 was 14 March).

[2] “Young Germany”, “Young Italy”, “Young France”: the 1830s movements (Giovine Italia of Mazzini, etc.).

[3] The allusion is to Bossuet’s *Histoire des variations des Églises protestantes* (1688).

[4] Attributed to Chrysostom by the preacher; not traced.

[5] The allusion is to the economic and social tension of the mid-1840s; the preacher does not specify.

[6] (1) Cabet and Icaria, 1849. (Note by M. l'abbé Pie.) Étienne Cabet led his Icarian followers to Texas in 1848–49. The note is dated 1849, evidently added on the later reuse of the sermon.

[7] The allusion is to the roman-feuilleton and the fashionable novelists of the 1840s; the preacher names no one.

[8] Bossuet; the passage reads like the funeral oration for the Prince de Condé, but I have not collated it.

[9] The professor quoted is not named by the preacher; I have not identified him.

[10] The Review and its writer are not named in the text; I have not identified them.

[11] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 25, n° 35; p. 27, n° 42 *ter*. (Editor's note.)

n° 35. Sermon for the Opening of the Jubilee of the Accession of His Holiness Pius IX

Preached in the cathedral of Chartres, Passion Sunday, 21 March 1847.

Et clanges buccina… et vocabis remissionem cunctis habitatoribus terrae tuae. Revertetur homo ad possessionem suam, et unusquisque redibit ad familiam pristinam, quia jubilaeus est. [Thou shalt sound the trumpet… and shalt proclaim remission to all the inhabitants of thy land. Every man shall return to his possession, and every one shall return to his former family, because it is the jubilee. (Lev. 25:9–11.)][1]

My Lord, it is not the trumpet of the sons of Levi that sounds today; it is not for the inhabitants of the land of Israel that a general remission is proclaimed; there is no question of the restitution of the hereditary field, nor of the return to the house of the ancestors. In a word, if it is a jubilee that I announce, as much as the reality surpasses the figure, so much does the jubilee of Christians surpass the jubilee of the Jews. The ancient people, blessed with temporal blessings, favoured with the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth, raised cries of gladness and jubilation at the approach of the happy year which brought them the extinction of debts contracted, the recovery of alienated estates and of pledged liberty.

Spouse of Jesus Christ, who came not to abolish the ancient law but to perfect it, the Church has taken care not to leave in oblivion the ancient institution of the jubilee year; she hastened to adapt it to the spirit of the new law, which is no longer a carnal and earthly law. And, not only every fiftieth year, but four times in each century, as soon as the voice of the supreme pontiff has given the signal, the sacred bronze resounds at the summit of all Catholic temples, the evangelical trumpet is heard from the height of all Christian pulpits, and the whole universe is invited to enjoy the favours of the holy year.

Thus soon, my brethren, we shall celebrate with solemnity the great indulgence which will open the second half of this century, and we shall announce to you all the general remission of the debts contracted toward divine justice, the recovery of the liberty of the children of God and of the inheritance of grace; because it will be the jubilee and the fiftieth year: *Quia jubilaeus est, et quinquagesimus annus.* [Because it is the jubilee, and the fiftieth year. (Cf. Lev. 25:10–11.)][2]

But besides these great periodic epochs, when the river of graces never fails to overflow, as it were, upon the Christian people and to carry into the Church a new fecundity, there are other circumstances again in which the head of the great family of the children of God opens for them, though with less solemnity, the same sources of salvation and pardon. In particular, as sovereigns on the day of their coronation pour out benefits and liberalities with a sort of profusion to conciliate the hearts of their subjects, so we see, for three centuries, the lieutenant of Jesus Christ, the Father and Bishop of our souls, when his brow has just been girded with the diadem of spiritual power, announce to the whole Christian world days of prayer and grace, destined to obtain for the pontiff not so much the favour of men as the favour of God, and to procure for the faithful precious advantages which at once increase and reward the merit of their suffrages.

Such, my brethren, is the jubilee that we announce to you today. And that you may better understand its nature, I shall try to develop these two points: 1st, what the head of the Church asks of us in the jubilee; 2nd, what the head of the Church grants us in this same jubilee.

Let us invoke the lights of the Holy Spirit through the intercession of that blessed Mother of God and of men, whose power is so great to obtain and to facilitate the miracles of grace. *Ave Maria.*

I. The venerable old man who had governed the Church in the name of Jesus Christ for more than fifteen years, and who, in that long and difficult pontificate, had accomplished so many great things whose memory the sacred annals will transmit to the most distant posterity; the studious and modest pontiff, courageous and tender, who had constantly edified his flock by his lights and virtues, who had sent so many zealous labourers to infidel lands, who had enlarged the domain of Jesus Christ by the creation of a great number of Churches, who had re-established the cross on shores conquered by the sword of France, who had often unmasked and condemned error, forestalled and branded rebellion, fought and disarmed tyranny, and who had just spoken so noble a language to the most powerful and most implacable of persecutors; Gregory XVI, to whose memory I owed today this homage of our love and respect, had gone to sit in the other Jerusalem, on one of those ivory thrones where sit still, as judges, the apostolic men who were incorruptible here below on the chair of Peter.[3]

By a sort of acclamation and unanimous inspiration, of which only a few examples are found in the history of the supreme pontificate, a bishop still young, almost a stranger up to then to the handling of affairs, but whose high qualities had nevertheless betrayed themselves, is suddenly raised to the see just fallen vacant. Neither the prudence of the prudent, nor secular interventions, nor the voice of flesh and blood have any part in this exaltation; this is the work of God, of God alone, and what hopes ought not so providential an election to make us conceive! But scarcely is the vicar and representative of Jesus Christ raised to the summit of the apostolic dignity, scarcely has he cast his eyes over all parts of the Christian world, than, enlightened by a supernatural light, he discovers with his penetrating eye all the obligations of the charge just laid upon him. And, addressing himself to all the faithful who recognise his voice, he reminds them that what is a common good must be asked by common vows, and he invokes the help of their prayers, that the ministry entrusted to him may turn to the advantage and felicity of the whole of Christendom, and that the vessel of the Church may rest from the long agitations of the tempest.[4]

But has the pontiff not flattered himself, when he speaks of the exact knowledge he has acquired of the difficulties of the times and circumstances? What are those particular dangers his gaze has discovered, those dangers against which he must struggle to the end; struggle, combat in which he asks to be assisted by our prayers? Permit me, my brethren, to let you hear here not so much my voice as that august voice whose teachings must always be received with so much respect. The servant of the servants of God writes to his brethren the Catholic bishops scattered over all the earth, and there he signals with so much sagacity all the perils to which we are exposed, that in this faithful picture one can recognise all the sad realities that surround us, and find in it the justification of the cry of alarm raised among us by all the pastors.

Perils from those enemies of truth and light, those artisans of fraud and falsehood, who have undertaken to weaken in souls all sentiment of piety, justice, honesty, to corrupt morals, to overturn all divine and human rights, and who, opening their mouths to blasphemies, do not fear to reject all religion and to deny Christ Himself and God.

Perils from those unbelieving men who, the better to deceive the peoples, arrogate to themselves the title of philosophers, as if philosophy, which has no other object than the search for natural truths, ought to reject what God Himself, sovereign and merciful author of all nature, has deigned to reveal, by the greatest of all benefits, to His intelligent creatures to lead them to salvation; blinded sophists, who violate all the rules of reasoning, cease not to appeal to the power and superiority of the human mind against the holy faith of Jesus

Christ, which they have the audacity to pretend is opposed to the lights of reason. Most senseless invention, most impious, and most contrary to reason itself; for, although faith is above reason, it can nevertheless be in no way contrary to her, since both emanate from the same and single source, from immutable and eternal truth, and they owe each other mutual help: right reason demonstrating, sustaining and defending the truth of faith, and faith freeing reason from all errors, enlightening, strengthening and perfecting her by the knowledge of divine things.

I wish to say in passing, my brethren: never has the rationalist doctrine of the independence and supremacy of the human mind been more victoriously refuted; never have the reciprocal attributions of reason and faith been better defined, and these ten lines of the pontifical letters end disputes too often agitated, even in Catholic schools. Perils from those adventurous minds who, ceaselessly vaunting progress, would introduce it, by a rash and sacrilegious attempt, into the Catholic religion, as if this religion were not the work of God but a human creation and a philosophical discovery, and were subject consequently to various phases of transformation and perfecting: minds in delirium, to whom applies the reproach of Tertullian to the philosophers of his time, fabricators of a Stoic, Platonic and dialectical Christianity.[5] And certainly, observes the pontiff, since it is incontestable that our most holy religion was not invented by the human mind, but that it is God Himself who gave it to men, everyone understands without difficulty that this gift of heaven can be neither diminished nor augmented by the reason of man.

Perils from the so numerous partisans of that horrible and unreasonable system of the indifference of religions, a system contrary even to natural light, a system which annihilates all distinction between virtue and vice, truth and error, opens heaven to the followers of all cults; as if there could ever be accord between justice and iniquity, between Christ and Belial.

Perils from those clandestine and tenebrous sects which aspire only to the overthrow of the public thing, both sacred and profane; which reject all respect and submission toward the powers of the earth; which spread in the bosom of the deceived people the principles of communism, which, once admitted, lead to the destruction of all rights, of all property and even of all human society. Perils from those innumerable books and libels which seem to have wings to carry the contagion more rapidly to all points of the globe; frightful liberty of thinking, speaking and writing, from which a thousand calamities have come: public morals corrupted, the religion of Jesus Christ despised, the majesty of worship misknown, the power of the apostolic see assailed, the authority of the Church reduced to servitude, the rights of bishops violated, ecclesiastical celibacy calumniated, the sanctity of marriage profaned, in a word, all powers shaken.

Perils from that perverse teaching which presides above all over the philosophical sciences, a teaching which deceives in the most lamentable fashion an inexperienced youth, corrupts it and pours the gall of the dragon into the cup of Babylon.

Thus far, my brethren, I have done nothing but quote the pontifical letters verbatim, and I have not recounted yet all the perils perceived and signalled by the head of the Church: perils in the east, perils in the west, perils in the north, perils in the south, perils on all sides; but I must stop here, and certainly the enumeration is already frightening enough: impiety, rationalism, the school of progress, the system of indifference, communist principles, perverse writings, guilty teaching.

Now in the presence of so many evils, in the presence of so many duties, feeling all the weight of the burden laid on his shoulders, the new pontiff puts the whole Church in prayer, and invites all Christians to intercede for him with the divine mercy. We shall obey this desire, my brethren. How refuse a Father what he asks with such lively instance? how close the ear to a voice that must be so dear to us?

Yes, my brethren, we shall pray; and since we know the intentions for which we must pray, we shall beseech the Lord to bring on, to hasten those ever-happy days in which the human mind must at last lay aside its prejudices and its hatred against divine revelation; those days in which reason and faith, nature and grace

must again become sisters, and live in their first union under the law of truth and charity.

We shall pray and beseech the Lord to touch hearts and convert wills, at the same time that He enlightens minds and subdues intelligences; we shall pray Him to dry up the source of iniquities, to draw from their indolent torpor those who sleep, to recall to the fountains of salvation so many sick souls which have so great need to be washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, which would find there, and there only, a remedy for the mortal wounds from which they suffer so cruelly.

We shall pray and beseech the Lord not to permit that the working class, the workmen and the poor, lend too easy an ear to the deceitful words with which they are sought to be seduced, and carried to excesses which only aggravate their ills. We shall ask the God of charity to inspire the rich with a sincere and effective solicitude for the needs of the suffering classes, and to inspire the poor with sentiments of resignation and piety, which are the only true alleviation of their unfortunate condition.

We shall pray, my brethren, and, in conformity again with the intentions of the head of the Church, we shall beseech the Lord to make all those whom He has clothed with power on earth, legislators and representatives of nations, understand that all outrages done to the religion of a country are so many blows to morality, that the rights of citizens are necessarily misknown where the right of God is not respected, and that under an angry heaven the earth is infallibly shaken.

Finally we shall pray and beseech the Lord that the new pontiff may accomplish the great things to which he appears destined and of which he has conceived the sublime intention. It seems that in these times of wrath he was given us as a pledge of reconciliation: *Et in tempore iracundiae factus est reconciliatio.* [And in the time of wrath he was made a reconciliation. (Ecclus. 44:17.)] Led from his childhood by ways so visibly miraculous, he opened his reign by an act of royal clemency, saluted with enthusiasm by all the nations of the universe.[6]

Never did monarch, never pontiff, never father receive from his people, his flock, his children a more unanimous tribute of praises, blessings and thanksgivings; and to the first transports of a joy at times blind there has succeeded I know not what universal confidence, founded on his high wisdom and eminent virtue. Europe, the whole world, tottering on its base, have need of a great man and of a saint. On every side I hear the organs of the most contrary parties send accents of hope toward the new pontiff. The East itself has been stirred; Islam has sent its homage and its protestations to the vicar of Jesus Christ; and China is about to welcome a protector of Christians.

Witness of so many marvels, the Italian people cling to the steps of the Holy Father in the streets of Rome, and cry to him: Courage, Holy Father, courage! And on this subject one of our statesmen, whose voice is not accustomed to be evoked from the profane tribune to resound in the Christian pulpit, said lately in the midst of the legislative assembly, which answered him with lively applause: Well then! I too, if the voice of a feeble individual, if a voice sent from France could resound in the heart of this noble pontiff, who joins to the piety of a priest the lights of an enlightened prince, I too would say to him: Courage, Holy Father, courage! If you succeed in the admirable work you have undertaken and in which the royalties of the earth have failed, you will have rendered to kings and to peoples, you will have rendered to humanity entire the greatest of all services (1).[7]

I know not, my brethren, what influence Pius IX is destined to exert on our agitated societies; history teaches me that more than once the salvation of nations has come from the Church and the Holy See. Who knows whether this same august power, which has stifled so many rivalries and dissensions, will not one day reconcile the two most bitter enemies of these modern times, power and liberty? But, without stopping at what concerns the interests of this world, when I see the immense necessities felt in the world of souls, in the order of the sacred interests of faith and morals; when I see in what darkness we are plunged, toward what abysses we march, from what intellectual chaos, what doctrinal anarchy we need to be drawn; in a word,

when I consider all the evil the head of the Church finds to combat, all the good to re-establish, knowing that the only encouragements he asks of me and I can effectively give him are my prayers: I obey his desire, I cast myself at the foot of the altars, I beseech the sovereign Priest Jesus Christ to be the support of his representative in times and circumstances so decisive, and thus I say to him in my own way: Courage, Holy Father, courage!

And as my voice is not an isolated voice, as the children of God scattered over the whole face of the earth raise to heaven the same voices and the same prayers, I cannot doubt that our request will be heard, and that strength from on high will descend into the heart of him to whom two hundred million Catholics will have cried in concert: Courage, Holy Father, courage! No, I cannot doubt that, resting on the most powerful lever in heaven and on earth, the lever of prayer, the new Elect will become the instrument of the mercies God prepares for us, the liberator of souls and the saviour of Christendom, exposed to more dangers than it was in the worst days of past centuries.[8]

I have told you, my brethren, what the head of the Church asks of us in this jubilee; it remains for me to tell you what he grants us in this same jubilee: the object of my second reflection.

II. Jesus Christ said: There is more happiness in giving than in receiving. The Church has understood this principle, and she never asks anything of her children that does not turn to their profit. The father of the great family of Christians, at the same time that he implores for himself their suffrages, whose effects they are moreover to gather, hastens to open to them the abundant treasure of spiritual favours whose dispensation is entrusted to him. And if you wish to know what particular advantages are to result for us from this jubilee, I shall tell you that, after the manner of the jubilee of the Jews, but in a more elevated and solely spiritual order, the jubilee of Christians brings us: 1st, the recovery of our patrimonial inheritance, if we have pledged it; 2nd, the remission of all the debts we have contracted.

In that year, says the Lord, every man shall return to his possession and go back to his first family. Now, my brethren, do you know what is the possession, the important property of the Christian, what is his patrimonial inheritance of which the titles were assured to him on the day of his baptism? The Christian's inheritance is divine grace, which makes the life and beauty of his soul here below, and which gives him a right to the riches of glory and eternal felicity. And do you know also what is the Christian's family, what is the house of his fathers? The Christian's family: God Himself is its father, Jesus Christ its elder brother, all the Angels and the elect its members, heaven the true dwelling of which the entrance and vestibule is the Church on earth. That is the property, that is the family of the Christian.

Now it may happen, alas! and too often it does happen, that the Christian does not know how to keep this inheritance of divine grace, that he squanders and loses it with all the inestimable advantages attached to it. This heavenly family, it may happen, alas! and too often it does happen, that the Christian separates himself from it and pledges his liberty to the service of the most frightful of all tyrants, who is the demon.

Such is your lot, my brother who hear me; you who by the sin you have committed, by the iniquity in which you have engaged, have lost the state of grace and the fruit of all your good works, and who are today stripped of every supernatural good, plunged in the most absolute spiritual indigence; you who still belong to the Church by the bond of your baptism and perhaps by that of faith, but who have otherwise renounced living in your father's house; you who no longer sit at his table, who no longer come, in company with your brothers, to offer him your homage and hear his paternal voice. My brother, you are stripped of your only real and solid possession, and you are banished from your family. Your misfortune is great. But hear the consoling voice of the Lord: In that year every man shall return to his inheritance and to his first family, because it is the jubilee: *Revertetur homo ad possessionem suam, et unusquisque redibit ad familiam pristinam, quia jubilaeus est.*

Doubtless, my brethren, the fountains of grace are always open. On whatever day the sinner returns to me, says the Lord, at the instant he repents of his iniquity, I myself lose the memory of it, and I restore him my love. But the inspiration to return to God is itself a grace, and for this inspiration there are chosen days, favourable times in which God makes it descend more particularly into souls. God, to speak according to our manner of conceiving, is always good and generous; but sometimes He is large and magnificent. Then He has pity on men, not according to His ordinary mercy, but according to His great mercy, as the penitent king expresses it; then, says Saint Bernard, He redoubles His graces beyond the common measure, and His goodness overflows above His justice: *In mensura contra mensuram, in mensura gratiae contra mensuram justitiae.*[9] Now, at the head of these privileged epochs one must count the time of the jubilee, a favourable time par excellence, days in which God makes an abundant profusion of graces, and invites sinners with a more tender and efficacious voice.

Yes, my brethren, there is in the mere name of jubilee a mysterious power; this word goes of itself to knock at the door of hearts and solicit them to conversion. Already for some days, my brethren, there are Christians, there are men who have begun the work of their reconciliation with God, who have shed at the feet of the priest the tears of penance. And what was the motive for this unhoped-for step? What determined this return to duties neglected so long? Is it one of the conquests of the divine word? Some of those I speak of have not heard it. And why then did they convert? Because it is the jubilee, *quia jubilaeus est,* and because this one word, cast upon the earth, has kept still I know not what accent given it by centuries of faith, which is the most eloquent of all preachings.

Ah! my dearly beloved brethren, you who have so long resisted the voice of God, profit, profit then by this opportune juncture. Delay no longer. It depends only on you to recover the inheritance of your baptism and the merit of all your former good works; it depends only on you to re-enter the family of the children of God. Later, doubtless, you will still be able; but later you will no longer be able with the same advantages. And if your inheritance is restored to you, you will find it burdened toward divine justice with dues and charges from which it would be exempt today. And here I come to the second benefit of the jubilee, its most special and most direct effect, that is, the remission of all the debts we have contracted.

You shall sound the trumpet, says the Lord, and you shall announce the general remission to all the inhabitants of the earth. Now, my brethren, what are these debts, and what is this remission? Recall here the principles of Catholic doctrine, as it has always been taught, and in particular as it was solemnly defined in the Council of Trent, which treated this matter with the more importance because it had been the pretext for the storms raised against the Church in the sixteenth century.

Sin draws with it two consequences: the stain of the soul become unworthy of the heavenly inheritance, and the debt contracted by that soul toward the sovereign justice of God; and, to use the terms consecrated by the School, one distinguishes in sin the guilt and the punishment (*culpa* and *poena*). At whatever time the sinner repents of his iniquity, from the moment he confesses his fault with compunction, at once the absolution of the priest, mingling as it were with the tears of this penitent soul a drop of the blood of Jesus Christ, effaces, destroys, annihilates the stain with which it was covered, restores to it its life and first beauty, the treasure of its former merits and the faculty of acquiring new ones, its titles and rights to the eternal inheritance. The touch of sacramental virtue produces all these marvels in a moment.

But if this soul, by the sentence of the priest, is put back in possession of the funds and fruits of its first inheritance, it is not thereby discharged of all its debts and all its obligations. It is, if you will, a king returned to his dominions, but on whom enormous sums to pay weigh for a long time. The reconciled sinner, by the very fact of his reconciliation, has no longer to dread the eternal punishment; but the justice of God awaits ample satisfactions from him, and will exact them in this world or in the other. Hence for the repentant sinner the necessity of good works and expiatory actions in this life, or the prospect of sufferings and sorrows in the place of expiation after death.

Now, my brethren, these are the debts of which the jubilee offers and proposes to us a general discharge. And in what way? Here it is. There exists in the Church a rich treasure of superabundant satisfactions. All the actions, all the virtues, all the sufferings of men constituted in grace have two properties and contain two distinct values, that of merit and that of satisfaction. Merit always obtains its personal reward by an increase of glory in the heavens. Satisfaction, on the contrary, profits him from whom it proceeds only until the payment of his debt; and his personal debt once discharged, the whole satisfactory value of his works can no longer be of use to him. Will it be lost for that? No. It will enter the common treasure of the Church, an immense treasure, since it contains the satisfactions of Jesus Christ and of His holy Mother, who, having never sinned, had no satisfaction to make for themselves, and the superabundant satisfactions of a great number of the elect, who have suffered and expiated on earth far beyond their own needs.

Now, says Saint Thomas, the Angel of the School, the goods of the community must be distributed to individuals according to the will of him who presides over the community; the head of the Christian community is the sovereign Pontiff: it therefore belongs to him to apply the satisfactory values of which he has the dispensation, and to make them profit those who have need of them, for the reasons, in the measure, and on the conditions of which he is the judge. It belongs to him, as steward of the Church, and by virtue of the communion of saints, to cover the debts of his needy children with the superabundant riches of the other members of the communion; it belongs to him finally to accept and ratify, in the name of God and as vicar of Jesus Christ, this discharge by way of exchange and substitution. Those are the Catholic principles on this matter.

O you then, my brethren, who have long offended God, who have reserved for Him only the last years of your life; all of you, whoever you may be, who have contracted grave and rigorous obligations toward divine justice (and it is not necessary to have lived long for that): ah! my dearly beloved brethren, do not permit the grace of the jubilee to be vain and fruitless for you. Alas! you have so great a horror of suffering, so little courage and good will for works of penance; there is so great a danger that you will never discharge yourselves by yourselves toward God’s justice here below, and that the imprescriptible rights of this justice will pursue you in the other life: profit then, ah! profit by the remission that is offered you, hasten to pay out of the treasure of the Church what it would cost you so dear to pay out of your own substance. No other indulgence is so precious, so easy, so reassuring as that of the jubilee, because none is more authentic, more authorised, more universal. Believe me, my very dear brother: perhaps heaven will never again make you so many advances. Obey the counsel of the wise man, who recommends that you not let slip a happy occasion: *Ne defrauderis a die bono,* and not lose the least part of a precious gift: *Et particula boni doni non te praetereat.* [Defraud not thyself of the good day, and let not the part of a good gift overpass thee. (Ecclus. 14:14.)]

Courage then, my brethren, courage! And since there will never be offered you more motives united to return at last to God, dispute no more with His grace, resist no more the inspiration, stifle no more the voice of your conscience, grieve no more the Angel who watches beside you. Let those who had forgotten the road to the temple find it again, because it is the jubilee: *Quia jubilaeus est.* Let those who had been little sensible until now to the needs of their indigent brothers hasten to offer them a charitable alms, because it is the jubilee: *Quia jubilaeus est.* Let the sacred tribunals be besieged as it were by sinners; they will find there a mercy greater still than ordinary, because it is the jubilee: *Quia jubilaeus est.* Let the table of the feast be surrounded by pressing and numerous guests; He who makes Himself our food there will be more generous and tender still than usual, because it is the jubilee: *Quia jubilaeus est.*

Finally, my brethren, may the priests of the Lord be consoled, the blessed Angels rejoice, the gates of heaven dilate, the thrones and crowns destined for the elect multiply! May holy Church taste more peace on earth, God receive more glory in the heavens, because it is the jubilee: *Quia jubilaeus est.* That is what I wish, with the blessing of Monseigneur (1).[10]

Translator's notes

1. Quotations from Pius IX's encyclical (*Qui pluribus*, 9 November 1846) are as the preacher gives them, apparently from a French translation, and have not been collated with the Latin. The statesman cited is not named.

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[1] The epigraph is given in the Vulgate text (*possessionem*). The French rendering printed beneath the Latin is "Vous sonnerez de la trompette…", as above.

[2] The jubilee of 1850, the second half of the century.

[3] Gregory XVI reigned 1831–46 and died 1 June 1846. "The most powerful and implacable of persecutors" is probably Tsar Nicholas I, whom Gregory received in December 1845; the preacher does not name him. "Shores conquered by the sword of France" is probably Algeria.

[4] The reference is to Pius IX's encyclical *Qui pluribus* (9 November 1846), to which the preacher now turns.

[5] Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* 7 ("Stoicum et Platonicum et dialecticum christianismum").

[6] The amnesty for political prisoners of the Papal States, 16 July 1846.

[7] (1) *Moniteur*, 5 February 1847. (Note by M. l'abbé Pie.) The speaker is not named.

[8] The figure "two hundred million" is as printed.

[9] Attributed to Bernard by the preacher; not traced.

[10] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 26, n° 36. (Editor's note.) The sheet signature "XXXVI" dropped.

n° 36. Sermon for Palm Sunday, Preached in the Cathedral of Chartres: On the Paschal Duty

Palm Sunday, 28 March 1847.[1]

Venit autem dies… in qua necesse erat occidi Pascha. [And the day of the Unleavened Bread came, on which it was necessary that the Pasch should be killed. (Luke 22:7.)][2]

My Lord, since that memorable night in which the children of Israel, in conformity with the orders of the Lord, had stained the door of their houses with the blood of the victim, and thus withdrawn their families from the sword of the destroying angel, the celebration of the Pasch never ceased to be for this people the most sacred and inviolable of all observances. On the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month of the year, each family immolated a lamb, and took the mysterious meal according to the rites prescribed by God Himself. And when the child asked his father the meaning of this religious worship: *Quae est ista religio?* [What is this service? (Exod. 12:26.)] the father answered his son: It is the worship of the Pasch: *Haec est religio Phase,* [This is the rite of the Phase (cf. Exod. 12:27)] a living memorial, as it were, of the passing of the Lord, when, striking from door to door the first-born of the Egyptians, He spared our houses reddened with the blood of the lamb. This language was repeated from generation to generation. And to the last days of the expiring synagogue, never did the sons of the Hebrews have the thought of omitting a duty so fundamental and so necessary.

Jesus Christ Himself had submitted to it faithfully during the days of His mortal life: *Venit autem dies in qua necesse erat occidi Pascha:* The day came, the evangelist tells us, on which it was necessary to immolate the Pasch. But this time the ancient Pasch was to give place to another Pasch. At the end of the mystic meal the figure was transformed into reality; the truly necessary immolation, the immolation awaited for forty centuries, came to put an end to the symbolic immolation of the lamb, and to give birth to a new Pasch. *Etenim Pascha nostrum immolatus est Christus:* For Christ, who is our Pasch, is sacrificed, writes Saint Paul to the Corinthians; *itaque epulemur, non in fermento veteri:* [Therefore let us feast, not with the old leaven (1 Cor. 5:7–8)] therefore let us take part, no longer in the Jewish feast, but in the new feast, the feast of the Angels.

And for eighteen consecutive centuries the return of this memorable anniversary brought back for all Christian families the necessary and invariably observed practice of the celebration of the paschal duty. For eighteen centuries, in the bosom of Christendom, every house that was not that of a Jew or a heretic showed, on the day of the paschal solemnity, its door stained and as it were reddened with the blood of the new covenant.

For eighteen centuries I hear the first doctors and sacred orators set out to the faithful the dispositions with which the Pasch must be celebrated; I hear them thunder against the hypocrisy or the vice that go to sit at the divine table, but I scarcely ever hear them complain that the Pasch is neglected. And when I read the last pages of our history, I recognise in them that the same sophists who attacked all the evangelical truths in their writings could not, in their conduct, evade the fulfilment of a duty which generally received ideas and practices rendered inevitable; and even for these men, who were assuredly a thousand times unworthy of it, every year the day came when it was necessary to observe the Pasch, so powerful, universal, uncontested was the empire of the Christian law in this respect: *Venit autem dies in qua necesse erat occidi Pascha.*

Alas! my brethren, what then has happened for the last half-century? Has the Pasch celebrated from Moses to Jesus Christ, and from Jesus Christ to our fathers, been abolished, and has God replaced it with something else? I seek, in the bosom of our cities and above all of our countrysides, the families all of whose members are stained with the blood of the Lamb, and I often travel a long road before finding one. And when, of the eight hundred parishes of this diocese, there were scarcely eight or ten where were found one, sometimes two, at most three or four Christians unfaithful to the paschal duty, as one may be convinced by reading the last visitations made by the archdeacons before our days of troubles, whose minutes are deposited in the public archives of our province, sometimes today the number of men observing the precept does not equal that of the violators at that period.

Once more, what then has happened since? What is the motive of this so sudden revolution in the habits of a great people? What new religion has been substituted for the ancient religion of the Pasch: *Quae est ista religio?* Has our country, retrograding toward the Synagogue, become Jewish? But at least it would celebrate the figurative Pasch which the rare children of Israel dispersed over the earth still celebrate. Has our country, abjuring Rome to attach itself to Luther or Calvin, become heretical? But at least it would celebrate the commemorative supper that the members of all evangelical confessions celebrate, with diverse beliefs. *Quae est ista religio?* What is the religion of this country that no longer knows the Pasch?

I could not tell you, my brethren; but what I wish to establish today is that the Catholic religion has not changed, and that one cannot truly be counted among its children if one does not put oneself in a position to accomplish the paschal duty. A thousand thoughts press in my mind, a thousand striking reflections would ask to be presented. Keeping to the most fundamental considerations and at the same time the most practical, I shall try: 1st, to show you the general reasons on which the obligation of the paschal duty rests; 2nd, to answer the particular reasons for which you think you must still neglect or defer the fulfilment of this duty.

Holy Virgin, may my voice at this moment become your organ; let it be not I but you who address to this people these words that you alone have the right to say: Come, my children, eat the bread I have given you, drink the wine I have prepared for you! None of them, O Mary, will resist this invitation of a mother. *Ave Maria.*

I. Before speaking of the necessity of the paschal duty, it is important, my brethren, to recall what it consists in. The paschal duty contains in itself and directly the precept of holy communion, indirectly and as a necessary preparation the precept of confession, of which it does not enter into my subject to speak today. But what is communion? I wish before all to tell you in a few words.

More than eighteen hundred years ago, one evening, the eve of His death, Jesus, having loved His own who were in the world, gave them a new and precious testimony of His love that He had reserved for these last

moments. Having gathered them in a banqueting hall, and having celebrated with them the Pasch of the Jews, He opened His heart to them and told them that He had long and keenly desired to eat this Pasch with them before dying. And He took bread in His hands, He blessed it, and said to His disciples: Take and eat, this is my body. Then in like manner He took the chalice of wine, He blessed it, and said to His disciples: Take and drink, this is my blood. As often as you shall do these things (and you will do them until the end of the ages), do them in remembrance of me.

Jesus Christ had spoken. And, remarks Saint John Chrysostom, just as that word of the Creator God: Increase and multiply, and fill the earth, pronounced once only at the beginning of things, communicated to the nature of man a virtue of inexhaustible fecundity for his reproduction to the end of the ages; so this word of the Saviour God: This is my body, uttered once only, has continued its effect from that moment to our own days, and has created in the Church a perfect sacrifice which will be renewed until the last of days.[3]

Behold, my brethren, behold the great prodigy of divine mercy! behold the incomparable treasure of the Church! behold the astonishing privilege of the Christian! Sublime dogma, admirable sacrament, which consummates the closest of all unions between God and His creature, and which consequently constitutes the most intimate religion that can be imagined. For, my brethren, this word religion, by its grammatical signification, expresses the bond which links heaven to earth, man to God. Now see how by communion heaven stoops down to earth, and earth rises up to heaven. The eternal Word, essentially united to the Father and the Holy Spirit, unites Himself in Jesus Christ to human nature, and unites Himself so perfectly that, according to the thought of Saint Augustine commented by Saint Thomas, the holy humanity is more united to the Word than the Word is united to the Father and the Holy Spirit, because the Word is in the Father and in the Spirit only by unity of nature, whereas the humanity belongs to the Word by unity of person.[4]

It is true that the Word united Himself in this fashion only to the humanity of the Saviour and not to human nature in all its individuals. But see how this union pursues its way to us, and how the Eucharist extends the consequences of the Incarnation. In the womb of Mary the Word is incarnate, unites Himself to a body and a soul. Then the Word made flesh unites Himself spiritually by grace, bodily and physically by communion, to all human creatures. So that the whole of humanity, deified in its head, which is the holy humanity of Christ, by the hypostatic union, is deified in the rest of its members by the sacramental union of the Eucharist: *O altitudo!* [O the depth! (Rom. 11:33)] O height! O depth!

Lord, ah! when Your Father, ceasing to restrain Your generous impulses, permitted You at last to take flight toward the earth, oh! how with great strides You marched, from heaven into the virginal womb, from the virginal womb into the stable, from the stable onto the cross, from the cross to the tabernacle, from the tabernacle into our heart! and there, taking us, seizing us by the depth of our being, You have no rest until You rise again triumphant into the heavens, like the eagle that carries off its prey. Ah! let I know not what troubled minds of our century renew the old pagan system of pantheism; for my part, I know for man only one deification, only one participation of the substance of the divine nature: that which results from the Catholic dogma of communion and the Eucharistic mystery.

Hear Saint Paul speaking to Christians: *Omnia vestra sunt, vos autem Christi, Christus autem Dei.* [All things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. (1 Cor. 3:22–23.)] All the rest of creation is man's; man appropriates it either by eating, or by sight, or by the other senses: *Omnia vestra sunt.* Man, in whom all the rest is gathered, is incorporated into Jesus Christ by communion: *Omnia vestra sunt, vos autem Christi.* And Christ belongs to God, by unity of person with the Word who is eternally in the bosom of the Father: *Omnia vestra sunt, vos autem Christi, Christus autem Dei.* God, in the Incarnation, borrowed from our nature flesh and blood: *Participavit carni et sanguini.* [He hath been made partaker of flesh and blood. (Heb. 2:14.)] But God borrows only to repay with interest; and this flesh and blood He gives back to us in communion, and gives them back to us supernaturalised, divinised. He borrowed from us our flesh and our blood to make Himself man, He who was God; and in giving us back His flesh and His blood, He makes

gods of us who were men; this is the language of Saint Augustine. Once more, O height, O depth! *O altitudo, o profundum!*

And there are found men who dare to laugh at communion, who dare to laugh at the paschal duty! It is impossible, my brethren, to descend from the heights where this mystery has just placed us, to answer the attacks of ignorance or the railleries of hatred. But happily what I have undertaken is not to prove and justify the Eucharistic dogma before those who despise it; what I have undertaken is to show that this so sublime mystery, as I have just set it out in a few words, ought not to be for Christians only an object of speculative admiration, but that they should gather its fruits by a practical participation.

Follow attentively what I have to say on this matter, my brethren. I should be inconsolable at discouraging some of those who hear me, men of good will, who have already taken some steps of return toward God, but who have not yet the strength to finish the rest of the road. God forbid that, by a hasty exigency armed with the axiom “All or nothing”, I should seek to make them believe that, if they do not arrive at the goal from this moment, it was not worth the trouble of setting out. God would not approve so blind a zeal, and He will preserve me from letting myself be carried away by it. But let me be permitted to express first the absolute truth, reserving to examine presently the particular motives which may justify certain delays.

It is to you then that I speak, my very dear brother, to you who have long since been undeceived of the lying promises of worldly philosophy, and have returned to the beliefs of your first age; it is to you that I speak, my very dear sister, to you who fulfil carefully all your duties as wife, as mother of a family, and who make profession of not being unbelieving. You listen with benevolence to the divine word. You tell me that I am quite right to attack the vices of this century, to combat public corruption, to announce the so consoling truths of Christianity; for your part, you often raise your mind and heart toward Him who created you, you come on holy days to pray to God in His temple, you respect His laws, you instruct your children in His doctrines.

But when I speak to you of the paschal duty, while admiring with me the beauty of the Eucharistic dogma, while envying the lot of those who can sit at this feast in which you always recall with happiness having once taken part, you ask me whether this useful, laudable practice is so indispensable that nothing can supply for it, whether it is the object of so rigorous a precept that, in fulfilling all the rest of religion, you cannot have confidence to live and die in the grace of God. You await with anxiety my answer to this question; you believe in my inflexible exactness in matters of dogma, and in my condescension as great as possible in things that are only optional. You are disposed to accept as definitive the solution I am about to give you on this point, where you have always wished to flatter yourself that a certain compromise was not impossible.

My brother, my sister, I am forced to tell you: there is neither in holy Scripture, nor in the whole Catholic tradition, anything, absolutely nothing that can tranquillise the conscience of whoever observes otherwise the whole law but does not fulfil the paschal duty. You might have turned over one after another all the pages of the sacred books, of the writings of the holy doctors, or of the acts of councils, you would not find in them a syllable in favour of this Christianity emancipated from the Pasch. On the contrary, these divine volumes, which are the sources of faith, contain clear, precise texts, placed above all discussion, which establish irrefragably the necessity of the paschal duty. For example, my very dear brother, you believe in holy Scripture: well then, I refer here to your own interpretation; here are the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.” In good faith, my brethren, is it possible to subtilise on this text? In principle then, the necessity of Eucharistic communion, a necessity such that without this food the soul cannot live here below the life of grace, nor consequently hope for the life of glory, is clearly enunciated by Our Lord Jesus Christ.[5]

Now, when and how many times is it necessary to feed on the body and blood of Jesus Christ? Here intervenes the precept of the Church, which is only the application of the divine precept itself. You believe in the authority of the Church, of the Church expressing herself in the conditions of her most sovereign

infallibility, that is, by the organ of the ecumenical councils. Well then, I refer here again to your own interpretation; here is the language of the whole Church assembled at Trent: “If anyone denies that all and each of the faithful who have reached the age of discretion are bound to communicate every year at least once at Easter, let him be anathema.”[6]

Finally, do you want some certain proof in tradition that the Eucharist, from the first times, has always been considered obligatory, and inseparable from the Christian profession? The holy martyr Ignatius, writing to the Christians of Smyrna, will say to them, speaking of certain heretics: *Considerate eos qui aliam opinionem tuentur contra gratiam Jesu Christi, quae ad nos venit; ab Eucharistia abstinent:* [Consider those who hold another opinion against the grace of Jesus Christ which has come to us; they abstain from the Eucharist.] Consider those who maintain against the grace of Jesus Christ a doctrine other than that which has come to us; they abstain from the Eucharist. Thus, in the language of this pontiff, disciple of the Apostles, to abstain from the Eucharist is a heretical fact; therefore to approach the Eucharist is a Catholic necessity.[7]

Do you want some other testimony? The apologist Saint Justin, wishing to give the emperor Antoninus Pius the exact definition of Christians, says almost nothing else of them than that Christians are men who assemble on certain days for the consecration and eating of the Eucharistic bread. Now, according to the rules of logic (and certainly this philosopher was a logician), a doctrine can be defined only by the expression of some truly fundamental and necessary point of that doctrine. Therefore, if the Christian is a man who communicates, communion is indispensable for every Christian. Do you want another testimony still?[8]

I could multiply them; but hear Saint John Chrysostom: Whoever is not a disciple of Jesus Christ, very well, let him abstain from the Pasch; but whoever is a disciple, it is a duty for him to approach, for Jesus said: I make my Pasch with my disciples: *Cum discipulis, inquit, meis facio Pascha.* [With my disciples, he says, I keep the Pasch. (Matt. 26:18.)] Whoever you are then, who are not uselessly a Christian, *quisquis non inaniter christianus* (1), know it: he who calls you into His Church calls you to His banquet: *Ad epulum te vocat, qui ad Ecclesiam te vocat.*[9]

And so, my brethren, if you consult one after another all the monuments of ecclesiastical tradition, if you interrogate all Christian countries and centuries concerning the true doctrine they professed: *Quae est ista religio?* all will answer you that the religion of Jesus Christ is the religion of the Pasch: *Haec est religio Phase;* and consequently that if you dream of a Christianity in which one is exempt from the paschal duty, a new Christianity must be invented, a Christianity apart from that which has been practised since the origin.

To all these proofs of authority it would be easy for me, my brethren, to add others very powerful, which would come out of your reason and your experience.

You, for example, my brother, who believe in the Eucharist, since you assist with respect every Sunday at the adorable sacrifice; tell me, what other aim could Jesus Christ propose in changing the bread into His body, if not to become our food? This divine Saviour said one day to His disciples: You are the light of the world; now light is not made to be hidden, but to be set on a candlestick from which it enlightens all eyes. You are the salt of the earth; now why is salt made, if not to be mingled with the things it is to season and preserve?

Borrowing from Our Lord Jesus Christ His simple and peremptory argument, I say to you yourselves, my brethren: the divine Saviour willed to remain among us under the form, under the species and appearances of bread; now what is the natural destination of bread, if not to be eaten? If Jesus Christ had wished only to be adored by the Christian, He would have manifested His presence in some manner more fitted to inspire respect: for example, a mysterious cloud, like that of the Holy of Holies, would have hovered above the tabernacle of the new covenant. But no; Jesus Christ chose the form of bread, therefore He willed to be the food of the Christian. You adore the Eucharistic bread at the altar: you are right, my brethren; but you must do more: bread profits truly only him who incorporates it by eating. From the dogma of Eucharistic

transubstantiation flows naturally and necessarily the precept of Eucharistic communion.

Finally, permit me to invoke experience here. Do you not hear it said everywhere that for half a century all the bonds of family and society have loosened, that love has been extinguished in hearts, and that the law of the modern world is a law of selfishness? Now does not a truly remarkable reflection present itself to your minds? It is that this isolation and cooling of men date among us from the same epoch that has been marked by the desertion of the Eucharistic table. What wonder? Must not love die where the food of love is no longer recognised?

Yes, I affirm it, my brethren, one of the greatest evils of this society to which we belong is the divorce it has made with the Eucharist. Let people speak as much as they will of equality, of fraternity; there is under the sun only one banqueting hall and one table where the poor man comes to sit beside the rich: this banqueting hall is the Catholic temple, this table is the Eucharistic altar. All of us, said Saint Paul, do we not make one body, we who eat of the same bread and drink of the same cup? My brethren, the solvent that has been deposited in the bosom of the present generation will yield only to this all-powerful remedy. Let kings and subjects, the great and the small, magistrates and artisans all celebrate at once the paschal banquet; on leaving the temple, instead of factions and rivals, there will be found only one family and brothers. The bond, as sweet as it is strong, which could draw near and unite all men, is the Eucharistic bond, is the religion of the Pasch: *Haec est religio Phase.*

I have demonstrated to you its necessity by proofs of every kind; I wish to answer the particular reasons for which you think you can still neglect or defer the fulfilment of this duty: the object of the second part.

II. It is true, several of you say to me, the necessity of the paschal duty is established by convincing proofs. But it is not possible for us, for particular reasons, to fulfil this duty yet.

I, says this one to me, I find that in fact the Gospel is formal on the necessity of receiving the Eucharist; if I had the happiness to believe in the Gospel, I should be consistent, and I would communicate. But I have not yet a sufficient faith, and I should fear, in communicating, to obey other considerations than that of a solid and settled conviction; before all, I wish to do nothing that is not true and sincere; I beg you therefore to be good enough to let me abstain again this year: *Rogo te, habe me excusatum.* [I pray thee, hold me excused. (Luke 14:18.)]

I, says that one to me, I am perfectly convinced of the existence and the obligation of the Eucharistic precept. But the fulfilment of this duty imposes and entails the necessity of fulfilling the whole Christian law and morality; now the evangelical code is too perfect for me. I do not yet feel the strength to put my life in harmony with this so holy action; before all, I wish to undertake nothing that is not serious and sustained. I beg you therefore to be good enough to let me abstain again this year: *Rogo te, habe me excusatum.*

I, says a third to me, I feel all the need I have of the Eucharist, all the advantages I should draw from it. But I live amid business, amid torments; I shall wait until I have more leisure, I want to have my head freer and my heart less sad; I beg you therefore to be good enough to let me abstain again this year: *Rogo te, habe me excusatum.*

And so, my brethren, for one motive or another, a great number of men neglect or defer answering the call of the father of the family: *Et coeperunt omnes simul excusare.* [And they began all at once to make excuse. (Luke 14:18.)] Let us examine these motives. You must have noticed, my brethren, that I have objected to myself here only those which rest on fairly grave foundations, and which are in a way honourable to those who allege them.

I come first to you, my brother, who still defer fulfilling the paschal duty because you do not find yourself enlightened enough by the lights of faith, convinced enough of the truth of religion. Certainly I praise you for wishing to do nothing that is not true and sincere. It is not worthy of a man of honour to fulfil a religious

practice in which he does not believe; this action, which would not be inspired by an intimate and true persuasion, would not be agreeable to God, and would not reconcile you with yourself. If it is true then that you make an effort to arrive at the light, that you ask God for the gift of faith, that you come to hear the divine word with the sincere desire to be enlightened, and that nevertheless the grace of God, which has its times and moments, has not acted sufficiently on your mind, has not dissipated your doubts, strengthened in you the fundamental principles; if it is so, my brother, continue to examine, to pray; not only do I accept your excuse in the name of God, but I would not allow you to sit at His table; my words, my counsels, my prayers are at your disposal, but God keep me from hastening His work and forestalling His grace. I should be an unfaithful dispenser of the holy mysteries if I called you to share in them before the time.

Nevertheless, my very dear brother, I have a question to put to you. Tell me, you believed in religion in your childhood; you still believed in it in your early youth. Then you possessed a sort of evidence and inner sense of the truth present in you; no kind of doubt came to combat the reign of faith in your intelligence. Now, what it matters to me to know is what solid and peremptory consideration, what reasoned examination of the principles of Christian doctrine, what objection unknown until now to so many great geniuses constantly submitted to the teaching of the Church, led you to doubt and unbelief. What it matters to me to know is on what sort of reefs your faith was shipwrecked. If it is instruction and study that have robbed you of it, it is by a deeper instruction, a deeper study that you must recover it. But if it should be otherwise; if your unbelief dates not from a first reasoning but from a first fault; if it had its source not in your learned researches but in your shameful weaknesses; if you began to doubt your duties only since you renounced fulfilling them; in other words, if you have taken your inclinations for lights and your passions for principles; if for you, as for so many others, it is the senses that mastered the intelligence, the flesh that vanquished the spirit: ah! my brother, I do not fear to tell you, you deceive yourself in imagining that truth will make its way amid discussions and controversies. Why ask of science the solution of a difficulty that is not in the understanding? It is your passions that have closed your eyes: abjure your passions, and your eyes will reopen of themselves (1). Have the courage to confess, and you will believe in religion; at each sin you accuse, one of your difficulties will vanish. Then approach the altar with a purified heart, and Jesus Christ, who is not only the food but also the light of souls, will finish dissipating the clouds that might still hover over your intelligence. In a word, you wait to believe in order to practise, you tell me; and I tell you that, on the contrary, you lack only to practise in order to believe. Your strongest, your only objection against religion is that you have been far from it for a long time. Draw near it again, and no objection will remain to you, unless it be the one I spoke of second.

I believe in the existence and the obligation of the Eucharistic precept, some Christians tell us; but the fulfilment of this duty supposes the firm resolution to conform one’s life henceforth to the principles of the Christian law. Now this law, this morality is, at present at least, beyond my strength. I do not wish then to begin what I could not pursue. My brother, you also I praise for wishing to undertake nothing that is not serious and sustained. But you are in an error that I must combat. You think the observance of the whole Christian law almost impracticable; in this you are mistaken. We know in the world, in the same conditions in which you are placed, true Christians, men who think and act as Christians everywhere and always; now what these men can do, you can, as much as they, more than some.

Ah! my people, the Lord said of old, the precept I give you today is not above you, it is not placed at a great distance: *Non supra te est, neque procul positum;* [It is not above thee, nor far off from thee (Deut. 30:11)] there is no need to go up to heaven, nor to cross the seas, to conform to it. I who am the author of your nature, who know your heart since I formed it, when I give you a rule, I put it on your level, I adapt it to your strength: *In ore tuo et in corde tuo, ut facias illud.* [It is in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayst do it. (Deut. 30:14.)] Jesus Christ goes further in the new covenant, and Himself assures us that His law is a yoke, but a sweet yoke; that it is a burden, but a light burden. And when you say to me, my very dear brother, that

you do not feel the strength to fulfil the whole evangelical law and that on this account you will still defer approaching the holy Eucharist, ah! you doubtless forget that after you have eaten this heavenly manna you will be changed into another man. You reason about what you will be after communion from what you are now. My very dear brother, you reason ill; you reason like the sick man whose faculties have all been weakened, dulled, by a fever or prolonged languor, and who firmly believes that all foods will be for ever devoid of savour for him, that he will no longer recover the suppleness and agility of his limbs, the strength and energy of his constitution.

Ah! my brother, feed on the bread which Scripture calls the bread of the strong, go to the sources of grace, receive in your heart Him who is the very author of grace, and there will be nothing impossible for you. To live as a Christian, I must be made over, you say. Well! answers Bossuet, if you must be made over, is it that you are ignorant that the grace of God reforms us and regenerates us into new men? The Apostles, naturally trembling and timid, are made invincible by this grace. Augustine, in the greatest vigour of his age, professes the continence which ten days before he proclaimed impossible. And Saint Cyprian will tell you, in his admirable letter to Donatus, that since he yielded to the solicitations of grace, he sees every day his doubts fly away, what was sealed to his eyes open before him, what was obscure become luminous, what seemed to him impossible become sweet and practicable: *Geri posse quod impossibile videbatur* (1). [That it can be done which seemed impossible.] Therefore, my brother, you excuse yourself from communicating because you think the Christian life above your strength. And I say to you: communicate, and the marvel that was worked in Cyprian will be worked in you; you will be able after communion to do what seemed before impossible.[10]

Finally, there are others who still excuse themselves from fulfilling the paschal duty because their life is too busy, too tormented; they defer communicating until they have more leisure and tranquillity. Ah! what an error is yours, my very dear brother, my very dear sister! What! you wait to be no longer in agitation before going to draw from the source of peace, to be sheltered from sorrow before asking of the bread of delights its ineffable consolations. But, my brother, my sister, it is precisely because there remains for you still a long road to travel, a road strewn with anxieties and griefs, that you must rise and eat this bread, alone capable of giving you strength enough to reach the end of the course: *Surge, et comede; grandis enim restat adhuc via.* [Arise and eat; for thou hast yet a great way to go. (3 Kings 19:7.)] Do you not know then that it is above all for the weak, the sad, the cast down that God was inspired by His love to institute this sacrament which is the strength and the joy of souls? Do you not know that the afflictions of the present life take a wholly different character according as he who endures them is one of the faithful or one of the deserters of the holy table?

Do you see those sombre and melancholy men, for whom life is an insupportable burden, whose heart is like a desert, like a land without water, who know not on which side to seek a rampart against the misfortune that is bent on pursuing them? *Ab Eucharistia abstinent,* they abstain from the Eucharist. Do you see that wife, that mother of a family, who bends as it were under the weight of sorrow, who drags a discouraged existence, who knows no longer in what friendly heart to pour out her griefs, who grows embittered and despairs in her isolation, and for whom the charms of society have become insupportable torments? *Ab Eucharistia abstinent,* she abstains from the Eucharist. It has been remarked, my brethren, that our century is a century of sadness and ennui. On the frontispiece of this sad and bored society, Saint Ignatius the martyr could engrave his accusing inscription: *Ab Eucharistia abstinent;* here they abstain from the Eucharist.

What is she, on the contrary, that virgin, that wife, that Christian mother, who, in this same desert of life, of life with its most afflicting and painful realities, hovers as it were above difficulties and sorrows, bears in her features serenity and peace, seems even to overflow with delights? *Quae est ista quae ascendit de deserto, deliciis affluens?* [Who is she that goeth up from the desert, flowing with delights? (Cant. 8:5.)] Ah! when all the others drag themselves heavily along the arid path of life, this one walks more unburdened and more joyous because she leans upon the Beloved: *Innixa super dilectum.* [Leaning upon her beloved. (Cant. 8:5.)]

Yes, the Eucharist is the whole explanation of this mystery. This table is for her a rampart against the thousand tribulations that besiege her: *Mensam adversus eos qui tribulant me.* [A table against them that afflict me. (Ps. 22:5.)] O you then who wait, you tell me, to be more tranquil, more happy in order to communicate, I say to you: Communicate, and you will find the repose and consolation for which you sigh.

O all of you here present, my very dear and beloved brethren, believe my word; for each of you the epoch, the day has come when it is necessary to celebrate the Pasch: a necessity founded on the rigorous precept of Jesus Christ and of His Church; a necessity justified by the present state of your soul, which hungers and thirsts for the Eucharist: *Venit autem dies in qua necesse erat occidi Pascha.* Others more fervent, more happy than you, have the happiness of approaching often the Eucharistic banquet; religion regards them with love and encourages their fervour. You, my brother, you, my sister, I know your position; religion does not ask of you a more frequent practice, which is only of counsel; she will be satisfied if you are faithful to the annual precept. She knows that on this condition your salvation is possible. Ah! I beg you, my brother, my sister, this year return to the rule. Jesus Christ wishes to celebrate this Pasch with you; come, come sit with us at His table. For some days, the word of God which you have heard, the graces attached to this holy time of the jubilee and of Lent have awakened holy thoughts in your soul.

This paschal solemnity, said Saint Augustine, restores fervour even to those who have been negligent the rest of the year: *Ipsa festivitas ferventiores efficit eos qui caetero anno pigriores sunt.* At the approach of this feast all hearts are drawn from their sleep. In some it is the joys of a good conscience, in others the remorse of iniquity that does not permit them to sleep: *Istum Christianus vigor, illum diabolicus livor nequaquam dormire in hac celebritate permittit.* [One, Christian vigour; another, devilish envy, permits not to sleep at this celebration.] Those who are not yet in any way Christians experience at this season sorrow and shame; those who are already near to faith and inclined toward Jesus Christ feel themselves more strongly shaken. For one reason or another the whole human race feels the impressions of the feast of Easter, and there is no one who is a stranger to it: *Diversis causis excitat eos ista solemnitas.*[11]

My brethren, what Saint Augustine said has not ceased to be verified. At the approach of the Pasch there is a recrudescence of religious feeling in all men, whoever they are; none of them can escape it; grace stirs and works even those it does not conquer and subjugate. You, my brother, you, my sister, will yield to this grace. If you have not done so yet, from tomorrow you will begin the work of your reconciliation, and on Easter Day we shall have the joy of all eating the same Eucharistic bread. Celebrated in the family, this banquet will be the sweeter.

There remains a word for me to say to you. Nourished with the bread of Angels, you will not forget, my dearly beloved brethren, to contribute to nourish with earthly bread the living members of Jesus Christ, who are this year exposed to so much misery. After sitting with them at the table of a God, you will see to it that the table of your brothers is not deprived of the most necessary substances, while yours would be served with abundance. You will remember in particular, my brethren, to succour Jesus Christ Himself in the persons of the aspirants to His priesthood. Give, give the bread of the body to those who one day must give to the peoples the bread of the soul, the bread of the Eucharist, and the bread of doctrine without which there is no society possible here below. On the offering you will make on Easter Day depends the existence of our ecclesiastical houses for the rest of this calamitous year. Their doors will be closed in a month if the faithful of this city, of this diocese, do not come to our aid. But we have learned, my brethren, to count on your inexhaustible charity. The venerable pontiff whom God has made the father and pastor of your souls often pours into our heart the sentiment of gratitude and ever-growing admiration which so many noble and disinterested souls of this city of Chartres make him conceive, who have never failed to answer his appeal with a generosity that has always exceeded his expectation. You will give him, I trust, my brethren, this new testimony of your respect and your filial love.[12]

Finally, my brethren, for my part I have a debt to discharge: it is to thank you for the universal eagerness, the benevolent attention with which you came to hear, not my word but the word of God, during the course of this holy forty days. There exists not, in human vocabularies, an expression that can render the happiness I should feel in thinking I have been able to be of some use to your souls. May I find again around the Holy Table those of my brethren whom it was so sweet for me to see around this sacred pulpit! May I henceforth, during all their life and all mine, eat each year this bread of the elect, drink with them this divine liquor, until it is given us to eat this same bread, to drink this same wine in the kingdom of our Father! That is the grace I wish you, with the blessing of Monseigneur (1).[13]

Translator's notes

1. The citations from Chrysostom, Augustine, Ignatius, Justin, Cyprian and Bossuet are as the preacher gives them; not collated.

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[1] (1) According to marginal indications on the manuscript, this sermon was preached by Mgr Pie, in whole or in part, on Palm Sunday or on Easter Day, at Châtellerault, at Poitiers, at Niort, etc., in 1863, 1876 and 1878. (Editor's note.) Palm Sunday in 1847 fell on 28 March.

[2] The verse is Luke 22:7.

[3] Chrysostom, *De proditione Judae*, hom. 1; the sense is as the preacher gives it; I have not collated the wording.

[4] The thought is of Augustine as commented by Aquinas, as the preacher gives it; I have not traced the passage. Pie's formulation seems unusually strong, but it is as printed.

[5] John 6:54.

[6] Cf. Council of Trent, session 13, canon 9, and the Fourth Lateran Council, canon 21 ("Omnis utriusque sexus"). The wording in Trent's canon is as the preacher gives it in French; I have not collated it.

[7] Ignatius, *To the Smyrnaeans* 6–7 (Latin version as the preacher gives it).

[8] Justin, *First Apology* 65–67, as the preacher summarises it.

[9] (1) Blessed Augustine: On the disciples of Emmaus. (Note by M. l'abbé Pie.) The Chrysostom and Augustine attributions are as the preacher gives them; not traced.

[10] (1) Bossuet: *Vaines excuses des pécheurs et de la passion.* (Note by M. l'abbé Pie.) The earlier "(1)" after "vos yeux se rouvriront d'eux-mêmes" has its own note: "Mgr Fayet, Lenten pastoral letter, 1844. (Note by M. l'abbé Pie.)"; that is Mgr Fayet, bishop of Orléans.

[11] Augustine; the wording is as the preacher gives it (it appears to be from one of his Easter sermons); not traced.

[12] The year 1847 was one of severe dearth in France; "this calamitous year" and "the ecclesiastical houses" (the diocesan seminaries) are as in the text.

[13] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 25, n° 37. (Editor's note.)

n° 37. Sermon Preached at the Visitation of Chartres on the Occasion of the Second Centenary of the Foundation of This Monastery

Saturday, 17 April 1847.[1]

In lenitate ipsius sanctum fecit illum. [He sanctified him in his meekness. (Ecclus. 45:4 Vulg.)][2]

Of all conquests, my Sisters, there are none more glorious here below than those that it is given to win over time, because of all enemies it is the most inevitable and the most terrible. It is not only purely human works that it sets itself to overthrow; it is not enough for it to destroy kingdoms and empires, to abase one after another all the powers of the earth, to transform flourishing cities into uncultivated solitudes, and to set its tooth on the richest monuments of the arts to turn them into ruins that attest its triumph. No, there is for time a prey, and, if I may so speak, a more sacred pasture which it above all ambitions to reach and devour. Doubtless, the divine work has nothing to fear from its efforts. What the Eternal has founded, the accumulated waves of centuries and ages seek in vain to shake. No more than the gates of hell shall the assaults of time ever prevail against the Church of Jesus Christ. But there are works that partake at once of the hand of God and the hand of man, and which it has pleased heaven not to defend for ever against the hand

of time.

In the bosom of the Church of Jesus Christ, of this imperishable Church which will live again in eternity, the divine breath gives birth, from generation to generation, by the fecund action of the Saints and heroes of Christianity, to precious institutions, destined to extend and develop the reign of the Saviour, to procure more glory to God in the heavens and more peace to men on earth. Ordinarily these creations of Christian genius borrow from the Church, their Mother, something of her privilege, and there is granted them here below a stability and a duration which contrast with the mobility and brevity of all human things.

However, it does not enter into the providential plan of Jesus Christ that any of the auxiliary societies of the Church can claim with certainty the promises of immortality made only to the great Christian community, and to its centre, which is the see of Peter. And often have been seen the most magnificent and holiest institutions, after they had satisfied the necessity of the times and places in which they arose, weaken, even disappear entirely and give place to new institutions adapted to new needs. In running through the annals of the Church, how often, at the sight of a great splendour that dies out, of the work of a Saint that degenerates and perishes, of a broad furrow of light whose trace, long brilliant, is buried in darkness; how often, I say, do our eyes let fall a tear and our heart contract with sorrow! Yes, my Sisters; and in particular when I read the voluminous history of the religious Orders of every kind that have made the ornament of Christianity since its origin, I am forced to recognise that it has been given to time to prevail with more or less empire against all that is not the Church herself; and one would say that in each century it consoles itself and avenges itself by some great destruction for the resistance that the principal and necessary work of Jesus Christ opposes to it.

O holy Church of my God, to you alone belongs immortality! That is why you alone do not even think of celebrating your duration. Tranquil queen of the centuries, you see them flow by as others see the days flow by. But our works, even the most perfect, even those that touch you most nearly, have the number of their years marked by heaven: that is why they must reckon with time; that is why each century elapsed can be celebrated by them as a victory won (1).[3]

My Sisters, it is a solemnity of this kind that gathers us at the foot of these altars. Your establishment in this city completes today its second century. One may say that your holy Order already occupies a great space in the history of the Christian Church. It is only eighteen hundred years since the divine Saviour shed His blood for men; and two hundred years of existence have already been granted to your Institute.

To contribute worthily to the celebration of this second centenary, I should have wished to prepare with more leisure a discourse in keeping with the occasion. You will have from me only a simple and familiar talk, in which I shall recall to this pious audience: 1st, what the spirit of the Order of the Visitation is; 2nd, what this Order has been for two centuries in the city of Chartres.

Holy Virgin, it is the history of the Daughters of the Visitation of Holy Mary Immaculate that I wish to relate. Help me in this design. *Ave Maria.*

I. Whoever is familiar with the Holy Scriptures cannot be ignorant that God has spread in the supernatural world still more variety than in the world of nature. It is the property of grace to put on with equal facility a thousand different forms (1). The Holy Spirit represents it to us as one and manifold at once, agile, penetrating, and endowed with a suppleness and activity that nothing equals (2). All the colours ground under its hand and applied by its brush are so many delicate shades distinguished from one another. Its rays, reflected in souls, produce there effects and plays of light so diversified that in the heaven of glory there is not a single star that does not differ from another star in brightness (3). And if each of the Saints receives a proper and special gift, each also has his employment and ministry, and imprints on his work a particular seal (4). Hence that rich garment of the Church which the king-prophet described, a garment of which the gold of charity makes the whole ground, but whose embroidery is infinitely varied: *In vestitu deaurato circumdata*

varietate (5).[4]

Now, my Sisters, on this robe of the Spouse I seek what colour, what shade is affected by the ornament your pious Institute came to bring to it. And a voice from on high answers me by this word that defines and characterises it: *In lenitate ipsius sanctum fecit illum:* Meekness is the distinctive feature of its holiness.

It is not assuredly that strength is lacking to it: one cannot be holy without being strong, for the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and none but courageous souls take it by force (1). Holiness and strength: they are one. But the Order of the Visitation is strength in meekness: *In lenitate ipsius sanctum fecit illum.* To found this Order, God raised up the sweetest of men, Saint Francis de Sales: a strong and generous soul, an elevated and sublime intelligence, but at the same time the most tender, sensitive, loving heart, the most gracious, fine, delicate mind. From him come the ground and essence of your rules. Then, to this man God joined the strong woman par excellence, the blessed Chantal: a character naturally firm, but in whom nature was penetrated by the most abundant unction of grace and of divine sweetness. It is she who developed, commented, applied to the most minute circumstances the sacred code bequeathed by your blessed Father. Virile strength tempered by a truly maternal sweetness; feminine sweetness sustained by a strength not ordinary to that sex: such are the elements from whose combination Providence brought forth the Visitation of Our Lady: *Et in lenitate ipsius sanctum fecit illum.*[5]

Your incomparable founder, my Sisters, often explained himself on this point. It is in his writings that one must seek the proper trait and the characteristic sign of your Institute. Now here is his thought on this subject. All congregations, besides their general end which is union with God by the perfect fulfilment of the evangelical precepts and counsels, have moreover a particular spirit with which each tends in its own way toward this perfection.

For example, other is the spirit of the sons of Saint Benedict, other the spirit of the sons of Saint Dominic: a life of psalmody and study for the one, a life of movement and preaching for the other.

What then will be the spirit of the Visitation? Will it not be a spirit of prayer, meditation, zeal, work? Yes, doubtless, the Daughters of Holy Mary must have all these virtues. But nevertheless that is not the proper and distinctive spirit of the Visitation. “I have always judged,” says this great servant of God, “that the particular spirit of the Visitation is a spirit of great meekness (1).” Meekness, in the natural and human sense of the expression; meekness in the supernatural and Christian sense of the evangelical beatitude. Let us explain.[6]

From the solitaries of the Thebaid to the days of Saint Francis de Sales, the first condition of the ascetic life had always consisted in the rigours of bodily mortification. There was almost no middle between the extreme austerities of the cloister and the dissipated life of the world. Now this holy bishop, raised up by God in these last ages to extend the practice of the most perfect virtues, had in this regard a double mission to fulfil.

“On the one hand,” I shall say with his great admirer Bossuet, “he brought the interior life back into the midst of the world which believed it relegated solely to cloisters; and, without having disguised it to make it agreeable to the eyes of worldlings, while preserving its natural habit, one may say that in the state in which he represents it to us, in that golden book called the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, the most austere religious can recognise it, and the most fastidious courtier, if he does not give it his affection, cannot refuse it his esteem (1).”[7]

On the other hand, knowing nevertheless that perfection is infinitely easier in the cloister, he wished to render the cloister accessible to that multitude of souls whom it has pleased God to unite to a weak body incapable of austerities. Although mortifications are good in themselves, he said to your first Sisters, “they would not be good among you, since it would be against your rules.” “The spirit of the Visitation,” he added, “is so much a spirit of meekness, that whoever should wish to introduce more austerities than there are would destroy the Visitation at that very instant, since it would be acting against the end for which it was erected,

which is to receive girls and widows who have not either the strength or the attraction to enter more austere religious orders (2)."[8]

The spirit of the Visitation in this regard, my Sisters, I do not believe was ever better understood and better expressed than by an illustrious member of the Society of Jesus, who wrote to Saint Francis de Sales in these terms: "You have, my Lord, begun to erect a seminary of special imitators of the benignity of the Word made man, who rejected no one; you have found this knot and this secret in your Visitation, which is not too sweet for the strong nor too harsh for the weak… You say as Our Lord said with regard to little children: Suffer these weak, these infirm, these sickly to come unto me… Alas! who would not pity a virgin who, having the lamp burning in her hand, full of good oil, cannot nevertheless enter a cloister to celebrate there the nuptials of the Lamb, for want of having shoulders strong enough to bear a robe woven of camel's hair like that of the great Baptist, nor a stomach robust enough to fast half the year and digest nothing but roots?… For my part, I believe your dear daughters will be the true spouses of Jesus Christ. One finds in your design the poverty and mortifications of Bethlehem with the reasonable comforts of Nazareth, the solitude of the desert with the sweet conversation of Bethany (1)."[9]

Yes, my Christian brethren, this spirit of meekness and temperament, this spirit that distinguished Jesus Christ from His austere forerunner, is precisely what makes as it were the outward seal of the holiness of this Order: *In lenitate ipsius sanctum fecit illum.*

And the more intimate seal of the virtue of these daughters of Saint Francis de Sales is this same spirit of meekness, which presides over the regime of their life, is spread in the depth of their soul, and shows itself in all their words and all their works. The Visitation is the outpouring of that ineffable beatitude proclaimed by Our Lord Jesus Christ: *Beati mites!* Blessed are the meek (2)! The whole novitiate of the Visitation consists in hearing this word of the Saviour: Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart (3). To labour, in the spirit of meekness and humility, to make oneself a worthy spouse of the Saviour, is to be a perfect religious of the Visitation. She is the most advanced in the ways of perfection proper to this Order who is the most animated by the spirit of meekness: *Docebit mites vias suas* (4). [He will teach the meek his ways.] She possesses the kind of mind most apt for command who is the most filled with holy mansuetude. There the hands are intelligent in governing only in proportion to innocence, that is, to the sweet benignity of the heart: *Pavit eos in innocentia cordis sui, et in intellectibus manuum suarum deduxit eos* (1). [He fed them in the innocence of his heart, and conducted them by the skilfulness of his hands.][10]

Once more, Christians who hear me, such is the proper spirit and particular character of the Visitation. And do not suppose that this spirit of meekness must assign to this Institute an inferior rank among the other religious and monastic societies. No: it is an error of the world to confound meekness with weakness; as if there were not, in the soul of man, one and the same faculty that loves and wills, and as if the invincible energy of love that constitutes the virtue of meekness were incompatible with the energy of will that constitutes the virtue of Christian fortitude and the aptitude for great things. Without speaking of the ever exemplary regularity, the abnegation and spiritual renunciation, the interior and perfect life that have never ceased to flourish there, I shall say, my brethren, that the Order of the Visitation has brought out in our midst, since its establishment, this truth taught by Scripture, namely that mansuetude opens and enlightens the understanding, and that a mind inclined to meekness is essentially a judicious mind: *Diriget mansuetos in judicio* (2). [He will guide the mild in judgment.][11]

When specious errors, when sects that imposed on the vulgar by their apparent austerity, insinuated themselves into the most reformed houses, the daughters of Saint Francis de Sales were seen, almost without exception, not only to avoid but to repel, combat, unmask the false prophets. What do I say? it is at the Visitation that the Church and the State alike have borrowed women as eminent for discernment of persons and knowledge of the human heart as for their sweet and conciliating piety, to appease the storms that had risen in the bosom of several celebrated abbeys. A great number of congregations, applied to diverse

vocations, owe either their existence or their reform to the intervention of the Religious of Holy Mary.

And while Jansenist influences, in the last century, spread by education in the mind and heart of a part of young women, and threatened to make French ladies lose that benign and playful grace, that exquisite and delicate ease which makes, in the eyes of all peoples, the ornament of their politeness and their piety, the daughters of the holy pontiff of Geneva were seen to give themselves ardently to the teaching which their founder had not forbidden them; and it was in great part their care that preserved to the higher ranks of our society the inimitable character of its women: a character, alas! which is effaced and disappears every day since the century has wished to compose it with its own maxims alone.

Do not say then that the Visitation, because it makes profession of condescension and meekness, is a subaltern Order in the Church. I affirm that Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Chantal are two of the most distinguished minds that have shone on earth. And I affirm with the same certainty that the work of Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Chantal is always worthy of its founders. Yes, for whoever knows the Order of the Visitation in its past and its present, it is an established thing that the temper of mind of Saint Chantal, with her judicious and at once indulgent glance, is hereditary and permanent there, just as the strong and merciful doctrines of Saint Francis de Sales are always living and practised there.

O Jesus, You Yourself wished to make known to men Your predilection for this blessed family begotten by two souls so perfect and so pure! Francis de Sales had given as arms and escutcheon to his nascent Institute Your divine Heart and the heart of Your mother. And behold, O Jesus, reserving for the whole Church a new effusion of Your graces and Your love by the cult of these sacred Hearts, it is to a daughter of Francis de Sales that You deign to manifest this important secret. My dearly beloved brethren, to the Order of the Visitation France will owe her salvation. For it is the common belief that the devotion to the adorable Heart of Jesus, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, was given us in these last times as a preservative against the thunderbolts of heaven, and as a fountain of miracles and conversions. And this devotion to the Sacred Hearts, it is through the Visitation that God gave it to France and to the Church. Yes, Jesus, she is loved by Your Heart, this little Society by which You revealed Your Heart to us. And what You love, O Jesus, we wish to love with You.[12]

I have spoken to you, my brethren, of the Order of the Visitation in general; I wish to add a few words in particular concerning this house, which is about to begin its third century in this city of Chartres. Let us rest an instant.

II. If it is true that the religious Orders are so many florets of the crown of the Church, it must be admitted that this diocese of Chartres, which has always been considered one of the most distinguished portions of the flock of Jesus Christ, has not lacked this kind of lustre and glory which the children of the cloister and the virgins of solitude can bring to a particular Church. In the very bosom of the city monasteries were opened early by the disciples of Saint Benedict, Saint Augustine, Saint Dominic, Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Teresa, Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Vincent de Paul. The history of each of these holy institutions is full of interest. And for us, who believe that outward and public facts are only the envelope and the bark of the history of the invisible world of grace; for us, who are convinced that nothing is accomplished on earth except in view of the elect, it is in the obscure and unknown annals of these monastic asylums that we shall seek the true philosophy and the secret thought of God concerning the men and events of this world.

Yes, my brethren, apart from that collection of memoirs which science gathers to serve the history of a country and a nation, political memoirs, diplomatic memoirs, municipal memoirs, family memoirs, there exist other memoirs of incontestable value, in which are met with, in their true physiognomy, portraits and characters on which all other documents present no details so faithful, nor pictures so artless. In the history of a religious foundation you see the spirit of a whole city and a whole epoch taking shape, the spirit of public power and the spirit of private persons.

In our days history makes profession of descending to intimate details, of surprising, so to speak, men in the abandon of private life; it believes, and in this it is not mistaken, that man reveals himself more surely by a single trait stolen from his domestic existence than by a thousand fine words uttered for effect and in public; in a word, it seeks the hero elsewhere than on the stage. Now from this point of view I dare say that the lines traced by poor religious of Carmel and of the Visitation have furnished me, on Louis XIV, on Maria Theresa of Austria, on Marie Leszczynska, on several princes of the house of Orléans, on the bourgeoisie and people of Chartres, on the bishops of this city for two centuries, on the spirit of the chapter and the clergy, on the holy souls who never ceased to be found in each of these diverse social positions, lights and insights that one would seek in vain elsewhere.

God has always had, He will always have, His elect. The works of the elect are for the most part obscure and secret; history registers them the less the more truly they were done according to the Christian spirit; and as they deserve a more distinguished place in the annals of heaven, they escape more entirely the annals of earth. But these same elect who hide themselves and withdraw from all other eyes, a powerful attraction, a need of drawing near impels them from time to time toward these holy dwellings, which are here below like the vestibules of the heaven to which they aspire.

Would you then know who in the clergy, who in the nobility and bourgeoisie, who among the poor people practised in an eminent way the duties of the ecclesiastical or Christian life? would you know what contingent of virtues each of these conditions furnished to the Church? Go, go and ask the annals of Carmel or of the Visitation. The saints have almost always lived in relation with saints. Infallibly, in these memoirs hastily written, besides the account of the virtues of the cloister, you will find, on several persons of the world, ingenuous accounts, happy revelations: unhoped-for discoveries, which will put you in a way in the anticipated confidence of a part of the virtues which the supreme Judge reserves to draw from their obscurity and publish solemnly in the broad daylight of manifestations.

These are some of the riches buried in this treasure that I would at this moment, my brethren, pass before your eyes. For the rest, it is not in some mysterious and inaccessible charter that this so rare information is hidden. Since the day of our troubles it is for the most part deposited, inventoried in the public archives of the province, and marked with the seal of the State which has made it enter the national domain. Time fails me, and I can offer you only a simple summary of what I have seen and what I have read.

Francis de Sales and Jeanne de Chantal had themselves laid, as it were, the first stone of the Visitation of Chartres. In that celebrated journey he made from Paris to Tours, where an illustrious princess summoned him, a journey in which he received everywhere on his passage such great honours, the pious bishop, careful to omit no pilgrimage to the sanctuaries of Mary, took care to stop in our city, and to visit there the Virgin who was calling, at that epoch above all of our history, France and almost the whole world before her altars. Saint Francis de Sales, in one of his letters, speaks of his host at Chartres (1), without telling us who he was. The episcopal see being then vacant, the holy pontiff stayed, according to the tradition of this monastery, in a public inn (2). And, according to the same tradition, he pronounced there this prophetic word: “This house is suitable, and would suit well an establishment of our dear daughters.”[13]

Thirty years later this inn was to become the convent of the Visitation. On another day Francis de Sales was returning by Orléans; he went to visit the Carmelites of that city, and as he gave them all his blessing, wishing that they might make happy progress in the perfection of Carmel, he excepted from this wish two young novices, to whom he predicted that they would one day be of the number of his spiritual daughters. Thirty years later, the elder of these two sisters was the first superior of the Visitation of Chartres. And one may say that in the person of this young girl this house of Chartres had been prophetically blessed: a blessing that Francis de Sales renewed from the bosom of glory by several authentic apparitions, and which spread over the whole monastery with celestial odours and perfumes, accompanied by cures and other miraculous signs.

As for Saint Chantal, she had a tender devotion to all the relics of the Blessed Virgin, and had the consolation of venerating several times at Chartres the holy Tunic of that immaculate Mother. For that reason an establishment of her Order in this city smiled to her heart; and we see in her letters what wishes she formed and what pains she took in this regard (1). A striking miracle, obtained in this monastery on the very day when the saint was placed on the altars, proved that from the height of heaven she had not forgotten her affection for the establishment so much desired.[14]

Who would believe it, my brethren, if one did not know that the demon and the world have always been what they are? To found the Visitation of Chartres, it was necessary to negotiate for twenty-five years, to struggle against the worst passions, to employ all the resources of diplomacy and all the credit of royal power. Chartres, from the beginning of the seventeenth century, was not what is imagined. At that epoch, as today, more than today doubtless, the multitude was gentle, peaceable, Christian, friend of good, and full of sympathy for religious works. At that epoch, still more than today, the nobility of the province, gathered in the city for half the year, gave there the example of the finest virtues, of the most sincere faith, of the most generous charity. At that epoch finally, as today, a numerous and ancient bourgeoisie, which made the foundation of native society, distinguished itself by its benevolence, its politeness, its religion; and, if not at first sight, at least after some explanations, it never failed to take the side of good.

But at that epoch also, it must be said, what is today agreed to call the *pays légal* was far from representing the true spirit of the city: the aldermanry had fallen into the hands of recently enriched commerce; families newly come out of the countryside had arrived at affairs and occupied the functions of the consulate. The true Chartres was content to think well at home and in secret; and the apparent Chartres, the official and deliberating Chartres, thought ill aloud at the town hall, and showed itself already touched by I know not what precursory wind of the storms that were to burst upon our heads in the following century.

So it was, O pious Valençay, who had been intimately bound with the bishop of Geneva, and who, in the name and as secretary of the clergy of France, alone had the privilege of affixing your name as bishop of Chartres to the petition for the canonisation of your holy friend; so it was that you had the grief of leaving your see without having been able to triumph over the inflexible opposition of the aldermen (1). So it was, O blessed Chantal, that you saw fail the powerful intervention of her who then bore with éclat a name that another was soon to render for ever famous, that noble Maintenon, who received only outrages in exchange for her advances, and that you went down into the tomb, I am mistaken, that you went up to heaven without seeing your intentions crowned with success.[15]

But what the Saints have desired on earth never fails to be accomplished. In vain the tocsin sounds for three hours, as if it were an enemy invasion (1); in vain the opposition starts from certain ranks of the sanctuary itself. God is not long in turning hearts. He makes use of the authority of princes and governors (2). And the day comes when this little family at last casts its cradle into the bosom of the city of Mary, a cradle which grows amid contradictions and consolations at once (3). What the city permitted (4), what the bishop authorised (5), what the illustrious family of Louville founded, the young king takes under his protection This hand, which was one day to make Europe tremble, affixes its august signature to the letters patent of foundation: “For,” says the monarch of fourteen, “we wish to contribute to so laudable a design, we have great affection for this Order for the progress it makes in piety and exemplary life, and we count that this monastery will continue to pray for the prosperity and preservation of our person, the repose and tranquillity of our State (6).”[16]

Thirty-three years later, Teresa of Austria having come with her royal husband to thank the Virgin of Chartres, of whom the prince had asked his cure in a long and cruel illness, and the illustrious queen having wished to breathe herself the supernatural perfumes of the Salesian monastery and to ascertain the miracles that Saint Francis de Sales had recently wrought there: rejoiced by these accounts, the monarch, with a firm hand, traced his name a second time on a royal ordinance, which we still possess like the first, and granted

new benefits to the daughters of the bishop of Geneva (1).[17]

But what are these favours beside those with which the divine Spouse never ceased to fill these sacred virgins? Ah! how many names inscribed in the diptychs of this monastery I could recall here! This house is the house of angels. For a century I see there, through the zeal of the most eminent priests of the Church of Chartres, and of that illustrious body which gave bishops to all parts of France, the finest virtues perpetuated, and rejoicing the heart of the pontiffs of the city, whose eyes are always open on this garden of the spouses of Jesus Christ.

The orator who spoke, a hundred years ago today, in the pulpit of this monastery, had reason to raise to heaven his accents of gratitude for an entire century of virtues worthy of the primitive Church; and I understand that he asked for the following century only the reproduction of the same prodigies of holiness. Alas! it was written from all eternity that this second century should occupy a great and sad page in history. The horizon was growing darker; the tempest was about to burst, but with it were to burst forth new virtues:

Come, come, commissaries of the nation. Your pity for these unfortunate captives of the cloister, for these unhappy victims of superstition, will at last be able to hold out to them a friendly and succouring hand. Let them appear before you; they have only one word to say, and the doors will open for them… But what have I seen? what have I heard? What marvel will not the triple minute of your official report, deposited in the archives of the nation, make known to the most distant posterity? This prison counts thirty-nine victims condemned to perpetual captivity. You interrogate them one after another. Thirty-nine times you hear this answer, accented with a sweetness mingled with dignity: “I form but one wish, to live and die in this holy house. So be it” (1). Angels of heaven, strike up, strike up songs of triumph. And you, O envoys of the people, if you have not lost all sensibility, shed tears of admiration; go, and carry back to your masters what you have witnessed.[18]

But there was on the altars a little gold and silver consecrated to the worship of God; the nation seizes it, and soon after drives the holy recluses from their dear retreat. The great king had written at the foot of the letters of foundation of the monastery: “And that it may be a firm and stable thing for ever, we have caused our seal to be put to these presents.” Alas! how could the royal seal have protected these sacred virgins against popular fury, when the royal Majesty itself was marching to the scaffold!… “Son of Saint Louis, ascend to heaven!”… Daughters of Francis de Sales, ascend to heaven! The rigours of exile, the grief they felt at the ills of the Church, made the greatest number perish. Driven from the maternal nest, these innocent doves flew away one after another each day toward the celestial azure…[19]

Happily the tempest subsided before all had taken their flight. On the still smoking ashes of the revolutionary volcano these diligent bees cast a new swarm which Providence was not long in enlarging. Soon a venerable priest (1) put his hand to the edifice. All resources failed him; what matter? “Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Chantal,” he said, “want a house of their Order at Chartres: well then, they will pay for it.” It was paid for in effect out of the funds of Providence. For twenty years it sheltered within its walls the most fervent and sweetest piety. But this enclosure had become too narrow; heaven moreover had other designs on it, and was to make of it the theatre of the most heroic charity of which the city of Chartres has ever been the object (2).[20]

O adorable Heart of Jesus, O Immaculate Heart of Mary, I have learned from Holy Scripture that the secrets of the great king must be kept hidden. I shall not say then by what signal graces You rewarded the engagements and vows formed before Your altars. I shall say only that, by one of those encounters of Providence which are not without mystery, this smiling site of the valley where the daughters of Francis de Sales were transferred as if by enchantment is precisely the place where the holy bishop Valençay would have established them from the first, if his resolution had not been opposed (3). This coincidence was arranged by the Lord, and there is something admirable in it in our eyes.[21]

On the day when our illustrious pontiff, the Athanasius of our century (1), whom such dear memories and so close a kinship fill with affection for your Institute, came to bless and consecrate your new dwelling, we heard him, my Sisters, borrow from Isaiah his poetic language (2): “Zion, enlarge the place of your tent, stretch out as far as you can the skins that cover your tabernacles; make the cords longer, and the stakes firmly fixed.” O my dear Sisters, what remains for me but to associate myself with these wishes, and to ask of God for your whole Order, and for this house of Chartres in particular, new centuries like the first?[22]

Lord, I shall cry, not on account of Abraham Your beloved, Isaac Your servant, and Israel Your holy one (3), but on account of Your beloved Francis de Sales, the founder of this Order, on account of Your servant Françoise de Chantal, his coadjutrix, on account of Vincent de Paul, Your Saint, the first father of this congregation in France; yes, on account of this trinity of Saints; but what do I say? O Jesus, on account of Yourself, on account of Your Heart and the Heart of Your mother, protect, protect always, sustain, enlarge the Visitation of Holy Mary. May Your blessings accompany it everywhere, even upon the mountains of Lebanon where they gather, amid the sweetest memories consecrated by the Holy Books, the bitterest sorrows; and even in the bosom of Russia where they are exposed to such cruel persecutions; and even to the banks of the rivers and lakes of the new world where they have also borne their tent.[23]

And you, O my very dear Sisters, daughters of the Visitation of Chartres, walk in the footsteps of those who have gone before you; continue to be like them, and to be like yourselves. Revive in you every day the principal spirit of your vocation, which is a spirit of meekness. Welcome eagerly the infirm, the weak, and form them, instruct them in the spirit of mansuetude. We wish to breathe, when we come among you, only the true and incontestable perfume of Saint Francis de Sales; we wish to find there only his doctrines, without addition, without diminution, without deviation to right or left, but with all the fullness and integrity of their inimitable grace and perfect truth.

It must be that your piety, your conversation, your whole being present themselves to our eyes as the living reproduction of his writings. We should complain loudly if we found that a single page of his incomparable books showed itself discoloured, insipid, denatured in your conduct and your government. But no: Francis de Sales lives always, speaks always in your midst. That is why we regard you, we love you, as one of the fairest portions of the flock entrusted to us by the Pastor of souls.

And you, my Christian brethren, you, Christian ladies, mingle your wishes with mine for the prosperity of this house during the new century which begins for it. Ah! how we all have an interest that the voice of prayer should not be stifled on earth! Who can presage what the future contains? Do not the flanks of the cloud seem to conceal new tempests?… But, I trust, prayer will avert them. Better days are reserved for the generation that is preparing. We shall owe them to the sighs of the spouses of Jesus Christ. Let us love then, let us succour according to our feeble resources those by whom salvation will come to us. The supreme Judge will treat us with more indulgence if we have favoured on earth His people of predilection. Whoever had done service to Israel obtained grace from the God of Israel. So be it (1).[24]

Translator’s notes

1. The quotations from Francis de Sales, Bossuet and Fr Ignace-Armand are as the preacher gives them. The historical material (Valençay, Louville, the 1790 official visit, Barentin, Coussay, Clausel de Montals) is rendered as printed; I have not verified the dates beyond what is noted.

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[1] All the footnotes of this sermon are by M. l’abbé Pie, as the first of them states.

[2] Ecclus. 45:4.

[3] (1) Cf. *Œuvres épiscopales*, t. IV, p. 70 and following.

[4] (1) 1 Pet. 4:10. (2) Wisd. 7:22. (3) 1 Cor. 15:41. (4) Eph. 4:12 [as printed; cf. 4:11–12]. (5) Ps. 44:10 [Vulg.: “clothed in gold, surrounded with variety”].

[5] (1) Matt. 11:12.

[6] (1) *Entretiens* of Saint Francis de Sales.

[7] (1) Bossuet, *Panégyrique de saint François de Sales.*

[8] (2) *Entretiens* of Saint Francis de Sales.

[9] (1) Father Ignace-Armand, letter cited by Mother de Chaugy, *Mémoires sur la vie de sainte Chantal*, 2nd part.

[10] (2) Matt. 5:4 [5:4 in the Vulgate order]. (3) Matt. 11:29. (4) Ps. 24:9. (1) Ps. 77:72.

[11] (2) Ps. 24:9.

[12] The reference is to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque (Paray-le-Monial, 1673–75), a Visitandine. The preacher does not name her.

[13] (1) *Lettres aux gens du monde*, letter 71, Blaise edition. (2) The inn of the Levrette, near the rue de Beauvais. Francis de Sales' journey to Tours was in 1619.

[14] (1) Letter 157, t. 1, p. 314, Blaise edition, Paris, 1833.

[15] (1) Léonor d'Estampes de Valençay, bishop of Chartres, transferred to Reims in 1641. The Maintenon "name that another was soon to render famous" alludes to Françoise d'Aubigné, marquise de Maintenon (Louis XIV's wife), who took the name later; the preacher does not say so.

[16] Notes to the preceding paragraph: (1) Opposition of the Prior of Sainte-Foi, 5 April 1647; of the Chapter and the Aldermen, 8 May 1650. (2) Letter of Gaston d'Orléans to the Aldermen, 5 July 1650; minutes of the entry of M. de la Frette, governor, 22 January 1647. (3) 17 April 1647. (4) Register of the Town Hall, 22 January 1647. (5) Consent of M. de Lescot, 26 March 1647; of the Chapter, 26 January. (6) Letters patent given at Saumur, 9 March 1652, countersigned Phelippeaux.

[17] (1) Letters patent given at Fontainebleau, October 1685, countersigned Colbert. "Teresa of Austria" is Maria Theresa of Spain, queen of Louis XIV (the preacher's name is as printed).

[18] (1) 21 June 1790, and following days.

[19] Louis XVI's scaffold, 21 January 1793; the words "Fils de saint Louis, montez au ciel" are traditionally attributed to the abbé Edgeworth. The preacher does not name them.

[20] (1) M. Barentin, superior of the Sisters of Saint-Paul and of the Visitation, died canon of Chartres. (2) The house of the rue Avedan, acquired in 1834 by the Baroness de Coussay, who maintains in it a hundred poor children.

[21] (3) The small estate of Vaujoly, parish of Saint-Maurice, at the entrance of the Bavre des Prés, offered in 1625 by Mme Morin, a bourgeoise.

[22] (1) Mgr Clausel de Montals, whose sister was superior of the Visitation of Reims. He blessed the house on 17 April 1834. (2) Isa. 54:2. Clausel de Montals was bishop of Chartres 1824–57.

[23] (3) Dan. 3:35 [Prayer of Azariah]. The note continues: "Everywhere and always, may this Order manifest to the world its holiness by its meekness: *Et in lenitate ipsius sanctum fecit illum.*" The Visitandines in Russia (Polish Russia) were then suppressed; the preacher is alluding to this.

[24] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 26, n° 38. (Editor's note.)

n° 38. Address for a Prize-Giving at the Ladies of the Sacred Hearts, Châteaudun

24 August 1847.

My dear children, amid the agitations that shake the world, it is with a quite particular happiness that we come to attend this sweet and restful solemnity, to take part in your pure and artless joys, in the joys of your parents full of happy presage.

The crowns placed here before your eyes, my children, are at once the conquest and the encouragement of work; and work is the guarantee and the means of all virtue, as of all success and all happiness. Work supposes pain; it is not without noble sweat that one cultivates the field of the intelligence. Study is a learned labour, and labour means fatigue. If we go back to the origin of things, we see that man, created to act and to keep, was condemned to work only as a chastisement. But it must also be said that, even in punishing, the divine hand was a paternal hand. Under an apparent evil it hid a thousand goods; the thorn of work covered a flower, and happiness was placed beside the torment. Yes, the child of man has need of work: to undergo his chastisement is a necessity for him, necessity of his material existence, but necessity also of his moral existence. There is not a being possessed of a reason and a heart who is not placed in the rigorous alternative of work or vice, of virtue by work or of vice by inaction.

That is why, my children, religion loves to mingle in the triumphs awarded to work; these joyous solemnities are, in her eyes, sacred solemnities. She knows that the victories of the mind prepare and facilitate the victories of the heart; she ambitions to see knowledge grow in young souls at the same time and in the same measure as piety, its companion and almost inseparable sister. She knows that ignorance, without being by itself vice, leads to it almost always, and that a little cultivated mind offers fewer resources for virtue. Therefore she often repeats to you that the great duty of your age is the love of study and application to work. My children, and if work is a duty, is it not also a pleasure? Already you have made the happy experience. Young as you are, have not the first roots of knowledge, I mean that which suits your age and your sex, distilled some sweetness for you? The day when, quite proud of having overcome first difficulties, you began to render your thought exactly, correctly, is it not true that an inexpressible joy penetrated your soul? What pride to know how to speak, to know how to write, with elegance, justness and precision, our magnificent French language, that language which all civilised peoples covet, are proud to know and to speak! My children, one day, I hope, Providence reserves to itself to make you know, in the various positions it destines you for, all the exquisite and delicate sentiments of nature, all the sweetnesses that the fulfilment of duty prepares for pure existences here below; well, I dare tell you, the sweetest transports the future reserves for you will perhaps never equal the vivacity of that first thrill, of those first emotions that you owe to study, and of which you will eternally preserve the memory.

Ah! may these amiable and peaceful contests of knowledge long still occupy your young age! Soon enough, my children, you will be transported into the midst of the noisy pleasures of the world or the serious interests of affairs; your new and intact souls know as yet only artless amusements without remorse. From the day the world should cast trouble upon this candour, and slip into this happy carelessness the restless vanities of success or the still more restless torments of rivalry, from then on study would become tedious to you, your youth would be over, the culture of your mind would be aborted, and a life escorted by cares and weighed down with griefs would begin for you.

My children, never has the education of women been more important than in this century, because, if there is a truth certain to all judicious minds, it is that the society of which we form part will be regenerated by mothers of families. You are therefore, my children, the principal hope of our country. It must be said, and this remark is, from the social point of view, very consoling, that never has the education of women been entrusted among any people to hands more intelligent, more devoted, more maternal, than it is in our days in our midst. It is to the religious influence of the mistresses formed by the Church that our fatherland will be indebted for having preserved to its women that benign and playful grace, that gentle and natural politeness, that easy and distinguished elocution, that inimitable character which makes the ornament of French ladies in the eyes of all peoples; a character, alas! which threatens to fade wherever the century has wished to compose it with its own maxims alone.

Courage then, young children. Answer always, as you have done till now, the desires of your parents, the eager care, the so lively and enlightened devotion of your mistresses; give yourselves ardently, in your young years, to this work which bears such sweet fruits, and which prepares more brilliant successes. We shall render account to God for all He has given us; intelligence is a domain we must make valuable; we are not its owners but its tenants; it is not permitted us to let its cultivation sleep. A day of solemn distribution will come: there we shall all take part in that great competition; and there also, I dare say, there will be crowns only for work. I do not wish here to slip down the slope and end by making a sermon. But believe me, my children, virtue is so essentially dependent on work that the crown of ivy is not without relation to the crown of eternity, and that hands accustomed to carry off palms on earth will be more skilful to reap the palms of Heaven (1).[1]

[1] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 27, n° 43. (Editor's note.)

n° 39. First Conference on the Creed

Preached on the second Sunday of Advent in the cathedral of Chartres, 5 December 1847.[1]

Credo. [I believe.]

My Lord, on mounting again today into this pulpit, raised in the very face of the altars where the God of truth resides, and on kneeling at your feet that Jesus Christ, by the sign of your consecrated hand, may Himself open my mouth and confer on my voice the accent of His divine authority, my soul is moved by a deeper impression than usual, and the ministry I come to fulfil is raised and enlarged more than ever in my eyes. Because the fairest and holiest of all God's gifts, I mean human speech, has never been more profaned than in our days; because, subjecting it to a sacrilegious adultery, the men of this century have turned it from truth and applied it to falsehoods and chimeras, ah! how much strength and joy does the priest not find in the thought that he did not give himself, but received from the Lord Jesus this august ministry of the word, and that he does not exercise it to clothe in more or less specious forms brilliant errors or at most generous dreams, but to teach and develop the proven and incontestable doctrine whose deposit has been entrusted to him by heaven.

To all these deliriums of the human mind, to all these vaporous and uncertain theories that a mad pride begets and multiplies each day, I come, my brethren, to oppose with confidence the age-old and invariable dogmas of the Christian faith. And because the new apostles dissimulate, by all the prestige of the art of speaking well, the crime and weakness of their guilty and ridiculous systems, and the skill of their discourses, if it does not make their paradoxes accepted, succeeds at least in casting scepticism into minds, and keeping them on guard against the seductions of speech, which one persuades oneself is powerless to prove anything certain, precisely because one has heard it applied with some success to demonstrating evident falsehoods; because of that, my brethren, I shall renounce employing even the most legitimate resources of eloquence, and in the simplest and least adorned language I shall explain to you the principal points of that confession of faith that we call the Apostles' Creed.

Saint John Chrysostom said that the Apostles' Creed is "like a place of refuge, an asylum, a sure harbour," where the intelligence goes to rest from all its wanderings, disengage itself from all its illusions, fortify itself against new surprises. My brethren, if this was true in the time of Saint John Chrysostom, how much more in our days! Which of us has not experienced how little faithful human science is in holding what it promises? Which of us, weary of knowing, does not understand the usefulness of believing? Happy, my brethren, if the disappointments of reason inspire us to cast ourselves back into the arms of faith![2]

But it is above all to you, faithful Christians, that my words will be addressed during this series of instructions that I begin today, and which will end when it shall please God, in whose hands we have placed ourselves, we and all our words. It is the titles of your faith whose importance and richness I shall unfold to you. And from today I wish to reveal to you yourselves the whole extent of a happiness you perhaps do not sufficiently appreciate; I wish to tell you how grateful you ought to be toward the Church of Jesus Christ, which puts in your hands a Creed, a profession of faith. Men need a creed; and we alone, properly speaking, can flatter ourselves with possessing one. The greatest of all misfortunes would be to be led astray by a deceptive creed, and we alone have the privilege of possessing the creed that is certainly and completely true. In other words, necessity of a creed; excellence of the Christian creed: this is the whole object and division of this conference.

Holy Virgin, ah! while the faith brought to men by your divine Son suffers from the world and hell such lamentable assaults that our eyes are filled with tears and our heart cannot contain its grief, help me to maintain, to strengthen in the heart of my brethren this perfect belief which distinguishes them from all who have abandoned the truth. *Ave Maria.*

I. What is a Christian? He is one who, being baptised, believes and professes the Christian doctrine. So speaks the catechism. The Christian therefore has a creed, he believes and professes a doctrine. And since the day of his baptism he has not ceased for an instant to believe and profess it; for in an instant of doubt and perplexity of his intelligence he would no longer have been a Christian, he would have been an infidel.

Credo, I believe: such is the first engagement that was formed in my name on this earth. And the Church, taking note of this contract signed by my spiritual guardians, put me among the number of her children, and made me enter into participation in all the advantages that belong to the members of her holy society, and in particular she poured, unknown to me, into my soul the holy and supernatural habit of faith.

Credo, I believe: such was the first movement, in a way instinctive, of my nature. When my soul began to expand, the rule of belief was presented to it, and it at once submitted to it. The revealed light was received first by my intelligence, or rather by my heart, like the light of the sun by my eyes; and, before any examination and any analysis, I believed as I saw, trusting equally in the mysterious Providence which, after casting me upon this earth, not wishing to leave me the care of seeking and finding the light, suddenly enlightened the eyes of my mind by the creed of faith, as it had enlightened those of my body by the rays of the sun.

And my faith, which was at first only a disposition and an infused habit, became an act of my soul and an adhesion of my nature.

Credo, I believe: such was the first thrill, the first triumph of my intelligence developed by reflection and reasoning. As soon as the horizon of my thought widened and I could observe and compare around me, I saw that this paternal authority from which I had accepted my belief was nothing else, in the providential plan, than a domestic church in communion and relation with the holy, universal Church, whose authority is exercised over the whole earth and is lost in the origin of the centuries, and my faith, reasonable from the beginning, has henceforth been reasoned.

Credo, I believe: such is, each day, the conclusion I draw from all the knowledge I acquire and all the studies to which I give myself. Since I have been able to think virilely and to examine the very nature of things, since I have been able to weigh objections and answers, to meditate the for and against, I have seen that my creed was never so much as grazed by any victorious argument; I have recognised that the human mind was so weak by itself that it dragged itself from error to error every time it had not accepted for the rule of its reason the very rule of faith; and I have come to the point that I do not deign even to grant any scientific value whatever to any proposition contradicted by my creed. I believed before I knew; but since I know, it would be impossible for me not to believe.

Credo, I believe. And the certitude of my faith possesses a character found in none of my other convictions. What I know by my reason, by the testimony of my senses or of my fellows; what I know most indubitably, I know nevertheless only with a human certitude. But what I know by faith rests on the word of God and on the divine veracity itself; and the inner sentiment that inclines me to this belief is again an effect and a movement of divine grace.

Credo, I believe: in this word is all my strength, all my joy, all my hope. If I prefer my lot to that of several of my brethren, it is because they do not believe, and I believe. They seek, and I have found; they desire, and I possess. And as I have always believed, to believe is for me a second nature; faith has taken the helm of my reason, it has become the principal reinforcement of my soul; I believe as I breathe, without effort, and I would even say without merit, if it were not a merit to have acquired this facility and almost this necessity of believing.

I believe; and if, forming the supposition of an impossible alternative, you were to ask me the sacrifice of my faith or that of my science, at once, and without hesitation, I would abandon science to keep faith; and to tell

the truth I should have little to regret, for if I had to give an account of what human letters and philosophy have added for me to the sum of truths the Church taught me in the Apostles' Creed, I should be embarrassed to reply; and, above all in regard to the moral order, to the pains and vicissitudes of the present life, to the questions, to the mysteries of the life to come, I have experienced no less the sterility of science than the efficacy of faith.

I believe then, *Credo;* and the creed of my faith is my first good and my most precious treasure. Let all the rest perish, provided my faith remain to me! I am rich enough if I believe: *Credo.*

So speaks the Christian, my brethren; so speaks the child of the Catholic Church. He has what heretics lack, at least those of these latter times; he has what unbelievers and reasoners of our century lack; he has a creed, a rule of belief. Therefore the child of the Church is strong, because he has this point of support, and the men of the century are weak, because they have it not. Follow me with attention.

I do not stop here, my brethren, to define literally what a creed is, nor to establish the different grammatical significations of this expression. I content myself with saying with Saint Augustine that for us the creed is the principal rule of our belief, it is a summary containing in a few words all the fundamental and necessary truths. Now that the human intelligence has need of being fixed by a creed so defined is easy to establish.

There have never been but two sentiments in the world in this regard. The first is that of almost the whole human race. The second is almost exclusively proper to the heretics and sophists of the last centuries.

All men had believed in all times that God, by virtue of His sovereign wisdom, owed it to His intelligent creature not to leave to himself the long and difficult labour of seeking truth. The child, on entering the world, finds there at once his food necessary to his existence and the hand that offers him this food. The child believes his mother, he accepts from her, without reasoning, the foods she presents to him. And if the child were to accept food only when he is capable of discerning by himself and analysing the properties of this food provisionally, he would begin by dying.

The Holy Spirit has said that the just man lives by faith. This proposition is capable of being much extended: it is not only the supernatural and spiritual man, it is physical and material man himself, it is man entire who lives only by faith. And I do not speak only of the child, I speak of man at all ages; reflect on it, and you will see that if man wished to know by himself the intimate essence of things before making use of them, this man would have to renounce study, society, I say more, life. Whether you eat or drink, whether you watch or sleep, whatever you do, man of science or of pleasure, in health as in sickness, everywhere and always I see you condemned by nature to make the act of human faith. Individual man, social man, learned man is possible only on this condition; and there is not a single circumstance of life in which man is not forced to say: *Credo,* I believe.

Now the education and supernatural life of man cannot differ from his education and natural life. It is impossible that God should abandon to the examination and researches of a weak and nascent intelligence the care of creating for itself its beliefs and its creed.

Under pretext of respecting the independence and liberty of individual reason, to abstain from teaching it the creed of heavenly truths is to condemn this reason to ignorance, to doubt, it is to reduce it to vegetate and die. Human reason, at the moment it awakens, must therefore find near it and at its disposal a body, an ensemble of religious truths; and this nourishment of the soul must be offered to it, like the nourishment of the body, by a hand that Providence has charged with this mission and ministry. There is more: it is not only the child; here again it is man of all ages who has need of receiving from the society set over spiritual interests, that is, from the Church, the creed of his beliefs. Experience is there to prove it; all the private investigations of reason have never ended but in divergences. The more men have sought, the more they have strayed. Contemporary history will instruct us in this regard.

In all times, I have said, all human societies had believed, had taught that the education of the spiritual man, just as the education of the physical man, is essentially traditional and social. Sometimes, as I shall observe later, there was error in the application; sometimes she who gave herself out as the mother was a stepmother, and what she gave out for bread was poison. But everywhere at least the principle was the same, everywhere it was taught that truth was transmitted from one generation to another by creeds; and the societies which transmitted erroneous or incomplete creeds attributed to themselves at least the right to transmit them and have them accepted.

For example, the various sects which separated from the Catholic Church during the first fifteen centuries were wrong doubtless to give themselves out as the true Church; but at least, giving themselves out as the true Church, they believed they possessed a creed and the right to impose it. In this regard they were neither less exacting nor less dogmatic than the society from which they had unhappily detached themselves. There is more, and until the day when the men born in the bosom of these societies can recognise that they adhered to a fallible and deceptive authority, as long as their good faith lasts, in the eyes of God they can belong to the true Church, because in right they are right to adhere to an authority, and in fact they invincibly ignore, I suppose, the incompetence of the authority that presented itself to them from their entrance into this world. The whole universe then had recognised the principle of doctrinal authority.

Suddenly a new principle was enunciated in this world. A man and a sect, then several men and several sects appeared, who, amid a thousand dissensions, agreed in overthrowing the way of tradition and authority, and made religious truth depend on free examination and the individual interpretation of each. This new sect, and each of these sects, gave itself out as the true Church, but without attributing to itself and recognising, in principle at least, the right to command and to impose anything on the intelligence. A Church of a new kind, it constantly and uniformly established only one dogma, namely, that no authority here below can impose a dogma, but that the reason of each is judge of dogma. The disciples of this society learned from it to recite no other creed than this: I believe in myself.

It is not that, frightened by the extreme wanderings of individual thought, these sects, after inaugurating the principle of free examination, did not themselves undertake to restrain it within certain limits. They were seen setting to work: synods, formularies, confessions, creeds; under the imperious law of necessity there reappeared all the acts of authority and doctrinal intolerance that had been condemned in the orthodox Church. But the word of emancipation had been pronounced, and it was impossible to retract it. Interpellated on the value of synods, confessions, formularies, the doctors, forced into their last entrenchment, were obliged to answer that all this, in the end, had only a human value, and must yield before the conviction, more sensible perhaps, of the least private individual; and all the creeds painfully concerted vanished before the fatal creed: I believe in myself.

The great Bossuet descended into the lists, and with his formidable dialectic he showed that independentism (I repeat the word adopted in this celebrated controversy), that the most monstrous independentism was nevertheless the most logical in the principles of the Reformation; that it was a first attempt against the liberty of man to bind him to Jesus Christ by baptism before having consulted him, and that on this title the Anabaptists were only consistent; that the natural and regular state of the child and adolescent in regard to religion ought to be that of ignorance and infidelity: rigorous but frightful deductions, before which Protestantism still recoiled.

But half a century had scarcely elapsed, and this same Protestantism, veiled under another name, itself avowed and loudly claimed these consequences. The sophist of Geneva wanted his Émile not to hear any talk of religion until his reasoning was formed enough to decide as master. And from the books of the sophists the principle of the absolute independence of human reason passed into the laws, and from books and laws it passed into manners. And what can be affirmed today, after looking and listening to what passes and is said among men, and what establishes the wall of separation between the errors of the last century and those of

the present, is that the modern world is entirely founded on the pretension to individual infallibility, that each is for himself his rule of faith, that the new society has no other creed than this: I believe in myself; which means that it has no creed.

Now, I have said it and I repeat it, because we Christians have a creed, a uniform rule of belief, on that account, despite our apparent minority, we are strong and numerous. And because the children of the century have no creed, on that account, and despite their apparent number, they are weak and isolated. When we Christians assemble, it is to prove to the world that we understand one another; when they assemble, it is to give the spectacle of their divisions. Hence, in the bosom of the society of which we form part, a striking contrast that cannot be too much remarked.

Enter the temple where Christians are gathered: you wish to know what they think, what they believe; you wish to know their programme, as you say. Listen… all the mouths are about to open together and sing with the accent of conviction: I believe. All the mouths, that of old man and child, magistrate and artisan, priest and layman, learned and ignorant, are going to repeat the twelve articles of faith. Call into this temple all the disciples of Jesus Christ, convoke there all the Christian centuries and countries, you will not hear a discord; all mouths will say again the same profession. The Apostles' Creed is their universal programme. So, on the frontispiece of this temple where the children of God are assembled, write this word of Genesis: *Ecce unus est populus, et unum labium omnibus:* [Behold, it is one people, and all have one tongue. (Gen. 11:6.)] There is here but one people, one lip, one same language.

On leaving this temple, enter any of the great assemblies of the men of the century. They have met to confer on the gravest interests of society, of private and public morality. You wish to know what they think, what they believe; you wish to know their programme. Listen… but what incoherence! what diverse opinions! what contradictory views! Sentiments cross, collide, clash; it is a combat, a melee. The floods of words leave behind them, as they withdraw, only systems lying mutilated. If you wished to ascertain with your own eyes the most incontestable progress of the nineteenth century, I mean the phenomenon of the divisibility of human thought to infinity, the experiment will have succeeded to your heart's desire. And if you convoked to this meeting a greater number of attendants, you would multiply the dissidences by so much. There are as many creeds as passions. The programme of each is the programme of no other. So on the frontispiece of this assembly of the children of the century, engrave this other word of Scripture: Babel, that is to say, confusion: *Et idcirco vocatum est nomen ejus Babel, quia ibi confusum est labium universae terrae.* [And therefore the name thereof was called Babel, because there the language of the whole earth was confounded. (Gen. 11:9.)]

No, my brethren, the children of this century will never understand one another, except in their instincts of destruction and hatred. To build and reform, they will not understand one another, because in fact they have no common creed, and because in right, and with the principles of modern heresy and philosophy, they cannot have one. And how bring minds together where the bond of unity is essentially lacking? How correct disorder where there does not exist and cannot exist any rule? My brethren, the alternative is rigorous: one must retrogress to nothingness, or return to the creed of the Christian faith. In the domain of ideas, firm ground is found only there; everywhere else it will be the shifting sand of opinions and the uncertain soil of doubt, doubt with all its train of private anguish and public malaise. I repeat, so long as we have not all for point of departure a religious creed, so long as we are not fixed by a formulary come from heaven, which binds our intelligences concerning divine things, it is impossible to hope for any accord or concert among us concerning human things.

I have sufficiently shown the necessity of a creed; I wish to add in a few words a general view of the excellence of our Christian creed: the object of a second reflection.

II. Excellence of the Christian creed, if I consider it in itself and in its content; if I consider it in its origin and its authors; if I consider it in its mode of transmission and in the society that explains it to me.

And first in itself and in its content. My brethren, have not you and I shed tears of tenderness when, on certain days when divine grace and the spirit of unction and prayer acted more powerfully on our heart, we had the happiness to sing in company with all our brethren, under the vaults of this magnificent temple, the triumphant creed of our belief? No, after the incomparable joy of contemplating face to face the divine realities in the bosom of glory, I know of no pleasure in the world comparable to the holy pleasure of confessing solemnly, here below, by faith, all the truths that heaven adores in the ecstasy of love.

Let us stop, my brethren, at a short analysis of this creed; I keep to the one the Church has us sing with the most solemnity, which is only a development of the Apostles' Creed: one God, and in the bosom of this indivisible unity, the society of the Father, the Son and the Spirit; one God alone, without however being solitary, and whose essentially one nature is reconciled with the trinity of persons. What sublime and unutterable mysteries! Then to these three divine and eternal persons there correspond in time three great manifestations.

"I believe in God the Father, creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible": what a picture in great strokes! How much in two words! God, author of all the visible creation and of all the invisible creation! Who will tell the whole extent of that second half of the works of the Almighty? Yet this is only the least of the divine operations. The picture unrolls.

"I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, only-begotten Son of God." Hear the history of His eternal generation. "Born of the Father before all ages, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father." Adore in passing this word consubstantial; the Church conquered it for the creed by floods of blood.

But suddenly the language changes, the mysteries become more touching. We were just now in the heavens, and we were celebrating, in a poetry which is the masterpiece of the alliance of the simple and the sublime, the begetting of the Word before the dawn. Now we leave these heights with Him; for "on account of us, humble creatures: *Qui propter nos homines,* on account of us men, and for our salvation, He came down from heaven." Let us restrain our tears, if we can, my brethren, on hearing this account of the clothing of the person of the Word in humanity: and, taking the envelope of flesh, uniting Himself to a body produced by the concurrence of the almighty power from on high and the most perfect purity of earth, to a body formed by the action of the Holy Spirit and of the substance of the Virgin Mary! "*Et homo factus est:* And He was made man!" On saying this word, my brethren, in thought we are all on our knees. It is a mystery that one adores and does not comment. But wait: from the heaven where He was God of God, light of light, we have come down to the manger where He is born, child of the Virgin.

However great the distance He has crossed, the hands in which we see Him rest are so pure, so heavenly, that we easily forget for Him the resplendent glow of the paternal bosom. The transition that is preparing is more abrupt and more painful: from the arms of Mary into the arms of the Cross: *Crucifixus etiam pro nobis.* He suffered, He died, died on a cross, and was buried. And as He had become man on account of us, *propter nos homines,* only in order also to die for us, *crucifixus etiam pro nobis,* as His Incarnation had for its aim our redemption, however short the summary of our faith must be, the deicide crime that consummated the sacrifice of Jesus will be signalled there by a proper name, like the fruitful virginity that gave Him birth; we shall know that He was born of Mary, and that He suffered under Pontius Pilate; for these two names so disparate, these two only historical names, cast by the creed, the one to the love, the other to the execration of all centuries, will teach us a truth the knowledge of which the spectacle of human affairs makes very useful and very consoling, namely that monstrous human perversity serves, in spite of itself, the designs of the Almighty, like the most exquisite virtue.

Et resurrexit tertia die. "After three days of apparent defeat, He rose from the tomb, as had been announced by the Scriptures; then He ascended into heaven, where He is seated at the right hand of His Father, whence

He will come a second time in glory to judge all men; and His reign shall have no end." If the seraphic Teresa were in this audience, she would stop me at this word and ask me the favour of savouring it in a holy rapture: *Cujus regni non erit finis.*

But a third manifestation, no less admirable, no less necessary, is revealed to us. "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and who, with the Father and the Son, is adored and glorified together." That is the eternal dogma on the person of the Holy Spirit; but His temporal mission is related next. It is He who spoke by the prophets and who hides as it were under the bark of every syllable of the Holy Books; it is He who assists and inspires, it is He who enlightens and animates the Church, one, holy, catholic and apostolic; it is He who, in the bosom of this Church, forms a sacred bond between all just souls; it is He who, as in the beginning He was borne over the waters to fecundate them and bring forth from them the world of nature, never ceases to hover over the mysterious pools of grace by which the Church purifies, sanctifies and deposits in the bodies themselves a germ of resurrection, until, for bodies and for souls, begins the life of the world to come which shall have no end. Amen. So be it!

My brethren, I ask you, where will you find, under the sun, anything resembling this magnificent profession of faith? Is not all the grandeur, all the simplicity, all the majesty of the Scriptures as it were gathered up in this elementary summary of Christian doctrine? What remains to be known, after one knows this creed? With it, is not man perfectly oriented in this world? The point of departure is God, creator of heaven and earth; the goal is the life of the world to come; the way is Jesus Christ, come into our midst; the vehicle , the chariot, is the Holy Spirit, ceaselessly vivifying the Church which offers and applies to our souls the remedy of salvation.

Once more, I ask you, my brethren, does not this creed carry in itself the evident characters of its superhuman principle? Among what people of the world, under the vaults of what temple or the porticoes of what school, was such a body of truths ever recited by any learned mouth? How many things the divine Plato always ignored, which this creed teaches to the child and the least instructed villager! No, it is not, it cannot be here a system of invention, of purely human fabrication. Man has never spoken this language. If you wish to impose on my reason a mystery a thousand times more inexplicable than all the mysteries contained in the creed, condemn me to believe that this creed is only a work of wit drawn up by a philosopher or composed by an assembly of sages. This supposition, my reason sees in it not only a mystery, it sees in it an impossibility. So I said in the second place: excellence of the Christian creed if it is considered in its origin and in its authors.

What results from the most incontestable monuments, uncontested even by heretics, apart from a few rare and late exceptions, is that the twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ, before dividing the world among themselves, assembled to fix in a short and precise formulary the principal points of the doctrine they had learned from the divine Master, and which He had commanded them to preach to all nations. The Apostles' Creed is therefore the work of the first and most ecumenical of all councils. It was, as it were, the day after the visible effusion of the Holy Spirit in their souls, it was when the voice of Jesus Christ still resounded in their ears, that the Fathers of the Christian Church laid together this fundamental and invariable basis of Catholic faith.[3]

The Gospels were to be written only in the course of the century that was closing. But the Church, which could do without Scripture, could not do without a creed. If the first preachers to the peoples did not carry with them the narrative of Matthew or Mark, Luke or John, they all carried the creed. And this creed sufficed, for the work of the twelve Apostles contained in advance the whole substance of the four Gospels. Thus the same Saint Irenaeus, who tells us that in his time whole peoples converted to the Christian faith were still ignorant of the existence of the Gospels, affirms to us on the other hand that no part of the Church, although dispersed to the ends of the world, is a stranger to the faith received from the Apostles, and which consists in believing in one God, Father almighty, and in one Jesus Christ, Son of God, incarnate for our salvation, and in a Holy Spirit who announced the divine mysteries by the prophets. I abridge the text of the holy doctor,

but it results that if whole Christian tribes could ignore the Gospel with impunity, none ever ignored the creed, because the creed is as ancient as the remotest and most primitive apostolic preaching.[4]

Behold then, my brethren, the creed received from the tradition of the Apostles before the Gospel was entrusted to the bark of letters and syllables. Behold, not by a metaphysical reasoning, but by a chronological and positive fact, the pre-existence of the Church to the Scriptures. Behold the authority of the teaching body exercised in the highest infallibility and the greatest plenitude of its power, previously to the existence of the inspired books. Which throws light on the most delicate matters of our controversies with heresy, and which leads me to my last consideration: excellence of the Christian and Catholic creed, if I consider it in its mode of transmission and in the authority that explains it to me and if need be develops it for me. A last moment of attention.

Let the heretic, holding Scripture in his hand, rise against the Church and oppose to the authentic interpretation of the sacred book his own interpretation: assuredly that is an evident disorder and one whose vice it is easy to demonstrate by irresistible arguments. But even if it were as true as it is false that Scripture, which after all is not the work of the Church but of God Himself, can be understood by each in its true sense, with the help of God alone, and without the intervention of the Church, error, outside Scripture, would still find an eternal contradictor in the creed. The creed does not belong to the sacred books, but is the work of the Church, a work essentially distinct from the Scriptures, a work so eminently traditional that, for more than six centuries, it was permitted to no private person to write it elsewhere than in his mind and heart, under penalty of being rejected by the Church; as is witnessed in particular by Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Jerome and Saint Peter Chrysologus.[5] The teaching of the Church, my brethren, is to the word of God what the echo is to the voice, but a faithful and infallible echo. Such is the creed.

It is by the creed, and not by the Scriptures, that the Church introduced us into her bosom. Over our cradle, as over the cradle of Christianity, what resounded was the creed. Before giving us baptism, the Church required of us the recitation of her creed, and not at all the reading and understanding of the sacred books. The Gospel is for the learned, the creed is for all. In fact many Christians will never know the Scriptures; all must know the creed. But if it is by the creed that the universe was made Christian, and that each of us is still made Christian, and if the creed is the work, the property, the thing of the Church, it must be concluded that none can remain a Christian except by adhering to the creed of the Church, as the Church understands it, as she explains it, as she develops it. For that a private person should wish to understand the word of God better than the Church is assuredly an untenable pretension; but that he should wish to understand the creed better than the Church, that is, the very teaching of the Church, is an absurd pretension which the mere statement of terms condemns. What does it matter then that the heretic recites word for word the same creed as I, if each syllable of this creed has for him an arbitrary signification? The letter of the Apostles' Creed may be found in all hands; the spirit, the sense of the Apostles' Creed is found only in the apostolic Church.

And behold, my brethren, the admirable character of the creed as it reaches us, children of the Church. The transmission is made by the same infallible authority that decreed the creed itself. At Nicaea, at Constantinople, it is the college of the successors of the Apostles which develops against Arius, against Macedonius, the work of the apostolic college. All the professions, all the formularies successively imposed by councils and by the Church, it is always the apostolic authority maintaining, by necessary appendices, the first and natural sincerity of the apostolic creed. All those thousands of pontiffs, doctors, in communion with the Church, who in their catecheses and homilies interpret, explain the creed to candidates for the faith and to neophytes, it is always the apostolic succession transmitting to us, from hand to hand, the living formula of apostolic faith. So that I, child of the Church, have over heretics the privilege that I not only recite the Apostles' Creed, but that I recite it with the Apostles and as the Apostles. Had I been in their midst on the day they promulgated the creed, had I received it from their hands, I should not have understood it otherwise than I understand it today when I receive it from the hands of the Church. Eighteen centuries have passed

over my creed only to enlighten it, comment on it, develop it; never to alter or modify it.

Let us rejoice then, my dearly beloved brethren, at the ineffable favour that heaven has granted us of possessing a creed, and of possessing it in all the conditions of the most perfect and entire truth. Others than we recite this creed; but why must they drink death at the very sources of life, or at least draw there the incomplete and altered truth, and why must error slip into their minds under the very edge of that sword which, placed in the hands of the Church, has always sufficed, said the great pope Saint Leo, to exterminate all errors? My brethren, let us love, let us cherish our creed. In the liturgy of the primitive centuries (and something of this usage remains in the ceremonies of the baptism of adults), the bishop himself pronounced the creed distinctly as many as three times, so that the catechumen who presented himself for baptism might thus finish learning it and repeat it afterward; which was called, on the part of the bishop, to deliver the creed, *tradere symbolum,* and on the part of the candidate, to render the creed, *reddere symbolum.*

And I wish, my brethren, before descending from this pulpit, to leave the word for a moment to Saint Augustine. “As long as you do not know your creed,” said this learned pontiff, “you cannot be admitted to the assemblies of the Church… And when you know your creed, recite it every day that you may not forget it; recite it in the morning when you rise, in the evening when you go to bed… Remember that you are permitted to write it only on the tablets of your heart… Render your creed, render it to the Lord, and do not weary of reciting it.

“Do not object: I said it yesterday, I say it today, I say it every day, I know it well, I am fully instructed in it… No, recall your faith without ceasing, look at yourself in your creed as in your mirror; see whether you truly and practically believe all that you profess to believe. Seek every day your consolation and your joy in this trial of your faith. Let your creed be your wealth, let it be a garment with which you love to adorn yourself every day. Every day you clothe your body; do the same for your mind, by reciting the creed. Our faith is at the same time the garment that covers us, and the breastplate that defends us; the garment that covers us against nakedness and confusion, the breastplate that defends us against our enemies and all their attacks.” It is only in heaven, adds the holy doctor, that we shall no longer make use of the creed, because there will be no more place for faith, and the sight of God will be there the reward of faith itself. This is what I wish you, my brethren, with the blessing of Monseigneur (1).[6]

Translator’s notes

1. Quotations from Chrysostom, Irenaeus, Augustine and Leo are as the preacher gives them (paraphrase, from French versions); I have not collated them with the originals. The “twelve articles” is the traditional division of the Creed.

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[1] The heading gives only “(1847)”; the second Sunday of Advent in 1847 was 5 December.

[2] Attributed to Chrysostom by the preacher; I have not traced the quotation.

[3] The traditional legend of the apostolic composition of the Creed (Rufinus, Ambrose); the preacher takes it as established.

[4] Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* I, 10; III, 4, as the preacher summarises it.

[5] The *disciplina arcani* regarding the Creed; the patristic attributions are as the preacher gives them.

[6] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 28, n° 46. — Avertissement, p. xxvi. (Editor’s note.) The Augustine passage is from his sermons *De symbolo ad catechumenos* (e.g. Sermon 58, 215); the wording is as the preacher gives it.

n° 40. Second Conference on the Creed

Preached on the third Sunday of Advent in the cathedral of Chartres, 12 December 1847.[1]

Credo in Deum. [I believe in God.]

My Lord, one of the most glorious titles ever attributed to a simple creature is assuredly that which the holy Scriptures give to the prophet of the old law and the priest of the new, when they call him man of God: *Vir*

Dei: Tu autem, o homo Dei. [But thou, O man of God. (1 Tim. 6:11.)] It is therefore true that in the midst of men, who all belong to Him, but who are too inclined to forget and misknow it, God has willed to have His men, charged with ceaselessly recalling His name and defending His rights.

Like those consuls, those chargés d'affaires, sent into barbarous countries by some great nation they represent, the prophet and the priest are here below, among peoples too often unfaithful, the representatives of God and the chargés d'affaires of that great power.

Now, how thankless and laborious the functions of this magnificent consulate have become! The name of the King our master has scarcely remained in the memory of the nation to which He sends us; His rank of precedence has been taken from Him, His standard is threatened to float no longer soon on this inhospitable coast; His rights, what do I say? His very existence is called in doubt, and people await only a few days more to arm themselves against Him with prescription and declare His cause lost.

Indolent or unfaithful ambassadors, shall we, in such circumstances, keep silence? Shall we see with indifference the name of our august Sovereign fall into oblivion? Shall we not raise His banner lying in the dust? Shall we cease for a single instant to speak, to protest, to negotiate, until the glorious rank that belongs to Him has been restored to Him? No, a thousand times no. And if it is His very existence that is put in question, it is to this fundamental truth that we shall first attach ourselves.

But what? you say to me; is our century a century of atheism? have there ever been true atheists? and if the generation that preceded us had the weakness to simulate this horrible doctrine, can it not be asserted that all polemic in this regard inspires today only disgust and horror? Let us explain ourselves, my brethren.

Saint Augustine said, speaking of atheists, that they were a very rare species of men: *Rarum hominum genus est.* And when Bossuet spoke of those "senseless men who, in the empire of God, among His works, among His benefits, dare to say that He is not, and to ravish being from Him by whom all nature subsists", he added: "The earth bears few such monsters; even idolaters and infidels hold them in horror. And when, in the light of Christianity, one is discovered, the meeting must be esteemed unhappy and abominable."[2]

But the same Saint Augustine and the same Bossuet, who scarcely admit the existence of speculative and reflective atheism, and who range it among exceptions and monsters, warn us "that the passions, which disorder the heart, aspire to deny the sovereign rule that condemns them"; and above all "that men who let themselves be tyrannised by the senses and matter end by believing that all that is not sensible is not real, and that what one neither sees nor touches is only a shadow and a phantom". Hence an atheism of practice and routine, perhaps still more deplorable than the atheism of conviction. It is this last plague, my brethren, that ravages the world today.

That the reading of the sophistical books of the last century left in some minds certain doubts, certain obscurities, certain traces of atheism, it seems to me difficult to deny. But that atheism, if it is found little in the controversies and writings of our epoch, has on the other hand established itself and reigns sovereignly in morals and habits, is what it is impossible not to see. Therefore, in presence of all these men who do not believe in God, or who act as if they did not believe in Him, we shall say, with our creed: I believe in God: *Credo in Deum;* which means that we believe in Him in mind and in action, in speculation and in practice. This is the whole object of this instruction, in which we shall consequently combat the atheist who denies God and the indifferent who takes no account of God. Before speaking of God, let us invoke His divine Mother: *Ave Maria.*

I. Will posterity believe it, my brethren, that there should have been found, in the most polished people of the world, on leaving the most glorious century of its history, a whole period of evil days during which atheism had become the dominant tone of society, the necessary appanage of wit, the agreed axiom of science, the favourite theme of literature, and the touchstone of true philosophy? Will posterity believe that for half a

century the intelligence bold enough to admit the existence of God had to hide its belief with care, to avoid the ingenious sarcasms of the learned world and the coarse derisions of the most unlettered multitude?

Then was seen a man justly famous in the exact sciences forget his astronomical studies to gather in a dictionary all the atheists of the universe. And as he made no difficulty of ranging under this monstrous banner, and for the most puerile reasons, the most religious and Christian philosophers of ancient and modern times; the mathematician, accused of grouping here lying figures and giving this time to his calculations and additions a suspect basis, answers with simplicity that, as he did not pretend to put the great men on trial but to praise them in introducing them into his book, he did not think himself obliged to so great a circumspection.[3]

Then also was seen a whole school of men applied to the art of healing, who, meeting under their scalpel only flesh, blood and humours, made profession of believing only what they saw; and, living amid the most astonishing marvels of the Creator, abjured the traditions of their predecessors, who, in the very bosom of paganism, had always proclaimed, following one of their most illustrious masters, that the study of the organisation of man was the finest hymn sung to the glory of God.[4]

These baleful prejudices, my brethren, were still in all their vigour when most of us began to think and reflect. Our mother according to nature, and soon also the Church, our second mother, had taught us to say: I believe in God: *Credo in Deum;* and we found in our heart a very pronounced assent to this doctrine. But all that surrounded us seemed to laugh at our creed, and to pity the simplicity of our belief. Therefore in what strange perplexity was our young intelligence cast! How often, if it did not succumb to this trial, did it at least feel itself shaken! And in this audience, at this instant perhaps, there are still wavering minds that await from me proofs, peremptory proofs. It will be easy for me to give them to you, my brethren; only they are so numerous that I shall be able only to indicate them.

There is a God: this is the cry of all nature, the cry of humanity, the cry of my reason and my heart, the cry of God Himself.

There is a God. Let us interrogate the spectacle of nature. Did this magnificent universe make itself? No; for what is not cannot give itself existence. The cause must pre-exist the effect, and nothingness is not a cause. If the universe did not make itself, has it then always existed? No; for if it had always existed, it would be the necessary being, the being to whom no perfection can be refused, the being whose non-existence cannot be supposed without falling into absurdity. Now this universe, however admirable, is deprived of intelligence and of a thousand other attributes inseparable from the necessary being; and moreover each portion of this universe, and this universe itself entire, might not exist without natural reason and the essence of things being in the least offended. The universe, on the one hand, has therefore not always existed; on the other, it did not make itself. It is therefore outside itself that its author must be sought.

Now who could create this world? Would it be that mysterious power called nature? And what is nature? Do you understand by this that virtue of fecundity which was deposited in the bosom of creation? Assuredly I do not deny its existence; but this energy of reproduction is posterior to the first production, and does not explain creation. Or does nature signify for you a fecund power anterior to the existence of this world? But then what is this fecundity and this power? Is it the eternal and infinite power, fecundity? If so, we are agreed; let us prostrate ourselves together and adore the sovereign Being. And if it is not the infinite power, fecundity, then the difficulty is only put back; from second cause to second cause one must always go back to a first cause, one must go back to God.

Do you abandon nature for chance? I distrust chance very much, for I fear that chance, instead of the act of faith, requires of me singular acts of credulity. And first, chance could at most give a form, a fortuitous disposition to objects already existing. But chance does not make exist what does not exist. Chance could not be the productive and efficient cause, the first cause. At most it would be the ordering cause. But what? Do

all the games and all the known caprices of chance have any relation with the order, beauty, harmony that shine in the universe? I meet in a desert island an edifice, an instrument, the least result of a reflective combination; instantly, and without the thought of chance coming to my mind, I conclude that an intelligent being, a man, has passed there; the work has revealed the workman to me. And in the admirable arrangement, in the sublime concert of all the parts of the universe, I would not see an intelligent cause?

Ah! cries the great theologian Saint Denis, here all the efforts of the atheist are useless. The works of the Almighty tell His existence and His wisdom, and no one will ever be able to suspend their narrations: *Concentum caeli quis dormire faciet?* [Who shall make the concert of heaven to sleep? (Job 38:37.)] Have you eyes and do you know how to read? Read then the truth of a Creator God, written in characters of light all around you. All the stars, uniting their brightness, carry as in triumph, from one end of the world to the other, this truth crowned with all their rays, to make it visible, legible to all beings. And who then is this man, this prodigy of a man, who does not know how to read on the firmament a truth lit with all the fires of the firmament?[5]

But do you hope, O you who do not believe in God, do you hope to make the universe your accomplice? Do you pretend to lull those vigilant guards posted at intervals above our heads to awaken our attention by an uninterrupted cry of marvels? Ah! whatever you do, never will you suborn these witnesses, never will you corrupt these sentinels, never will you make nature lie, never will you make her keep silence: *Concentum caeli quis dormire faciet?* Refuse to join your voice to her voice, very well; keep outside her concert. But as for her, never will you falsify her language; and all the efforts of your unreason will not make the universe sing out of tune: *Concentum caeli quis dormire faciet?*

I believe in God: *Credo in Deum.* It is the cry of all inanimate nature; it is also the cry of the whole of humanity. The world has existed six thousand years, my brethren; and for some forty centuries since history began to be written, it has transmitted to us, certainly, documents sufficiently multiplied on the customs and manners of all countries and all ages. Now, after studying the annals of all ancient and modern societies, it is still true to say what Plutarch said: “Cast your eyes over the whole face of the earth, you may find cities without fortifications, without academies, without regularly constituted magistracy; countries where property in a dwelling, the division of territory, the use of money, the rules of the fine arts are entirely unknown; but you will nowhere find a city without the knowledge of divinity.”[6]

This challenge thrown by Plutarch to atheism was not rash. A whole half of the world has been discovered since the time Plutarch wrote, and, in spite of infinite efforts, atheists have not yet been able to point out among so many new tribes a single tribe denatured enough to be without God. Doubtless barbarism has not been more privileged than civilisation, and there have arisen in its bosom impious men who have paraded atheism. But the fact of some individuals does not prove the atheism of a people. An assemblage of men strangers to the idea of God is a phenomenon whose existence has not yet been demonstrated. Now, when the whole human race is agreed on a truth which in itself imposes a curb on the passions instead of favouring them, it is impossible not to admit this truth.

Do you say with the most infamous of poets that this belief of the human race was the effect of fear: *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor?* [Fear first made gods in the world.] Besides that history shows us altars besieged by confidence and love far more than by fear, I shall answer you that vice had reason to fear the divinity, but that assuredly it was not vice that would have invented it for the pleasure of fearing it. Virtue is not afraid of the gods, only crime dreads them; now crime, far from inventing the gods, we have experience of it, far rather makes atheists. No, the proof is without reply, and when I see all the peoples of the world believe in the existence of God, when I see in the bosom of the diverse nations the most distinguished intelligences make a more open profession of this belief, I say with Saint Augustine: “If it is an error, pray let me be allowed to err in such company.”

Let atheists go and console themselves in the company of some of their like, lost here and there in history; let them at a pinch make themselves a fatherland among those forest dwellers who have of the human only the figure, worthy patrons of so desperate a cause. In a word, let them be right with what our species has most abject and degraded, very well; provided they leave me to be mistaken with what humanity contains most imposing, most instructed and most pure: *Patere me errare cum talibus.* [Suffer me to err with such.][7]

I believe in God: *Credo in Deum.* It is the cry of all the universe, it is the cry of all the human race, it is also the cry of our reason and our heart. There are, my brethren, first truths written in our soul, which form as it were the basis of our intelligent nature. There are other truths that come out of our reason, as the spark comes out of the stone, at the first shock that makes them leap forth. Finally, there are others that bloom rather in the heart than in the mind and are born of sentiment. And in whichever of these three classes they are to be ranged, these truths carry in themselves a character of certitude so striking, so seizing, that man cannot doubt them without laying aside his own nature. Now belief in God belongs to each of these three orders of ideas at once.

Saint Augustine is a philosopher whose sentiment must rarely be abandoned. Now Saint Augustine said: Such is the power of the true divinity that it cannot be entirely and utterly hidden from the rational creature once it enjoys its reason: *Haec est vis verae divinitatis, ut creaturae rationali jam ratione utenti, non omnino ac penitus possit abscondi.* Whether the idea of God be innate in us, or there be no innate ideas, what matter! if the idea of God is one of those mother ideas without which a being ceases to have the possession and use of his reason. And if one comes to present to this reason, strong and developed, the arguments that prove the necessity of God, at once she perceives their whole invincible power. She understands, for example, that to explain effects one must always and necessarily arrive at the existence of a first cause; that nothing of what exists in time and accidentally could exist if there did not first of all exist an eternal and necessary being; finally, she understands that the idea of God alone is the demonstration of the existence of God, seeing that the infinite is conceivable and imaginable only because it is real, and that if it is real, this reality is God.

But there is another precious faculty in man, and the development of which supplies often for the development of reason: I mean sentiment. Scripture teaches us that there is mind in the heart: *Mente cordis;* [In the mind of the heart (cf. Luke 1:51)] it is this reason, this mind, this logic, this science of the heart which will never permit man to doubt seriously, sincerely, constantly, of the existence of God. From it starts involuntarily and as it were instinctively that glance toward heaven, that invocation of God which Tertullian called the testimony of a soul naturally Christian. There is a God: oh! how unhappy man would be if it were otherwise. Here below, I cannot doubt, evil exists, physical evil and moral evil; evil in me, evil around me. Now, in presence of this universal degradation, I avow it, the world without God would be uninhabitable; it is a dwelling that frightens. If You were not, O my God, it would be necessary to invent You. But because You are necessary, You are; since I desire You, You exist. *Credo in Deum,* I believe in God: it is the cry of my reason, it is the cry of my heart.

Finally, my brethren, there is a last testimony to the existence of God that demands of us a particular attention. It is no longer the testimony of the universe, the testimony of the human race, the testimony of our reason and heart, it is the testimony of God Himself. I explain. The Angel of the School, Saint Thomas, puts to himself this question: can the existence of God be the object of an act of supernatural faith? Faith being the adhesion of man to the word of God, before believing this word, is it not indispensable to know already the existence of Him who speaks? Is not the act of belief in God, consequently, an act of reason, anterior to every act of faith? And after presenting this objection, the holy doctor answers: the existence of God is for Christians the object of a true act of faith; and it is in its most supernatural sense that we pronounce the first word of our creed: I believe in God: *Credo in Deum.*[8]

In effect, let us forget for an instant all the proofs of reason that establish the existence of God, proofs so solid that the philosopher who does not yield to them is inexcusable, as the great Apostle teaches us.[9] But

here is another basis for the Christian's belief: it is the testimony God gave Himself. God has spoken, therefore He exists. He spoke formerly in diverse circumstances and in diverse manners to our fathers by the prophets; He has spoken more recently by His Son; He has spoken, and the divine accent of His voice cannot be misknown; He has spoken by miracles, by the Holy Books and by the whole ensemble of supernatural facts that establish the Jewish and Christian religion. Therefore, once more, He exists.

If you could doubt it, doubt is henceforth impossible. If you did not admit the testimony of the universe, nor the testimony of men, nor the testimony of your own intelligence, well then, the testimony of God is greater.[10] If you let yourself be deceived by the idea of I know not what mysterious power of nature, which prevented you from recognising in its constant and regular phenomena the result of a superior power, well then, behold prodigies contrary to all the laws of nature come to reveal to you a power placed above nature and its laws.

Who knows what there is beyond the stars? the impious have said. And the God of heaven has sent His messengers, the Angels; He has sent His orators, the prophets; He has sent His titles, the books inspired by Him, and, if I dare say so, His certificate of existence, miracles. There is more: on the brow of the mountain furrowed by lightnings, and from the bosom of the cloud, He Himself made His voice heard, and said: *Ego sum qui sum:* I am who am. [Exod. 3:14.] Finally, He sent His own Son, who, in proving His divinity to men, rendered an irrefutable testimony to the divinity of His Father.

And now the existence of God is no longer only an object of study and philosophy, it is an object of faith and of revealed science. And now, if the atheist of infidel nations was inexcusable, I understand the energetic word of Bossuet, who declares that "when, in the light of Christianity, one is discovered, the meeting must be esteemed unhappy and abominable."

So, as I said at the beginning, my brethren, there scarcely exists in our midst a reasoned and reflective atheism. The man who has reason to fear God may well desire that God should not be; he may say it in his heart, but he does not succeed in saying it with conviction, and his reason is never entirely persuaded. For the honour of my century, I wish to believe it, today as in the time of Saint Augustine, atheists are a very rare species of men: *Rarum hominum genus.* But alas! the number of those who live as if they did not believe in God is unhappily infinite. This leads me to my second consideration.

II. It is not enough, says Saint Augustine, to believe a God: *Credere Deum;* we are commanded to believe in God: *Credere in Deum;* that is to say that, recognising the existence of the sovereign Being, we have duties to fulfil toward Him.

I believe in God: *Credo in Deum.* Therefore I lower my intelligence before the word of God; therefore I subject my will to the will of God; therefore I recognise the law of God as the rule of my actions. *Credo in Deum:* I believe in God. Therefore I bend the knee before the incontestable superiority of God; therefore I bow before His majesty; therefore I present to Him the humble tribute of my adorations and prayer. If it is a question of men, my fellows, a sentiment of pride or envy may prevent me from lowering myself before them, because I think myself their equal. If it is a question of God, this pride, this envy would be absurd and ridiculous. It is so evident that, whatever I do, God is and will be eternally above me! *Credo in Deum:* I believe in God. Therefore I think at least sometimes of God, for to recognise the existence of God, and not judge Him worthy to occupy a single instant of my thought, would be a revolting outrage toward God. And I do not know whether this practical atheism would not be still more guilty than reasoned atheism.

Now, my brethren, this kind of atheism, it must be recognised, yes, it is the distinctive character of our epoch. God has ceased to be among us an object of contestation only to become an object of indifference; to the most frightful of all negations has succeeded the most frightening of all omissions. I consider the private and individual life of a great number of my brethren, I consider society in its ensemble and constitution; and I see that, for individuals as for the public thing, God is as if He were not. The accusation is grave; unhappily it

is only too easy to prove it.

My brother, you who hear me, assuredly you have a horror of atheism, and if I were to accuse you of not believing in God, you would repel this calumny with energy. But tell me, from which of your works, from which of your words do you wish me to conclude, and above all that the multitude around you may conclude, that you really believe in God? To admit the existence of God, and to testify that one does not busy oneself with Him, that one thinks one owes Him nothing, that one judges oneself a perfectly honest man and that one violates no rule of justice by rendering Him nothing, doing nothing for Him, is that what you call believing in God?

You believe in God, my brother; well, there is near your dwelling a temple, a magnificent temple, built in honour of God, built by the active and generous faith of your fathers, who believed in God, and who have left proofs of it after them. You believe in God, my brother; well, there is among the days one day each week which all who have believed in God, in all times and over all the earth, have employed in the worship of God. There, in this temple, on this consecrated day, one still sees faithful adorers of the true God assemble. You believe in God, my brother, doubtless you are in their midst; doubtless you come there at least sometimes. But no, I seek you there in vain, you are not there, you come there almost never. Many of your fellow citizens have not met you there a single time.

Ah! perhaps if I followed you into the secret of your more hidden and intimate life, there perhaps I should find indications, certain testimonies of your belief. My brother, tell me that your companion’s eye has seen you sometimes in the morning prostrate before the divine Majesty; tell me that your child’s ear has sometimes caught the accent of your prayer; tell me that your servants, those who are witnesses of all your actions, all your movements, have acquired the certain proof that you profess sentiments of respect and confidence toward the supreme Being. Tell me that at least, my brother; but no, your frankness refuses it, and your conscience tells you that even in the eyes of those who are most familiar with you, you do nothing that shows God and justifies your belief.

In default of your works, at least, my brother, show me God in your words. You believe in God, that is, you believe in a father; now one does not spend one’s life without speaking of one’s father. You believe in God, that is, you believe in a friend; now there is no sweeter pastime than to repeat the name of one’s friend. You believe in God, that is, you believe in a benefactor from whom you hold everything; now it is only the ungrateful who never speak of their benefactor. And you, my brother, you are not ungrateful, I have often experienced it. If the name of a family that has shown itself obliging toward you, that welcomed you with kindness in your youth, is pronounced before you, at once the most sensitive fibre of your heart is moved, and it is in a voice softened that you repeat this name, object of your eternal gratitude.

Now, since you believe in God, the tenderest of fathers, the most faithful of friends, the most generous of benefactors, my brother, you do sometimes speak of God, do you not? I should like to hear this name come from your lips. You know how to pronounce it, do you not? Ah! here again you are obliged to avow it to me. Days, months, whole years pass without your articulating a single time the name of God. Never perhaps has anyone heard this name come from your mouth; unless, shall I say it! unless in your moments of anger it has been heard mingled with your words of passion and blasphemy.

What then? you believe in God, and you never speak of God! and you do not suffer anyone to speak to you of Him! I know it, it is with discretion, not on every occasion, that this sacred name must be mingled in the commerce of life. Each thing must be in its place; but at least every essential thing must have a place. Now tell me, during a long succession of days and years, could your best friend seize a single opportune circumstance to speak of God in your presence? Let this divine name be cast into the conversation, at once astonishment manifests itself, silence is the only answer, embarrassment begins, the tone cools, relations are more constrained, and God, who is the sole bond of true friendship, becomes the solvent of yours.

My brother, what to conclude from that? I have said it, and I do not retract: no, you are not an atheist by system, by examination, but you are one by habit, by routine. You did not draw atheism from books, but it has established itself triumphant in your manners. Whatever you think in this regard, it is certain that your works say: I do not believe in God. Now this is the disorder to which an end must be put; and since God is something in your mind, He must be something in your life. You owe it to God, whom you have too long forsaken, you owe it to yourself, whose heart suffers a frightful void; and you owe it also to society, in order to contribute to reform in it this same practical atheism that has too long manifested itself in you.

For, my brethren, if we consider society, we are not long in recognising that this ice of practical atheism of which I speak is still more flagrant there than in the life of private persons. Many men of our century still pay God the domestic and individual tribute; every public and social tribute is refused Him. I know it, when a rash voice, thinking to state only the fact and the right today recognised, dared to say in the sanctuary of justice that the French law is atheist and must be so, the magistracy protested against this assertion; and in this the magistracy did itself honour, for it is better to fail in logic than to admit in so absolute a form the rigorous consequences of a sacrilegious principle.[11]

However, the corrective has come singularly near to the assertion combated. The law is not atheist, it was answered, but it is incompetent. What? in the nineteenth century, society is incompetent to pronounce on the existence of God? But this declaration of incompetence, what is it other than the atheism of omission and indifference, in place of the atheism of affirmation and principle? And this law, which makes profession of neutrality and abstraction concerning the existence of God, on what foundation will it establish its own authority? In permitting me not to recognise God, does it not authorise me to misknow it itself? We did not wish, you tell me, to put dogma in the law. And I answer you: If the dogma of the existence of God is not in the law, the reason of the law is no longer found in the law; and the law is only a word, it is only a chimera.

So, my brethren, by its own avowal, present society has no authentic and recognised dogma, not even that of the existence of God. And as it has no dogma, by a quite natural consequence it has no worship. Whence it results that, without denying divinity, society governs itself as if divinity did not exist: which gives the Majesty of heaven quite exactly the same rank that certain modern systems have assigned to the majesties of earth, which are permitted to sit on a throne, but must not govern.

Now, my brethren, heaven and earth shall pass away, but there is a word that shall never pass away, and it is the word of the Holy Spirit who said: that God will reign, in the true sense of the word, and that He will reign in spite of the proud tumult of peoples: *Quoniam regnavit Deus, irascantur populi.* [The Lord hath reigned, let the people be angry. (Ps. 98:1.)] He will reign; and if He does not reign by the benefits inseparable from His presence, He will reign by the calamities inseparable from His absence.

O France, more than fifty years have elapsed since the name of God went out for the first time from the constitution. Now I adjure you today to show me the fruits of this half-century of experience. I lend my ear and I hear a confused murmur bursting out on all sides. O my country, I do not judge you rashly, since I judge you by your own words: *Ex ore tuo te judico.* [Out of thy own mouth I judge thee. (Luke 19:22.)] There is no more morality, no more justice; everything goes, everything declines, everything is to be remade; society needs a general reform: such is the avowal that escapes from all points of the country. Behold then the results, behold then the progress obtained, since we gave God the exclusion.

There is no more public morality, no more justice, you say. These results astonish you; it was easy to foresee them. Did not a sage of paganism write that a city would be built more easily in the air than a society without God? Did not the Roman orator say that with respect for divinity disappear good faith, the security of commerce, and the most excellent of all virtues, which is justice? Did not the Holy Spirit declare, in a more energetic language, that wherever the impious reign men have nothing to hope for but ruins: *Regnantibus impiis, ruinae hominum?* [When the wicked reign, men are ruined. (Prov. 28:28.)][12]

You add: everything goes, everything declines. That again astonishes you; it would have been easy to foresee, if you had ever read that magnificent page in which a great king, inspired by God, recounts the works of atheism. Listen: The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God. The Lord looked down from heaven to see if there be any that understand and seek God: *Ut videat si est intelligens aut requirens Deum.* He perceived only a generation that does not call upon Him: *Dominum non invocaverunt.* Now this generation of men, here is what will have signalled its passage on earth: it devoured the people as a morsel of bread, and gave the world only the spectacle of a great uselessness: *Simul inutiles facti sunt.* [They are become unprofitable together. (Ps. 13:1–4.)]

Finally, I hear you say again that an immense void has been made in society. I believe it well; it is all the place that belongs to God that is vacant. A general reform is necessary, you conclude. Yes indeed, I am of your opinion, it must be reformed, reformed entire, in its heads and members, this society which no longer believes in God, or which at least governs itself as if it did not believe; and the first article of the programme of reform must be the first article of the creed: I believe in God: *Credo in Deum.* Teach again, teach again all this generation of men to say: I believe in God, and to live conformably to this belief. On this title the reform will be efficacious and salutary. Otherwise, I shall say that you signal the evil and do not approach the remedy. It is not enough to have invented a new Trisagion, and to say again eternally three times nothing; say rather once: God, and the face of society will be renewed.

I take up this whole discourse again in a few words, my brethren. There is a God: it is the cry of all nature, it is the cry of humanity, it is the cry of my reason and my heart, it is the cry of God Himself.

I have interrogated the heavens, and they answered me: there is a God. I have interrogated the earth and the seas; they answered me: there is a God. Every creature took a voice to tell me: there is a God. If I read on the brow of the stars, I should find there the name of God; if I opened the calyx of a flower, I should find there the name of God. God, God, God; all the echoes of the created world answered one another to repeat: God.

And I interrogated my fellows in the history of all past centuries, and all answered me: God. In the morning they prostrated themselves to say: God, and in the evening they knelt again and said: God. And a thousand altars, and a thousand temples raised by their hands said to me: God. And those even who seemed most indifferent, in the instant of sorrow raised their arms and eyes toward heaven and said: God. And the wicked themselves, amid their blasphemies, said still: God. God, God, God; all the echoes of humanity answered one another to repeat: God.

And I interrogated myself, and all my faculties answered: God. My lips said of themselves: God. If I sought in myself the principle of my being and the source of my reason, a voice said to me: God. If I asked the aim and end of my existence, this voice said still: God. If I consulted the desires and aspirations of my soul, it said: God. God, God, God… And all the fibres of my heart were animated, and all the echoes of my being answered one another to repeat: God.

Finally, I interrogated God Himself, and He answered me by naming Himself, and He told me the mystery of His existence, the most intimate secrets of His nature. And the patriarchs and the prophets, and the royal psalmist, and the books of the Wise Man, and Jesus and His evangelists, and the pontiffs and the doctors told me: God. God, God, God… And from Eden to Sinai, and from the manger to Calvary, and from Tabor to Olivet, a thousand supernatural echoes answered one another in emulation to repeat: God.

And then I interrogated my life, I interrogated my actions; and for the first time the answer was slow in coming. Yes, I confess it, a blasphemous language, a deicide word seemed to come from my works. Too often my conduct has been that of the atheist; too often I have lived as if God were not. That is the crime of my epoch, and I have shared in it. What the barbarians of Africa asked themselves on seeing the French abstain from all public worship, one would have had to ask until now with regard to me: *Ubi est Deus eorum?* Where then is their God? those infidels said to one another.[13]

But today, O my God, today that I have entered into myself, I wish to render You in my existence the place that You should always have occupied in it. I do not wish only to recognise You as the God of the universe, I wish You to be mine. Now You told me so in a language that fills me with hope: On whatever day I begin to call upon You, I shall experience that You are always my God: *In quacumque die invocavero te, ecce cognovi quia Deus meus es tu.* [In what day soever I shall call upon thee, behold I know that thou art my God. (Ps. 55:10.)] This is what I wish you, my brethren, with the blessing of Monseigneur (1).[14]

Translator's notes

1. The quotations from Bossuet, Plutarch, Augustine and "saint Denys" are as the preacher gives them (the "Denys" attribution of Job 38:37 is odd and unexplained). The allusions to Lalande's *Dictionnaire des athées*, to Galen, and to Plutarch and Cicero are the preacher's unnamed references, identified by me and so marked.

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[1] The heading gives only "(1847)"; the third Sunday of Advent in 1847 was 12 December.

[2] Bossuet, *Oraison funèbre de Henriette-Marie de France*? or the *Élévations*? The passage is as the preacher gives it; I have not traced it.

[3] The allusion is evidently to Lalande's supplement to Sylvain Maréchal's *Dictionnaire des athées* (1800); the preacher names no one.

[4] Galen is meant ("the most illustrious master"); the preacher does not name him.

[5] The preacher gives "saint Denys"; I do not know which author is meant. The Latin is Job 38:37.

[6] Plutarch, *Adversus Colotem* 31 (1125 D–E), as the preacher gives it.

[7] The sentiment is Cicero's (*Tusc.* I, 39: "errare malo cum Platone"); the preacher attributes it to Augustine, which I could not confirm.

[8] Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II-II, q. 2, a. 2, ad 1 (and q. 1, a. 5); the sense is as the preacher gives it.

[9] Rom. 1:20.

[10] Cf. 1 John 5:9.

[11] The preacher does not name the advocate or the case.

[12] Plutarch (*Adversus Colotem*) and Cicero (*De natura deorum* I, 4) are meant; the preacher does not name them.

[13] The allusion is to the French in Algeria. "Where is their God?" echoes Ps. 78:10 and Joel 2:17.

[14] (1) Cf. Appendix I: p. 28, n° 47. (Editor's note.)

n° 41. Third Sermon on the Creed, for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

Fourth Sunday of Advent (1847).[1]

Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem. [I believe in one God, the Father almighty.]

My Lord, as invariable and unanimous as has been the accord of all peoples and all centuries concerning the dogma of the existence of God, so divided have minds been concerning the nature and the most essential attributes of divinity. When we asked the human race whether there is a God, the human race answered us by a clear and precise affirmation. But if we ask it today what God is, the human race will answer us only by incoherent and contradictory opinions. Like those torches which cast all their brilliance on the threshold and vestibule of a great edifice, and which let only vague and uncertain gleams reach the shadowy interior of the dwelling, the torch of reason grows dim as soon as we seek to penetrate with its sole help into the more intimate sanctuary of the knowledge of God.

Doubtless the human mind, if it were not enslaved by the interest of the passions, would find in itself precious notions of the divine nature. It is not in vain that the luminous seal of the face of God has been impressed on our soul, created in the image and likeness of its author. But what matters what it would be capable of, supposing a different order of things, if, in its present state, experience has proved that, deprived of the help of revelation, man has known only how to disfigure divinity in a thousand ways, and lend it all the colours and forms which please his passions and can justify them?

Witness of the monstrous errors spread over the rest of the earth, the Prophet-King restricts to Judea the knowledge of God: *Notus in Judaea Deus.* [In Judah God is known. (Ps. 75:2.)] And since the Son of God came upon the earth, one may say again that all philosophy that has abstracted from the evangelical doctrine, and has not been contained by the authority of the Church, has been quick to go astray and lose itself in guilty systems and opinions injurious to the divinity: to such a degree that I shall not be found rash if I affirm that today, in the nineteenth century, it would be impossible, outside the Church, with all the philosophical books of the men of our time, to form, touching the supreme Being, an idea truly worthy of Him. That is why the great Bossuet applied to the Church of the new law, with far more justice than to the Synagogue, the word of the holy King: *Notus in Judaea Deus:* God is truly known only in the Church.

Hold for indubitable, added the learned pontiff, leaning on the word of Tertullian, that the Church is the sole universal temple of God: *Catholicum Dei templum;* that is, the only school where all the divine attributes are taught as completely, as luminously as it has pleased God to reveal them to us. And this incomparable theologian remarks that the whole study of the mysteries, miracles, precepts and sacraments of the Gospel bears in the Church precisely the name of theology, which means science of God, seeing that we never know fully either His essence or His attributes, if we do not know them in all the means by which He willed to discover them to us.

It would be therefore, my brethren, the whole of theology that would have to be fathomed to arrive at an appreciation, as extended as possible, of the divine perfections. And as "the treatise would be immense," says Bossuet again, we should have the resource of "referring you in a word to the faith of the Church, which is the universal temple of God: *Catholicum Dei templum,*" if the Church herself had not made choice, in her creed, of some divine attributes which apparently it is more useful for us to know, since she thought fit to enounce them, while passing over in silence so great a number of others.

I believe in one God, Father almighty: the unity of God, the paternal goodness of God, the omnipotence of God, such will be the object of this talk. Let us ask the assistance of the holy Mother of God. *Ave Maria.*

I. I believe in one God: *Credo in unum Deum.* The author of the *Genius of Christianity* remarks, and rightly, that neither among the Greeks nor among the Romans, in no country, civilised or barbarous, had there ever been heard an assembly of men profess publicly and solemnly the dogma of the unity of God. It is by the Christian creed that this truth, so simple in appearance, and nevertheless misknown by the universe for so many thousands of years, has so identified itself with our minds that we no longer understand polytheism today except as an absurdity. And I wish to enter here into some details, my brethren, that we may all know how much we are indebted to our creed, and from what errors as monstrous as universal it has drawn and preserved us: interrogate the smallest child of this assembly, and ask him whether there exists one God or several. Without hesitating he answers you at once: No, there is only one God, and there cannot be several. There is only one God: this is a dogmatic affirmation, and if need be the child, I mean one whose intelligence is a little developed and who has followed the whole course of the catechumenate, the child is going to produce for you the authorities on which this affirmation rests. There is only one God, and there cannot be several: these last words contain a philosophical assertion in support of the dogma enounced, and, if you wish, the same child is going to explain the reasonings that justify this assertion. There is only one God: the young Christian will tell you that this is written in his creed, and that on that account he believes it so; that it is written also at the head of the first table of the law given to men on Sinai, that all the pages of the Holy Books enounce this fundamental truth.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God. I am the Lord, and there is none other beside me. We know, says Saint Paul, that an idol is nothing, and that there is no other God but one God: *Scimus quia nihil est idolum in mundo, et quia nullus est Deus nisi unus.* [1 Cor. 8:4.] There is only one God, and there cannot be several: here the child becomes a philosopher, after showing himself a theologian. There cannot be several: for, he says to you, God is necessarily the infinite Being, the being who has no bounds; now if there were

several gods, there would be several infinites; but several infinites are impossible, for the first infinite would cease where another infinite distinct from it began. Therefore, he concludes, expressing himself, without knowing it, like Tertullian: either there is no God, that is, no infinite, or there is only one: *Aut Deus nullus, aut unus est.* [either there is no God, or there is one] *Credo in unum Deum:* I believe in one God: my faith and my reason are in accord on this article of my creed.

Behold then, my brethren, how Christian childhood decides every day, dogmatically and philosophically, a question that the most eminent men of paganism never approached without their heads turning, or courage failing them to profess openly their belief. Invite the wise Socrates or the divine Plato, invite Cicero the most becoming of philosophers, or Varro the most erudite of the writers of Rome, to come and sit beside our young initiates on the benches of Christian doctrine; interrogate them in their turn. The erudition of the Roman will answer you that in fact the Capitol contains at least twenty thousand gods, whose worship the ordinances of the Senate have authorised; and all four will answer in concert that in truth, in principle, it seems difficult to admit the multiplicity of gods, but that society must not be troubled by dangerous and importunate innovations, and that in matter of religion one must follow the people.

In effect, on leaving their talks and lessons, in which they will have dissertated more or less clearly on the divine unity, you will see them sacrifice with the vulgar and burn their incense with that of the multitude, before all altars indiscriminately; and if the most illustrious among them, victim of his lights, is condemned by the people to drink the hemlock, he himself will disavow, before dying, the pretended purity of his doctrine, and will give satisfaction to one of those divinities to which popular justice offers his life as a holocaust. And Socrates, undergoing the last torture, will himself profane his martyrdom and say: I do not believe in one God. There is paganism at its purest. Therefore to our creed, and to our creed alone, belongs this profession of faith that excludes idolatry: *Credo in unum Deum.* Therefore outside our creed God was not known by His creatures, and, by a revolting outrage, they attributed to others than Him what belongs to Him alone. But see the practical consequences, and it is there above all that I wished to come.

One asks how it could come about that, the unity of God being so conformable to reason, men so easily misknew this truth; and how idolatry and polytheism, being on the contrary so manifestly opposed to reason, men showed so much inclination toward this error, the most durable of all in the bosom of humanity. My brethren, here is the answer. If nothing is more conformable to reason than the dogma of the divine unity, nothing also is more contrary to the passions; and if nothing is more contrary to reason than idolatry, nothing is more accommodated to the desire of the passions. I explain.

An ancient philosopher perfectly characterised man when he defined him by those two words that can be translated only with circumlocution: *Animal religiosum.* Man has a body, senses, and on that side he is bent toward the earth, and shares in the ignoble inclinations of the brute. But man has a soul, a mind, a heart, and on that side invincible instincts and a mysterious need raise him toward God. Whatever man does, there will always remain in him sensual or animal tendencies, and religious or celestial tendencies. He will never wholly silence either. Hence, in the very depth of man’s nature, a conflict, a struggle. And hence also the disposition of man to take the side of idolatry, the sole means of bringing about a compromise, a capitulation, between the two extreme passions of his nature.

In effect, if the divinity toward which the religious instinct of man is carried, instead of being the one and consequently spiritual God, who demands the worship of the spirit and the repression of the senses, becomes an assemblage of divinities themselves made of flesh and blood, of matter and mud, then man can grant to his religious bent a just satisfaction without his baser bents being thwarted. To reconcile religion with vice by inventing vicious divinities, such is the infernal secret, the satanic art by means of which the enemy of the human race succeeded in establishing insolently his empire over the greater part of the globe for centuries.

That is what Bossuet says. Idolatry appears to us today weakness itself, and we have difficulty understanding that so much force was needed to destroy it. But one does not think that all the senses, all the passions, all the interests fought for idolatry. It was made for pleasure; amusements, spectacles and finally licence itself made a part of divine worship. The feasts were only games; and there was no place in human life from which modesty was banished with more care than it was from the mysteries of religion. In impiety man is not tranquil; as he finds in himself an inextinguishable sentiment of religion, the absence of all religious act is a source of remorse. In the bosom of idolatry, on the contrary, man immolated victims, burned incense, took part in public worship, in a word, he satisfied the needs of his religious nature; and divinity, on its side, having made itself accomplice of his passions, he found on the very altar where he carried his offering the sanction of all his vices.

Thus I understand what the Holy Spirit said, that idolatry is the principle, "the development and consummation of all the most abominable things."[2] Preach then morality to a people who honour as their gods monsters of immorality. Preach then temperance to a people who honour as their gods monsters of debauch. Preach then probity to a people who have placed on their altars thieving gods. In a word, ask then the combats and triumphs of the spirit of a people who have deified and who adore matter. But, on the contrary, bring this people back to the pure and primitive idea of divinity. Teach it to believe in one God, a sovereign, holy and perfect God; "then," says Bossuet, "then vanish all the idols, both those that were adored on altars and those that each served in his heart. These had raised up the others, which in their turn maintained them."

My brethren, because the Christian creed has dethroned idolatry, on that account, in spite of the indifference and all the vices of our modern societies, morality is and will always be infinitely more respected among us than among pagan peoples. We, at least, if we yield to our passions, know that in that we put ourselves in opposition to God. The day we return to a religious thought, we find in the temple, on the altar, the rule that condemns us, or according to which we must reform ourselves. For the pagan, on the contrary, disorder came precisely from what should have served him as rule, and instead of finding in his religion a corrective, he met there only a stimulant of his disorders. Be blessed then a thousand times, O my God, that You made us be born in the bosom of truth, that You did not cast us amid those unhappy peoples for whom all is God except God Himself. Be blessed that it is given us to profess clearly what so many such enlightened centuries, so many such distinguished intelligences ignored: *Credo in unum Deum:* I believe in one God.

I believe in You alone, O my God, but should I not be one of those Samaritans of whom there is mention in the fourth book of Kings, who knew the true God and nevertheless served their idols?[3] My brethren, we believe in one God, but do we not serve several gods? We say with our mouth: I believe in one God; and does not our heart give an at least equal place to that idol called money? to that other idol called voluptuousness? to that other idol called pride? We say: I believe in one God; it is true, but that God is ourselves. That is too often our practical creed. It is by that we have become idolaters again. We refer everything to ourselves, we make ourselves the central and sole point toward which all must converge. Alas! and less indulgent than the God of heaven, who has seen tranquilly in all centuries so many unworthy rivals placed on altars which should have belonged to Him alone, we, a sad and insignificant divinity, we want for ourselves an altar where none other may ascend or dare to place himself beside us. Ah! my brethren, let us reform our life by our belief. And since we believe in only one God, the God of heaven, let us live for only one God, and let Him have henceforth our undivided heart. Does He not belong to Him entire, since He is our Father? This is the object of a second consideration.

II. *Credo in Deum Patrem:* I believe in God the Father. If I ask the catechisms of the ancient doctors, or the catechism of the great Bossuet, what must be understood by this word Father, they answer me in the first place that this word applies to the whole divine nature, and signifies that God, who is the author of all things, is animated toward His creatures with a wholly paternal goodness; and they answer me in the second place

that this word applies in particular to the first of the divine persons, who begot a Son from all eternity. It does not enter into my design, my brethren, to speak to you today of the mystery of the divine persons; I have therefore not to speak to you of God as He is the Father of the uncreated Word, but of God as He is our Father: *Credo in Deum Patrem.*

Ah! how encouraging for my heart is this first quality attributed to God. There is a God: I cannot doubt it. The universe took a voice to tell me so; humanity joined its voice to that of the material world, and the inmost powers of my soul spoke like creation, like the whole of humanity. There is a God: but my first question is to know whether this God is good, whether He is indulgent. Do not speak to me first of His immensity, His power, His justice; these are precisely the divine attributes that frighten me, and of which I shall dare to think only after you have reassured me about His goodness.

There is a God: but, by one and the same act of faith, the Church teaches me to believe in the existence and in the paternal goodness of this supreme Being: *Credo in Deum Patrem.* O man, your first smile upon this earth was for the authors of your days; what you learned to love first was your father and your mother, because the first love of which you felt the effects was paternal love, maternal love. Well then, O child of man and woman, when religion approaches you with her creed, the first thing she asks you to believe is that above your father, above your mother, there is in the heavens another Father from whom all fatherhood proceeds. And if a single drop fallen from that ocean into the heart of your father, into the heart of your mother, can produce there so much love, so much devotion, what are we to think of the devotion and the love that dwell in that infinite abyss of the divine fatherhood? What happiness, then, to be able to say: *Credo in Deum Patrem:* I believe in God the Father!

I address you again, O son of man and of woman. The longer you have lived, the more you have recognised that no other heart on earth held toward you such treasures of indulgence and pardon as the heart of your father and your mother. Others loved you for your good qualities, when they did not hate you on account of them. But if you chanced to forget some one of the laws of probity and honour, at once all withdrew from you. There remained to you on earth but one refuge, one fortress where love was impregnable: the heart of your father and mother. Yes, the criminal who has incurred the sentence of death, and whom society cuts off from its bosom on account of some great crime, that man whom the whole country execrates and curses, well! there is still one tribunal before which he finds grace, there are two beings who are still moved with tenderness over him, two beings who, while blaming his crime, still appreciate qualities he has not lost; in a word, this great culprit is still somewhere an object of love. Where, then? Go, lay your ear upon the breast of his father and of his mother, and listen under the impression of what sentiment those hearts are beating. The constancy, the energy of love of human fatherhood goes as far as that.

O man, O sinner man, when religion asks you to believe in God, she asks you to believe in a Father, that is, in a love a thousand times more inexhaustible than all created loves. You are perhaps a horror to yourself, my brother, you no longer esteem yourself; well, you are commanded to believe in a Father who still loves you, who still esteems you: who loves you because He is a father and a father always loves; who esteems you because He is just and because, beside your crime, He sees in the past reasons for excuse, in the present qualities that persevere. What depth of meaning, therefore, what infinite ground of confidence in this first exclamation of our creed: I believe in God the Father: *Credo in Deum Patrem!*

Did not Saint John, the disciple of love, allude to this first article of the Christian creed when he said: *Et nos cognovimus, et credidimus charitati?* [And we have known, and have believed the charity (1 John 4:16).] We have known; and what then is the fruit of our knowledge? We have known: *Et nos cognovimus,* and we have believed in love, in the charity of God for His creature: *Et credidimus charitati quam habet Deus in nobis.* [and have believed the charity which God hath to us.] Let each of you, my brethren, go back with me to his earliest childhood memories, and let us see whether it is not enveloped, as it were, in this creed of love that the idea of God presented itself to us and grew strong in our heart.

There is a God: but the first time this great Being was named before us, was not His name, lest it should inspire us with any fear, accompanied, what do I say? preceded, by the reassuring adjective that inseparably qualifies it in the idiom of all Christian peoples: the good God? Admirable language of our mothers! An answer given in advance to the first question we should have asked; the solution of our first perplexity. Then we were made to kneel, to fold our hands, to lift our eyes to heaven, and we were made to say: Our Father who art in heaven. At the same time we were shown the crucifix: the God, the Father who is in heaven, good even to coming down among us and dying for us.

My brethren, we had nothing more to learn. The good God (why should I not say it?), the *bon Dieu;* our Father who art in heaven; the crucifix: all was there. We already possessed the whole theology of the divine goodness. That first revelation of God was a faithful and substantial summary of all that we were to learn and experience later. From the first days of our life, then, from the moment we knew anything, we believed in charity, in love: *Et nos cognovimus, et credidimus charitati,* in the charity, in the love of God our Father: *Credo in Deum Patrem.*

Soon the book of nature opened before us; then we saw, we felt for ourselves that the earth is full of the mercy of God: *Misericordia Domini plena est terra.* [The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord. (Ps. 32:5.)] Everywhere we found this great divine power revealing itself by goodness, intervening by an attentive and merciful providence. The goodness of God we admired in all nature; the sun was the mirror of that goodness; the flower was its smile. From whatever quarter the wind blew, whether it came from the west or from the dawn, it was to lay new gifts at our feet; fatherly attentions reserved for us the manna of the north winds as well as the tribute of the zephyrs. The succession of days and nights, the variety of seasons and climates, was but a word of command given to nature to vary our enjoyments. In a word, we felt that a benevolent intelligence had its eyes fixed upon us and had surrounded us with favours; and we said like David, without knowing it: *Misericordia Domini plena est terra:* the world is full of the mercy of God. We knew nature, then, and we believed in charity, in love: *Et nos cognovimus, et credidimus charitati,* in the charity, in the love of God our Father: *Credo in Deum Patrem.*

Soon also we went to visit God in His temple. Ah! if the God of nature had seemed to us good and lovable, how much better and sweeter still did we feel the God of the altars! There everything was full of the mercy of God. It was like a river of love which, taking its source at the entrance of the temple in the baptismal font, flooded the whole forecourt, and kept in every part of the edifice waters perpetually springing up, until it overflowed from the sanctuary. Ah! if ever fear gave the idea of divinity, assuredly the God who manifested Himself to us in His temple was not that God invented by terror. The chain by which He bound us to Himself was a chain wholly of love.

The holy canticles, the inspired oracles that resounded in our ears and that we delighted to repeat, were only words of love. David told us: I will sing the mercies of the Lord for ever. The Lord is merciful, and He is merciful still; His long-suffering has no bounds, and He is plenteous in mercy. Sing, sing a hymn to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever. The prophets told us: the love of God is the love of the mother who feeds her children and presses them to her bosom. Can a woman forget the fruit of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will I not forget you, saith the Lord.[4]

And the Son of God, opening His divine mouth, affirmed to us with an oath that not a hair would fall from our head without the permission of our heavenly Father. And the Church, joining her own voice to that of the inspired oracles, taught us prayers such as these, for example: O God, whose property is always to have mercy: *Deus cujus proprium est misereri et parcere.* O God, who most manifestest Thy almighty power in showing pity and pardon: *Deus qui omnipotentiam tuam parcendo maxime et miserando manifestas.*[5]

At last the voice of the holy doctors also made itself heard; and the most austere of them, those to whom history gives a more fearsome face and a harder character, still spoke in magnificent terms of the goodness of

God. Tertullian, in a famous text, told us that God finds in His own depth only goodness and love, and that when He exercises justice, it is an attribute that comes to Him from without, the sad consequence of our sin: *Deus de suo bonus, de nostro justus.* [God is good of His own, just of ours.] From the depth of his solitude, Saint Jerome added: If you can say in what manner God is, you will be able to know to what extent He is merciful, because His mercy has no other measure than His very being: *Si dicere poteris quomodo Deus est, nosse poteris quemadmodum miseretur.*

And if we have gathered the accents of some sweeter voices, if, for example, we have ever listened to the harmonious and ineffable word of Ambrose, what touching commentaries will he not have given us on some of the words of Scripture in which the divine mercy is celebrated! Hear, he told us: the Lord is merciful, and He is just, and He is merciful still: *Misericors Dominus, et justus, et miseretur.* [Ps. 114:5.] Thus the Lord first exercises mercy, exercises it long; then He tries justice for an instant; but soon He returns to mercy; so that the justice of God walks enclosed between two hedges of mercy: *Gemino septo interclusa misericordia.*

We have therefore known the Lord in His temple, we have known Him in His holy Books, we have known Him in the chants of His Church, we have known Him in the teachings of His doctors: *Et nos cognovimus;* and after going to all these schools, the result is that we have believed in charity, in love: *Et nos cognovimus, et credidimus charitati,* in the charity, in the love of God our Father: *Credo in Deum Patrem.*

Thus, my brethren, ever since we have been in this world, all that we have seen, all that we have heard, all that we have felt, has come to strengthen the first article of our creed: I believe in God the Father. Alas! even though we had not yet lived much, we have already recognised by experience the depth of the word of Jesus Christ when He said that there is none good but God: *Nemo bonus, nisi Deus.* [Luke 18:19.] Yes, every goodness other than the goodness of God has its limits; the moment comes when it fails; either it has found its boundary, or it has turned elsewhere. I have considered every other love, and I have believed in the love of God: *Et nos cognovimus, et credidimus charitati.*

Now, my very dear brethren, since nothing is better proved to us than the paternal goodness of God, that is, His infinite, inexhaustible goodness, ah! shall we believe in that goodness without casting ourselves into His arms? *Credo in Deum Patrem.*

I believe in a God who is my Father. Therefore I may hope all things, expect all things from this sovereign Being, the more so as His paternal love is seconded by a power without bounds: this would be the object of a third consideration; I shall give only a few words to your reflections.

III. *Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem:* I believe in one God, the Father almighty. I shall not show you at this moment, my brethren, the almighty God exercising His empire over the material world that came forth from His hands, and which He governs by constant laws whose course He alone can change or suspend. To command inert nature is not the most surprising effort of sovereign power. But to lead and govern the mind and heart of men, to maintain and make prevail His eternal design without thwarting the free will of the creatures who must concur in it, to make of the obstacle a means, and, as the final result, to bring about good even by evil: that is the masterpiece, the miracle, and, if I may allow myself a familiar expression, the *tour de force* of divine omnipotence.

Man, who was born yesterday and will die tomorrow, man, placed within a narrow horizon, who judges things only under the impression of the present moment, man, at the sight of what he calls the injustices of fate, at the sight of crime prosperous and virtue oppressed, has perhaps more than once asked himself: *Ubi est Deus eorum?* [Where is their God? (Ps. 78:10.)] Is there then a God in the heavens? What is divine omnipotence doing? How reconcile the idea of the existence of an infinitely perfect and almighty Being with all the disorders that burst forth in this world? *Ubi est Deus eorum?*

Wait, wait, the Holy Spirit says to you; it is precisely because He has the consciousness of His strength and power that God does not hurry. God is patient, says Saint Augustine, first because He is good: who knows whether the sinner will not repent and merit pardon? God is patient because He is just: do you not know that this culprit was not disinherited of all virtue, and that the just Judge owed him at least a few days of temporal prosperity, as a reward, such as it is, for those human qualities? Finally God is patient because He is eternal: if it happens that the guilty man is buried in the mantle of his prosperity, do not cry scandal;

for at that very instant he appears before the dread Judge, and the bolts of the eternal prison are about to close upon him. Besides, it is rarely to His eternity that God commits the mystery of His justice; divine justice almost always acquits itself in time. I have seen, said King David, I have seen the impious exalted above the cedars of Lebanon; his feet rested on a throne, and his head bore the fairest crown of the universe. I passed by, and he was no more; his very trace had disappeared.[6] Such are the blows of divine omnipotence; what the day before was incredible, impossible, costs it but a day: *Credo in Deum omnipotentem.*

And if this omnipotence is always exercised in the end against the guilty, it is no less manifested to the advantage of the just, for whose profit it knows how to turn evil itself. If there is a God, Augustine asked himself, when he was not yet Christian enough to be truly a philosopher, if there is a God, whence comes it that evil exists? *Si Deus est, unde malum?* A thorny question, which long embarrassed his mind, but to which he has since replied in a thousand places in his works.

If there is a God, this God, in spite of His omnipotence, could not do the impossible, and consequently could not create a being at once capable of meriting and incapable of sinning, merit necessarily supposing liberty, and the essence of liberty consisting in the power of obeying or not obeying the law. Human liberty comes from God, and it is good; sin, which is the bad use of this liberty, comes from man, and is imputable to him alone. God is therefore not the author of evil, He is not the author of sin. But since evil and sin exist, God still exercises His omnipotence upon them by the use He knows how to make of them. God is so good, Saint Augustine tells us, that He makes use for good of the worst works of men, just as they make use of the finest gifts of God for evil. God uses guilty wills holily, just as those wills use excellent things criminally.

And to what particular ends can divine omnipotence make evil serve? Again it is Saint Augustine who will tell us. God uses the perversity of the wicked to exercise and purify the good. God permits the triumph of the impious only so far as He knows it to be expedient and sufficient to admonish and exercise His holy house, the Church: *Deus tantum malos permittit esse, quantum novit expedire atque sufficere admonendae atque exercendae sanctae domui suae.* God, says the same holy doctor always, God knows where He places the sinner in this world, as the painter knows where he places the shadow in a picture: *Deus scit ubi ponat peccatorem, haud secus ac pictor ubi ponat nigrum colorem.*

In a word, concludes that great man, the whole universe, with the whole succession of the centuries, is a crucible: *Mundus totus, forma aurificis;* there the just are like gold: *Ibi justi tanquam aurum;* the impious like straw: *Impii tanquam palea;* tribulation is the fire: *Tribulatio ignis;* and God is the supreme and universal workman: *Deus sicut aurifex.*[7]

O you, then, whose faith is disconcerted and whose hope is overthrown at reading this or that page of human history where nothing seems to show itself but a blind or hostile fatality, wait, wait till Providence has turned the leaf. When one more page has been written by the finger of God, you will prostrate yourselves on both knees, and you will say with your creed: I believe in one God, the Father almighty: *Credo in Deum, Patrem omnipotentem.*

O almighty God, hear, grant the prayer that Your holy Church addresses to You at this moment by my mouth! O almighty God, who love above all to manifest Your power in exercising pardon and mercy, ah! in the difficult days in which we are placed, put, put more than ever Your omnipotence at the service, at the orders, of Your love; let Your arm be the instrument of Your heart! May the men who have long forgotten

and misknown You, O my God, and who have proudly set themselves upon the altar from which they had cast You down; may those men abase themselves at last at Your feet, O only living and true God, only God whose glory is eternal, and may they humbly acknowledge that it does not become mortals to dream for themselves of divine pretensions! for, as a poet of our century has said, if God is not God, which of us will be able to be?

Yes, Lord, with Your almighty arm bring back, bring back to You the heart of men that had turned away from You; bring back our brethren by the path of penance and compunction; and from this day set them upon the road that is to lead them to the Eucharistic table, at the end of this Lenten course. This, my brethren, is the grace I wish you, with the blessing of My Lord.[8]

Translator's notes

1. The "Notus in Judaea Deus" attribution to Bossuet and the quotations from Tertullian, Jerome, Ambrose and Augustine are as the preacher gives them; not collated. The "poet of our century" is not named in the text.

2. The closing footnote's page reference (Appendix I, p. 28, n° 48) is as printed. The appendix (T. II, n° 46) confirms the date, 19 December 1847, and the reason the sermon was not preached: "Not preached, on account of indisposition."

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[1] The date line reads "(1847)": the fourth Sunday of Advent fell on 19 December 1847. The editor's note (1) to the title reads: "A note of M. l'abbé Pie informs us that this sermon was not preached," and then breaks off; the Appendix (T. II, n° 46, entry 48) adds "on account of indisposition."

[2] Cf. Wisd. 14:27 (Douay): "For the worship of abominable idols is the cause, and the beginning, and end of all evil." The preacher's quotation marks and the citation of Bossuet that follow are as printed.

[3] 4 Kings (2 Kings) 17:33.

[4] Pss. 88:2; 135:1; Is. 49:15.

[5] Both are familiar collects of the Roman Missal; the Latin is as printed.

[6] Ps. 36:35–36.

[7] The Latin sentences are given as the preacher prints them; they are not collated against Augustine.

[8] Cf. Appendix I: p. 28, n° 48.

n° 42. Sermon for the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul

Preached at the convent of the Sisters of Saint Paul at Chartres, 25 January 1848.

Non vos me elegistis; sed ego elegi vos, et posui vos ut eatis, et fructum afferatis, et fructus vester maneat. [You have not chosen me: but I have chosen you, and have appointed you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain. (John 15:16.)]

My Sisters, such are the magnificent and divine words by which the Saviour of men, Jesus Christ, taught His disciples the whole nobility and value of the apostolate to which He had called them. The Church has chosen these words to make of them the Gospel of this solemnity of the Conversion of the great Apostle; for who more than he has been the object of an election as gratuitous as it was miraculous? who more than he has been appointed to go and bear fruit, lasting and permanent fruit?

These words, my Sisters, I come to apply to yourselves; for do not think that it is by chance, and without a secret view of Providence, that your precious congregation has been placed under the patronage of an Apostle, of the Apostle par excellence. Nothing is done in the Church save by the disposition of the heavenly Father. And it will be easy for me to show you today that, being daughters of Saint Paul, you are destined to reproduce some of the wonders of his apostolate. Yes, whether I consider the manner and circumstances of your election, or look at the nature and the fruits of your ministry, I recognise in what forms your

characteristic trait a mysterious family likeness to your father.

Non vos me elegistis, sed ego elegi vos: it is not you who made choice of God, it is God who made choice of you; all the advances were on His side, and your vocation is entirely His work: such is my first consideration. *Et posui vos ut eatis, et fructum afferatis, et fructus vester maneat:* God has appointed you that you may go, and bear fruit, and that your fruit may remain; your ministry is a ministry of action and movement: *Ut eatis;* and the particular value of the good you do consists in its stability and duration: *Et fructum afferatis, et fructus vester maneat:* this is my second consideration.

The most holy Virgin Mary, queen at once of Apostles and of virgins, will grant, my Sisters, the prayer that you are about to address to her, that I may confirm in you the twofold spirit of the apostolate and of virginity. *Ave Maria.*

I. There is a language, my Sisters, which could never be found without pride on the lips of man, but which is sublime in the mouth of the God-Man, Jesus Christ; for then this language, however lofty it may be, cannot be taxed with haughtiness, since it is founded on the truth. Such, for example, is that word of the divine Saviour, thrice repeated: If anyone love father or mother more than me, he is not worthy of me: *Non est me dignus.* If anyone love son or daughter before me, he is not worthy of me: *Non est me dignus.* If anyone take not up his cross and follow me, he is not worthy of me: *Non est me dignus.*[1] Surely, my Sisters, if Jesus Christ had been only a mere mortal, such a manner of speaking, had it come down from a throne, would seem so pompous that it would be difficult not to charge it with pride. But Jesus, who had the consciousness of His divinity, spoke thus His natural language, and had every right to impose conditions on those who aspired to the favour of belonging to Him.

Such too is the word we are developing at this moment. It is not you who have chosen me, Jesus says to His disciples, it is I who have made choice of you. It is not you who set out and climbed up to me; it is I who have deigned to come down and reach you. *Non vos me elegistis:* it is not you who have chosen me. It is to His twelve apostles that Jesus Christ holds this language; and in fact each of them had given his existence another direction; most of them were engaged in the bonds of marriage and the cares of a family; Peter had inherited his father's profession, and he cast the nets with Andrew his brother, a fisherman like himself. Matthew was sitting at the counter, and his name figured on the roll of the publicans. They would all have passed their lives in that condition, which they never thought of leaving, if Jesus had not approached them and said to them: Arise, and follow me. *Non vos me elegistis:* it is not you who have chosen me. It is the great Apostle who applies this word to himself; and certainly the account of his conversion, as the holy Scriptures have handed it down to us, makes us sufficiently know that Paul did not of his own accord opt for Jesus Christ. Son of Abraham and child of the covenant, brought up at Jerusalem, he had received from the synagogue and drawn from his family only distorted traditions, and all his Jewish zeal consisted in combating and repelling the Saviour so ardently awaited by the Jews. It was in this way of opposition and hatred that he walked, and in which he would have persisted to the end, if Jesus had not struck him down on the road to Damascus.

Non vos me elegistis: it is not you who have chosen me. My Sisters, it is to yourselves that Jesus addresses this word. No, your vocation is not your own work; it was not in the natural order of things that your choice should fix itself upon the holy state you have embraced. Doubtless, by a privilege more precious even than that of the great Paul, you had received on your entrance into this world the benefit of baptism; you had been brought up in the true Jerusalem, which is the Catholic Church. But as Paul was born in the midst of a degenerate Judaism which engaged him in a false road, you also, my Sisters, is it not true that the ideas of the time, of society, of the family perhaps, among which your childhood passed, is it not true that these ideas, falsified and corrupted by the contagion of unbelief, tended to estrange you from Jesus Christ rather than to bring you near to Him? Is it not true that several of your companions, welcoming warmly the traditions of the domestic hearth, *paternarum traditionum aemulator*, [a zealous defender of the traditions of my fathers (Gal.

1:14)] showed only opposition, manifested only repugnance, had only censures and sarcasms for the service of God? Is it not true that you yourselves were often shaken by those doctrines of falsehood, and that, under the empire of the ideas you nourished for a time in your mind, you would have taken a course quite different from that which you have at last embraced?

Non vos me elegistis: No, my daughter, Jesus Christ says to you, it is not you who made choice of me. Do you remember those times of lukewarmness and neglect, when, abandoning prayer, you nearly left, like so many others, the path of duty? Do you remember that period of your youth when you had taken a liking to certain frivolous readings, which might have led you to your ruin, as they have led so many other unfortunate girls? Do you remember that day when an imprudence, a levity, had dug before you an abyss that seemed inevitable? Do you remember that the allurement of luxury, of finery, had seduced you? Do you remember that your heart had begun to attach itself to gain, to money? Do you remember that your imagination had already arranged an existence for you? *Non vos me elegistis:* No, it is not you who chose me. Your choice carried you elsewhere; you inclined toward the world, toward its pleasures, toward its advantages. The ordinary course of events was not leading you to where you have arrived today. Your vocation, once more, does not come from you, it is my work; it is I, I alone, who have accomplished it: *Sed ego elegi vos.*

I know it, my Sisters, the work of God is sometimes prepared from so far off; sometimes it is brought about by so gentle and insensible a slope, that one would say it had been the natural and spontaneous work of the creature. In the centuries that preceded us there were families, Christian mothers, whose children seemed as it were devoted from the beginning to the sanctuary or to the solitude of the cloister, like that young Samuel of whom it is written that he was a Nazarite before he was born, and that his mother had borne him not for herself but for the tabernacle. Then divine election, perhaps even more prodigious, was nevertheless more veiled. But in the days in which we live, my Sisters, precisely because it meets with more obstacles in the spirit of the age, no religious vocation is accomplished without one's being able to say with evidence: The finger of God is here: *Digitus Dei est hic.*[2]

Tell me, my Sisters, what hand came to seek you, to single you out in the midst of the crowd, to bring you to this holy asylum, to lead you to the foot of the altars where you became the spouses of Jesus Christ? While the companions of your childhood, those who shared the same practices of piety with you, and who perhaps then manifested more perfect sentiments than you, remained in the world where their hearts have been more or less soiled by contact with worldly dust, how comes it that you, you alone, have taken sacred engagements? Search your memory, go back over the days of your past existence, and tell me by what chain of circumstances, by what concurrence of events God has led you, through a thousand difficulties, a thousand impossibilities, to the goal at which you have at last arrived?

My Sister, no, none of this was your work; none of it was the work of chance. The sole explanation of this marvel is this: that Jesus Christ, by a purely gratuitous love, had made choice of you; that His omnipotence knew how to work what His will had resolved: *Sed ego elegi vos.* Doubtless you were not thrown to the ground, like Paul on the road to Damascus. But because divine grace, instead of mingling with the claps of the thunderbolt, penetrated your soul on the wings of a light and caressing breath, is its operation any the less admirable?

You did not hear a voice that said to you: I am that Jesus whom you persecute. But did you not at least hear a voice that said: I am that Jesus whom you grieve by your infidelities, by your resistances, by your delays. It is hard for you to kick against the goad of my love, of my love that invites you, that has long been calling you into the immaculate college of my spouses. Finally, is it not true that for you too a moment came when, after a prayer more ardent than usual, scales fell from your eyes? And during those instants of fervour it was said to you: Arise, go into the city, and there it shall be told you what you must do. And there the marvel of your consecration to God was accomplished.[3]

I was right, then, to advance it, my Sisters: the history of your election to the religious life is, to a certain degree, that of the election of your great Apostle. Whence I conclude that, like him, you owe eternal thanksgiving to God in return for so great a benefit. Hear him: I am indeed, he says, the least of the Apostles; I am not worthy to bear that name; but yet what I am, I am by the grace of God. When it pleased Him who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, immediately I condescended not to flesh and blood. And it is of the Lord again that I received the grace to be faithful.[4]

Make your own, my Sisters, each of these words. For in truth I say to you, the whole of eternity will not suffice to express the sentiment of gratitude with which you ought to be penetrated, on account of the favour that has been done you of being the spouses of Jesus Christ. Your great Apostle said that he counted all the rest as dung, and that he coveted but one gain, namely Jesus Christ. In leaving the world you have left nothing but what is vile and contemptible, and that in order to win the sole treasure worthy to be esteemed.[5]

But it is not enough, my Sisters, to have been the object of an election so sublime; one must correspond with this grace, and fulfil the ministry that has been entrusted to you. This is the principal point that remains for me to develop.

II. I have appointed you, Jesus Christ says to His Apostles, that you may go, and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit may remain. The apostolic ministry is a ministry of action, of movement. There are in the treasures of God graces of retreat and solitude; there are in the Church religious orders devoted exclusively to contemplation and psalmody; in a word, among the children of God there are some who have inherited the part of Mary, who sat motionless at the feet of Jesus, gathering up His words. But such is not the part that fell to the Apostles.

Hear in what manner Jesus Christ gives them investiture, and observe how He opens the whole world before them: All power is given to me in heaven and on earth; going therefore, teach all nations: *Euntes ergo, docete omnes gentes.* I have appointed you that you may go: *Et posui vos, ut eatis.* And among the Apostles there is one in particular whom it is permitted to call the man of action and movement; he is the one we know under the name of Apostle of the nations, Apostle of the Gentiles. This man, said the voice from heaven, is to me a vessel of election, to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.[6]

Now, my Sisters, I have said it, it is not without a settled counsel of God that Saint Paul is your father; your condition is an apostolic condition: *Et posui vos ut eatis;* you are appointed to go. Others prolong for many years the fruitful and tranquil exercises of the novitiate, working in silence at the task of their own perfection. You, my Sisters, from the very day you are clothed in the sacred habit of virgins, your active ministry begins: *Euntes ergo;* from that day you are sent far from the cradle of your novitiate, and this active life will cease only with your strength. At the least signal given you, you transport yourselves from one point to another point; and the map, so extensive though it is, of the journeys of your holy Patron, is narrow and cramped in comparison with one that would contain all the countries where your zeal can be exercised. Daughters of Saint Paul, I have appointed you that you may go: *Et posui vos, ut eatis;* that you may go and bear fruit: *Ut eatis, et fructum afferatis.*

For, my Sisters, the world will perhaps ask me what is the object, what is the result of this so active life. And I shall answer that your congregation, however humble and modest it may be, renders to the Church and to society all the kinds of service together that they receive from the various other more renowned and celebrated institutes. "I am nothing," said Saint Paul; "nevertheless I am in nothing inferior to those who are Apostles par excellence; for the signs of my apostleship have been wrought among you, in labours, in wonders and in mighty deeds. For what is there that you have had less than the other churches?"[7]

My Sisters, I do not say this to flatter in you a pride that would be culpable; God, before whom I speak, knows that I do not lie to my own thought. Yes, this family of Saint Paul whose cradle and centre Providence has established in our city of Chartres, this religious family, less known than other more ancient

congregations, is nevertheless inferior to none of them. The signs of its apostolate have been manifest in the midst of us, for more than a century, by labours, wonders and virtues of every kind. And this sacred college of virgins, with which our Church is enriched, leaves it nothing to envy any other Church: *Quid enim minus habuistis caeteris Ecclesiis?* [For what is there that you have had less than the other churches? (2 Cor. 12:13)] This man is to me a vessel of election, to carry my name before the Gentiles and before the children of Israel.

Daughters of Saint Paul, each of you is that vessel of election; each of you has received the mission of recalling the name of Jesus, of making it live, of perpetuating it in the bosom of our society where it threatens to fall into oblivion. And some among you have also received the mission of carrying this sacred name of Jesus beyond the seas, and of making it known to the Gentiles and to idolaters.

And in what manner, my Sisters, are you charged with preserving the name of Jesus Christ in the midst of us? Ah! in the most salutary manner, I would even say, in the circumstances in which we are placed, the only one truly efficacious. The whole existence of man flows between two extreme points, the cradle and the tomb. Two epochs are decisive in the Christian life: childhood, during which we must learn to live; old age, in which we must learn to die. These two ages have particular need of support. Childhood needs to be brought up; old age, suffering, needs to be relieved.

The priest, who owes himself to all, teaches the multitude in the temple, he visits the sick man to bring him the spiritual helps necessary to him; but the priest cannot give himself exclusively to this ministry, and it is not right that he should abandon all his other duties to settle in a school or an infirmary. Besides, what is needed beside the cradle, beside childhood, is a mother, the care of a mother, the voice of a mother. Instantly religion calls you, O consecrated virgins, and says to you as once the daughter of Pharaoh: *Accipe puerum, et nutri mihi:* Take this child, and nurse it for me.[8] And at the same time she gives you grace, authority, jurisdiction to fulfil this ministry. She says to you on behalf of Jesus Christ: *Euntes ergo, docete:* Go, and teach.

My Sisters, the Christian faith is preserved, it will be saved in our unhappy fatherland only by women, by Christian mothers. Now there will remain women, Christian mothers in France only so long as the education of young girls remains in the hands of the spouses of Jesus Christ. Yes, if the name of Jesus is not yet forgotten, unknown among us; if those slander France who dare to say that the name of the Saviour of men, pronounced in the midst of the representatives of the nation, falls on that astonished assembly like a stone descending from the stars;[9] if the name of Jesus Christ still lives in the depth of the heart of our brethren, it is because their mothers made them lisp that sacred name in their early age; and their mothers taught them the adorable name of Jesus Christ only because they had themselves learned it from the lips of the spouses of Jesus Christ.

Let this thought, then, my Sisters, encourage you, strengthen you, animate you always amid the weariness and fatigues inseparable from the teaching of childhood. These innocent creatures, these little girls whose mind and heart you cultivate, will one day become mothers, and will transmit to the next generation those holy and religious lessons they will have received. This, my Sisters, this is how you are vessels of election, to carry the name of Jesus before the children of Israel. This is how you are appointed to bear fruit: *Et posui vos, ut fructum afferatis.* It is not only to the generation that will follow them, it is even to the generation that bore them that your young pupils, my Sisters, will carry back the name of Jesus Christ.

What Saint Jerome relates of the old man Albinus, high priest of the idols, who took delight in hearing his little granddaughter Laeta repeat the Alleluia of Jesus Christ, is renewed every day.[10] How often has it been on the lips, in the heart of his little granddaughter, that the man already advanced in life has found again that sacred name of Jesus which he had forgotten, neglected for a long time! My Sisters, all these young children who throng around you, and to whom you speak of Jesus Christ, are so many echoes that will carry that

adorable name to the ears of the sons of Israel: *Ut portet nomen meum coram filiis Israel.*

Beside the cradle a mother is needed; but is not the tomb also a cradle? To learn to die, is it not to learn to live, to live eternally? My Sisters, ah! how admirable is religion when she places you beside the bed of pain, beside the couch of the dying! What matters it to you what the life of that unfortunate has been? If he has too long forgotten God, he is only the more worthy of your zeal and your care. To soften for this child of God the anguish of death, to prepare his soul for heaven, what an admirable mission! At that moment when the great question is about to be resolved, one day it is given you to intervene, to bring to that son of Israel the name of Jesus, that is, the name of the Saviour, that name which one cannot pronounce with love without being at once justified. Ah! my Sisters, love, love to fulfil this ministry. Do not murmur when Providence sends you one more infirm person to care for. If the arrival of a sick person in your houses vexed you as an inconvenience, you would no longer be worthy of your vocation.

But, I have told you, my Sisters, some of you are destined to produce other fruits still; some are vessels of election, to carry the name of Jesus Christ to distant nations and among idolatrous peoples. For more than a hundred years the Ocean has been accustomed to bear on its docile and obliging waves the daughters of Saint Paul of Chartres toward the shores of the New World, where they go to speak of Jesus Christ to those unfortunates who have scarcely the human face, and who bear the hard condition of slavery. But behold, other seas are about to open before you, my Sisters. The inaccessible empire of China lowers its barriers before you. Ah! who knows whether, in the designs of God, you are not the vessels of election, the predestined vessels, to have the name of Jesus Christ at last welcomed by those barbarians. There also, my Sisters, you will form, you will bring up childhood; and thereby you will infuse the name of the Saviour into the generations. There also you will assist the dying, and thereby you will open heaven to the elect.[11]

Courage, my Sisters, courage! You are the daughters of the Apostle of the nations; I am not astonished that the care of evangelising distant peoples is today devolved upon you. Courage! Do not dread the furies of the terrible element. Your holy patron will sail with you, and you know by experience, for more than a century, that it was promised to your Father that none of those who sail with him shall perish in the waves.[12] Courage! The word of Jesus Christ must be fulfilled: I have appointed you that you may go, and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit may remain. For I end with this: among those distant peoples, as among us, more than among us still, what the results of the priestly ministry lack is stability, duration, permanence. Individuals receive the good seed in their hearts, but as the soil has not been prepared long beforehand, the seed produces no lasting fruit. Therefore, my Sisters, your work is indestructible, because it begins with life, with the first development of the intelligence and heart of those whom you instruct; it is indestructible, because its action is continuous for several years. This is what we have a thousand times verified among us. Your work is the necessary preparation, the indispensable continuation of our own. We do nothing solid without you; it is through you that our fruit remains.

Now, my Sisters, for three hundred years several thousand missionaries have watered China with their sweat and their blood, without having been able to give to the establishment of Christianity in that country this character of stability, of duration. I understand it. Beside the cradle of those tribes of neophytes there have until now been found no mothers; that is why those peoples, always children, have not grown up. But behold, you are going to take hold of the young age; behold, you are going to prepare women, spouses, Christian mothers; my Sisters, I hope your intervention will change the face of things. You are vessels of election, predestined to carry the name of Jesus Christ and to plant it indestructibly on those barbarous shores. You are appointed to go, to bear fruit, and that your fruit may remain: *Et fructus vester maneat.* Amen.[13]

Translator’s notes

1. The title says the sermon was preached at the Sisters of Saint Paul at Chartres; the preacher says “our city of Chartres” accordingly. The “old man Albinus” passage is a free paraphrase of Jerome as the preacher

gives it; not collated.

2. The unnamed remark about “the representatives of the nation” is left unidentified.

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[1] Matt. 10:37–38.

[2] Exod. 8:19. On Samuel, cf. 1 Kings (1 Sam.) 1:11, 28; the “Nazarite before birth” is the preacher’s gloss.

[3] Cf. Acts 9:4–6, 18.

[4] 1 Cor. 15:9–10; Gal. 1:15–16; the last clause cf. 1 Cor. 7:25.

[5] Phil. 3:8.

[6] Matt. 28:18–19; Acts 9:15.

[7] Cf. 2 Cor. 12:11–13, as the preacher gives it.

[8] Exod. 2:9.

[9] The preacher alludes, without naming it, to a remark said to have been made in a French legislative assembly; I have not identified it.

[10] Jerome, *Letter* 107 (to Laeta), 1; the preacher’s rendering is free.

[11] The remark about “those who have scarcely the human face” is the preacher’s, referring to the enslaved peoples of the colonies; it reflects the idiom of the period and is rendered as printed.

[12] Cf. Acts 27:22–24, 34.

[13] Cf. Appendix I: p. 28, n. 44.

n° 43. First Sermon on the Temporal Utility of Religion: the Right of Property

Preached in the cathedral of Chartres, on the First Sunday of Lent, 1849.

Pietas autem ad omnia utilis est, promissionem habens vitae quae nunc est, et futurae. [But godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. (1 Tim. 4:8.)]

My Lord, the great Apostle doubtless did not mean that the God of the new law attached to the observance or the infraction of His commandments an earthly sanction so absolute, so universal, that the piety of the Christian must always gather here below the advantages of the present life as infallibly as it will gather on high the promises of the life to come. Presented in terms so extensive, this doctrine would renew an error that was that of the friends of Job; and, often contradicted by the realities that strike our eyes, it would not even be avowed by the ancient law of the Jews, which, carnal as it was, addressed its temporal promises and threats not so much to each child of Abraham in particular as to the nation as a whole.

Let us say then first, restricting the Apostle’s word within the just measure of truth in which the Holy Spirit willed it to be contained, let us say that the piety of the disciple of the Gospel is useful to him not only for the interests of his soul, but also for his interests of every kind. Let us say that, besides the certain advantages of the future life, it brings him for the most part in the present life inestimable advantages: for example, exemption from the torments and evils that trail in the wake of the passions; consideration, honour, whose aureole is perfectly pure and spotless only when it shines about a Christian brow; success and final triumph, which rarely fail to remain even here below with candid virtue rather than with crafty skill; and finally, above all, the secret joys of the heart and that ineffable thrill of conscience which are the reward, I should almost say the already infinite reward, of duty religiously and invariably observed: so many ways in which the oracle of Saint Paul is fulfilled for each Christian in particular: *Pietas ad omnia utilis est, promissionem habens vitae quae nunc est, et futurae.*

But if from the sphere of private existences we wish to pass to that of public interests; if, instead of applying the Apostle’s word to beings at once perishable and immortal, whom God after all reserves to reward or punish throughout eternity, according to the extent of the goods He will have denied or left them in time; if, I say, we apply this word to nations, to societies, whose destiny does not extend beyond the duration of the centuries and in regard of which the justice of God, remunerative or avenging, must be exercised wholly in time; oh! then it must be said without hesitation, without restriction, that the observance of the evangelical

law is useful for all things, and that religion, which promises us an eternal fatherland, is alone capable of guaranteeing us a temporal fatherland, in the bosom of which we may enjoy at leisure the passing goods of this world: to such a degree that with the reign of religion the reign of order and happiness infallibly ends, and with the reign of impiety the reign of anarchy and misfortune infallibly begins, and that, in verifying these sensible, palpable results, there is no one who is not led to repeat with my text: *Pietas ad omnia utilis est, promissionem habens vitae quae nunc est, et futurae.*

My brethren, this important truth revealed by our holy Books, I mean the utility of religion even in regard of our temporal interests, is on the eve of being acknowledged even by the most opposing and the most rebellious. And for my part I shall try to carry light and conviction in this regard into your souls.

A tempest has come down upon us; the thunderbolt which a social storm concealed in its flanks, which the prophets of the living God had long shown us preparing and swelling on the horizon, has suddenly burst over our heads, and its terrible gleams have lit up many darknesses. In a first moment of fright all eyes turned toward heaven. But now the thunder-claps seem to grow rarer and more distant, and more than one begun conversion has vanished with the fear. I hear it asked around me that pardon be begged of philosophy for having lacked faith in her, and for having believed, by a thoughtless impulse, that one must, in face of the abyss, retrace one's steps and retreat as far as Christianity. The great chiefs of the school, the clever men of politics and the strong men of the army have set hand to the work, and society thinks itself henceforth sheltered from a fresh surprise. This man has reprinted a book, that man has composed another. A vigorous hand holds the sword and the command in the great city; the reassured province has caught the accent of a martial voice. It is clear that this time again society will suffice for itself alone, that it has its saviours, its defenders in its own bosom, and that we were too hasty in believing in the necessity of a serious return to God and to the Gospel. My brethren, this is what is thought and what is said.

And I think and say boldly that the social problem is so sharply and so energetically posed that henceforth all subterfuges are impossible, and that neither the half-reasons of philosophy nor the deployments, doubtless necessary, of the public force, will succeed in resolving it in a definitive manner. And I think, resting on divine authority, and I say, with the assurance my sacred ministry confers on me, that the vast, the terrible problem that puts in question the existence of modern society will be resolved only by society's return to the principles of religion. And, to get out of over-general ideas and fasten upon a subject that at this moment preoccupies all minds, I affirm that religion, which is useful for all things, is the necessary and indispensable guarantee, that it is the sole solid guarantee, of property. And I establish in this regard two propositions.

In principle, property can defend itself against evil doctrines only so far as it proves its rights; and religion alone demonstrates peremptorily and without reply the rights of property.

In fact, property succeeds in defending itself against evil passions only so far as it itself secures the exercise of its rights by the fulfilment of its duties;

and religion alone teaches impartially and without weakness the duties of property.

The development of the first proposition will suffice us for this day. Look for no art or studied plan in my discourse; it is a simple conference upon one of the most burning questions of the moment. Having no other aim than to penetrate you with the conviction with which I am penetrated myself, I claim, as regards the exposition and arrangement of my matter, all the privileges of familiar talk, I might almost say of conversation.

Let us invoke the assistance of the Holy Spirit through the intercession of the Mother of God. *Ave Maria.*

I. Let us listen to a voice revered for nearly thirty centuries. "The earth is the Lord's," cries the royal prophet, "and the fulness thereof; the world, and all that dwell therein": *Domini est terra et plenitudo ejus; orbis terrarum, et universi qui habitant in eo.* [Ps. 23:1.]

Thus, my brethren, there exists one sole proprietor, whose absolute and sovereign dominion extends not only over all things, but also over all persons. And the reason of this right of the Lord, the same inspired philosopher tells us straightway: "It is that the Lord alone made the world and men: *Quia ipse fundavit eum;"* [For he hath founded it. (Ps. 23:2.)] it is that He alone is creator, author of things and persons; He alone, consequently, has over the world and over men, over things and over persons, a supreme and necessary right, a right that can truly and absolutely bear that name. And if, apart from Him, beneath Him, human vocabularies leave to others than Him the faculty of attributing rights to themselves, it is the duty of the theologian, to prevent a sacrilegious confusion, to establish the essential and profound distinction between the right of God and all that He has been pleased to permit us to call the rights of His creature.

The right of God is right in its essence, in its source, in its root; it is independent, unlimited, necessary right; the right of God is identified with the very notion of right; and, to say all, the right of God is God Himself, since God Himself is the reason of His right. But the rights of man, on the contrary, are a participation, an outflow of the right of God; they are subordinate, restricted, contingent rights, in the language of the school. And, to speak more exactly, the rights of man are not properly distinct from the right of God, since they have their reason of being only in Him and through Him. Thus, applying this principle in all its extent, one would have to say: divine right of paternity, divine right of sovereignty (under whatever form it may present itself), divine right of property. It is from God, the Apostle tells us, that all fatherhood descends: *A quo omnis paternitas;* and it is from God, adds the same Apostle, that all authority proceeds, whether exercised over men or over things, by the right of sovereignty or by the right of property: *Omnis potestas a Deo.* [Eph. 3:15; Rom. 13:1.] Therefore no created being, head of a family, of an empire or of an estate, can lay claim to a right, or exercise a single act of authority, except in dependence on, and by delegation from, Him in whom all power and all fatherhood are summed up: *A quo omnis paternitas. Omnis potestas a Deo.*

These truths, my brethren, are elementary among Christians, and when Jesus Christ taught men to pray, it is this acknowledgment of the supreme right of God that He willed first to place upon their lips. See that father, that old man surrounded by his children and grandchildren. He kneels in the presence of God, and speaking in his own name as in the name of his sons, he says: *Pater noster, qui es in caelis:* Our Father who art in heaven. And because before God, before that sole Father of all creatures, *unus Deus et Pater omnium,* [one God and Father of all (Eph. 4:6)] he considers himself the humblest of the children; for that very reason he exercises over all his house the authority of a sacred patriarchate, and his paternity, re-tempered as it were each day in the divine paternity, is the object of a filial cult of veneration and love. Let that father, that head of a family, instead of this, never say to God: *Pater noster;* let him never bow before Our Father who is in the heavens, and his children, bereft of religion like himself, will have a thousand objections to make against the contestable rights of his human paternity.

Perhaps that man is the head of a society, of a State; he is called king, emperor, consul, what matters? He kneels in the presence of God, and he says: *Adveniat regnum tuum; fiat voluntas tua:* heavenly Father, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And because before God, before that sole King of the whole universe, *Rex regum et Dominus dominantium,* [King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15)] he considers himself the humblest of subjects, and there ceases to reign and to will in order to abase himself before the reign and the will of the Most High; for that very reason he exercises over all his people an uncontested sovereignty, and his principality, subjected to the divine principality, finds in that very dependence the sole title that can make it respected among men: *Et servus meus, princeps in medio eorum.* [And my servant … a prince in the midst of them. (Ezech. 34:24.)] Let that head of the State, instead of this, never say to God: *Adveniat regnum tuum, fiat voluntas tua;* let him not so much as think of making his reign and his laws depend on the reign and will of the heavenly King, and his subjects, bereft of religion like himself, will have a thousand objections to make against the ill-secured foundations of his human sovereignty.

Finally, this man perhaps is one of the rich of the earth; he counts his estates by thousands, and revenues of every kind, the fruit of his inheritances, his savings, his labour, abound in his hands. He kneels in the presence of God, and says: *Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie:* Give us this day our daily bread. And because, before God, before the absolute Master of all things, he implores, like the last of beggars, his daily subsistence, and acknowledges that he possesses nothing which he does not receive from the divine hand, through whatever intermediary he receives it; for that very reason he is invested with a legitimate title over his possessions of every kind, and his property, in rendering faith and homage to the sovereign dominion of God, draws from this recognition of a right superior to his own the principle of its force and the last reason of its validity. Let that rich man, instead of this, never say to God: *Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie;* let him believe that his bread is so assured to him that he has no need to ask it of the heavenly Father, and that his fortune is so much his own that it depends on no right placed above him, and soon all that surrounds him, bereft of religion like himself, will have a thousand objections to make against the ill-established pretensions of his human property.

Therefore, my brethren, neither the right of paternity itself, nor the right of public power, nor the right of private property, are rights existing by themselves, finding in themselves their reason of existing; but these rights, like all other human rights, exist only on condition that they justify their derivation from the right of God. The Lord's Prayer teaches us this, and besides, Saint Paul tells us clearly: *Omnis potestas a Deo. A quo omnis paternitas;* I shall prove it at greater length presently. Therefore, in particular, property is not a first truth but a second truth; that is, a truth that can be established only so far as it is legitimately deduced from one or several truths acknowledged and pre-existing. Now, if you deny the first truth, what becomes of the second truth that rests upon it? It is therefore in God, in the dogma of the existence of God first and of His sovereign dominion, and then in the fact of His providence, of His will clearly expressed, that one must go to seek the right of property. There only will you find firm ground; so long as you do not go back as far as that, the soil will tremble under your feet. Listen, and tell me whether there is any other rigorous and peremptory demonstration of the right of property than the one I am about to set before you rapidly.

There is in heaven a God, first principle of all things, a God who is creator, rewarder and avenger. All is His, not only in heaven but also on earth, for all things, visible and invisible, were created in Him and by Him, says Saint Paul; and as He is before all beings, His right precedes all other rights, and these have consistence only in Him: *Et ipse est ante omnes, et omnia in ipso constant.* [And he is before all, and by him all things consist. (Col. 1:17.)] He is the universal proprietor. *Meum est aurum, meum est argentum, dicit Dominus:* Mine is the gold, mine is the silver, saith the Lord. [Agg. 2:9 (Hag. 2:8).] All the fruits that the earth produces, with whatever alien sweat it is watered, belong to Him alone, for the reason that the earth is His alone: *Domini est terra,* and that the sun that ripens the fruits of the earth is His alone: it is called His sun, and it rises only at His command: *Qui facit oriri solem suum;* [Matt. 5:45] and finally that the arms that cultivate the earth are His: it is He that made us, and not we ourselves: *Ipse fecit nos, et non ipsi nos;* [Ps. 99:3] and when we eat the fruit of our labour we live not so much yet by our industry as by His bounty. Before Him we are all equal by nature; we all depend on Him in the same degree; toward Him we have no right, we have only duties. Rights we can pretend to only so far as it pleases Him to entrust them to us.

And behold, in effect, a marvellous Providence reveals itself to us. Man had just been introduced into the universe; his nobly raised head, and his brow on which intelligence shone, already betrayed a privileged being, invested by his Author with a right of pre-eminence and command over inferior nature. But God pronounces a word from which a whole new order of things is to be born. Man exists; a second creation is going to produce the family and, in consequence, property and society. It is not good, says the Lord, that man should be alone: *Non est bonum hominem esse solum;* and man receives a companion, whom the mystery of her formation shows to him as indissolubly united to him, in a condition mingled of equality and subordination; and of man and woman children are born; and, as a fundamental law of the family, God grants

to the father and the mother, within determined limits, an inalienable portion of His supreme right of paternity; and if this right, which nature has been commanded to respect, can in certain cases raise difficulties and doubts against it, God will write it more explicitly on the tables of the law; and, without excepting even him whose whole paternity has consisted only in a criminal pleasure and a frightful egoism, He ordains that by divine right the father shall be honoured by his son, because in the father, whatever he may be, an outflow of the divine paternity has descended; and He threatens with death present and eternal the son who shall misknow the invariable and absolute precept: *Honora patrem tuum et matrem tuam, ut sis longaevus super terram.* [Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land. (Exod. 20:12.)]

But paternity is not enough to regulate everything; the family having grown, interests divide;

this man feeds the flocks, that man cultivates the earth; the industry of one prospers less, that of another succeeds more. As a fundamental law of society, God transfers to each of the men, over determined objects, an inviolable portion of His supreme right of property; and if nature and good sense do not suffice to make this right respected, God will promulgate it in clear and solemn terms amid the thunders of Sinai, and He will say: Thou shalt not steal: *Non furtum facies;* more: not only thy hands but also thy thoughts and desires shall respect the property of another. Therefore thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, nor his wife, nor his handmaid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his. And if you wish to know the sanction attached to this precept, Saint Paul, showing the eternal abyss that opens, will proclaim that thieves shall not possess the heavenly kingdom: *Neque fures possidebunt regnum caelorum:* a threat that descends to the depth of consciences to repress there all injustices, even those that would escape human justice.[1] And Jesus Christ, on the other hand, promises to those who know how to endure poverty in this world the blessed property of the kingdom of heaven. Finally, this divine Saviour, before leaving the earth, established a tribunal of reconciliation, before which no possessor or holder of another's goods will obtain remission of his fault unless he first restores what he unjustly possesses: *Non dimittitur peccatum, nisi restituatur ablatum.* [The sin is not forgiven unless what has been taken away is restored. (Augustine, Ep. 153.)] Thus, my brethren, religion protects, maintains among men the right of property, a right established, consecrated, sanctioned by God Himself. Thus, with the Decalogue and the Gospel, she answers the sacrilegious blasphemers who have wished to derive from Christianity the insolent axiom: "Property is theft."[2]

Yet the empire of religion does not stop there; for the question of property, when one approaches the detail and analysis of it, presents difficulties that must be resolved. God, who commanded respect for property, did not Himself write in a code on what conditions, by what ways, and in what measure property was legitimate. What constitutes property in one country does not constitute it in another. Here the fact of possession, in a given time, becomes a title of property; there it is otherwise. In this country kinship confers up to such a degree a rigorous hereditary right, and up to such another degree a facultative hereditary right; elsewhere the right is much less extensive. Today the State, the nation, appropriates to itself, under the name of rights of mutation, a tenth part of inheritances, and, under the name of direct and indirect taxes, a fourth part of revenues; tomorrow perhaps, the legislators having changed, there will be left me only half of my paternal inheritance, and my revenue will be illusory. Labour itself, which brings certain workers a notable part of its fruits, procures for others strictly only the bread of the hireling, without any proportion to the profits of the master.

In a word, property is in itself a divine institution, and consequently sacred: I admit it; but it is men who regulate the conditions of property. Now, have men the right to make laws that oblige conscience, and oblige it always and in every case? If there exists no legitimate public power to regulate the conditions of property, we fall into the communism of anarchy and pillage; and if this power, which assuredly is not infallible, is itself contained by no bounds, we may descend, if not abruptly, at least by an inclined plane, toward another communism no less frightful, that which results from the absorption of all rights into the rights of the State.

Here again, my brethren, religion alone can offer us fixed and certain principles, instead of hazardous and precarious expedients. She tells us:

God, having created man for society: *Non est bonum hominem esse solum,* has provided for the government of societies, by transferring to the public powers a determined portion of divine sovereignty. Nowhere and never has any man, as man, or as delegated by other men, had the right to command the conscience of his fellows, or to regulate their interests by laws. Sovereign authority resides originally in God alone; God alone, therefore, is the source from which sovereignty flows on earth, whatever the channel through which it runs, whether this channel, itself prepared long beforehand by the divine will, be called succession, election or conquest. Every power, then, constituted according to the true laws of a nation or according to a marked design of Providence, is a power that comes from God: *Omnis potestas a Deo.* He who resists this power resists the divine providence: *Qui resistit potestati, Dei ordinationi resistit.* [Rom. 13:1–2.]

By me, says the Lord, the chiefs of nations command nations, and by me also the lawgivers decree just things: *Per me reges regnant, et legum conditores justa decernunt.* [By me kings reign, and lawgivers decree just things. (Prov. 8:15.)] Therefore the laws of the public power, regularly established, those in particular that regulate the conditions of property, are laws made with the authority of God, and, on that title, they oblige consciences, because one must recognise in the dispositions of the law the dispositions of the supreme orderer of societies: *Quae autem sunt, a Deo ordinatae sunt.* [Rom. 13:1.] And thus every man furnished with a title of property conformable to the jurisprudence received in his country can say with truth that his title comes to him from God by the authority of the laws; and the act that justifies his possession is valid not so much by the signature of the contracting parties, or by the signature of the prince and the magistrate, as because it is countersigned by the divine signature: *Ego Dominus:* I the Lord.

But, you say to me, is every human power, and chiefly every exercise of human power, legitimate and avowed by God? If that is so, if the assembly of the legislators themselves can in certain cases become a conspiracy of thieves, and brigandage can be erected into law; if the property of citizens, guaranteed against the attacks of private persons, is delivered as prey to the unjust and spoliating decrees of a tyrannical legality…!

Ah! my brethren, it is here that Catholic theology has teachings which nothing can supply. Every power, she tells us, is not a legitimate power. For there are powers evidently born of the violence of some, or of the caprices of a moment; and the name of usurpation, which is found in the language of all countries and in all centuries, applies to those powers, or must be effaced from the vocabularies. Nevertheless, as regards the indispensable interests of society, there are just and obligatory laws which may be decreed not only by the man of the right hand of the Lord, but also by the man of His left, that is, by him whose usurped authority the Lord tolerates only, and for a time. All that this passing power does that is just and useful still flows providentially from the divine sovereignty. But if the chiefs of a people, whoever they be and by whatever title they govern, forget that they are the ministers of God, for the good of society and not for its ruin; if their laws lack the essential character of law, which is justice and public utility; if, despising the sacred rights God has conferred on humanity, they attack the inviolability of the family and the very essence of property: then Saint Augustine will tell us that, "justice being thus trampled underfoot, governments are no more than great brigandages," which have no other right than that of force, which impose no other duties than those suggested by prudence: *Remota justitia, quid sunt regna, nisi magna latrocinia?* [Take away justice, and what are kingdoms but great robberies? (*City of God* IV, 4.)] and the Angel of the School, Saint Thomas, will add that "such legislators and such governments, emperors, princes, magistrates, no matter which, are bound to restitution toward the citizens no more nor less than thieves: *Tales reges et principes ad restitutionem tenentur sicut et latrones,* with this difference, he observes, that their attack on property is a thousand times more culpable than that of thieves, because the consequences of it are a thousand times more extensive and irreparable."[3]

Thus, my brethren, by the mouth of all our Catholic doctors, who never admitted certain modern theories concerning the absolute supremacy of human law and the deification of the State; thus, I say, by the mouth of Saint Augustine in particular and of Saint Thomas, we have our answer ready against a legislative assembly of men who, invested by a stroke of hand with an administrative omnipotence rather easy to seize today, as a result of an abusive centralisation, should fling at France laws of socialism and communism in the name of the State. We should say what our predecessors in the priesthood already said sixty years ago (they said it then in the interest of a more restricted class; we should say it today in the interest of all; certainly the bourgeoisie, in its just rights, will not reproach us with abandoning its cause), that the State can neither take nor claim what is not its own; we should say that property is a right that comes from God directly, and of which no human power can strip inoffensive citizens, a right that the State may regulate but cannot annihilate, since the State itself has no other rights than those it has received from God, and God has given the public power no other authority over private property than that which is indispensable to the public good. We should say to this government of extortioners that its taxes, without proportion to the rigorous exigencies of society, are a disguised spoliation, reproved by the divine law, and that before God the legislators are bound to restitution no more nor less than thieves; we should say to those multitudes of purchasers, of eager ravishers, what we have said already, that their title, however legal it may be, is not valid in conscience, at least so long as it is not ratified by another contract, since, being contrary to the law of Him who judges justices, it cannot be countersigned with those two words: *Ego Dominus:* I the Lord, and that consequently it is radically null. And to the one and the others, to the legislators and to the unjust possessors, we should say the word of Saint Paul: Neither thieves nor extortioners shall ever possess the kingdom of God: *Neque fures, neque rapaces, possidebunt regnum caelorum.*[4]

Thus, my brethren, religion, making the right of human property descend from God Himself, from His direct and immediate jurisdiction, establishes this right irrefragably, and defends it not only against the aggressors from below but also against the aggressors from above; I mean, not only against the anarchic doctrines of the street, which never obtain more than a few hours of pillage, but also against the accredited doctrines of these latter times, which, having erected into dogma the religious independence of public powers and the omnipotence of the State, may become in the hands of legal communism the most logical and the most murderous weapon. You grant me, I think, that I have justified my proposition, namely that religion establishes peremptorily and without reply the right of property; yet I said that religion alone established this right well. That is perhaps what you would contest, if I did not add a few words. Let me draw breath a moment.

II. Yes, doubtless, you say to me, religion is an excellent auxiliary for property. Thus a statesman, in a recent treatise on this matter, devoted his last chapter to presenting the religious arguments, those in particular which Christianity offers.[5] But must it be said, nevertheless, that without religion and its doctrines property cannot be solidly established and defended? Is not property one of those truths that defend themselves, and that, in any case, the general principles of morality establish sufficiently apart from every positive belief? This is what certain men tell us, some of them in good faith; and here is what I answer:

If you suppose a society within which men, some paid by the State, others stipended by the eager tribute of public corruption, have for half a century professed, these in the high chairs or the humble schools, those by weighty books or light sheets, doctrines that lead to the denial of the existence of God, to the denial of Providence, to the denial of heaven and hell, to the denial of revealed religion, to the denial of every principle of authority, sacred or profane, to the denial of marriage and the family, to the denial of probity and morality; doctrines that teach the independence of man, the sovereignty of his thought, the autocracy of his free examination, the predominance of interests, the holiness of enjoyments, the rehabilitation of the flesh, the dominion of the State over minds, the right of insurrection, the legitimacy of all accomplished facts; if, I say, you suppose a society worked upon for fifty years by all these doctrines, and you ask whether property is not

a truth so evident that it must sustain itself by its own weight, and remain standing in the midst of this atheist, sceptical, indifferent, sensualist, immoral, revolutionary, fatalist society, I shall answer you:

No; a thousand times no: in the bosom of such a society, if it does not reform in its doctrines, property must crumble and it will crumble. Naked and disarmed of all the principles that make its moral force, it will be vanquished and overthrown. For a time it will defend itself by material force; in time of peace it will maintain a militia of some hundreds of thousands of men to watch over its safety; but the reign of force always ends by yielding before the reign of ideas. One day the torrent, held back with so much pain, will carry off the dikes and break the sluices; and that overflowing ocean, which has long since invaded without obstacle all the most sacred principles, will not come, to please us, to break its waves respectfully at our feet against that grain of sand which is called our family, our house, our fortune; it will engulf our interests, after we have allowed it to engulf all the rest. Bossuet, speaking of the Lower Empire, which lacked neither soldiers nor sophists but no longer had principles to bind men to one another, said with his usual authority: Such a society gave the barbarians fair play against itself. The barbarians were to pass that way, and they did pass.[6]

My brethren, would you be right against the barbarians? would you bar their passage? There is but one means: to return to God and to the great principles that religion has never ceased to teach men. In truth I say to you, among that multitude which possesses nothing but hatred against whoever possesses anything, you will succeed in converting to property only those whom you convert to God. Assuredly it is not I who, in order to prove a thesis better, shall apply myself to showing from this pulpit the weakness of all the arguments which certain men, certain books, put forward for property apart from every religious truth and every revealed doctrine, arguments which are meant to convince, it is said, even those for whom God would be called chance or evil. Ah! far be it from me to make myself a professor of logic in the interest of the passions! Well, my God, let the true consequences survive as long as possible after the true principles have perished; let the canal keep abundant and pure waters after the source has been closed or poisoned: no, it is not I who shall complain of it. I am not of those intemperate and impassioned dialecticians who undertake to hasten, for love of logic, the agreement of acts with doctrines, even when those doctrines are criminal. But, by an inevitable necessity, this agreement always comes in a near future, because the passions are armed by themselves with a power of dialectic and reasoning that nothing can stop.

“Let it be proved to me,” said one of the legislators of our modern Constituent Assembly, “that public teaching has ever professed communism!”[7] And I reply: Is it teaching communism to open the road that leads directly to communism? Now, atheism, which overthrows all principles, scepticism, which reduces them all to problems, rationalism, which submits them all to the arbitrary decision of individuals, is not this a direct avenue, a great highroad toward communism?

And if you yourselves teach, as one of your more decisive psychological observations, that human nature is driven toward property by an attractive law that may be called the gravitation of humanity; will not this observation, which proves well enough that he who possesses has a right to keep, prove also that he who does not possess ought to tend by every means toward property?

Let it be proved to you, you say, that you ever taught communism, you who on the contrary write books to refute it. And I reply: Consider that man. So long as nothing has troubled him in his material enjoyments, he has always believed he had no religion, no belief; but now an unexpected revelation has just been made to him himself. Since a certain historical date that weighs on his memory, he has verified that his incredulity has bounds, and that it stops at the very least before the seventh precept of the Decalogue. Sceptical about all the rest, none is more dogmatic than he on property. But it is too late. They said to him: God, he answered: Prejudice; Jesus Christ, he answered: Prejudice; Eternity, heaven, hell, he answered: Prejudice. They alleged to him, concerning all these great truths, the most imposing testimonies, the language of nature and of conscience, the consent of all peoples, the incontestable facts of history, the authority of the Bible, of the

Gospel; he always answered: Prejudice. At last behold the multitudes, accustomed to seeing prejudice everywhere, have approached the vital question of property, and have naturally cut it short with the word that had been so often repeated to them: Prejudice. But here, precisely, the master has made an about-face. The roles have changed. He who had never ceased to deny against those who affirmed, behold, he affirms against those who deny. It is he in his turn who invokes nature, conscience, the universal and constant fact; but his lessons are remembered, and he is answered: Prejudice. What will he do then? Either he will resign himself to seeing property perish, in the wake of so many other truths that he himself has immolated; or he will strike his breast, he will confess that his blasphemies turn against him, and that henceforth it is in the school of religion that he must be instructed.

And in effect, I wish to say it again, address yourselves to the Catholic theologian. He will begin by speaking to you of God, then of the true religion, and of the society within which this religion has invariably been preserved. In the name of God, and resting on the revealed doctrine, he will teach you the duties of men, founded on the divine will; and thus, from the Treatise on God, on the True Religion and on the Church, he will pass logically to the treatise on laws, on justice and on contracts; and there will come, in its place, to be developed the thesis of the right of property, a right whose unshakable foundations he will rest on all the great principles previously admitted. And thus everything is linked, chained together; the ring holds to a ring that precedes it, and the first ring is God Himself. And thus, from God and His sovereign dominion down to me and my field, my house, there is not a single gap of principles, not the least solution of continuity in the reasoning.

But if, on the contrary, an unbeliever and deist in religious matters, you begin abruptly with the demonstration of your favourite thesis; if your sole God is your income, and your complete course of theology is the treatise on property: allow me to tell you, your God will be truly respectable only to yourself, and the suspect arguments of your interested theology will never convince any but proprietors.

Let it be proved to you, you say, that you ever taught communism, you who on the contrary have armed yourselves to combat it. And I reply: No indeed, you never said to the multitude: Come and strip us; communism in action, if need be, you take the field against it. But it would be a sad duty, you know, to be often reduced to repressing with the sabre what one had oneself provoked with the pen. Our fathers were more far-sighted than we: they crusaded against errors, and thereby spared themselves the crusade against all the excesses that are born of errors. We, on the contrary, crusade first to spread all the false doctrines, saving ourselves to crusade afterwards to repress the material results of those doctrines. We love the bad principle, we idolise it; but if what we have placed in the head of the people happens to descend as far as its arms, then, forgetting for a moment all our teachings, we go down into the street to shoot down the consequences; then, when we have restored order, we resume the ordinary web of our falsehoods, with the conviction that we shall always succeed in paralysing their results. And thus libertinism of mind, without ever ceasing to pursue its attacks on the truth, applies itself to making abortive the embarrassing and dangerous fruits of that disorder, and divides itself between the satisfaction of producing the cause and the care of destroying the effect. But these stratagems last little; these infamous calculations are deceived. One day the monster grows in the shadow, and devours its author.

Let it be proved to you, you say, that you ever taught communism. And I answer you with a word of the prophet Osee: *Arastis impietatem, iniquitatem messuistis.* [You have ploughed wickedness, you have reaped iniquity. (Osee 10:13.)] How many furrows have been dug in that noble land of France, which produced no monsters! how many furrows have been dug to cast in it the seed of impiety! The circle of studies has been enlarged only to enlarge the domain in which this impious labour was to be exercised: *Arastis impietatem;* you taught history, you taught philosophy, you taught the sciences, you multiplied books, flung the daily sheets to all the winds, and everywhere, at the foot of every page, you slipped in an impious lie, a blasphemy against God, against His Christ or against His Church; in a word, you ploughed the human intelligence in

every direction for half a century, and everywhere and always you sowed the false, cultivated impiety: *Arastis impietatem, iniquitatem messuistis;* today the harvest has come, and this harvest is contempt of all your rights, it is iniquity calling itself by every name, socialism, communism: these are the sheaves of your crop, one had to expect it: *Arastis impietatem, iniquitatem messuistis;* and all these bitter fruits, it is cruel but necessary to tell you, all these bitter fruits you are condemned to eat, are the fruits of your lie: *Et comedistis frugem mendacii vestri.* [and have eaten the fruit of lying.]

Is the evil then irreparable? and if it is not, what have we to do henceforth? No, my brethren, the evil is not irreparable, and what we have to do I will tell you. The evil is not irreparable, for the evil comes from this, that the principles which are the base of societies have been torn up. Now these principles are not lost. Religion, the Catholic Church, has carefully preserved them; it depends only on us to find them again. Since it is the foundations of society that have been torn up, it is these foundations that must be put back. It is not a question of disguising the fissures, of hiding the crevices under a superficial coating, of replacing isolated stones. No, we must go down into the foundations, rebuild the great walls, raise up again the buttresses of society and of property; that is, we must return to all the principles that are the base of society and of property. Any other work would be illusory.

Walking my sad meditations along our boulevards, I have often seen a spectacle that has struck you as it has me. At the foot of a great wall, the remains of another age, the only portion that is left of the old fortifications of the city, you find almost infallibly at a certain season of the year, for example after the disasters of a rainy winter, two sorts of workmen busy at the same time at very different works: the one, armed with the pickaxe, who dig, who mine, who weaken more and more the ground on which this wall, hanging in the air and quite ready to slide, is seated; the others, furnished with the trowel, who, mounted on scaffolds of considerable height, repair here and there gaping breaches. Continual work of destruction at the foot of the edifice, attempt at consolidation at the top: this is exactly the definition of our social situation. If this comparison is vulgar, pardon me. When it is a matter of enlightening a society that is about to perish, I confess that, in the ardour of making my thought more graspable, I resign myself to wrapping it in a rind even trivial.

And besides, here I should be trivial with the prophet Ezechiel, who, in his energetic language, stigmatised those sad workmen who whitewashed the walls of Jerusalem with a treacherous coating, when there should have been raised courses of stone and buttresses: *Linientes eos absque temperamento.* [daubing it without tempering (Ezech. 13:10)] No, my brethren, we must not persist in a work so thankless and so unhappy. Let us not have recourse to a thousand insignificant palliatives. Once more, since it is the foundation of society that is lacking, it is the foundation that must be re-established. Now, for the salvation of nations as for the salvation of individuals, there is no other foundation save that which has been laid by the hand of God, and which is Jesus Christ and His Gospel.[8]

Let us therefore write on our banner the motto that the pagans themselves had adopted when they leagued for the defence of the fatherland against the invasion of the barbarians: *Pro aris et focis:* For altars and for hearths. For indeed the altars are the safeguard of the hearths, principles are the rampart of interests: *Pro aris et focis.* O you, then, who too long perhaps, by thoughtlessness and indifference rather than by calculation and impiety, have abandoned all interests that were not directly your own, understand today that your cause is essentially bound to the cause of God, and that order and preservation have become impossible if one does not set upright again the sole principle of order and the only means of preservation, which is religion, seriously, universally accepted, observed in all its great principles.

Let us then fight, if need be, let us all fight in our own way, but let us not separate interests that are inseparable; let us fight for the altars and for the hearths: *Pro aris et focis.* For know it well, if once more you have the misfortune to abandon heaven to the outrages of impiety, hoping to buy at that price the tranquil possession of the earth, you will be deceived in your guilty hope. Yes, if you persist in a conduct that might be expressed by these words: against the altars and for the hearths: *Contra aras et pro focis;* if you open the

temple by two doors, if you deliver it to the mercy of blasphemers, bow your head before the fate that awaits you. For, after you have let the barbarians invade the altars, be sure that they will come and sit at your hearth.

Inscribe then, there is no more time to lose, the moments are counted, inscribe on your flag the motto of the ancients: *Pro aris et pro focis:* For altars and for hearths. These two words will recall to you the whole substance of this discourse, and the word of the Apostle that served it for text: Religion is useful for everything; it has promises for the present life as well as for the future life, which I wish you, with the blessing of My Lord.[9]

Translator's notes

1. The printed heading is "First Sermon on the Temporal Utility of Religion: the Right of Property", dated "(1849)"; the First Sunday of Lent in 1849 was 25 February.

2. Scripture and the citations of Augustine, Aquinas and Bossuet are as the preacher gives them; not collated. The unnamed targets (the statesman's treatise, the Constituent legislator) are left unnamed; only the "property is theft" axiom is identified (Proudhon, 1840), and that identification is mine, as a gloss.

3. The preacher's political allusions (the "tempest," the "vigorous hand holding the sword in the great city," the "legislator of the Constituent Assembly") are the revolution of 1848 and its aftermath, as the date implies; I have not tried to name the individuals.

4. The formula "Let it be proved to you, you say, that you ever taught communism" recurs several times with slight variations; I render each as printed.

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[1] 1 Cor. 6:10 reads "regnum Dei"; the preacher's "caelorum" is as printed.

[2] The axiom is Proudhon's (*Qu'est-ce que la propriété?*, 1840); the preacher does not name him.

[3] The citation of Aquinas is as the preacher gives it; not collated (cf. *Summa theol.* II-II, q. 62, a. 3, which treats restitution by those in authority).

[4] 1 Cor. 6:10.

[5] The preacher does not name the statesman or the treatise.

[6] As given by the preacher; not collated against Bossuet.

[7] Unnamed in the text.

[8] 1 Cor. 3:11.

[9] Cf. Appendix I: p. 32, n. 64. — Avertissement, p. X[?]II [a numeral is missing in the print].

n° 44. Second Sermon on the Temporal Utility of Religion: the Duties of Property

Preached in the cathedral of Chartres, on the Fourth Sunday of Lent, 1849.

Pietas autem ad omnia utilis est, promissionem habens vitae quae nunc est, et futurae. [But godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. (1 Tim. 4:8.)]

My Lord, I said in a former conference that religion, and religion alone, established, by principles and on unshakable bases, the right of property. And I concluded, on the one hand, that the communist could not, without a sacrilegious falsification and a flagrant lie, claim the authority of the doctrines of Jesus Christ and of the Gospel; on the other, that the proprietor unhappy enough to propagate irreligious doctrines was himself working, without suspecting it, at the annihilation of his rights. I shall pursue today the discourse I began on this important matter, which gives rise to so many serious reflections.

I am the disciple, and I have the honour to be the priest, of Him who had not where to lay His head, and who asked His apostles to abandon their poor boat and their nets to follow Him. But the God whom I preach is none the less the God who created man for society, and who instituted the right of property as one of the

principal conditions of the existence of human societies. Respect for property forms part of the doctrine whose deposit was entrusted to the keeping of the Church; resting on the Decalogue and on the Gospel in the course of the ages, the Church has already several times condemned the adversaries of property, the partisans of the universal community of the things of this world. And the priesthood would be unfaithful to its divine mission on the day it ceased to promulgate in the midst of the peoples those formal commandments of the Lord, which I wish to repeat again today: "Thou shalt not steal": *Non furtum facies.* More: thy thoughts, thy desires shall respect property: therefore "thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, nor his wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his." For, adds Saint Paul, be not deceived: *Nolite errare:* "Thieves shall not possess the kingdom of heaven": *Neque fures possidebunt regnum caelorum.*[1] Therefore, my brethren, because I am the apostle of the Gospel, for that very reason I am the apostle of property.

But, as I announced to you, the religion that establishes rights always preaches duties at the same time. And it is chiefly on this side that its teaching is salutary and conservative. For it is little that a right be established in principle, if one does not succeed in fact in obtaining for this right the respect of the multitude. Now the experience of all centuries teaches us that the principal safeguard of right is found in the fulfilment of duties. Every authority, every power needs to be fortified against its intoxications and excesses, which would become the principle of its ruin. A right, however legitimate in itself, is on the eve of no longer being respected when it does not show itself respectable. I said, then, and it is to this second proposition that I wish to hold today, that religion, and religion alone, secures to property the tranquil exercise of its rights, because she alone teaches it impartially and without weakness the whole extent of its duties.

I am not unaware, my brethren, how delicate this question is; but neither can I forget how important and decisive it is. Perhaps my word will not be received today with the accustomed favour it finds among you; nevertheless, if you take the trouble to reflect upon it, you will find it wise and measured. I shall be silent on many things, and there are others I shall only let you glimpse. But as defender of property I should miss my aim if I were its courtier. The austere friend of your interests, I shall serve them more effectively than if I were their perfidious flatterer. Believe me, it is because I wish for you the entire enjoyment of your rights that I come to preach to you the entire observance of your duties.

Now, to establish some order in my subject, I say that property has duties to fulfil: first, with regard to all that is placed above it, and second, with regard to all that is placed beneath it, and that it is by the fulfilment of these different duties that it secures the tranquil exercise of its rights.

Let us implore the lights of the Holy Spirit through the intercession of Mary. *Ave Maria.*

I. One of our old jurisconsults said that we live, in France, in the kingdom of consequences. This remark is conformable to the finest and most exact observation of our national character. As soon as a consequence, good or bad, is contained in a principle or in a fact, be sure that in France that consequence, however extreme it may be, will be drawn almost at once. That is why, in this country which is that of logic, it would be labour lost to apply oneself to combating the evil in itself, if one did not attach oneself before all to suppressing the cause, the source, the root of the evil. Now, what is it about at this moment, and what is the evil to be healed? The present crisis, we are answered, is directed chiefly against material interests. It is not, in itself, a war of religious or political principles; it is a social revolution.

The rights of property are misknown by those who do not possess. Yes, that is the evil, I admit it; and what is the remedy? The remedy I indicated in my preceding discourse: there is no other than the return to all the true and solid principles. Now these same principles, which establish invincibly the just and legitimate rights of property, establish also above property other rights more important still and not less legitimate; these are, for example, the rights of God, of His Church, and of the public power. And from these rights, anterior or superior to the right of property, there result for all men indiscriminately, for the rich as for the poor, I am

mistaken, for the rich much more than for the poor, duties from which it is impossible to free oneself without opening the way to a certain confusion and a universal anarchy.

In other words, here is my reasoning. Property wishes its right to be respected by all those who, in the hierarchy of fortune, are placed beneath it. And I say that, to obtain this result practically, property must above all itself teach, by its examples, respect for all the rights hierarchically constituted above its own, that is, the right of God, of the Church and of the temporal power. For if it be otherwise, if the class that possesses, considered not in this or that individual but nearly as a whole; if this class, I say, glories in recognising nothing above itself, it will infallibly happen that its example will be law, and that it will turn against itself and against its most sacred rights.

For, says Saint Augustine, it is a disposition of Providence that every rebellion is chastised by another rebellion: *In illius peccati poena, quid inobedientiae, nisi inobedientia retributum est.* [In the punishment of that sin, what was repaid to disobedience if not disobedience?] The disobedient is not slow to be paid in his own coin; and what he complains of most bitterly is nothing else than his own disobedience rising and bristling against him: *Adversus eum ipsum, inobedientia ipsius.* So it will be everywhere and always, my brethren. However, I admit, if you have to do with English or Germanic minds, Augustine's remark may be justified only after several generations have passed; that temper of mind is less carried to extremes. But with us, in this country where cause and effect touch, hope for no respite. The conclusions of the principle or example laid down will be shortly and inevitably deduced; lightning and thunder will go off almost simultaneously. For the axiom of the old jurisconsult is full of justness, and it is belied by no page of our history: "We live, in France, in the kingdom of consequences."[2]

This being so, my brethren, I enter into the heart of my subject, and I say to that man justly frightened by the threats of spoliation and pillage that resound on every side:

My brother, you wish the maintenance of property: you are right, a thousand times right; I wish it as you do. Thus you and I will respect, will we not? the sacred principle of property wherever we find it, but above all where it shows itself in its highest expression. You wish that nothing be taken from you of what belongs to you: I wish it as you do. Thus you and I shall take good care not to snatch violently from God anything that is His. For there exists in heaven a God, creator, conserver, and consequently sole and sovereign master of all things. This God, in His infinite liberality, has conceded to us precious rights, magnificent goods; but there are rights, there are goods that He has reserved to Himself. This is His property; and surely, if there is a property that can be called sacred, it is that one, is it not?

For example, to speak here of only one thing, God is the sovereign proprietor of time; day and night belong to Him, it is He who made the dawn that brings back the light and the sun that measures its hours. Now, in His great goodness, He has divested Himself toward us of almost the whole of His property; He has given us six consecutive days for the material necessities of our existence. During those days our limbs belong to us; we exercise them in useful and productive labour, for our food, for the increase of our fortune, the advancement of our family, the well-being of our heirs. But the seventh day God has reserved to Himself; it is the day of the Lord, it is divine property. On that day we no longer belong to ourselves; but we belong to God. He takes back, even upon the body, upon the limbs He gave us, His sovereign right; and He permits us no works but those that turn to His glory.

You, my brother, who are the defender of property, assuredly you will not commit the fault of giving against yourself a fatal example. You do not want it to be permitted to go and reap furtively in your field; you will take good care not to reap ostensibly in the field of the Lord. You do not want your servant to steal from you for his own profit a single one of the moments that are due to you, nor to share in the fruit of a labour that is yours by right; you will not undertake to steal from God the sacred day that belongs to Him, nor to appropriate to your interests works that must be directed only toward heaven. For, take heed, my brother, if

you, and all that makes up the whole of the class of proprietors, are the first to strip God of what is due to Him, I fear that a severe retaliation may one day be inflicted on you. What then! it is you who commit, who encourage, who order pillage, when it is a question of what belongs to God; it is you who have no scruple about enriching yourselves at His expense: and you think that this example will not be gathered up! and what you dare against God, you think that others will not dare against you! Ah! undeceive yourselves. Where the right of God is no longer anything, the right of man is condemned to perish.

The law had been engraved on two tables. On the first table were written the rights of God Himself, and the property of the Sabbath was attributed to Him in these solemn terms: “Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour, and shalt do all thy works. But on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For God has set the Sabbath apart from every profane use, and has reserved it to Himself.” On the second table were written the rights of man, in particular the right of the family and the right of property, drawn up in these terms: “Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, nor his wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his.” Of these two tables it cannot be denied that the first was yet more sacred than the second.[3]

You, my brother, you who had so great an interest in not taking away from the second law the solid support of the first, alas! what have you done? You have thrown to the ground, and it was not for lack of will on your part that you did not reduce to nothing, the first table. You have contradicted each of the syllables that formed the text of that law. Instead of remembering to sanctify the Sabbath day, you have affected to treat it as a common day, and to accomplish on that day your accustomed works; not content with the theft you committed yourself against God, you have given yourself as accomplices your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant, and even your cattle, whose exhausted strength claimed rest, and finally the crowd that surrounded you and of which you were the oracle. Then, while you thus trampled underfoot the first table that consecrates the right of God, ah! you held firmly in your hand the second table that consecrates your right, and that one you meant well to maintain. But the signal of destruction was given, given by yourself. The second table has been torn from your hands; presently perhaps it will be broken in pieces. Already I hear all its terms contradicted, and it is said: Theft has nothing culpable in it. It is one of the laws of our nature to covet the fortune of the neighbour, and his wife, and his manservant, and his maidservant, and his flocks, and all his goods. It had to happen so. Man may well wish to play the God on earth, he will never succeed in making rights respected in his own person which he has dispossessed the God of heaven of.

And do not think, my brethren, that this connection that I establish between the violation of Sunday and the attacks on property is the forced deduction of an arbitrary logic. It is not I who introduced into the Old Testament that so often repeated threat: “Because you have despised my Sabbath, saith the Lord, for that reason I will deliver all your riches to strangers. The barbarians shall come, and they shall divide among them those lands that have not observed the law of my rest. The streets of the city, scandalously furrowed by the traffic of a guilty commerce, shall be alternately like the battlefield and the desert. And I will take back at leisure my Sabbath, during the seventy years that the desolation shall last.” Yes, my brethren, it is before God a stain, a blot, that French property bears upon its brow; it is this profanation of the day consecrated to the Divinity, a crime unknown among all the other peoples of the world, unknown to heretical nations and even to idolaters. Alas! how much it is to be feared that Heaven may make us pay dear for that seventh part of our material property which we long usurped against Him!

Therefore, my brother, would you do a truly conservative act with regard to property? Respect religiously yourself property in its highest and most venerable expression; divert to your profit no portion of the day that belongs to God; but on the contrary, each time the term of that holy payment comes round, go into the house

of the Lord to pay Him your religious tribute as faithfully as you wish to be paid yourself by your debtors at the agreed terms. Otherwise, know it well, your field is no more yours than Sunday is God's; and we live, in France, in the kingdom of consequences.

But let us go on. My brother, you wish the maintenance of property; I wish it as you do. Thus you and I shall be careful not to attack, not to strip the holy authority that has been established among men to command consciences, and so secure all rights. For, you know, the God of heaven, having come down upon the earth, left His religion there clothed with a spiritual power exercised over souls. The authority that exercises this power is called the Church, the priesthood. Its title of jurisdiction and property over spirits and hearts, over intelligences and wills, was delivered to it by Jesus Christ Himself, when, stretching out His hands over His apostles, He said to them: All power is given to me in heaven and on earth: go therefore and teach all nations to the end of the ages, go and baptise, go and preach the observance of all that I have commanded.

Souls, then, God has reserved the government of to His Church. And then, as this spiritual authority is subject here below to the common necessities of life, God, who is the proprietor of the whole globe, while He abandoned the rest of the earth to the children of men: *Terram autem dedit filiis hominum,* [but the earth he has given to the children of men (Ps. 113:24)] has nevertheless reserved to Himself certain asylums that are called His temples and, around these temples, the dwelling and subsistence of His ministers. All the rest men share among themselves. But souls and what sanctifies them, but the temple and what serves to maintain it, this belongs only to religion, that is, to God. Among all peoples of the world it has been so judged, and the history of paganism is there to attest it.

You, my brother, defender of property, you will not commit the fault of giving against yourself a fatal example. You do not want the State to seize your fortune to govern it at its pleasure; you will not be of those who proclaim this doctrine, namely: that the State, and not religion, has received the mission of forming intelligences, and that it possesses empire over souls just as much as over bodies. You intend well to be master in your own house when you sit by your hearth; you will not be of those who refuse God the property of His temple, and who concede to Him only the use of the chalice in which the blood of His Son is consecrated. Finally, you ask that the properties of citizens be inviolable, save in case of public utility and on payment of a just indemnity; you will not then be of those who pretend that every property used for religion shall be violated as often as one pleases, and that every indemnity stipulated in favour of the Church, even by public contracts, may be brutally suppressed without the slightest injustice. No, my brother, you will admit, you will justify none of these enormities. For, take heed, if you and all that makes up the whole of the class of proprietors are the first to strip religion, the Church, of what is the essential object of her authority, the necessary condition of her spiritual and temporal existence, ah! this time again I fear that a severe retaliation may one day be inflicted on you.

What then! Are souls and all that sanctifies them, are teaching and religious worship with all that is inseparable from them, is the body of Jesus Christ and the altar where it is immolated, are the sacraments and the priesthood that administers them, not the highest, the most important things that can be conceived? Is there elsewhere a property comparable to this property, for dignity, value, destination? Now this property, you want everything to be permitted against it, yesterday by violence, today by a legality more homicidal than violence. Then you are astonished that the sentiment of duty, that respect for property, is weakened among the people. You ask how there could arise assemblies of legislators disposed to decree spoliating laws! But tell me, by what reversal of ideas will you dare to pretend that property is a sacred thing if it touches your house, and that it loses that character if it borders on the house of God? and how will you make it believed that the theft of a common good is a sacrilege, if the things consecrated to the service of religion and of your soul can be usurped every day without crime?

Assuredly, my brethren, it is not I who shall recall here ancient injustices, I, minister of a Church that has long since renounced complaining, and which, ever ready to immolate herself for the repose of consciences,

abandoned her rights by a solemn concordat. And ah! would that it had been possible for religion to add to all her sacrifices another benefit, and to arrest moral consequences that the wise had foreseen, that they had announced! It was said, sixty years ago, from the French tribune, and said not only by orators of the clergy and the nobility but also by orators of the Third Estate, it was said to the legislators: "You are casting the first stone at property; the attack will not stop there, and before half a century a general assault will be delivered upon it." That oracle was prophetic.

I know well that a modern historian of our revolution made merry at the expense of one of the celebrated orators of the religious cause, who "displayed," he tells us, "on that occasion his imperturbable fluency," and wished, by bizarre reasonings and forced deductions, "to sound the alarm among the proprietors." But what I know also is that this same historian, who mocked ten years ago the chimerical fear inspired in proprietors, has just composed in his turn, for the defence of property, a modest volume in which his fluency unfolds itself in four hundred and forty pages, and in which he tells us, in the preface, "that henceforth, if society is not to perish, we must prove what, out of respect for the human conscience, we would never formerly have undertaken to demonstrate." Here, my brethren, is one of those reversals of ideas that Providence takes pleasure in making necessary.[4]

The great man whose tomb has just closed said on this subject, thirty years ago, in the upper Chamber of the nation: "Gentlemen, I dare predict it to you. Under a government that represents order, if you continue these ancient injustices against the Church, none of you can be assured that his children will peaceably enjoy their inheritance…. I know," he added, "that in this age one is little struck by reasons placed beyond the term of life," which materially seemed to concern only the following generation; "daily misfortune has taught us to live from day to day. We sell sacred goods, we see the physical and near consequence; as for the moral and distant consequence, which is not to reach us, little do we care. Gentlemen, let us not trust so much to the tomb; time flies rapidly in this country; in France the future is always near, it often arrives faster than death."[5]

But let us throw a veil over this sad picture of our past inconsistencies. I shall say to you only, for the present and for the future: my brother, would you do, with regard to property in general, an eminently conservative act? Respect religiously yourself property in one of its most august and most inviolable forms; do no harm, do not even envy the authority or the spiritual or temporal property of the Church. And above all, in an age when the Church scarcely possesses what is necessary, let no one hear any more of our proprietor-legislators hurl against a few scattered shreds of the sacred domain this savage word: "Let war come, and we shall lay hands on them." For, know it well, that word would not fall to the ground. Your properties are assuredly no more sacred, and they are today much more important than those of the Church. Now we live, in France, in the kingdom of consequences.

Finally, my brother, you wish the maintenance of property: you are right, I wish it as you do. Thus you and I shall be careful not to fight incessantly, to weaken, to ruin the temporal authority that is charged with the guard of our dearest interests after those of our souls. For, you know, above the family, above property, Providence has constituted a public government: *In unamquamque gentem posuit rectorem*, [over every nation he set a ruler (Ecclus. 17:14)] whose mission is to maintain order, peace and justice within, and without the independence and glory of the nation. And to arrive at this aim, to attain this result, power before all needs to be respected, sustained by those chiefly who have most interest in preventing upheavals and revolutions. God orders this submission, this respect, this concurrence, with regard to the power that He Himself has established and that is legitimate.

You, my brother, who are partisan and defender of property, ah! here again you will not commit the fault of giving against yourself a fatal example. You do not want property to be undermined in silence; you will not dig the abyss in which authority would be engulfed. The slightest principles of communism or socialism deposited in a book or a newspaper make you shudder; you will not then be of those who would think

themselves small minds and vulgar men if they did not figure systematically everywhere and always in the ranks of what has been called for thirty years the opposition. For, take heed, if you and all that makes up the whole of the class of proprietors are the first to make a guilty sport of raising obstacles to the sovereign authority, seeking to degrade it by your sarcasms, to shake it by your intrigues, to overthrow it by perpetual revolutions, ah! this time again I fear that you will be the victims of your fault and that a cruel retaliation will be inflicted on you.

What then! It is you who cannot suffer any superiority, it is you who attribute to yourselves the right to break, when it pleases you, all that eclipses and offends you, and you think this example will not be contagious? You conspire against power, because, as you already possess fortune, power is the only thing that tempts you. But that people, which possesses nothing, and which does not yet covet power, is it not natural that it should conspire against what flatters its covetousness, against your money and your lands? You clap your hands, and applaud all changes, all substitutions, all transformations of authority. But do you not logically see a last revolution coming that will clap its hands and applaud all changes, all substitutions, all transformations of property? I already hear all your well-known arguments taken up against you, and all that you have said of power said of fortune. The same sophisms contest to it every right of permanence and stability.

But I stop, and closing my eyes on the past, about which we can do nothing now, I say to you for the present and for the future: My brother, would you do with regard to property an eminently conservative act? Consecrate henceforth all your influence to setting upright again, to making respected, the principle of authority. Instead of weakening the public power, gather around it all the living forces of the country. And above all, no longer say that insurrection is the holiest of duties. For, know it well, the right of insurrection against authority contains eminently the germ of insurrection against property. And we live, in France, in the kingdom of consequences.

Let us collect our thoughts, my brethren, and avow that the anarchy that threatens us proceeds from another anarchy of which we were the first authors. We would respect none of the rights that cast a shadow upon us, we contested, violated the right of God, the right of the Church, the right of the public authority. Today the word of Saint Augustine is fulfilled: as punishment of our rebellion, behold revolt in its turn contests all our rights, and the evil of which we complain so bitterly is nothing else than our own disobedience turning and rising against us: *Quid inobedientiae, nisi inobedientia retributum est. Adversus illum ipsum, inobedientia ipsius.*

Thus, my brethren, would that I could bring into your presence this unfortunate society, all covered with wounds, all bruised with blows, attacked in all its most intimate interests, the family, property. I would ask her, as the prophet did of old: What are these wounds in the midst of thy hands? And she would answer me: Ah! it is in the house of my best friends that I was thus ill-treated: *His plagatus sum in domo eorum qui me diligebant.* [With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved me. (Zach. 13:6.)] They wanted order, and they overthrew all the principles of order. They wanted property, and they gave the signal of its destruction. And even now, what I dread most is not the violent, and consequently little durable, doctrines of my adversaries; it is the absence of the true and salutary doctrines among my partisans. It is not in the street, it is in the assembly of my defenders, of my legislators, that the most murderous blows against me are prepared: *His plagatus sum in domo eorum qui me diligebant.* No, she would add, turning toward me, no, the time of misfortunes is not over, since the day of truth has not yet come. For you yourself, minister of the Gospel, whose word full of reserves and reticences I have just heard, know it well, notwithstanding your constraint and your efforts, you have not been able to make the truth acceptable to several of my friends, my partisans, who listen to you; the appearance of this too vivid light has excited in their souls the shudder that the word of Jesus once provoked in the princes of the people: *Et fremebant in eum.* [and they murmured against him (cf. Mark 14:5)] Therefore, she says to me, I beseech you, put your finger upon your mouth, lest

you make this generation more guilty; heap not burning coals upon its head. Be content to pray between the porch and the altar, and abandon me to the mystery of the justice and mercy of your God.[6]

II. My brethren, it is because I seemed to hear a secret voice hold this language to me that I shall not finish this discourse. I had promised to reveal to property the whole extent of its duties, whether it looks above itself or below itself. Arrived at this second part of my subject, I feel the necessity of restricting myself to the simple enunciation of a few general ideas. For God forbid that I should rashly carry the torch of truth into the midst of the most inflammable passions. I shall say only to property that, according to Saint Paul, the sole means of not being judged is to judge oneself. Let the class that possesses, then, carefully make its examination of conscience.[7]

Ah! I know it, there are a great number of my hearers who must find in the depth of their soul only the noble satisfaction that results from duty faithfully, heroically accomplished. Or rather I am mistaken, for those whose charity knows no bounds are almost always those whose delicate conscience reproaches itself with not having done enough. Noble scruple, which teaches them to calculate and regret what they do not give as rigidly as others calculate and regret what they give. My brethren, it would be a crime not to acknowledge it, God has preserved in the midst of the French nation, as formerly in the midst of His chosen people, compassionate hearts, generous hands, men of mercy, by whose benefits property finds grace even in the eyes of its most cruel adversaries: *Et conservavit illi homines misericordiae, invenientes gratiam in oculis omnis carnis.* [And he preserved to them men of mercy, finding grace in the sight of all flesh.; the preacher gives no reference.] Do not tell me that, as a result of these benefits, there are multitudes of ungrateful hearts; I answer you that there are also multitudes of grateful hearts. And, in the last analysis, it is because of this blessed charity of some of the rich that all the others have succeeded in getting their fortune forgiven so long. The evil passions would already have burst out a thousand times in France if they had not been forestalled, disarmed, by the holy conspiracy of those men, those women of mercy, whom God has preserved to us, and in whom wealth is absolved even by its enemies: *Et conservavit illi homines misericordiae, invenientes gratiam in oculis omnis carnis.*

But would it be true, my brethren, that beside this merciful wealth that delights to pour out, to pour out always, there is another selfish wealth, which applies itself solely to preserving, to increasing? Would it be true that in particular goods which were long the most precious resource of the indigent have become for them the most ungrateful and sterile portion of the territory, since the hands into which they have fallen have not yet learned to open? Finally, would it be true that, apart from very honourable exceptions, property, wherever it is irreligious and impious, shows itself equally dry and pitiless; so that, on several points, the suppression of mendicity, so warmly solicited, will soon come to equal the suppression of charity? These are not facts that I advance; they are questions that I put.

And, be that as it may, I must tell you, my brother. You wish the maintenance of property; you are right. But to obtain this result, I beg you, fulfil the duty that God has imposed on property. Do not possess for yourself alone. Give, give to your brethren, give to them in proportion to your superfluity and to their needs. Give, for God commands you. I know, and I wish the enemies of property, if by chance there are some within these walls, to know as I do; I know that the rigorous duty of charity that is ordained to the rich does not constitute correlatively for the poor a rigorous right to assistance. Theology teaches me that the fundamental distinction between charity and justice is that the debt of justice can be exacted either by recourse to the laws, or by recourse to force according to circumstances, whereas the debt of charity is discharged freely, and cannot be commanded by any tribunal but that of God and of conscience. If the right to assistance were a rigorous right, a right properly so called, then charity would no longer be charity, it would be confounded with justice. And history teaches me in this regard that one of the greatest misfortunes that can fall on a nation is that charity there lose its true character, and that a cruel necessity, resulting from the scarcity of voluntary alms, denature and transform it into a forced tax.

Yes, I am ignorant of none of these things, and I wish that the adversaries of property should not be ignorant that God has reserved to Himself alone to avenge the tears of the poor and to chastise the hardness of the rich. The Catholic doctrine will never authorise the spoliation of any proprietor, were that proprietor at once without religion and without humanity, because, says the great theologian Suarez, the divine law protects all legitimate rights, even the rights of those who combat and misknow it.[8] Accordingly, in conformity with these principles, the indigent who are truly religious will never think of overthrowing property on account of its excesses and wrongs. But what must be added is that the multitudes who are not religious will certainly let themselves be drawn to less moderate or less salutary counsels. And consequently what the proprietors must know on their side is that if they persevere in disobeying God who commands them to give, infallibly others will one day disobey God who forbids them to steal. Therefore, my very dear brother, would you do with regard to property an essentially conservative act? Fulfil, according to the extent of your means, the precept of charity.

I add also, my brother, you wish the maintenance of property, you are right; and to obtain this result, observe in all circumstances toward your inferiors the duty of justice. For if the charity that is commanded you confers on them no rigorous right, justice may confer several. For example, I do not recognise, and I have seen nowhere in holy theology, that imperious right which has been called the right to work, and which, exercised with rigour, is a spoliation begun. But what is written in the holy Books, and what is incontestable, is that the workman who has consecrated his pains and his time to you has a strict right to his wage, and that this wage must not be without proportion either to the gains he procures you or to the necessities of him who procures them.

Now would it be true (here again I do not affirm, my brethren, but I ask), would it be true that examples, set from above, had accustomed wealth to discharge its debts late to the supplier and the workman, for whom these culpable delays sometimes bring complete ruin? Would it be true that the merchant, through excessive avidity to enrich himself, scarcely pays the industrious hands he employs, and that his fortune, rapid to the point of scandal, is levied upon the vigils and sweat of poor young working girls, who do not find in their assiduous labour the bread and water on which they feed and the clothes with which they cover themselves? Would it be true again that demands at once impious and inhuman refuse all employment during the other six days of the week to the conscientious worker who asks to observe the law of God on the seventh day? Or would it be true, at least, that this unfortunate man is obliged to renounce his wage if he does not go to wait for it and receive it precisely at the hour when his conscience and the precept of the Church summon him to the foot of the altar, for the most solemn and most useful act of religion, which is the holy Sacrifice, accompanied by the preaching of the Gospel? Finally would it be true again that, on several points of this region where domestic service had long been so mild, new habits of luxury and urbanity, substituted for the first patriarchal manners, no longer allowed the hireling to eat his bread otherwise than on the very sheaf from which he has just laboriously drawn the grain; and that in the most rigorous season, banished far from hearth and table, he had no other refuge than the neighbouring roof where the temperature is softened by the warmth of the animals? To these questions I could add many others.

I know, and I hasten to say it, that all may know it as I do; I know that, according to true principles, an injustice suffered does not legitimate an injustice returned; I know that religion well understood and well practised would teach the servant, the workman, the hireling, a resignation a thousand times more useful, a thousand times more salutary for themselves than all violent and criminal reactions, whose results after all reach them even more than others. But what must be added is that it will always be dangerous to put the virtue of men to too severe a trial. And consequently what the proprietors must know on their side is that, if they misknow a single one of the just rights of their inferiors, these will infallibly one day let burst out angers that it will no longer be time to restrain, and to which it matters not to furnish the least pretext. Therefore, my brethren, would you do with regard to property an eminently conservative act? Fulfil in all its rigour, and

even with a sort of superabundance, the precept of justice.

I stop here, my brethren, and conclude with a story that I borrow from the book of Judith. A terrible army was marching to the conquest of the land of Juda. Having learned this, the people of Juda prepared an energetic resistance, and closed all the roads of their mountains. The general of the enemy army, assembling all the wise men of the neighbouring countries, questioned them on the history, the manners, the characters of this nation, on the number and strength of its cities, on the courage and multitude of its troops, on the chief of its militia. Then an old man, named Achior, answered in these terms: General, if you deign to hear me, I shall tell you the truth concerning this people. It is not by the passes of its mountains, nor by the weak side of its fortresses, nor by the inexperience of its warriors, that this people is vulnerable. For it is a people that God visibly protects, as all its history bears witness. Every time that this nation has been faithful to God, God has fought for it, and it has been victorious without striking a blow. But when it adored strange gods, it was delivered as prey to neighbouring nations. And finally, when, having committed faults, it repented of them, God gave it strength to resist the most powerful enemies. These various alternations have been renewed even in our own days.

Now therefore, my lord, inquire whether the sons of Israel are guilty of some great iniquity; and then let us go up the mountain, let us march courageously against them, for their God will deliver them to you, and they shall be, for some time at least, under your power. But if the nation has nothing to reproach itself with toward its God, it will be impossible to resist them, because their God will defend them, and we, whose attempt will have failed, shall be the reproach of the earth. So spoke old Achior, and the sequel proved that he was right.[9]

Now, my brethren, you know it, an army perhaps more formidable than that of Nabuchodonosor is meditating the conquest and ruin of our society. We too, like the sons of Israel, have organised a powerful resistance and placed sentinels in all the streets. Assuredly it is not by any point of the frontier, nor for lack of citadels and bastilles, nor by the treason or weakness of our troops, that we give hold against ourselves. Whence then could the enemies of society get their favourable chances, and on what side could they find auxiliaries? Ah! hear that cry that Saint Jerome uttered in the midst of the convulsions of the expiring Roman Empire: *Nostris peccatis barbari fortes sunt:* it is by the fact of our sins that the barbarians are strong. It is we who, by our vices, have prepared for them victory over the bravest people of the universe: *Nostris vitiis Romanus superatur exercitus.* Unhappy that we are, to have made ourselves so insupportable to God that He makes use today of the rage of the barbarians to weigh down His wrath upon us: *Qui tantum displicemus Deo, ut per rabiem barbarorum illius in nos ira desaeviat!* May the Lord Jesus drive far from us such wild beasts: *Abigat Jesus ab orbe Romano tales bestias!* But how hope it, since so many calamities already begun have not been able to reduce our pride and our impiety? The Roman empire collapses with a crash, and in the midst of these ruins we still hold our head up, unwilling to bend it: *Romanus orbis ruit, et tamen cervix nostra erecta non flectitur.* Full of horror for the evil that threatens us, we have still more horror, if possible, for the remedy; and because we do not consent to remove the cause of the disease, the disease is incurable: *Nec amputamus causas morbi, ut morbus pariter auferatur.* What shall we say then of that desperate state of a society which, after exhausting all other means of salvation, reduced to the necessity of converting to God if it would live, proudly declares that it dies and does not convert? It is much thus that Saint Jerome expressed himself.[10]

You, my brethren, will not deserve such reproaches. No, you are not of those who, rather than return to God and the truth, would make a pact with death. Would you then spare the family, property, a social revolution? You have, each of you, an infallible means in your hands; accomplish, each for his part, a Christian reform. Property will become stronger than all its enemies, if it will conform to the laws of the Gospel. Therefore no longer encroach on the rights of God, and in particular on His Sunday, which is His property; invade no more the spiritual or temporal domain of the Church; be no longer men of systematic opposition to every principle of authority; but, on the contrary, set loudly the example of rendering to God what belongs to God, to the

Church what belongs to the Church, to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. Then exercise charity according to the extent of your resources; give much if you have much, and if you have little give little, but with eagerness; and let the indigent know, let him understand, that you have for him bowels of mercy. Finally, observe toward your subordinates an irreproachable justice; do not withhold the wage of the servant and the hireling, or ever reduce the price of his labour below just proportions; and let the workman know, let him understand, that you are truly animated by a pious solicitude for his interests.

Then, as you will have reformed property in the Christian sense, as you will have fulfilled the duties of property, by that very fact you will have sheltered it from revolutions, and you will secure to it the tranquil enjoyment of its rights. Soon it will have nothing more to fear on earth, because it will no longer have deserved to be struck from heaven. If Attila had not had the consciousness that he was a scourge in the hands of God, his savage hordes would never have obtained any success. Therefore, I repeat, defenders of order, of property and of the family, make yourselves worthy to preserve all these goods; put the Almighty on your side against your adversaries.

And as a final conclusion, may the grave lessons that have come to us from heaven this year convince you that the moment has come for you, this year, to approach the tribunal of reconciliation, and to go and receive into your heart the sacred Bread of which the priest says, presenting it to the gaze of the crowd: Behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world: *Ecce qui tollit peccata mundi.* With sin all our evils will disappear. This is the grace I wish you, with the blessing of My Lord.[11]

Translator's notes

1. The heading is "Second Sermon on the Temporal Utility of Religion: the Duties of Property, preached at the cathedral of Chartres", dated "(1849)"; the preacher's register gives the Fourth Sunday of Lent, 18 March 1849.

2. Citations from Augustine, Jerome and Suarez are as the preacher gives them; not collated. The unnamed persons (the "old jurisconsult," "the modern historian of our revolution," "the orator of the religious cause," "the great man whose tomb has just closed") are left unnamed. The first two are possibly the same persons as the unnamed statesman in n° 43; I make no identification.

3. The preacher's "questions" about the wealthy and the labourers (the paragraphs beginning "Would it be true…") are rhetorical and are rendered as questions, as in the French.

4. A few phrases are archaic or obscure ("rage des barbares," "talion"); I keep "retaliation" for *talion* throughout.

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[1] Exod. 20:15, 17; 1 Cor. 6:9–10 (Vulgate reads "regnum Dei"; "caelorum" is as printed).

[2] The Augustine citation (cf. *City of God* XIV, 15) is as the preacher gives it; the "old jurisconsult" is not named.

[3] Cf. Exod. 20:8–17. The preacher's wording of the Sabbath commandment is a free paraphrase; I render it as printed.

[4] Neither the historian, the orator nor the book is named in the text.

[5] The speaker is not named; "the great man whose tomb has just closed" is evidently someone who died in 1848 and sat in the Chamber of Peers about 1818–19. I leave him unnamed.

[6] Cf. Rom. 12:20; Joel 2:17.

[7] 1 Cor. 11:31.

[8] The reference to Suárez is as the preacher gives it; not collated.

[9] Judith 5:5–25 (Douay 5:5–24), freely summarised.

[10] The Latin sentences are Jerome's, as the preacher gives them (cf. *Letters* 60 and 123); not collated, and the preacher's paraphrase is loose.

[11] Cf. Appendix I: p. 32, n. 65.

n° 45. Parish Instruction on the Charm of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin

For the First Sunday of the Month of Mary, 2 May 1841.[1] [2]

In me gratia omnis viae et veritatis, in me omnis spes vitae et virtutis. [In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue. (Ecclus. 24:25.)]

My very dear brethren, when the year has just brought back to us its most enchanting days, when the Church has just asked of nature the hymn of its flowers and perfumes, I need to speak to you of her who is the object of so many homages, I need to speak to you of Mary. We have set her, this holy Virgin, like a seal not only upon our heart, that is, upon all our affections, but also upon our arm and upon our lips, that is, upon all our works and all our words. We should think we no longer loved her enough if she did not preside over the least of our actions, if her name were not invoked and pronounced even in the least of our discourses. Yes, holy Virgin, whatever subject we treat, we never lose sight of you. Upon whatever sea we sail, you are always our compass and our star. Everywhere we love to meet you, to greet you, to invoke you, to speak at least in passing of you, and we are never happier than when circumstances give us occasion to choose you for the direct object of our teaching; for you are all the charm of religion and of truth, all the support of life and of virtue: *In me gratia omnis viae et veritatis, in me omnis spes vitae et virtutis.*

What shall I say to you then on this day, my very dear brethren? My text will suffice me, and I shall only be able to touch lightly upon its development. I shall tell you that the Church has been admirably inspired in consecrating to Mary the most gracious days of the year, because Mary is in religion what spring is in nature. I shall tell you that Mary is all the charm of the way and all the hope of life, that this dogma of a mother who is in the heavens beautifies all the dogmas, all the beliefs, at the same time that it softens and facilitates all the virtues and all the practices of religion: *In me gratia viae et veritatis, in me omnis spes vitae et virtutis.*

I. Mary is all the charm of the way and of the truth; in other words, Mary is all the beauty of the Catholic dogma. To understand this assertion, let us try to grasp some relations between the natural and the supernatural world. Have you sometimes meditated, my brethren, how lovable and sweet the Lord is in His works? *Viae ejus, viae pulchrae, et semitae illius pacificae.* [Her ways are beautiful ways, and all her paths are peaceable. (Prov. 3:17.)] His ways are beautiful ways, His paths are peaceable paths. God never proceeds drily or harshly; His means are always gracious and sweet. He is not that architect of exact ideas who subjects everything to geometrical proportions, who knows only straight lines and monotonous planes, and whose cold hand, disdaining ornaments as so many superfluities, brings down under its pitiless scythe a whole harvest of flowers that ancient art had made to grow, or buries them under coatings more or less precious but of a plain and correct kind, and for that very reason wearisome and graceless. Still less is He that cruelly greedy workman who never believes he has found a means too rapid and too violent to reach the goal, and who harnesses the most dangerous elements to the chariot of his fortune. No, God does not proceed so; He tends strongly to His end, but by an adorned and peaceful road; His action is always full of grace and sweetness. There is in the divine operation a fruitful poetry; all that passes through His hands flowers and is festooned; His means are changed into ornaments; one feels that these works spring from an inexhaustible source of grace and love: *Viae ejus, viae pulchrae, et semitae illius pacificae.*

See how God has proceeded in the inanimate world; see by what laws He constituted nature. Admire, my brethren, the rich garment with which the universe adorns itself at this moment. Nothing is more gracious and sweet than nature. God has hidden all the springs of this great machine under pleasantly varied forms. Oh! yes, my brethren, in presence of all these marvels that the Creator spreads out at this moment before our eyes, it is indeed the moment to cry out that His ways are beautiful and His paths sweet: *Viae ejus, viae pulchrae, et semitae illius pacificae.*

All these riches that astonish us are only means, but what beautiful means! Between the winter in which one has sown and the summer in which one will reap, see what a delightful spring! God could have produced the

result at one stroke, and made the fruit come out from the very germ. But no: *disponens omnia suaviter.* [ordering all things sweetly (Wisd. 8:1)] Between the germ and the fruit, see what intermediate means: that plant, so admirably organised, whose stem shoots up with such lightness; that bud that opens and unfolds, with emanations so sweet that one does not know whether the flower will be preferable to the bud; that rich and luxuriant vegetation, and those leaves whose green so pleasantly enchants and rests the sight; then finally those flowers of such diversified forms and colours, which send up into the air clouds of odours and columns of perfume. Once more, these are only means, but what grace, what sweetness in the means!

They are only means… The flower awakened in the morning will fall asleep in the evening, and will not open again from the second or third dawn; soon the dried-up stem will see its leaves strew the ground, only the fruit will remain. The man of dry heart, the man without poetry and without love, asks why this so useless luxury? He does not understand why the infinitely wise Being tends to His goal by such costly ways and why He expends so much power on mere means, when the result could be obtained at much less cost. In his eyes God is like a child at play, like a prodigal who squanders. This rich fecundity, this softness of the divine action almost scandalises him; he would find it good that God should throw the fruits on the earth as the tempest throws hail there and looses the winds. But God none the less continues His work in His own fashion, disposing all things with sweetness, and walking always by beautiful ways and by sweet paths: *Viae ejus, viae pulchrae, et semitae illius pacificae.*

This, my brethren, is how God proceeds in the inanimate world, this is according to what laws He constituted nature. Would you know how He proceeds in the animate and rational world? would you know according to what laws He constituted the family? You will find Him no less disposing all things with sweetness, and walking by beautiful ways and by peaceable paths: *Disponens omnia suaviter. Viae ejus, viae pulchrae, et semitae illius pacificae.*

Beside man, who is the head of the family and the depositary of authority, whose rights and power the whole house doubtless loves but also fears and respects, see that weaker and more sensitive being who governs by the sceptre of gentleness. God had just created man when He said to Himself: It is not good for man to be alone. God had discerned in the heart of the children of men a need; He had perceived a suffering that would not have failed to manifest itself if a smile more tender, more gracious than that of man had not welcomed the child in the cradle, if a weaker, and consequently more sensitive, being had not joined her more delicate action to the action of man. Man is power, and power always has something austere; beside power which is strong, a minister was needed who should be gentle. And God placed woman beside man. Man is the head of woman, says Saint Paul: *Vir caput est mulieris.* [1 Cor. 11:3.] Woman is the heart of man. Man commands with authority; woman governs with love. What power would have of hardness, the minister softens.[3]

This empire of gentleness woman can exercise in the family in two characters and in two different ways, each more admirable than the other. Sometimes it is the young virgin, adorned with her grace and her innocence, and using this heavenly gift to maintain harmony by a mediation full of charm. Sometimes and above all it is the mother, the mother, masterpiece of the divine goodness, the mother whose heart is a prodigy of ardent love, of generous tenderness, the mother, that being whom nothing can replace, the most precious treasure that heaven has given us.

Thus Scripture tells us that woman, she who understands her mission, is all the charm of the family, that her brow dispels all clouds, that her word brings joy into all hearts, and that where she is not, all joy is extinguished, and all is suffering: *Ubi non est mulier, ingemiscit egens.* [Where there is no woman, he mourns that is in want. (Ecclus. 36:27.)] What the sun is to nature, the face of woman is to her house; it is through her that everything there is disposed sweetly, and that the law of the family is an amiable and peaceable law: *Disponens omnia suaviter. Viae ejus, viae pulchrae, et semitae illius pacificae.* Oh! yes, how beautiful are His ways and how sweet His path! how He disposes all with sweetness, He who has sown so much grace in nature, and who has put woman in the family, He who created the lilies and made virgins, He

who made the fruit come out of a flower and gave us mothers: *Disponens omnia suaviter. Viae ejus, viae pulchrae, et semitae illius pacificae.*

Now, my very dear brethren, what God has done in nature, what He has done in the family, He has done also in religion. God is not unlike Himself; the same imprint of His hands must be found everywhere, the same touch, the same workmanship. In religion, which is His work par excellence, the supreme Workman must not have been inferior to Himself and below His other works. God, who placed between the germ and the fruit the bud and the flower, God, who sowed so much beauty in nature and so much sweetness in the family, cannot have been less liberal in religion. Religion must be Noemi, "the beautiful" (cf. Ruth 1:20), like the other works of God. In religion too there is a sacred stem, a flower that has produced a blessed fruit; in religion too there is at once virgin and mother: it is Mary.

Do you understand now, my brethren, how Mary is all the grace of the way and of the truth; how she beautifies all the Catholic dogma, since she is in religion what spring is in nature, what woman is in the family? From this gracious flower escapes a divine perfume that embalms all the rest. By her hand at once virginal and maternal, this woman par excellence, touching all the dogmas, beautifies them all, and gives them a smiling colour. Our dogmas, my brethren, are severe in themselves. Alas! and it must be said, they are hard to bear: *Durus est hic sermo.* [This saying is hard. (John 6:61.)] They might often disconcert the intelligence and weigh heavily on the heart. Yes, I say it boldly, take away Mary, and religion will take a sombre and sad tint, it will be a year without a month of May, a family without a mother; but with Mary everything regains beauty, grace and sweetness. There is not a single aspect of Christianity, however austere it may appear, that one cannot adorn and soften by showing Mary in a corner of the picture.

This, my brethren, was what I announced to you: Mary beautifying all our beliefs; I have only laid down the principle. I should now have to take one after another all the points of the creed, and show you how each of them is beautified, softened, by its relation to Mary; as in the second reflection that I announced, I should have to take one after another all the virtues, and show you how the example and help of Mary beautify them still more and make them easy. This plan carried out in detail would be the object of a long series of meditations which perhaps, my brethren, we shall make together later. Let us try only to approach some principal ideas.

All the dogmas revealed by God, and constituting the whole of Catholic truth, are summed up in the creed that was given us by the Apostles. Now have you ever noticed, my brethren, what a beautiful place Mary occupies in this creed, and how much charm and sweetness the part she has there casts over all the rest? My brethren, a woman, a virgin, a mother in the creed! There are three great things in the creed, three great things that make the whole of religion: God, Jesus Christ, and the Church. Now Mary appears there beautifying God; she is associated with the Trinity; beautifying Jesus Christ, she is the complement of the incarnation; beautifying the Church, she is the spirit of the priesthood.

I believe in God, in God the Father, in His only Son, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. Do you see, my brethren, do you see Mary, do you see the woman, the virgin, the mother, mingled in the creed with the three divine persons and with the most astonishing mysteries? Do you see the most holy Virgin in the Trinity itself? And she is there not as a stranger but as in her family, and with the closest relations and incomparable titles: spouse of the Father, whose fruitfulness she shares, mother of the Son whom she conceives and brings into the world, virginal companion of the Holy Spirit who deposits this sacred fruit in her womb. Ah! how God is beautified, softened in my eyes![4]

I believe in God the Father. Doubtless His quality of Father pleases me, smiles upon me; but beside Him, is there not also a mother? It is not good that he should be alone, said God, speaking of our first father. Now if it is in the nature of the child, of man, to need a mother: *Ubi non est mulier, ingemiscit egens,* it is consequently in the nature of this same man to wish to find the mother everywhere, and to seek her even in

religion and in the heavens. I believe in God the Father. But this eternal Father has, in time, shared His fruitfulness with a woman; this woman is Mary.

I believe in God almighty. I admire this omnipotence, but it frightens me. I would have a God all good, and that is impossible; He must have justice, the vengeance of His outraged goodness. What then is to be done? God invents a means of stealing from His justice in favour of His mercy; He invents Mary, all good, always good, nothing but good, whose all-powerful prayer comes to arrest the arm of His justice and break the sword in His hands.

I believe in God, creator of heaven and earth. But in this heaven that Your hand, O creator God, has stretched out like a tent above our heads, You have set two great lights: *Luminare majus, ut praeesset diei, et luminare minus, ut praeesset nocti:* [the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night (Gen. 1:16)] the sun, star of the days, and the moon, which presides over the nights, a gentler star whose light lets itself be fixed by our eyes. Now, O my God, what You have put in this visible firmament, I seek in the heaven of heavens. You are there the sun radiant with glory whose brilliance dazzles me; I want there a gentler star that my feeble eyelid lets me contemplate: *Luminare minus.* Now, my brethren, this is what the creed shows us in the firmament of the Catholic dogma: two stars, of which one seems to temper the burning fires of the other, God and Mary: *Luminare majus et luminare minus.*

I believe in God, creator of heaven and earth. But once more, O my God, on earth You gave man woman for spouse, for sister, for mother. Will there be something corresponding in the heavens? Yes, there is found woman, virgin, mother. Thus, my brethren, this first dogma of the creed is beautified by Mary. It is the woman, the virgin, the mother, coming to mingle her charms with the very dogma of the Trinity. It is Mary associated with God. God is more lovable when one knows that a woman, a virgin, a mother sits at His side. Yes, Lord, You dispose all things with sweetness; Your ways are beautiful ways, and all Your paths are sweet: *Disponens omnia suaviter. Viae ejus, viae pulchrae, et semitae illius pacificae.* Yes, Mary, in you is all the grace of the way and of the truth, in you is all the charm of religion and of its dogmas: *In me gratia omnis viae et veritatis.*

Mary beautifying God, she is associated with the Trinity; you have just seen it. Mary beautifying Jesus Christ, she is the complement of the incarnation, and the last expression of the union contracted by God with human nature.

Time does not permit me detail. Go to the crib, and tell me whether the new-born child is not more beautiful in the arms of the Virgin, His mother; tell me whether this flower is not more graceful when you see it on its stem. Go to Calvary, and tell me whether that scene of sorrow is not more touching when you see the mother at the foot of the cross of her Son. Penetrate into the heavens, and tell me whether beside this mediator, this advocate, you are not happy to find His mother, who is also yours, and who intercedes for you. Go to the foot of the tabernacles, and tell me whether the Saviour who dwells upon the altar does not seem to us marvellously completed by the image of Mary that surmounts Him.

Yes, my brethren, the divine maternity is an admirable complement of the hypostatic union. By the God-Man, and by the woman, mother of God, the mystery of the incarnation has seized all the avenues of our heart, answered to all the sentiments and all the needs of our being. God, wishing to become incarnate, had to become man: the sex of Adam alone had to be the direct object of the hypostatic union; but woman was not a stranger to this great union, and if she could not, and ought not, be its object, she was its means. God made Himself man, and a woman was mother of God. The God made man, by His divine nature, may still appear to us formidable. The Virgin, mother of God, who by this title has so much power, and who on the other hand has only our nature, can appear to us only good, gentle and lovable. She is, as Saint Bernard says, pure of divinity: yes, relatively to us it is one title more, it is a merit in her not to be God; she excites our confidence and our love the more: *Pura siquidem in Maria humanitas, non modo pura ab omni contaminatione, sed et*

pura singularitate naturae. [For in Mary the humanity is pure, not only pure from all contamination, but also pure in the singularity of its nature.] Thus Mary beautifies, softens Jesus, and she is the last perfection of that great mystery of the incarnation which has for object to unite, to fuse heaven with earth, God with man, and to establish a commerce of love and an exchange of sweet familiarity between the Trinity and creation.[5]

Mary beautifies the Church; she is the type of the priestly spirit. Have you ever remarked, my brethren, how suave and sweet the Church is in all that she does, in all that she inspires? Have you remarked how beautiful her ways are, and how peaceable her paths? And what wonder! The Church is on earth the personification of religion. Now how should she not be gracious, how should she not be sweet, who represents here below a religion that acknowledges Mary as its queen? And the priesthood, which is the Church in her highest part, how should it not be suave and sweet? Oh! how the priest is constantly brought back to the spirit of grace, of unction, of tenderness, when he perceives above the altar where he celebrates a woman, a virgin, a mother. How well he then understands that word which one of the greatest pontiffs of the Church of France pronounced, namely: that the priest must be father, it is not enough, he must be mother.[6]

How well he understands that teaching of the great Apostle speaking to the young priest Timothy: In your ministry, he says to him, rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father: *Seniorem obsecra ut patrem;* treat the young men as your brethren, the elder women as your mothers, the younger as your sisters, in all chastity: *Juvenes ut fratres, anus ut matres, juvenculas ut sorores, in omni castitate.* [1 Tim. 5:1–2.] Yes, my very dear brethren, the Catholic dogma of a woman virgin and mother gives to the action of our priesthood a virtue of sweetness, suavely virginal and courageously tender, that is found nowhere else. Alone on earth the Catholic Church teaches and acts with this charm, this grace, this beauty, this generosity, this love, because she alone is inspired by the teachings and the virtues of the Virgin Mary, in whom is all the grace of the way and of the truth: *In me gratia omnis viae et veritatis, in me omnis spes vitae et virtutis.*

II. Let us stop here, my brethren: I have treated only half of my subject. You have seen Mary beautifying the dogmas or beliefs; I should have to show you Mary beautifying, facilitating all the virtues and all the practices. I should have to show you the dogma of a Virgin mother impressing on Christianity so ineffaceable a seal of purity and of love that every Christian who has loved this Virgin mother even for a few years of his life feels himself ever after drawn back toward this religion as toward the religion of purity and of love.[7] I should have to show you the Virgin Mary keeping intelligences of purity in even the most corrupt hearts, and maintaining some sparks of faith and piety in the souls apparently most unbelieving and most impious. All the more should I have to show you the action of Mary in pure and upright souls. But, once more, I stop. Let it suffice that you have well understood the substance of this doctrine, namely: that Mary is all the grace of the way and of the truth, and that she is all the hope of life and of virtue.

Yes, holy Virgin, you are the heavenly bait that draws souls. Saint Bernard said it in an infinitely true manner: you are the ravisher of hearts! To you then, O Mary, since you are the flower of religion, the charm of all truth and of all virtue, to you all that is gracious in nature, to you the season of flowers! Let the great aspects of the world, the surgings of the sea, the lightning that furrows the cloud, the thunder that bellows, lift my soul toward the God thrice great and thrice holy. But the perfume of plants, the enamel of the meadows, the spring with all its graces, shall lift my soul toward the sweetest of women, the most lovable of virgins, the tenderest of mothers. May you, my brethren, love and imitate Mary here below; you will obtain, without any doubt, the immortal crown of innocence and of glory! Amen.[8]

Translator's notes

1. "La religion doit être Noémi": Pie plays on Ruth 1:20 ("Call me not Noemi, that is, beautiful, but call me Mara, that is, bitter"), as he does elsewhere in these sermons: religion should be "Noemi", beautiful and pleasant.

2. The date line reads “(2 mai 1841)”, and the editor’s note says the instruction was first preached in 1841; the heading is for the first Sunday of the Month of Mary.

3. The citation of Bernard and the “pontiff of the Church of France” are as the preacher gives them; not collated or identified.

4. This instruction is the closing piece of the *Sacerdotal Works* proper; n° 46 (the appendix) follows.

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[1] 2 May 1841 was a Sunday. The editor’s own note (below) says the instruction was first preached in 1841 and repeated before various audiences until 1848.

[2] (1) “We have reserved, as the conclusion of the *Sacerdotal Works*, this charming talk on devotion to the Blessed Virgin. M. l’abbé Pie had wished that his first word, on mounting the pulpit of Notre-Dame de Chartres, should celebrate the name of Mary (*Avertissement*, p. XVII). Is it not also entering into his thought to end this publication with the name of Mary? Besides, this instruction, preached for the first time in 1841, was often afterwards repeated before various audiences, until 1848, as may be seen in the *Exact Note of my sermons and instructions*.”

[3] Gen. 2:18. The note-mark here refers to a footnote: “Cf. t. II, p. 132” (a cross-reference within the edition).

[4] The preacher’s phrase “spouse of the Father” is as printed; I render it literally and do not endorse or qualify it.

[5] The Latin is attributed to Bernard by the preacher; not collated.

[6] The “pontiff of the Church of France” is not named.

[7] Here the edition prints a marginal note, “Developments: Protestantism sad… I well believe it… they have driven the mother out of the family, they have suppressed her: *Ubi non est mulier, ingemiscit egens.* (Note of M. l’abbé Pie.)” It is a sermon-note of the preacher’s, not part of the delivered text; I give it as printed.

[8] Cf. Appendix I: A, 34; AB, 32 *bis*, 36; p. 30, n. 37 *quater*.

n° 46. Appendix: I. Exact List of My Sermons and Instructions; II. Plan of a Sermon on Saint Joseph; III. Facsimile of a Manuscript with Corrections

This appendix is the preacher’s own register of his sermons, with two further documents. The edition prints it in two interleaved columns (series “A,” preached in the cathedral of Chartres, and “B,” preached elsewhere); I keep the items in the edition’s order; the bracketed bold markers “[Series A continues:]” and “[Series B continues:]” are mine, to help the reader follow the alternation. Doubtful numerals are discussed in the Translator’s notes. Footnote marks are given as inline notes at their marks.

APPENDIX

Exact list of my sermons and instructions

Sermons, instructions and parish instructions (*prônes*) preached in the cathedral of Chartres (the Rosary instructions not included)

1. Exhortation for the renewal of the baptismal vows, on the day of first communion, 3 July 1839.

2. Parish instruction on this proposition: that Mary is the channel of all graces, 14 July 1839.

3. Parish instruction, following the preceding, on the necessity of invoking Mary, 11 August 1839.

4. Parish instruction on the spiritual and temporal helps that Mary grants to men, on the Sunday anniversary of the miraculous cessation of the cholera, 25 August 1839.

5. Parish instruction (1st) on the education of children: first family education; on the occasion of the opening of the catechisms, twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost 1839.

6. Parish instruction (2nd) on education: public education of children, last Sunday after Pentecost 1839.

7. Parish instruction for the feast of the Immaculate Conception 1839.

8. Parish instruction (3rd) on education: the vocation of children, Sunday within the Octave of Christmas 1839.

Sermons and instructions preached outside the cathedral of Chartres

1. Talk for the day of Pentecost, on the Holy Spirit, at the Visitation of Chartres, 1839.

2. Meditation on the Sufferings of Mary, at the house of the Heart of Mary, 28 May 1839.

3. Sermon for the day of Corpus Christi, on the Eucharist, at the Visitation of Chartres, 1839.

4. Close of the month of Mary, at the house of the Heart of Mary, 1839.

5. Talk for the feast of Saint John the Baptist, at the Visitation of Chartres, 1839.

6. Sermon on the Divinity of religion proved by its perpetuity, preached at Favril, on the patronal feast of Saint Peter 1839.

7. Sermon on the Priesthood, preached at the Visitation of Chartres, on the day of Saint Vincent de Paul 1839.

8. Talk for the feast of Saint Anne, at the Visitation of Chartres, 1839.

9. Talk for the feast of Saint Chantal, at the Visitation of Chartres, 1839.

10. Talk on the rule, for the feast of Saint Augustine, at the Visitation of Chartres, 1839.

[Series A continues:]

9. Parish instruction (4th), complement of the preceding ones on education, for the feast of the Purification 1840.

10. Sermon (1) on the importance of studying the Christian religion, preached at Vespers before the Bishop of Chartres, on the first Sunday of Lent 1840.

11. Sermon (2) on the importance of studying the Christian religion, preached before the Bishop of Chartres, on the day of the Annunciation 1840.

12. Sermon on the necessity of hearing the word of God, preached on the Wednesday of the 4th week of Lent 1840.

13. Sermon on the method to be employed to instruct oneself in religion, preached on the Wednesday of the 5th week of Lent 1840.

14. Parish instruction on the fruit of the paschal solemnities, for Low Sunday 1840.

15. Parish instruction on the practices of devotion toward Mary, for Sunday 17 May 1840.

16. Parish instruction for the day of the Ascension 1840.

17. Parish instruction for the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus 1840.

18. Address for my brother’s marriage, 22 June 1840.

19. Exhortation for the consecration of the children of first communion to the Blessed Virgin, Wednesday 1 July 1840.

20. Parish instruction on the bells, to announce the collection, Sunday 2 August 1840.

21. Parish instruction for the day of the Assumption 1840.

[Series B continues:]

10 bis (1). Parish instruction on the Blessed Virgin (A, no. 4), preached at Regmalard, last Sunday of September 1839.[1]

11. Sermon on the religious life, preached in the chapel of the mother-house of the Sisters of Saint Paul, at Chartres, for a clothing, 8 November 1839.

12. Sermon on virginity, preached on the day of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, for the clothing of two Sisters of the Visitation and the renewal of vows, 21 November 1839.

13. Sermon for the feast of Saint Francis de Sales, at the Visitation of Chartres, 1840.

14. Sermon for the feast of the Holy Heart of Mary, at the Visitation of Chartres, 8 February 1840.

15. Sermon for the feast of the Holy Heart of Mary, preached to the Archconfraternity of Saint Peter, Sunday 9 February 1840.

16. Sermon on the religious life (B, no. 11), preached in the church of Gallardon, on the occasion of the blessing of the chapel and the installation of the Sisters of Reparation, Sunday 16 February 1840.

17. Talk for the feast of Saint Joseph, at the Visitation of Chartres, 1840.

18. Exhortation for the religious profession of two kitchen Sisters of the Visitation, 20 March 1840.

19. Sermon for Easter day, preached at Lèves, 1840 (B, no. 6).

20. Several instructions for the month of Mary, at the house of the Children of the Heart of Mary, 1840.

21. Sermon preached at the mass of first communion, at Épernon, 31 May 1840.

21 bis. Sermon on the importance of studying the Christian religion, preached at Épernon, on the eve of the eve of Confirmation, 1 June 1840.

[Series A continues:]

22. Parish instruction on devotion to the Cross, sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost 1840.

23. Parish instruction concerning the number of the Elect, for the Sunday before All Saints, 25 October 1840.

24. Parish instruction on the part we ought to take in the evils of the Church, second Sunday of Advent 1840.

25. Sermon on the dignity of the poor in the Church, preached before the Bishop of Chartres, on Christmas day 1840.

26. Parish instruction preached at the mass of the feast of the Epiphany, 10 January 1841.

27. Conference on the close union of Catholic dogmas and practices with morality, preached on the 2nd Friday of Lent 1841.

28. Conference on the necessity of the priesthood for the maintenance of morality in society, 3rd Friday of Lent 1841.

29. Conference on this proposition: that truth is one and consequently intolerant, 4th Friday of Lent 1841.

30. Conference on this proposition: that truth is necessarily fought against on earth, 5th Friday of Lent 1841.

31. Conference on the mysteries and sacraments of Holy Week, 6th Friday of Lent 1841.

32. Parish instruction for Easter day 1841.

33. Address for the marriage of a Catholic man and a Protestant woman, 11 April 1841.

[Series B continues:]

21 ter. Sermon for the renewal of the vows of Baptism and the consecration to the Blessed Virgin, preached at Épernon, 31 May 1840.

21 quater. Sermon on the study of religion, preached on Saint Peter's day at Dreux, 1840.

22. Sermon on the religious life (B, no. 11), for a clothing at the Visitation, on the day of Saint Mary Magdalene, 22 July 1840.

22 bis. Parish instruction on the Blessed Virgin (A, no. 4), preached in the evening to the Archconfraternity of Saint Peter, on the Sunday anniversary of the cessation of the cholera, 1840.

23. Sermon for the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, preached at Rouvres, before the Bishop of Chartres, 13 September 1840.

24. Sermon (the same) for a planting of a cross at Pontgouin, and address on the mountain of La Livraye, Sunday 3 October 1840.

25. Sermon on the Priesthood, preached at the major seminary of Chartres, on the day of Saint Charles, 4 November 1840.

25 bis. Sermon on the importance of studying the Christian religion, preached at Maintenon, on All Saints' day 1840.

26. Sermon for the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, patronal feast of the minor seminary of Saint-Chéron (A, nos. 2 and 3), 1840.

26 bis. Sermon (the same), preached to the Archconfraternity of Saint Peter, the following Sunday.

27. Talk for a Religious Profession, at the Visitation of Chartres, 23 November 1840.

27 bis and ter. Parish instruction on the charm of devotion to Mary, preached at the Visitation and to the Archconfraternity of Saint Peter (A, no. 34), 1841.

28. Sermon for the ceremony of the translation of the relics of Saint Chéron, deacon and martyr, apostle of the Chartrain country, preached at the minor seminary, 27 May 1841.

[Series A continues:]

34. Parish instruction on the charm of devotion to Mary, Sunday 2 May 1841.

35. Parish instruction on the efficacy of prayer intervening in natural things, Sunday, eve of the Rogations 1841.

36. Parish instruction for the day of the Ascension 1841.

37. Parish instruction for the day of Pentecost 1841.

38. Parish instruction for the day of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord 1841.

39. Exhortation for the consecration of the children of first communion to the Blessed Virgin, Wednesday 30 June 1841.

40. Parish instruction for the feast of the Assumption 1841.

41. Parish instruction on the holy Guardian Angels, for Sunday 3 October 1841.

42. Parish instruction for the Sunday after All Saints, on the holy Relics, 7 November 1841.

43. Parish instruction on the mystery of the Incarnation and its consequences, preached on the 3rd Sunday of Advent 1841.

44. Some commentaries and developments on the Pastoral Instruction of the Bishop of Chartres, 26 December 1841.

45. Parish instruction for the feast of Reparation, Sunday of Quinquagesima 1842.

46. Reflections and commentaries on the Lenten Pastoral Letter of 1842.

47. Conference offering the summary of those of the year and the subject of the Instructions of this year, 2nd Friday of Lent 1842.

48. Conference on the necessity of an external worship, preached on the 3rd Friday of Lent 1842.

49. Conference on the first family education (A, no. 5), and on the influence of worship for this first epoch of life, preached on the 4th Friday of Lent 1842.

50. Conference on Catholic temples, preached on the 5th Friday of Lent 1842.

51. Conference on the dramatic character of Catholic worship, preached on the 6th Friday of Lent 1842.

52. Address for a marriage, 5 April 1842.

52 bis. Eight instructions for the month of Mary 1842 (ABC).[2]

53. Parish instruction on Sunday (1st?): the existence of the law of Sunday, 3rd Sunday after Easter 1842.

54. Parish instruction for the day of the Ascension 1842.

55. Address for the consecration of the children of first communion to the Blessed Virgin, Wednesday 8 June 1842.

56. Parish instruction on Sunday (2nd): advantages of the law of Sunday, 5th Sunday after Pentecost 1842.

57. Parish instruction on Sunday (3rd): manner of practising the law of Sunday, 8th Sunday after Pentecost 1842.

58. Parish instruction on the holy Sacrifice (1st): nature of the sacrifice of the altars, 11th Sunday after Pentecost, 31 July 1842.

[Series B continues:]

28 bis. Sermon for first communion and exhortation for the renewal of vows and the consecration to the Blessed Virgin, preached at Saint-Prest, on the day of Saint John 1841.

28 ter. Sermon on communion and confession, on Saint Peter’s day, at Favril, 1841.

29. Parish instruction on the education of children (1st), preached at the meeting of the Archconfraternity of Saint Peter, 1841.

29 bis. Parish instruction (the same), preached at the patronal feast of Saint-Julien de Royaucourt, near Laon, August 1841.

30. Parish instruction on public education (2nd), preached at Saint-Julien de Royaucourt, on the Sunday feast of the Dedication of Churches, 29 August 1841.

31. Parish instruction on the charms of devotion to Mary, preached at Saint-Julien, on the Sunday feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, 12 September 1841.

32. Sermon for the translation of the relics of Saint Prest and his companions, martyrs, preached in the church of Saint-Prest, Sunday 17 October 1841.

32 bis. Sermon on the charms of devotion to Mary, preached at Saint-Chéron on the day of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin 1841.

33. Sermon for the bi-centenary of the death of Saint Jane Frances Chantal, preached at the Visitation of Chartres, 15 December 1841.

34. Sermon for the anniversary expiation of a sacrilege committed in the church of Luisant, Sunday 10 April 1842.

35. Address to the Perseverants of Saint-Sulpice at Paris, on the charm of devotion to Mary, Sunday 24 April 1842.

36. Sermon for the opening of the month of Mary at the novitiate of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, at Conflans, 30 April 1842, on the charm of devotion to Mary (A, no. 34).

36 bis. Instruction for 1 May, on the help of Mary, etc. (A, no. 4), preached at Conflans, 1842.

37. Sermon on the first education of children, preached at Dreux, at the patronal feast of Saint Peter 1842.

38. Talk for the meeting of the Lady Servants Expiatory of Mary, in the chapel of the Children of the Heart of Mary, 12 July 1842.

39. Sermon on the priesthood, preached in the church of Notre-Dame of Nogent-le-Rotrou, on the day of Saint Vincent de Paul, 19 July 1842.

39 bis. Sermon on the first education of children, preached on the day of the Magdalene, in the church of the Madeleine of Châteaudun, Sunday, July 1842.

39 ter. Sermon (the same), preached at Saint-Calais, at the annual feast of thanksgiving for the cessation of a scourge, 1st Sunday of September 1842.

39 quater. Parish instruction on devotion to the Cross, preached at La Lande-Chasles, in Anjou, September 1842.

39 quinquies. Parish instruction on the holy Angels, preached at La Lande-Chasles, September 1842.

39 sexies. Sermon on devotion to the Cross, preached near Mondoubleau, at Cormenon, Sunday 2 October 1842.

39 septies. Sermon on the first education, at Maintenon, on All Saints' day 1842.

40. Talk on virginity, for the renewal of vows at the Visitation of Chartres, 21 November 1842.

41. Talk for the children of the Perseverance of Saint-Pierre of Chartres, on the day of the Immaculate Conception 1842.

41 bis. Sermon on the Holy Heart of Mary, preached to the Archconfraternity of Saint Peter, Sunday, February 1843.

41 ter. Sermon on the Holy Heart of Mary, preached at the Visitation, 8 February 1843.

[Series A continues:]

59. Parish instruction on the holy Sacrifice (2nd): greatness of the sacrifice of the altars, 22nd Sunday after Pentecost, 16 October 1842.

60. Parish instruction on the holy Sacrifice (3rd): attendance at the holy Sacrifice, 23rd Sunday after Pentecost, 23 October 1842.

61. Parish instruction on the holy Offices of the Church, 3rd Sunday of Advent, 11 December 1842.

62. Parish instruction on the year sanctified by the Church, or on the Ecclesiastical Cycle, Sunday 16 January 1843.

63. Parish instruction for Sunday 8 February, on the Holy Heart of Mary, 1843.

64. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross at the cathedral of Chartres, 1st Friday of Lent, feast of the Five Wounds of Our Lord 1843.

65. Parish instruction on the Christian day sanctified by the Church, 3rd Sunday of Lent, 19 March 1843.

66. Conference on the intervention of prayer among natural causes, preached on the 5th Wednesday of Lent 1843.

67. Conference on prayer, preached on the Wednesday of Passion week, 5 April 1843.

67 bis. Instruction for the feast of the Compassion of the Blessed Virgin, preached on Friday 7 April 1843.

68. Address for a marriage, 4 May 1843.

69. Parish instruction on the practices of devotion toward Mary (A, no. 15), on Sunday 14 May 1843.

70. Exhortation for the consecration of the children of first communion to the Blessed Virgin, Wednesday 31 May 1843.

[Series B continues:]

41 quater. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross at Berchères-l'Évêque, 26 March 1843.

42. Sermon on Sunday, preached at Lèves, at the Vespers of Easter day 1843.

42 bis. Sermon on Sunday, preached on Saint Peter's day, at Favril, 1843.

43. Sermon on the holy Sacrifice, preached at the Visitation, on the Sunday after the feast of Saint Vincent de Paul, 1843.

44. Sermon on the priesthood, preached at the Hôtel-Dieu of Chartres, on the day of Saint Vincent de Paul, 19 July 1843.

45. Talk for the feast of Saint Anne, at the Visitation of Chartres, 26 July 1843.

46. Sermon on the holy Offices of the Church, preached at the ceremony of the clothing of a religious of the Visitation, 16 August 1843.

47. Sermon on Sunday, preached at the patronal feast of Saint-Agile, near Mondoubleau, Sunday 27 August 1843.

48. Sermon (the same), preached at Cormenon, Sunday 3 September 1843.

48 bis. Sermon on prayer, preached at the patronal feast of Saint Lubin, at Pontgouin, September 1843.

48 ter. Sermon preached at the establishment of the Way of the Cross, at Luisant, 24 September 1843.

49. Talk on devotion to the Blessed Virgin, considered as a means of arriving at the practice of the virtues, preached at the novitiate of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, at Conflans, 17 October 1843.

49 bis. Talk on the holy Sacrifice of the mass, addressed to the Novices of Conflans, 22 October 1843.

50. Talk on the Blessed Virgin, preached at the boarding-school of the Sacred Heart of Conflans, 20 October 1843.

[Series A continues:]

71. Address for a blessing of the Scapular, 4 June 1843.

72. Parish instruction on the prayers that compose the mass of the day, 5th Sunday after Pentecost, 9 July 1843.

73. Parish instruction for the feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, 3rd Sunday after Pentecost 1843.

74. Parish instruction for the feast of the Assumption 1843.

75. Instruction on the glories of the Cross, preached in the chapel of the Calvary, on the day of the Exaltation, 14 September 1843.

76. Parish instruction on the vocation of children (A, no. 8), for the 14th Sunday after Pentecost 1843.

77. Parish instruction on the cult of the saints and prayer for the dead, for the Sunday before All Saints, 29 October 1843.

78. Parish instruction on the reading of the holy Scriptures by simple believers, preached on the 24th Sunday after Pentecost, 19 November 1843.

79. Parish instruction on the word of God, preached on the 25th Sunday after Pentecost, 26 November 1843 (A, no. 12).

80. Parish instruction for the day of the Immaculate Conception 1843 (A, no. 7).

81. Parish instruction for Christmas day 1843.

82. Parish instruction on penance and retreat, for the 1st Sunday of Lent, 25 February 1844.

82 bis. Eleven meditations on God, for Lent 1844 (before the eight o'clock mass).

[Series B continues:]

51. Talk on the evils of the Church and the part one must take in them, preached to the Archconfraternity of Saint Peter, on the Sunday of the Dedication of Churches, November 1843 (A, no. 24).

52. Address for the renewal of the Vows of the Visitandines, on the day of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, 21 November 1843.

53. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross in the chapel of the Sisters of Providence of Chartres, 22 November 1843.

54. Sermon for the day of the Immaculate Conception, on the practical importance of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, preached at the Providence of Chartres, 8 December 1843.

55. Sermon preached at Saint-Aignan of Chartres, on the patronal feast, 10 December 1843, on the importance of studying the Christian religion (A, no. 10).

55 bis. Sermon preached at Saint-Aignan of Chartres, on the Epiphany 1844: second part, on the importance of studying the Christian religion.

55 ter. Sermon preached at Montboissier, for the establishment of the Way of the Cross in the parish church, 14 January 1844.

56. Talk on the first four beatitudes, for the meeting of the Servants Expiatory of Mary, preached in the chapel of the house of the Heart of Mary, 24 January 1844.

56 bis. Address to the Children of the Heart of Mary, on the Gospel of Jesus as a youth, 24 January 1844.

57. Sermon preached to the Archconfraternity of Saint Peter, on the feast of the Heart of Mary, Sunday 28 January 1844, on the practical importance of devotion to the Heart of Mary.

58. Instruction preached at the Visitation, on the Octave day of Saint Francis de Sales, on the last four beatitudes, 5 February 1844.

[Series A continues:]

83. Parish instruction on the importance of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, preached on the 2nd Sunday of the month of Mary, 12 May 1844 (A, nos. 2 and 3).

84. Address at the Baptismal Fonts, on the day of first communion, 26 June 1844 (A, no. 1).

85. Parish instruction on the merit of our works, for the 7th Sunday after Pentecost, 14 July 1844.

86. Parish instruction on the practical importance of devotion to Mary, preached at the cathedral, on the Sunday before the Assumption, 11 August 1844.

87. Parish instruction for the feast of Saint Michael, preached at the cathedral, Sunday 29 September 1844.

88. Parish instruction for the Sunday before All Saints, on the pious remembrance of the dead, 27 October 1844.

89. Parish instruction for the Sunday after All Saints, on prayer for the dead, 3 November 1844.

90. Sermon on the sanctification of Sunday, preached at Vespers in presence of the Bishop of Chartres, in the cathedral, on the 1st Sunday of Advent 1844.

91. Sermon on the holy Sacrifice of the mass, preached at Vespers, in presence of the Bishop, in the cathedral of Chartres, on the 2nd Sunday of Advent 1844.

92. Sermon on attendance at the offices and on the exercise of works of charity, complement of the sanctification of Sunday, preached on the 3rd Sunday of Advent, in presence of the Bishop, in the cathedral of Chartres.

[Series B continues:]

58 bis. Sermon preached at the Visitation, at the 1st Vespers of the Heart of Mary, 7 February, on the practical importance of devotion to the Heart of Mary, 1844.

58 ter. Talk on the Heart of Mary, preached to the Children of the Heart of Mary, on the day of their feast, 8 February 1844.

58 quater. Sermon preached in the parish church of Saint-Maurice of Friaize, for the establishment of the Way of the Cross, Sexagesima Sunday, 11 February 1844.

58 quinquies. Sermon preached at the Providence of Chartres, on the Thursday of Reparation, on the outrages done to Our Lord, 15 February 1844.

58 sexies. Instruction for the 1st Sunday of Lent, at the house of the Ladies of the Sacred Hearts, on the practical importance of devotion to Mary, 25 February 1844.

58 septies. Instruction on devotion to the Cross, preached at the house of the Ladies of the Sacred Hearts, on the 4th Sunday of Lent, 17 March 1844.

59. Discourse for the anniversary of the deliverance of Orléans by Joan of Arc, preached in the cathedral church of Sainte-Croix at Orléans, 8 May 1844.

59 bis. The same, delivered two days before, in the chapel of the Children of the Heart of Mary, at Chartres.

59 ter. The same discourse, delivered at Saint-Chéron, on the day of the Ascension, 16 May 1844.

59 quater. Sermon on the Cross, preached at Courville, at the establishment of the Way of the Cross, 19 May 1844.

59 quinquies. The same at Jouy, 7 July 1844.

60. Instruction at the Visitation, on Saint Anne, 25 July 1844.

61. Sermon on the importance of studying the Christian religion, preached at the Madeleine of Châteaudun, on the Sunday of the patronal feast, 28 July 1844.

[Series A continues:]

93. Sermon on the mystery of Christmas, preached on the 4th Sunday of Advent, in presence of the Bishop, in the cathedral of Chartres, 22 December 1844.

94. Parish instruction for the day of the solemnity of the Epiphany, 12 January 1845.

[Series B continues:]

62. Instruction for the day of the Transfiguration, to the Children of the Holy Heart of Mary, 1st Tuesday of the month of August 1844.

63. Parish instruction on the sanctification of Sunday, preached in presence of the Bishop of Chartres in the parish church of La Lande-Chasle, in Anjou, Sunday 1 September 1844.

64. Parish instruction on the practical importance of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, preached before the Bishop of Chartres at La Lande-Chasle, on the day of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, 8 September 1844.

65. Sermon on the sanctification of Sunday, preached at Saint-Denys-des-Puits, on the Sunday of the patronal feast, 13 October 1844.

66. Instruction for the feast of the Rosary, in the church of Saint-Julien des Aveugles, at Chartres, 1st Sunday of October 1844. (Not preached.)

67. Discourse for the entry into office of a young priest, to the archconfraternity of Saint Peter of Chartres, Sunday 10 November 1844. (Not preached, on account of illness.)

68. Talk on virginity, for the renewal of the Vows of the religious of the Visitation, 21 November 1844.

68 bis. Sermon on the Cross, preached at the monastery of the Sisters of Saint Paul of Chartres, for the establishment of the Way of the Cross, 26 November 1844.

68 ter. The same talk on virginity, addressed to the Children of the Heart of Mary, 1st Tuesday of December 1844.

Since my appointment as Vicar General

1. Sermon preached before My Lord in the cathedral of Chartres, on the 2nd Friday of Lent, on the supernatural life, 1845.

2. Sermon on the insufficiency of human virtues, preached on the 3rd Friday of Lent 1845.

3. Sermon on Jesus Christ considered as author of grace, preached on the 4th Friday of Lent 1845.

4. Sermon on the opposition and the agreement that obtain between nature and grace, preached on the 6th Friday of Lent 1845.

5. Talk for Confirmation, on Christian fortitude, preached at Auneau, 5 May 1845.

6. Talk on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, at the Visitation of Chartres, June 1845.

6 bis. Sermon on the holy Sacrifice, on Saint Peter’s day, at Dreux, June 1845.

6 ter. The same at Châteaudun, on the day of Saint Mary Magdalene, 27 July 1845.

7. Sermon on bells, preached at the solemn blessing of the four bells of the cathedral of Chartres, Thursday 31 July 1845.

8. Discourse for the blessing of the first stone of the viaduct of the Voise, at Maintenon, delivered on Sunday 31 August 1845.

8 bis. Discourse on bells, preached on Sunday 31 August, at the blessing of the bells, at Nogent-le-Roi.

8 ter. Sermon on bells, preached at the blessing of the bell of Lèves, near Chartres, Sunday 7 September 1845.

8 quater. Sermon for the erection of the Way of the Cross at Rouvray-Saint-Denis, Sunday 14 September, feast of the Exaltation of the holy Cross.

8 quinquies. Sermon on the first education of children, preached at Rouvres, Sunday 21 September 1845.

8 sexies. Talk on devotion to the Blessed Virgin, preached the same day at Anet. (The evening before, in the chapel of La Ronce: *Dilexit… Diliges.* In the evening, on the Cross.)

8 septies. Sermon on the first education of children, preached at Louville-la-Chenard, at the translation of the relics of Saint Pius, pope and martyr, Sunday 28 September 1845.

9. Sermon for the Clothing of Mademoiselle Natalie de la Varenne, preached to the Carmelites of Chartres, Friday 10 October 1845.

10. Sermon for the feast of Saint Teresa, on the union of man with God, preached to the Carmelites of Chartres, 15 October 1845.

10 bis. Sermon on the importance of studying the Christian religion, preached at Anet, 9 November 1845, for the blessing of the house of the Sisters.

10 ter. Address for the renewal of the Vows of the Visitandines, on the day of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, 21 November 1845.

11. Exordium and peroration for the discourse on the necessity of studying the Christian religion, preached at Orléans before the Bishop, Monday 13 December 1845, for the establishment of a Christian library.

11 bis. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross, preached at Maintenon, Sunday 18 January 1846.

11 ter. Sermon on the Holy Heart of Mary, preached to the Archconfraternity of Saint Peter, Sunday 1 February 1846.

11 quater. Sermon on the Holy Heart of Mary, preached to the Carmelites of Chartres, 9 February 1846.

12. Sermon for the 1st Sunday of Lent, preached at the cathedral of Chartres before the Bishop, on the return to God, considered as a duty and need of society as a whole, 1 March 1846.

13. Exordium and peroration for the discourse on the necessity of studying religion, preached in the cathedral church of Versailles, in presence of the Bishop, on the 2nd Sunday of Lent, 8 March 1846, for the work of the Refuge.

14. Sermon for the 3rd Sunday of Lent, preached at the cathedral of Chartres before the Bishop, on the return to God, considered as the special duty of the heads of society, 15 March 1846.

15. Sermon for Passion Sunday, preached at the cathedral of Chartres before the Bishop, on the return to God, considered as the duty of each one in particular.

16. Exordium and peroration for the discourse on the first education, preached in favour of the work of Saint Anne in the church of Saint-Roch, Wednesday 1 April 1846, in presence of Marie-Amélie and of the Archbishop of Paris.

16 bis. Instruction for the establishment of the Way of the Cross in the church of Saint-Martin-au-Val, at Chartres, Friday 3 April 1846.

17. Sermon for Easter day, on the Resurrection, preached at the cathedral of Chartres, in presence of the Bishop, 12 April 1846.

17 bis. Sermon on the first education, preached at Épernon, with instruction for first communion, on Good Shepherd Sunday, 26 April 1846.

18. Instruction for the 1st Sunday of the month of Mary, preached in the church of Saint-Pierre of Chartres, 3 May 1846.

19. Instruction for the tours of Confirmation, on the practice of religious duty, 25 May 1846.

20. Instruction for the close of the month of Mary at Saint-Pierre, 31 May 1846.

21. Retreat of first communion, preached at Saint-Louis of Versailles, and sermon on the renewal of the Vows and the consecration to the Blessed Virgin, preached on the day of first communion, Thursday of Corpus Christi, 14 June 1846.

22. Talk for the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, at the Visitation of Chartres, 19 June 1846.

22 bis. Sermon of first communion, preached at Vespers in the church of Saint-Aignan of Chartres, 28 June 1846.

22 ter. Address for the consecration to the Blessed Virgin, preached at the first communion of the cathedral of Chartres, 1 July 1846.

22 quater. Sermon on the holy Sacrifice, preached on Saint Peter’s day, at Saint-Pierre of Chartres, 5 July 1846.

22 quinquies. Sermon on prayer, preached on the day of Saint Vincent de Paul, 19 July 1846, in the church of the Madeleine of Châteaudun.

23. Sermon for the feast of Saint Vincent de Paul, preached in the chapel of the Hôtel-Dieu of Chartres, Monday 20 July 1846.

24. Station of the Novena preparatory to the Assumption, preached in the cathedral of Metz, in presence of the Bishop, 1846. Composed as follows (with exordium and peroration for the first and the last):

25. Discourse on the importance of studying religion, Thursday 6 August.

26. Continuation of the preceding discourse, Friday 7.

27. Discourse on the first family education, Saturday 8.

28. Discourse on conversion, the need of society, Sunday 9.

29. Discourse on conversion, the need of the great, Monday 10.

30. Discourse on conversion, the need of each one in particular, Tuesday 11.

31. Discourse on prayer, Wednesday 12.

32. Discourse on the holy Sacrifice, Thursday 13.

33. Discourse on the Cross, Friday 14.

34. Discourse on the Blessed Virgin, Saturday 15.

24 bis. Address to the Archconfraternity of the Holy Heart of Mary in the church of Notre-Dame of Metz, Sunday 26 [so printed; the Sundays of that month fell on the 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th]. In the morning, talk to

the Sisters of Sainte-Chrétienne.

24 ter. Address to the Ladies of the Sacred Heart of Mary, at Nancy, Sunday 23 August, on practical devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

25. Instruction for the blessing of the chapel of Our Lady Immaculate in the village of Le Coudray-lez-Chartres, Wednesday 9 September 1846.

26. Discourse for the blessing of the chapel of the Agricultural Colony founded in the old abbey of Bonneval, Monday 21 September 1846. (Not delivered: the Bishop spoke.)

26 bis. Parish instruction on the Cross, preached at Courtalain, Sunday 27 September.

26 ter. Discourse for the blessing of a bell of which the Duke and Duchess of Montmorency were godfather and godmother, preached at Saint-Pellerin, Sunday 27 September 1846.

26 quater. Sermon on prayer, preached at Anet, Sunday 4 October 1846.

26 quinquies. Instruction for the establishment of the Confraternity of the Holy Heart of Mary, preached at Anet, the same day.

27. Panegyric of Saint Teresa (1st part), preached to the Carmelites of Chartres, Thursday 15 October 1846.

28. Discourse for the taking of the Veil of Mademoiselle N. Le Chapellier de la Varenne, preached to the Carmelites of Chartres, Thursday 22 October 1846.

28 bis. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross at Saint-Denys-des-Puits, Tuesday 8 December 1846.

29. Exordium for the feast of Saint Aignan, bishop of Chartres, and sermon on prayer, preached on the patronal feast of Saint-Aignan of Chartres, 13 December 1846.

29 bis. Sermon on the first family education, preached at Orléans for the work of the Holy Childhood (A, no. 5), Monday 28 December 1846.

30. Sermon on alms, preached at Orléans for the Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul, Wednesday 30 December 1846, on the dignity of the poor.

31. Instruction preached at Saint-Pierre on the feast of the Holy Heart of Mary, Sunday 24 January 1847.

32. Sermon preached at the cathedral before the Bishop of Chartres, on the 1st Sunday of Lent 1847, on the close union of morality with faith and Christian practices (A, no. 27).

33. Sermon on the true character of the influence of the Catholic priesthood, preached before the Bishop of Chartres, on the 2nd Sunday of Lent, 28 February 1847 (A, no. 28).

34. Sermon on doctrinal intolerance, preached before the Bishop of Chartres, on the 3rd Sunday of Lent, 7 March 1847 (A, no. 29).

35. Sermon on the parable of the prodigal son applied to the wanderings of the mind, preached before the Bishop of Chartres, on the 4th Sunday of Lent 1847.

36. Sermon for the opening of the Jubilee of the accession of His Holiness Pius IX, preached before the Bishop of Chartres, on the Sunday of the Passion [so printed: “4th Sunday of the Passion”], 21 March 1847.

37. Sermon on the paschal duty, preached before the Bishop of Chartres, on Palm Sunday, 28 March 1847.

38. Sermon for the bi-centenary of the establishment of the Visitation at Chartres, 17 April 1847.

38 bis. Sermon on the advantages of alms, 1847.

39. Sermon for the profession and clothing of three Sisters of Bon-Secours, preached at Saint-Pierre of Chartres, 20 April 1847.

40. Sermon for the patronal feast of the house of the Holy Family, in the parish of Saint-Pierre of Chartres, Wednesday 28 April 1847.

40 bis. Talk to the Lady Servants Expiatory, and to the Children of the Holy Heart of Mary, on the 1st Wednesday of May, on the spirit of expiation.

40 ter. Sermons of the Confirmation tour:

1. At Villemeux, on the day of the Ascension, at Vespers, on religious practice.

2. At Rueil, parish instruction on Sunday 16 May, on the Cross.

3. At Laons, on religious practice, 18 May. In the morning, at 4.30 [so printed], instruction to the Trappistines of La Cour-Pétral.

4. At Anet, Trinity Sunday, 30 May, parish instruction on the sanctification of Sunday.

5. At Guainville, 31 May, instruction on religious practice.

6. At Rouvres, 1 June, instruction on Christian fortitude.

7. At Berchères-sur-Vègre, 2 June, instruction on piety.

8. At Saint-Aignan of Chartres, 28 June: religious practice.

9. At Saint-Pierre of Chartres, 29 June: Christian fortitude.

40 quater. Talks for first communion, at the mass and at vespers, at the house of the Ladies of the Sacred Hearts, Pentecost Sunday, 23 May, at Chartres.

40 quinquies. Address to the major seminary at the mass of the feast of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord, June 1847.

41. Talk for the feast of the Visitation, 2 July 1847.

41 bis. Talk to the Ladies Expiatory, on the 1st Wednesday of July, on the spirit of crucifixion.

41 ter. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross, at the chapel of Saint-Nicolas of Auneau, Sunday 11 July.

42. Talk for the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, to the Carmelite Religious of Chartres, 16 July 1847.

42 bis. Exhortation to the members of the Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul, in the church of Saint-Pierre, 19 July 1847.

42 ter. Sermon on the parable of the prodigal son applied to the wanderings of the mind, preached at the Madeleine of Châteaudun, Sunday 25 July 1847.

42 quater. Talk to the Ladies Expiatory, 1st Wednesday of August; spirit of faith.

42 quinquies. Discourse for the translation of the head of Saint Romain, martyr, delivered in the parish church of Brou, Sunday 8 August 1847, on the cult of the holy Relics (B, no. 32).

43. Address for the distribution of prizes of the Ladies of the Sacred Hearts, at Châteaudun, 24 August 1847.

44. Panegyric of Saint Louis, preached in the cathedral of Blois, in presence of the Bishop, Sunday 29 August 1847.

44 bis. Talk to the Ladies Expiatory, 1 September, at Chartres.

44 ter. Sermon on the Cross, preached in the church of La Flèche, Sunday 19 September.

44 quater. Parish instruction on prayer, preached at La Lande-Chasle, in Anjou, Sunday 26 September 1847.

44 quinquies. Sermon on the Cross, preached in the church of Gambais (diocese of Versailles), Sunday 3 October, in presence of the Bishop of Chartres.

45. Talk for the definitive establishment of a catechism of perseverance at Saint-Pierre of Chartres, Sunday 17 October 1847.

45 bis. Exhortation on the priestly spirit, on the day of Saint Charles, at the major seminary of Chartres.

45 ter. Sermon on the Cross, for the establishment of the Way of the Cross in the church of Saint-Jean de la Chaîne, at Châteaudun, Sunday 21 November 1847.

46. Sermon preached before the Bishop of Chartres, on the 2nd Sunday of Advent; 1st on the Creed, 5 December 1847.

47. Sermon for the 3rd Sunday of Advent, at the cathedral of Chartres, 2nd on the Creed: existence of God, 12 December 1847.

48. Sermon, 3rd on the Creed: unity, goodness, power of God, for the 4th Sunday of Advent, 19 December 1847. (Not preached, on account of indisposition.)[3]

48 bis. Sermon for the work of the Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul, preached in the cathedral of Chartres, Wednesday 29 December 1847 (p. 25, no. 30).

48 ter. Talk to the Ladies Expiatory, 5 January 1848.

49. Sermon for the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, preached in the chapel of the Sisters of Saint Paul of Chartres, 25 January 1848.

50. Sermon for the feast of Saint Francis de Sales, preached at the Visitation of Chartres, 29 January 1848.

51. Sermon for the feast of the Holy Heart of Mary, at the Visitation of Chartres, 8 February 1848.

52. Sermon for the Profession of a religious of the Providence of Chartres, Tuesday 18 [so printed; the 18th was a Friday] February 1848.

52 bis. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross in the parish church of Saint-Aignan of Chartres, Sexagesima Sunday, 27 February 1848.

53. Discourse for the blessing of the tree of Liberty, at Chartres, Tuesday 11 April 1848.

53 bis. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross, at Vert-lez-Chartres, Good Friday, 21 April 1848.

54. Address delivered before the blessing of an altar and a stone tabernacle, for the chapel of the Blessed Virgin in the parish church of Lèves, Sunday 30 April 1848.

54 bis. Discourse delivered at the marriage of M. Lepoivre, at Maintenon, 9 May 1848.

55. Sermon and instructions for first communion, preached at Épernon, 21 May 1848.

55 bis. Sermon for the close of the month of Mary, and the opening of the Ordination retreat at the major seminary of Chartres (p. 22, no. 18).

56. Explanation of the Pontifical to the ordinands for the general Ordination of Sunday 4 June 1848:

57. Thursday morning (Ascension), on the Orders in general and the Tonsure.

58. Thursday evening, on the minor Orders.

59. Friday morning, on the Subdiaconate.

60. Friday evening, on the Diaconate.

61. Saturday morning, on the Priesthood.

62. Saturday evening, on the Priesthood.

63. Address for the blessing of the chapel of the Sisters of Bon-Secours of the Sacred Heart, formerly the Sisters of the Providence of Auneau, newly established at Chartres, Thursday 8 June 1848.

57 bis. Sermon on prayer, preached on the day of Pentecost in the cathedral of Chartres, in presence of the Bishop, 11 June 1848.

57 ter. Sermon on prayer, preached in the church of the Trinity at Vendôme, Trinity Sunday, 18 June.

57 quater. Talk on the charm of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, preached the same day to the Congregation of Mary in the same church.

57 quinquies. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross in the church of Saint-Prest, on Corpus Christi Sunday, 25 June 1848.

58. Sermon for the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, preached at the house of the Sisters of Bon-Secours of the Sacred Heart, Friday 30 June (p. 20, no. 6).

59. Exordium and peroration of the sermon on the union of morality with faith and Christian practices, preached on Saint Peter's day, in the church of Saint-Pierre of Chartres, 2 July 1848 (p. 25, no. 32).

59 bis. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross at Saint-Lubin des Joncherets, on the Sunday of the Sacred Heart, 9 July 1848.

59 ter. Address for the distribution of prizes of the Ladies of the Sacred Hearts of Chartres, 24 August 1848 (p. 27, no. 43).

60. Exordium and peroration of the panegyric of Saint Louis, preached at the cathedral of Versailles, 27 August 1848, in presence of the Bishop of Versailles.

61. Discourse for the profession and clothing of three Sisters of Bon-Secours of the Sacred Heart, Tuesday 5 September 1848.

61 bis. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross at the house of the Trappistine Religious of Notre-Dame de Bonne-Espérance, at La Cour-Pétral, diocese of Chartres: on the glories and sweetnesses of the Cross, Tuesday 12 September.

61 ter. Sermon preached at the Madeleine of Châteaudun, on the Sunday of the Exaltation of the holy Cross, 17 September, on the observance of Sunday.

61 quater. Parish instruction preached at Montigny-le-Gannelon, Sunday 21 [so printed] September, on the Cross.

61 quinquies. Parish instruction on the sanctification of Sunday, preached at Champhol, on the Sunday of the patronal feast of Saint Denis, 15 October 1848.

61 sexies. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross at La Loupe, Sunday 22 October 1848.

62. Advent station, preached in the cathedral of Versailles, in presence of the Bishop:

63. Sermon on prayer; on All Saints' day, Wednesday.

64. Sermon on the Dead; Thursday 2 November (A, nos. 88, 89).

65. Sermon on the holy Sacrifice; on the Sunday of the Dedication, 12 November.

66. Sermon on the union of morality with faith and Christian practices; on the 1st Sunday of Advent, 9 [so printed] December.

67. Sermon on doctrinal intolerance; 2nd Sunday of Advent, 10 December.

68. Sermon on the Priesthood; on the 3rd Sunday of Advent, 17 December.

69. Sermon on the mystery of Christmas; on Christmas day, Monday 25.

70. Sermon on faith lost and recovered; Sunday of the Epiphany, 7 January 1849.

[Series A continues:]

63. Talk for a religious profession, at the house of the Sisters of Bon-Secours, 24 November 1848.

63 bis. Talk for the feast of the Archconfraternity of the Heart of Mary, Sunday 28 January 1849, at Saint-Pierre of Chartres (no. 63).

63 ter. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross at Digny, Septuagesima Sunday, 4 February 1849.

63 quater. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross at Le Coudray, near Chartres, Sexagesima Sunday, 11 February 1849.

64. Sermon on the right of property, preached at the cathedral of Chartres, on the 1st Sunday of Lent, 25 February 1849, in presence of My Lord the Bishop.

64 bis. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross at Bailleau-le-Pin, on the 3rd Sunday of Lent, 11 March 1849.[4]

65. Sermon on the duties of property, preached at the cathedral, on the 4th Sunday of Lent, 18 March 1849, in presence of Their Lordships the Bishops of Chartres and of Quimper.

65 bis. Sermon for the adoration of a relic of the true Cross in the church of Voves, on Passion Sunday, 25 March 1849. In the evening, address on the Blessed Virgin.

66. Talk for a religious profession, at the Providence of Chartres, Tuesday 17 April 1849.

66 bis. Sermon preached at Belhomert, Sunday 6 May, feast of Saint John before the Latin Gate, on the sanctification of Sunday. In the evening, address on Our Lady of Sorrows.

67. Instruction at the house of the Sisters of Bon-Secours of Chartres, Thursday 24 May, feast of Our Lady Help of Christians.

68. Address for a marriage (Auguste and Antoinette), 3 July 1849.

69. Discourse for the blessing of the railway of Chartres, Thursday 5 July 1849.

70. Address for Confirmation at the house of the Ladies of the Sacred Hearts of Chartres, 30 July 1849.

71. Sermon for the establishment of the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the chapel of the Visitation of Chartres, Friday 3 August 1849.

71 bis. Sermon on the day of the Assumption, at the Madeleine of Châteaudun, 15 August 1849.

71 ter. Parish instruction on Sunday 19 August, in the church of Douy, on the gospel of the good Samaritan.

72. Address for the distribution of prizes, at the house of the Ladies of the Sacred Hearts of Châteaudun, Saturday 25 August 1849.

72 bis. Address for the distribution of prizes at the house of the Ladies of Picpus, at Paris, Tuesday 4 September.

72 ter. Discourse for the planting and blessing of a cross at Épernon, Sunday 16 September 1849.

73. Discourse for the first exposition of a relic of Saint Leger in the church of Sancheville, Monday 1 October 1849.

73 bis. Discourse for the establishment of the Way of the Cross at the minor seminary of Saint-Chéron, Sunday 7 October 1849.

74. Discourse for the religious profession and clothing of four Sisters of Bon-Secours of Chartres, 8 October 1849.

74 bis. Sermon for the establishment of the Way of the Cross at Épernon, Sunday 21 October 1849.

74 ter. Address to the Ladies Expiatory, Wednesday 1 [so printed] November 1849.

74 quater. Address to the pupils of the minor seminary of Saint-Chéron, on the day of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, 21 November 1849.

74 quinquies. Address to the ladies of Saint-Paul, at the consecration of their church, Tuesday 27 November 1849.

74 sexies. Address to the Carmelite Religious of Chartres, at the consecration of their church, Friday 30 November 1849.

75. Farewell parish instruction at the parochial mass of the cathedral of Chartres, Sunday 2 December 1849.

II. PLAN OF A SERMON ON SAINT JOSEPH

Sermon preached at the Visitation, on the feast of Saint Joseph.[5] *(1840)*

Jacob autem genuit Joseph virum Mariae, de qua natus est Jesus, qui vocatur Christus. [And Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. (Matt. 1:16.)]

These words, which are the whole panegyric of Mary, contain also a great eulogy of Saint Joseph.

He enters into the genealogy of Jesus Christ… Father by adoption… That the paternity of adoption is sometimes more intimate than that of nature. Thus God is more our father than our fathers… and yet…

How Saint Francis de Sales establishes the paternity of Saint Joseph. The date let fall by a dove… (2).[6]

“Now, if this be so, who can doubt that the Holy Spirit having let fall this date, like a divine dove, into the enclosed and shut-up garden of the most holy Virgin… which belonged to the glorious Saint Joseph, as the wife or spouse to the husband: who will doubt, I say, or who can say that this divine palm, which bears fruits that nourish unto immortality, does not belong at once to this great Saint Joseph, who nevertheless is not the more exalted for it, becomes in no wise the prouder, but becomes ever the more humble?” (*Spiritual Conferences*, XIX; vol. III, p. 541 of the Vivès edition, 1566 [so printed; probably 1866].)

Saint Joseph is, consequently, also father of men, brothers of Jesus Christ.

First point. Saint Joseph, father of Jesus Christ and of men, loved Jesus Christ much, and loves men much.

1. It is the depth of the paternal heart to love… If Saint Leonidas went, etc… *Sic sanctus Josephus*… to adore the divinity itself, united, etc…

Saint John, once… Saint Joseph, etc…

Name of love, according to Saint Francis de Sales…

2. We are the beloved brothers of Jesus Christ… Saint Joseph loves us as the brothers of his Son…

He loves Jesus Christ in us… *Christianus alter Christus.* [The Christian is another Christ.]

There is a great love of men in the heart of Saint Joseph.

Second point. Saint Joseph, father of Jesus Christ and of men, was much loved by Jesus Christ, and ought to be much loved by men.

1. First as just. Jesus Christ, come down from the heavens, was in great constraint on earth, living in the midst of sinners, surrounded as it were by hell… But behold a just man… Pressing Himself against his breast, Jesus Christ found there again that heaven from which He had come down, etc…

But above all as father. *Exurge in praecepto quod mandasti…* [Arise, O Lord my God, in the precept which thou hast commanded. (Ps. 7:7.)] How he assisted Him at the deathbed… The storks (see Saint Francis de Sales).

2. How not to love him whom Jesus Christ so loved? Jesus Christ said: *Qui me amat, amat Patrem meum…* [He that loveth me, loveth my Father.] If that is true of His eternal Father, it must also be so of His temporal foster-father… Saint Joseph is a father for us… One must love one's father.

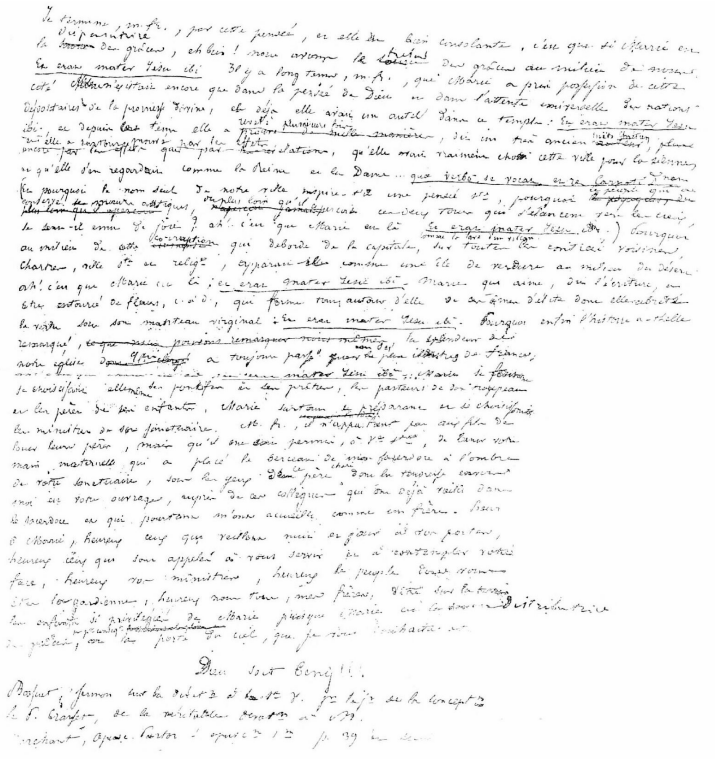
That one does not address oneself enough to Saint Joseph…

That the cult of Saint Joseph (so humble and so hidden in his life) was spread only very late in the Church… Saint Teresa… But above all, before her, Gerson… his letter to the great cantor of Chartres…

Fine saying: *Laus Josephi, laus Mariae est…* [The praise of Joseph is the praise of Mary.] If you love Mary, you must love Joseph… It is to honour [her] in what is very tender to her.

Entreat the Religious to pray that our ministry be not sterile during this Lent… The desolation of fighting in darkness, etc. (1).[7]

III. FACSIMILE OF A MANUSCRIPT, WITH THE CORRECTIONS



Cardinal Louis-Édouard Pie, Priestly Works: Sermons and Instructions, 1839–1849 — English translation — p. 578

A page of the preacher's manuscript, with his corrections, as reproduced in the French edition. It is not transcribed here.

Translator's notes

1. The register is the preacher's own list of his sermons and instructions, 1839–1849 (the last entry is his farewell parish instruction at Chartres, 2 December 1849). The "Since my appointment as Vicar General" section begins with the Lent of 1845. The register is printed in two interleaved columns, so the order of items is the edition's, not strictly numerical; my bold bracketed markers help follow the alternation of the two series (A: preached in the cathedral; B: elsewhere; ABC: the cartons in which the manuscripts are kept, per the preacher's note).

2. Where a date or number is doubtful, the printed reading is given with "[so printed]" or "[sic]". Cases left as printed: n° 24 bis (Sunday 26), the Montigny-le-Gannelon Sunday ("21 September"), the Advent station of Versailles ("1st Sunday of Advent, 9 December"), 52 (Tuesday 18 February 1848), 74 ter (Wednesday 1 November 1849), and the "4th Sunday of the Passion" in n° 36.

3. The entry for 19 December 1847 (n° 48: "Not preached, on account of indisposition") confirms the date and circumstance of the Third Sermon on the Creed (T. II, n° 41). The entries for 25 February and 18 March 1849 give the dates of n° 43 and n° 44 (First Sunday of Lent and Fourth Sunday of Lent).

4. Place names and proper names are as printed. "Laons" and "Douy" are villages of Eure-et-Loir; "Regmalard" is the old spelling of Rémalard (Orne).

5. Section II is a set of telegraphic notes (ellipses are the preacher's). The quotation from Francis de Sales is given as printed, with its footnote (2); the quoted edition's date ("1566") is evidently a misprint for 1866 (I mark it but do not alter it). The fragment "*Sic sanctus Josephus* … adorer la divinité même, unie, etc." is incomplete in the original and is left so.

6. Section III is a plate, a facsimile of a page of the preacher's manuscript; it is not transcribed.

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[1] (1) The numbers repeated with *bis*, *ter*, etc., indicate sermons already preached.

[2] (1) The letters ABC indicate a third carton containing the Rosary Instructions, the retreats of first communion, etc.

[3] This entry confirms the date and the circumstance of n° 41 above.

[4] The edition prints "Baillou-le-Pin"; the place is Bailleau-le-Pin, near Chartres.

[5] According to a note in the manuscript, M. l'abbé Pie wrote this plan only after having delivered the sermon; which shows us that the young preacher sometimes gave himself to improvisation, after a simple meditation on the subject.

[6] (2) "If a dove carried in its beak a date, which it let fall into a garden, would one not say that the palm that should come of it belongs to him to whom the garden belongs?"

[7] (1) Cf. Appendix I: AB, 12. *Avertissement*, p. XXXVI.