St. Anthony Mary Claret

SUNDAY HOMILIES, VOLUME I

Colección de pláticas dominicales, primer año

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

English translation

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

---

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About this translation · 7
Front Matter of Volume I · 7
Title Page · 7
Prologue · 7
For Announcing the Feasts · 8
Calendar for Announcing the Feasts of Each Week · 9
1. First Sunday of Advent: On the Last Judgement · 15
Reading for the First Sunday of Advent · 15
Outline of the Plática for the First Sunday of Advent · 18
2. Second Sunday of Advent: On the Virtues of the First Christians · 19
Reading for the Second Sunday of Advent · 19
Outline of the Plática for the Second Sunday of Advent · 22
3. Third Sunday of Advent: On Pride · 22
Reading for the Third Sunday of Advent · 22
Outline of the Plática for the Third Sunday of Advent · 24
4. Fourth Sunday of Advent: On Penance · 25
Reading for the Fourth Sunday of Advent · 25
Outline of the Plática for the Fourth Sunday of Advent · 27
5. Sunday within the Octave of Christmas: That the Gospel Must Be the Rule of Our Faith · 28
Reading for the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas · 28
Outline of the Plática for the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas · 30
6. Sunday between the Circumcision and the Epiphany: On the Duties of Fathers and Mothers towards Their Children · 31
Reading for the Sunday between the Circumcision and the Epiphany · 31
Outline of the Plática for the Sunday between the Circumcision and the Epiphany · 34
7. Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany: On the Obligations of Children towards Their Parents · 34
Reading for the Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany · 34
Outline of the Plática for the Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany · 36
8. Second Sunday after the Epiphany: On Matrimony · 37
Reading for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany · 37
Outline of the Plática for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany · 41
9. Third Sunday after the Epiphany: On Sin and the Evils It Brings · 41
Reading for the Third Sunday after the Epiphany · 41
Outline of the Plática for the Third Sunday after the Epiphany · 44
10. Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany: On Temptations · 44
Reading for the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany · 44
Outline of the Plática for the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany · 46
11. Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany: On Presumption on the Goodness and Mercy of God · 46
Reading for the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany · 47
Outline of the Plática for the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany · 48
12. Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany: On the Word of God · 49
Reading for the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany · 49
Outline of the Plática for the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany · 50
13. Septuagesima Sunday: On the Importance of Salvation · 50
Reading for Septuagesima Sunday · 51
Outline of the Plática for Septuagesima Sunday · 53
14. Sexagesima Sunday: On Hardness of Heart · 53
Reading for Sexagesima Sunday · 53
Outline of the Plática for Sexagesima Sunday · 55
15. Quinquagesima Sunday: On Intemperance, or Excess in Eating and Drinking · 56
Reading for Quinquagesima Sunday · 56
Outline of the Plática for Quinquagesima Sunday · 58

16. First Sunday of Lent: On Abstinence and Fasting · 58
Reading for the First Sunday of Lent · 58
Outline of the Plática for the First Sunday of Lent · 61
17. Second Sunday of Lent: On the Commandments of God · 61
Reading for the Second Sunday of Lent · 61
Outline of the Plática for the Second Sunday of Lent · 63
18. Third Sunday of Lent: On the Sin of Impurity · 64
Reading for the Third Sunday of Lent · 64
Outline of the Plática for the Third Sunday of Lent · 67
19. Fourth Sunday of Lent: On Confession · 67
Reading for the Fourth Sunday of Lent · 67
Outline of the Plática for the Fourth Sunday of Lent · 70
20. Passion Sunday: On Contrition · 70
Reading for Passion Sunday · 70
Outline of the Plática for Passion Sunday · 72
21. Palm Sunday: On the Dispositions for Communion, and on Bad Communions · 73
Reading for Palm Sunday · 73
Outline of the Plática for Palm Sunday · 75
22. Good Friday: Before the Cross · 76
Reading for Good Friday · 76
23. Easter Sunday: On the Resurrection of Jesus Christ · 77
Reading for Easter Sunday · 78
Outline of the Plática for Easter Sunday · 79
24. Low Sunday (Quasimodo): On Relapse into Sin · 80
Reading for Quasimodo Sunday · 80
Outline of the Plática for Quasimodo Sunday · 82
25. Second Sunday after Easter: On the Causes of Sin and the Remedy against It · 82
Reading for the Second Sunday after Easter · 82
Outline of the Plática for the Second Sunday after Easter · 84
26. Third Sunday after Easter: On Trials and Afflictions · 85
Reading for the Third Sunday after Easter · 85
Outline of the Plática for the Third Sunday after Easter · 87
27. Fourth Sunday after Easter: On the Injury Sin Does to God, and the Evils It Brings on Man · 88
Reading for the Fourth Sunday after Easter · 88
Outline of the Plática for the Fourth Sunday after Easter · 90
28. Fifth Sunday after Easter: On Prayer · 91
Reading for the Fifth Sunday after Easter · 91
Outline of the Plática for the Fifth Sunday after Easter · 93
29. Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension: On the Sacraments in General · 93
Reading for the Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension · 93
Outline of the Plática for the Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension · 96
30. Pentecost Sunday: On the Establishment of the Faith · 96
Reading for Pentecost Sunday · 96
Outline of the Plática for Pentecost Sunday · 99
31. Trinity Sunday: On Baptism · 100
Reading for the Sunday of the Most Holy Trinity · 100
Outline of the Plática for the Sunday of the Most Holy Trinity · 104
32. Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi: On the Holy Mass · 106
Reading for the Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi · 106
Outline of the Plática for the Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi · 108
33. Third Sunday after Pentecost: On Hope in God’s Mercy · 109
Reading for the Third Sunday after Pentecost · 109
Outline of the Plática for the Third Sunday after Pentecost · 111
34. Fourth Sunday after Pentecost: On the Importance of Salvation · 111
Reading for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost · 112

Outline of the Plática for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost · 113
35. Fifth Sunday after Pentecost: On the Spirit of Christianity · 114
Reading for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost · 114
Outline of the Plática for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost · 116
36. Sixth Sunday after Pentecost: On Almsgiving · 116
Reading for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost · 116
Outline of the Plática for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost · 119
37. Seventh Sunday after Pentecost: On Putting Off Conversion until Old Age · 120
Reading for the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost · 120
Outline of the Plática for the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost · 122
38. Eighth Sunday after Pentecost: On Confession · 122
Reading for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost · 122
Outline of the Plática for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost · 124
39. Ninth Sunday after Pentecost: On Respect for Churches · 125
Reading for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost · 125
Outline of the Plática for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost · 127
40. Tenth Sunday after Pentecost: On Satisfaction · 127
Reading for the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost · 127
Outline of the Plática for the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost · 129
41. Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost: On the Sins of the Tongue · 129
Reading for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost · 129
Outline of the Plática for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost · 131
42. Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost: On the Love of God · 132
Reading for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost · 132
Outline of the Plática for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost · 135
43. Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost: On Sins of Such Enormity That God Casts Us Off · 136
Reading for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost · 136
Outline of the Plática for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost · 138
44. Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost: On Trust in Providence · 138
Reading for the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost · 138
Outline of the Plática for the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost · 140
45. Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost: That Conversion Must Not Be Put Off to the Hour of Death · 141
Reading for the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost · 141
Outline of the Plática for the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost · 143
46. Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost: On the Unhappy Death of Sinners · 144
Reading for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost · 144
Outline of the Plática for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost · 146
47. Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost: On Avarice, or the Disordered Love of Money · 147
Reading for the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost · 147
Outline of the Plática for the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost · 150
48. Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost: On Bad Habits · 150
Reading for the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost · 150
Outline of the Plática for the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost · 152
49. Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost: On the Pains of Hell · 153
Reading for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost · 153
Outline of the Plática for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost · 155
50. Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost: On Faith · 156
Reading for the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost · 156
Outline of the Plática for the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost · 158
51. Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost: On the Love of Neighbour · 159
Reading for the Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost · 159
Outline of the Plática for the Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost · 161
52. Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost: On Purgatory · 162
Reading for the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost · 162
Outline of the Plática for the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost · 164

53. Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost: On the Happy Death of the Just · 165
Reading for the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost · 165
Outline of the Plática for the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost · 168
54. Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost: The Severity of God's Justice · 168
Reading for the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost · 169
Outline of the Plática for the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost · 171
55. Readings for the Feasts of the Mysteries of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Most Holy Virgin Mary: The Sunday before the Ember Days · 171
Reading for the Sunday before Each of the Four Ember Days of the Year · 172
56. The Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy (8 December) · 172
Reading: Exhortation to Be Given on the Sunday before the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy · 172
Reading for the 8th of December, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy · 173
Outline of the Plática for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy · 175
57. The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ (25 December) · 175
Reading for the Sunday before Christmas · 175
Reading for the 25th of December, the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ · 176
Outline of the Plática for the Day of the Lord's Nativity · 178
58. The Circumcision of the Lord (1 January) · 178
Reading for the Sunday before the Circumcision · 178
Reading for the First Day of the Year, the Day of the Circumcision of the Lord · 179
Outline of the Plática for the Day of the Circumcision of the Lord · 180
59. The Epiphany: The Feast of the Holy Kings (6 January) · 181
Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of the Holy Kings · 181
Reading for the Day of the Holy Kings · 181
Outline of the Plática for the Day of the Holy Kings · 183
60. The Purification of the Virgin Mary (2 February) · 183
Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary, 2 February · 183
Reading for the Feast of the Purification of Mary Most Holy, 2 February · 184
Outline of the Plática for the Feast of the Purification of the Most Holy Virgin · 185
61. The Annunciation of Mary Most Holy (25 March) · 186
Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of the Annunciation of Mary Most Holy, 25 March · 186
Reading for the Feast of the Annunciation of Mary Most Holy, 25 March · 186
Outline of the Plática for the Feast of the Annunciation of Mary Most Holy · 188
62. The Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ · 189
Reading for the Sunday before the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ · 189
Reading for the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ · 189
Outline of the Plática for the Day of the Lord's Ascension · 191
63. The Feast of Corpus Christi · 191
Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of Corpus Christi · 192
Reading for the Feast of Corpus Christi · 192
Outline of the Plática for the Feast of Corpus Christi · 194
64. The Assumption of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady (15 August) · 194
Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of the Assumption of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady · 194
Reading for the Feast of the Assumption of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady, 15 August · 195
Outline of the Plática for the Feast of the Assumption of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady · 197
65. The Nativity of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady (8 September) · 197
Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of the Nativity of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady · 197
Reading for the Feast of the Nativity of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady, 8 September · 198
Outline of the Plática for the Feast of the Nativity of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady, 8 September · 199
66. The Feast of the Most Holy Rosary · 200
Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of the Most Holy Rosary · 200
Reading for the Feast of the Most Holy Rosary · 200
Outline of the Plática for the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary · 202
67. All Saints and All Souls (1 and 2 November) · 202

Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of All Saints · 202
Reading for the Day of All Saints, 1 November · 202
Outline of the Homily for 1 and 2 November, the Days of All Saints and of All Souls · 204
68. Appendix: Two Instructions · 205
On the Existence of Hell · 205
Are the Wicked Happy and the Good Unfortunate? · 207
69. Index of the Readings and Outlines Contained in This First Volume · 209

About this translation

The *Colección de pláticas dominicales* (Barcelona: Librería Religiosa, 1858–1859, seven volumes) was compiled and published by St. Anthony Mary Claret, then Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, for the use of parish priests. Its title page says that he "formed and gathered" it "from the most classic authors": the sermons are drawn from other preachers, who are not named, and are given here as sermons of Claret's collection, not as his own compositions. Translated from the edition of 1858–1859. This is Volume I, the "First Year" of the cycle, complete: Claret's prologue and the front matter, and for each Sunday and feast both forms he provided, the *Lectura* (a sermon to be read as it stands) and the *Esqueleto* (its outline).

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

Front Matter of Volume I

Vol. I, title pages and pp. 5–26.

Title Page

Half-title: Collection of Sunday Pláticas. Volume I.

On the back of the half-title: Several Prelates of Spain have granted 2400 days of indulgence to all who read, or hear read, a chapter or page of any of the publications of the Librería Religiosa.[1]

Title page:

> *COLLECTION OF SUNDAY PLÁTICAS, which, for the ease and relief of the venerable Parish Priests and Curates, has been formed and gathered, from the most classic authors, by D. Antonio María Claret y Clará, Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, Primate of the Indies, etc.*
>
> *Volume I.*
>
> *With the approval of the Ordinary.*
>
> *Barcelona: Librería Religiosa. Printing house of Pablo Riera, calle de Robador, nos. 24 and 26. 1858.*

Prologue

To the venerable Parish Priests, Curates and other Priests.

In the book entitled *Advice to a Priest* we said to you: "The work of each priest according to his talent is so important that without it everything is lost. For example, what will become of the fruit of the missions if, after sinners have been convinced and, with the help of the Lord, placed in the state of grace, the priests who live in each parish do not work? Since it is not possible for the missionaries to be always there, the priests of the place must go on feeding, with the fuel \[*pábulo*\] of the sacred ministry, the divine fire that the missionaries have kindled; otherwise the holy flame will naturally and imperceptibly go out. The good seed sown in the field, if it is abandoned, will be choked by weeds: it will be of little use for the missionaries to beget a great many in Christ, if afterwards the other priests do not take care, like good nurses, to preserve and increase the spiritual life of these children with a breast full of holy zeal."

That is the reason why, after publishing the work *Sermons and Documents* for the relief and help of priests who devote themselves to the great and apostolic task of the holy missions, we have thought of publishing this Collection of Pláticas by the best authors for all Parish Priests, so that, having at hand something they can say or read to their parishioners, they may never defraud them of the bread of the divine word that they are so bound in conscience to break for them.

On this occasion we recommend to you the little work entitled *The Golden Key*, followed by the *Apparatus*, in one octavo volume of 288 pages, which we brought out last year and which has met with the greatest acceptance among all learned and zealous priests, because it contains in a single small volume what is most important for hearing confessions, catechizing and preaching.

For the greater glory of God and the good of your souls and of those of the faithful, we cannot fail to remind you that one of your chief duties is to instruct the parishioners in Christian doctrine: the mysteries they must believe, the precepts they must keep, the Sacraments they must receive, the prayers they must say, how they are to turn away from evil and do good, and how they are to live in the holy fear and love of God. So the sacred Council of Trent commands, session 5, chapter 2, and session 24, chapter 4, *de reformatione*. Many other councils and many papal bulls lay down the same, and all the synodal constitutions of the Catholic world deal with this great obligation. So general is this duty that it extends to all churches and chapels; so much so that the Roman Council held in the time of Benedict XIII earnestly and severely enjoins and commands that this instruction be given not only in parish churches during holy Mass, but also in other churches and chapels, under pain of suspension: …*ac etiam in oratoriis, capellis et ecclesiis ruralibus, ubi sacra celebrare consuevere, celebrantes adimplere teneantur, sub poena suspensionis a divinis, Episcoporum arbitrio imponenda* \[and also in oratories, chapels and rural churches where they are accustomed to celebrate the sacred rites, the celebrants are bound to fulfil it, under pain of suspension *a divinis*, to be imposed at the discretion of the Bishops\].

So that all priests, then, may fulfil this obligation so often enjoined and recalled, we bring out this Collection; and we present it in such a way that it may be useful to the learned and to the less learned or unlearned, since we are debtors to all, as the Apostle said.[1] The less learned, or those who are not practised in speaking from memory, or have not had time to prepare, can read the plática just as it stands in the book; those who have the opportunity to learn it by heart will be served by the outline \[*esqueleto*\] found at the end of the plática, for it will help them greatly to form a clear and distinct idea of what they are to say, and at the same time will guide them as by the hand so that they do not lose their way. However, since it often happens in rural parishes or small congregations that what is said seems to be aimed at some particular person, it will be better then to read that matter from the book rather than speak it, as also when there is some prejudice or mistrust, so that people do not put a bad interpretation on the priest's words. That is why each Plática is given in two forms, so that the minister of the Lord may choose the method that in his prudence he judges most suitable for the glory of God and the good of souls, since this and nothing else must be the motive of all the works of a good minister and faithful servant, if he is to merit praise and the crown of glory from the hands of his Lord in the kingdom of heaven, which is what we wish you all.

ANTONIO MARÍA, Archbishop of Cuba.

For Announcing the Feasts

After the Offertory of the Mass, immediately before the *Lavabo*, the celebrant, turning to face the people, shall say in a loud, clear and intelligible voice:

Catholics and devout Christians, who are in this holy church to hear Mass and fulfil one of the precepts of our holy mother the Church: may the Lord grant that you may come for many years and exercise yourselves in such acts of Religion, and may he also accept your prayers and offerings for his honour and glory and the profit of your souls. Amen.

The feasts that our mother the Church celebrates this week are the following:

Monday… Tuesday… *(here the Calendar is read)*.

Then shall be said:

My brethren, the Saints were saved by knowing and practising Christian doctrine; therefore if we wish to be saved, we too must know it and practise it.

Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity

Act of Faith. I firmly believe, my God, because You, infallible truth, have revealed it to the holy Church, that in the mystery of the most holy Trinity there is only one God, though there are three distinct and equal persons, who are called Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe that the second person, who is the Son, became man by the work of the Holy Spirit in the virginal womb of most holy Mary; that he suffered and died on a cross to save and redeem us. I believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man; that as God he is in heaven, on earth and in every place, that he sees all, hears all and knows all, even the most hidden thoughts; and that as man he is in heaven and in the most holy Sacrament of the altar. I believe, my God and my Jesus, that in the holy Sacraments you have deposited the merits of your sufferings, which are of infinite value; that they alone can blot out the malice of our sins; and therefore I believe that to obtain pardon I must receive, or desire to receive in case of necessity, the sacrament of Penance which You instituted for the salvation of sinners. I believe and declare, my Jesus, that whoever does not receive the sacrament of Penance when he can, being in sin, or when the Church commands it, despises You with the foulest ingratitude, and by his pride and criminal omission shows that he would rather be the devil's slave and be damned than be your child and be saved. Finally I believe, my God, that you will call me to account for all my thoughts, words, deeds and omissions, to make me happy in heaven if I die in your friendship and grace, or unhappy in hell if I die in mortal sin.

Act of Hope. My God, I believe all that the Church our mother commands us to believe, and I hope, through your infinite mercy, omnipotence and goodness, and through the merits of Jesus Christ, that you will forgive me my sins, for which I tell you with all the sorrow of my heart that I am sorry to have committed them, because by them I offended You, my God, who are goodness itself, infinite; and I give you my word that I will let myself be killed sooner than commit any sin; and I hope that you will give me your friendship and grace, and afterwards in heaven the eternal glory for which you created me.

Act of Charity. My God, I love you with all my heart, and I love you above all things, because You are infinitely good and lovable, and also for the countless benefits you have bestowed on me, of creation, preservation and redemption; and I would wish to love you with that ardent love with which the Angels and Saints in heaven and the just on earth love you; and because I know that this is your desire and will, I love most holy Mary, my sweet mother; and also for love of you, O my God, I love my neighbour as myself, and I forgive all who have offended and wronged me, and I desire that all may love and serve you here on earth, and afterwards in heaven for all eternity. Amen.

Calendar for Announcing the Feasts of Each Week

To use this calendar one must know the dominical letter; for which the parish priest shall do as follows.

He shall look at the table: in the first column is the year, and in the second the dominical letter belonging to that year. Take for example the year 1855. It has the dominical letter g; the year 1856 has two, f e, because it is a leap year; and so from 1 January to 25 February the dominical letter is f, and from 26 February to the end of the year it is e.

In a leap year 24 February is St. Modestus, the 25th St. Matthias, the 26th St. Caesarius, etc., and so on to the end of the month.[1]

Once the letter is known, look at the calendar and begin to count as Sunday the line on which that letter stands, and call the other days Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

Table of the Moveable Feasts, 1855–1895

(Recomputed and checked against the printed table.)

Year	Dom. letter	Golden no.	Epact	Septuag.	Ash Wed.
1855	g	13	XII	4 Feb.	21 Feb.
1856	fe	14	XXIII	20 Jan.	6 Feb.
1857	d	15	IV	8 Feb.	25 Feb.
1858	c	16	XV	31 Jan.	17 Feb.
1859	b	17	XXVI	20 Feb.	9 Mar.
1860	ag	18	VII	5 Feb.	22 Feb.
1861	f	19	XVIII	27 Jan.	13 Feb.
1862	e	1	*	16 Feb.	5 Mar.
1863	d	2	XI	1 Feb.	18 Feb.
1864	cb	3	XXII	24 Jan.	10 Feb.
1865	a	4	III	12 Feb.	1 Mar.
1866	g	5	XIV	28 Jan.	14 Feb.
1867	f	6	XXV	17 Feb.	6 Mar.
1868	ed	7	VI	9 Feb.	26 Feb.
1869	c	8	XVII	24 Jan.	10 Feb.
1870	b	9	XXVIII	13 Feb.	2 Mar.
1871	a	10	IX	5 Feb.	22 Feb.
1872	gf	11	XX	28 Jan.	14 Feb.
1873	e	12	I	9 Feb.	26 Feb.
1874	d	13	XII	1 Feb.	18 Feb.
1875	c	14	XXIII	24 Jan.	10 Feb.
1876	ba	15	IV	13 Feb.	1 Mar.
1877	g	16	XV	28 Jan.	14 Feb.
1878	f	17	XXVI	17 Feb.	6 Mar.
1879	e	18	VII	9 Feb.	26 Feb.
1880	dc	19	XVIII	25 Jan.	11 Feb.
1881	b	1	*	13 Feb.	2 Mar.
1882	a	2	XI	5 Feb.	22 Feb.
1883	g	3	XXII	21 Jan.	7 Feb.
1884	fe	4	III	10 Feb.	27 Feb.
1885	d	5	XIV	1 Feb.	18 Feb.
1886	c	6	XXV	21 Feb.	10 Mar.
1887	b	7	VI	6 Feb.	23 Feb.
1888	ag	8	XVII	29 Jan.	15 Feb.
1889	f	9	XXVIII	17 Feb.	6 Mar.
1890	e	10	IX	2 Feb.	19 Feb.
1891	d	11	XX	25 Jan.	11 Feb.
1892	cb	12	I	14 Feb.	2 Mar.
1893	a	13	XII	29 Jan.	15 Feb.
1894	g	14	XXIII	21 Jan.	7 Feb.
1895	f	15	IV	10 Feb.	27 Feb.

Year	Easter	Ascens.	Pentec.	Corpus	Advent I
1855	8 Apr.	17 May	27 May	7 June	2 Dec.
1856	23 Mar.	1 May	11 May	22 May	30 Nov.
1857	12 Apr.	21 May	31 May	11 June	29 Nov.
1858	4 Apr.	13 May	23 May	3 June	28 Nov.
1859	24 Apr.	2 June	12 June	23 June	27 Nov.
1860	8 Apr.	17 May	27 May	7 June	2 Dec.
1861	31 Mar.	9 May	19 May	30 May	1 Dec.
1862	20 Apr.	29 May	8 June	19 June	30 Nov.
1863	5 Apr.	14 May	24 May	4 June	29 Nov.
1864	27 Mar.	5 May	15 May	26 May	27 Nov.
1865	16 Apr.	25 May	4 June	15 June	3 Dec.
1866	1 Apr.	10 May	20 May	31 May	2 Dec.
1867	21 Apr.	30 May	9 June	20 June	1 Dec.
1868	12 Apr.	21 May	31 May	11 June	29 Nov.
1869	28 Mar.	6 May	16 May	27 May	28 Nov.
1870	17 Apr.	26 May	5 June	16 June	27 Nov.
1871	9 Apr.	18 May	28 May	8 June	3 Dec.
1872	31 Mar.	9 May	19 May	30 May	1 Dec.
1873	13 Apr.	22 May	1 June	12 June	30 Nov.
1874	5 Apr.	14 May	24 May	4 June	29 Nov.
1875	28 Mar.	6 May	16 May	27 May	28 Nov.
1876	16 Apr.	25 May	4 June	15 June	3 Dec.
1877	1 Apr.	10 May	20 May	31 May	2 Dec.
1878	21 Apr.	30 May	9 June	20 June	1 Dec.
1879	13 Apr.	22 May	1 June	12 June	30 Nov.
1880	28 Mar.	6 May	16 May	27 May	28 Nov.
1881	17 Apr.	26 May	5 June	16 June	27 Nov.
1882	9 Apr.	18 May	28 May	8 June	3 Dec.
1883	25 Mar.	3 May	13 May	24 May	2 Dec.
1884	13 Apr.	22 May	1 June	12 June	30 Nov.
1885	5 Apr.	14 May	24 May	4 June	29 Nov.
1886	25 Apr.	3 June	13 June	24 June	28 Nov.
1887	10 Apr.	19 May	29 May	9 June	27 Nov.
1888	1 Apr.	10 May	20 May	31 May	2 Dec.
1889	21 Apr.	30 May	9 June	20 June	1 Dec.
1890	6 Apr.	15 May	25 May	5 June	30 Nov.
1891	29 Mar.	7 May	17 May	28 May	29 Nov.
1892	17 Apr.	26 May	5 June	16 June	27 Nov.
1893	2 Apr.	11 May	21 May	1 June	3 Dec.
1894	25 Mar.	3 May	13 May	24 May	2 Dec.
1895	14 Apr.	23 May	2 June	13 June	1 Dec.

The Saints of Each Month

On pp. 14–25 of the book, each line gives the day, its calendar letter, and the saint or feast. ✠ marks a feast of precept (a holy day: Mass and rest from work); † marks a day on which there is an obligation to hear Mass, but work is permitted. The marked feasts are printed in italics, as in the book.

January

1. A — ✠ *The Circumcision of the Lord.*\ 2. B — St. Macarius, abbot.\ 3. C — St. Daniel, martyr.\ 4. D — St. Titus, bishop and confessor.\ 5. E — St. Telesphorus, pope and martyr.\ 6. F — ✠ *The Adoration of the Holy Kings \[the Epiphany\], and St. Andrew.*\ 7. G — St. Raymond of Peñafort, confessor.\ 8. A — St. Lucian, martyr.\ 9. B — St. Marcellinus, bishop.\ 10. C — St. William, archbishop, and Blessed Gonzalo, confessor.\ 11. D — St. Hyginus, pope and martyr.\ 12. E — St. Victorian, abbot.\ 13. F — St. Hilary, bishop and confessor.\ 14. G — St. Felix, priest.\ 15. A — St. Paul the first hermit, and St. Maurus.\ 16. B — St. Marcellus, pope and martyr, and St. Fulgentius, bishop.\ 17. C — St. Anthony, abbot.\ 18. D — The Chair of St. Peter at Rome.\ 19. E — St. Canute, king and martyr.\ 20. F — Sts. Fabian and Sebastian, martyrs.\ 21. G — † *(In Tarragona) St. Fructuosus, bishop and martyr; and St. Agnes, virgin and martyr.*\ 22. A — Sts. Vincent and Anastasius, martyrs.\ 23. B — St. Ildephonsus, archbishop, and St. Emerentiana.\ 24. C — Our Lady of Peace, and St. Timothy.\ 25. D — The Conversion of St. Paul, apostle.\ 26. E — St. Paula, widow, and St. Polycarp, bishop.\ 27. F — St. John Chrysostom, doctor.\ 28. G — St. Julian and St. Cyril, bishop.\ 29. A — St. Francis de Sales, and St. Valerius, bishop.\ 30. B — St. Martina, virgin and martyr, and St. Lesmes \[Adelelmus\], abbot.\ 31. C — St. Peter Nolasco, founder.

February

1. D — St. Cecilius and St. Ignatius, bishop.\ 2. E — ✠ *The Purification of Our Lady.*\ 3. F — St. Blaise, bishop and martyr, and Blessed Nicholas of Longobardi.\ 4. G — St. Andrew Corsini, and St. Joseph of Leonessa.\ 5. A — St. Agatha, virgin and martyr, and the Blessed Martyrs of Japan.\ 6. B — St. Dorothy, virgin.\ 7. C — St. Romuald, abbot.\ 8. D — St. John of Matha, founder.\ 9. E — St. Apollonia, virgin and martyr.\ 10. F — St. Scholastica, virgin, and St. William, confessor.\ 11. G — The Blessed Seven Servants of Mary, founders.\ 12. A — St. Eulalia, virgin and martyr.\ 13. B — St. Catherine de' Ricci, virgin.\ 14. C — St. Valentine, priest.\ 15. D — Sts. Faustinus and Jovita, martyrs.\ 16. E — St. Julian and the Five Thousand Martyrs.\ 17. F — St. Peter Thomas, bishop.\ 18. G — St. Simeon, bishop and martyr.\ 19. A — St. Conrad, confessor.\ 20. B — St. Leo, bishop.\ 21. C — St. Felix, bishop and confessor.\ 22. D — The Chair of St. Peter at Antioch.\ 23. E — St. Margaret of Cortona, widow.\ 24. F — † *St. Matthias, apostle.*\ 25. G — St. Avertanus, confessor, and Blessed Sebastian of Aparicio.\ 26. A — Our Lady of Guadalupe of Mexico.\ 27. B — St. Baldomerus, confessor, and St. Maurice, martyr.\ 28. C — St. Romanus, abbot.

March

1. D — St. Rudesind and St. Albinus.\ 2. E — Sts. Jovinus and Basileus, martyrs.\ 3. F — Sts. Emeterius and Celedonius, and St. Medin \[Emeterius' companion of Spanish tradition\].\ 4. G — St. Casimir, confessor.\ 5. A — St. Eusebius, confessor, and Blessed Nicholas Factor.\ 6. B — St. Oleguer, bishop and confessor.\ 7. C — St. Thomas Aquinas, doctor.\ 8. D — St. John of God, founder.\ 9. E — St. Frances \[of Rome\], widow, and St. Pacian.\ 10. F — The Forty Holy Martyrs.\ 11. G — St. Eulogius, priest and martyr.\ 12. A — St. Gregory \[the Great\], pope and doctor.\ 13. B — St. Leander, archbishop.\ 14. C — Sts. Florentina, virgin, and Matilda, queen.\ 15. D — St. Madrona, virgin, and St. Raymond \[of Fitero\], founder.\ 16. E — St. Heribert, bishop and confessor.\ 17. F — St. Patrick, bishop.\ 18. G — St. Gabriel the archangel, and St. Braulio, bishop.\ 19. A — † *St. Joseph, spouse of Our Lady.*\ 20. B — St. Nicetas, bishop and confessor.\ 21. C — St. Benedict, abbot and founder.\ 22. D — St. Ambrose of Siena, confessor.\ 23. E — St. Victorian, martyr.\ 24. F — St. Agapitus, bishop.\ 25. G — ✠ *The Annunciation of Our Lady.*\ 26. A — St. Castulus, martyr.\ 27. B — St. Rupert, bishop.\ 28. C — St. Sixtus III, pope and confessor.\ 29. D — St. Eustasius, abbot, and St. Berthold, confessor.\ 30. E — St. John Climacus, abbot.\ 31. F — St. Balbina, virgin.

April

1. G — St. Venantius, bishop and martyr.\ 2. A — St. Francis of Paola, founder.\ 3. B — St. Theodosia, virgin, and St. Benedict of Palermo.\ 4. C — St. Isidore, archbishop and doctor.\ 5. D — St. Vincent Ferrer.\ 6. E — St. Celestine, pope.\ 7. F — St. Epiphanius, bishop and martyr.\ 8. G — St. Dionysius, and St. Albert,

bishop and confessor.\ 9. A — St. Mary of Cleophas.\ 10. B — St. Ezekiel, prophet.\ 11. C — St. Leo I, pope and doctor.\ 12. D — St. Zeno, bishop and martyr.\ 13. E — St. Hermenegild, martyr.\ 14. F — St. Peter González, commonly called St. Telmo, and Sts. Tiburtius and companions, martyrs.\ 15. G — Sts. Basilissa and Anastasia, and Blessed Lucius.\ 16. A — St. Turibius, bishop, and St. Engracia, virgin.\ 17. B — St. Anicetus, pope, and Blessed Mariana of Jesus, virgin.\ 18. C — St. Eleutherius, bishop.\ 19. D — St. Hermogenes, martyr.\ 20. E — St. Agnes of Montepulciano.\ 21. F — St. Anselm, bishop and doctor.\ 22. G — Sts. Soter and Caius, popes and martyrs.\ 23. A — St. George, martyr.\ 24. B — St. Fidelis, martyr.\ 25. C — St. Mark, evangelist, and St. Anianus, bishop.\ 26. D — Sts. Cletus and Marcellinus, popes and martyrs.\ 27. E — St. Peter Armengol, and St. Anastasius.\ 28. F — St. Prudentius, bishop, and St. Vitalis, martyr.\ 29. G — St. Peter Martyr, inquisitor.\ 30. A — St. Catherine of Siena, virgin, and St. Peregrine.

May

1. B — † *Sts. Philip and James, apostles.*\ 2. C — St. Athanasius, bishop and doctor.\ 3. D — † *The Finding of the Holy Cross.*\ 4. E — St. Monica, widow.\ 5. F — St. Pius V, pope, and St. Angelus, martyr.\ 6. G — St. John before the Latin Gate.\ 7. A — St. Stanislaus, bishop and martyr.\ 8. B — The Apparition of St. Michael the archangel.\ 9. C — St. Gregory Nazianzen.\ 10. D — St. Antoninus, archbishop.\ 11. E — St. Anastasius, St. Eudald and St. Pontius.\ 12. F — St. Pancras, martyr.\ 13. G — St. Secundus, bishop, and St. Peter Regalado, confessor.\ 14. A — St. Boniface, martyr.\ 15. B — † *St. Isidore the farmer \[San Isidro labrador\].*\ 16. C — St. John Nepomucene, martyr.\ 17. D — St. Paschal Baylon.\ 18. E — St. Felix of Cantalice, confessor.\ 19. F — St. Celestine, pope, and St. Ivo, doctor.\ 20. G — St. Bernardine of Siena, and St. Baudilius.\ 21. A — St. Secundinus, martyr.\ 22. B — St. Quiteria, and St. Rita of Cascia, widow.\ 23. C — The Apparition of St. James the apostle \[at Clavijo\].\ 24. D — St. John Regis \[Francis Regis\], confessor.\ 25. E — St. Gregory \[VII\], pope.\ 26. F — St. Philip Neri, founder.\ 27. G — St. John, pope and martyr.\ 28. A — St. Justus, bishop and confessor.\ 29. B — St. Maximinus, bishop and confessor.\ 30. C — St. Ferdinand, king of Spain.\ 31. D — St. Petronilla, virgin.

June

1. E — St. Simeon, monk.\ 2. F — Sts. Marcellinus, Peter and Erasmus, martyrs.\ 3. G — St. Isaac, monk.\ 4. A — St. Francis Caracciolo, founder.\ 5. B — St. Boniface, bishop.\ 6. C — St. Norbert, bishop and founder.\ 7. D — St. Paul, bishop and martyr.\ 8. E — St. Medard, bishop and confessor.\ 9. F — Sts. Primus and Felician, martyrs.\ 10. G — St. Margaret, queen of Scotland, \[widow; the source has “virgin”\].\ 11. A — St. Barnabas, apostle.\ 12. B — St. John of Sahagún, and St. Onuphrius, anchorite.\ 13. C — † *St. Anthony of Padua.*\ 14. D — St. Basil the Great, doctor and founder.\ 15. E — Sts. Vitus, Modestus and Crescentia, martyrs.\ 16. F — Sts. Quiricus and Julitta, and St. Lutgardis.\ 17. G — St. Manuel, martyr.\ 18. A — Sts. Mark and Marcellian, martyrs.\ 19. B — Sts. Gervase and Protase, martyrs.\ 20. C — St. Silverius, pope and martyr.\ 21. D — St. Aloysius Gonzaga, confessor.\ 22. E — St. Paulinus, bishop.\ 23. F — St. John, priest and martyr.\ 24. G — ✠ *The Nativity of St. John the Baptist.*\ 25. A — St. William, abbot.\ 26. B — Sts. John and Paul, martyrs.\ 27. C — St. Zoilus, martyr.\ 28. D — St. Leo II, pope.\ 29. E — ✠ *Sts. Peter and Paul, apostles.*\ 30. F — The Commemoration of St. Paul, apostle, and St. Martial, bishop.

July

1. G — St. Gall, bishop, and St. Secundinus, martyrs.\ 2. A — The Visitation of Our Lady.\ 3. B — St. Tryphon, martyr.\ 4. C — St. Laurean, archbishop, and Blessed Gaspar Bono.\ 5. D — Blessed Michael of the Saints.\ 6. E — St. Romulus, bishop and martyr.\ 7. F — St. Fermin, bishop, and Blessed Lawrence of Brindisi.\ 8. G — St. Elizabeth, queen of Portugal, widow.\ 9. A — St. Cyril, bishop, and St. Zeno and companions, martyrs.\ 10. B — St. Christopher, martyr.\ 11. C — St. Pius I, pope and martyr.\ 12. D — St. John Gualbert, abbot.\ 13. E — St. Anacletus, pope and martyr.\ 14. F — St. Bonaventure, doctor.\ 15. G — St. Camillus de Lellis, founder.\ 16. A — The Triumph of the Holy Cross, and Our Lady of Mount

Carmel.\ 17. B — St. Alexis, confessor.\ 18. C — St. Symphorosa, martyr.\ 19. D — St. Vincent de Paul, founder.\ 20. E — St. Elijah, prophet, and Sts. Margaret and Liberata.\ 21. F — St. Praxedes, virgin.\ 22. G — St. Mary Magdalene.\ 23. A — St. Liborius, bishop and confessor.\ 24. B — St. Christina, virgin and martyr.\ 25. C — ✠ *St. James \[Santiago\], apostle, patron of Spain.*\ 26. D — † *St. Anne, mother of Our Lady.*\ 27. E — St. Pantaleon, martyr.\ 28. F — Sts. Nazarius and Celsus, martyrs.\ 29. G — St. Martha, virgin, and St. Seraphina.\ 30. A — Sts. Abdon and Sennen, martyrs.\ 31. B — St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder.

August

1. C — St. Peter in Chains, and St. Felix, martyr.\ 2. D — Our Lady of the Angels.\ 3. E — The Finding of St. Stephen, protomartyr.\ 4. F — St. Dominic de Guzmán, founder.\ 5. G — Our Lady of the Snows.\ 6. A — The Transfiguration of the Lord.\ 7. B — St. Cajetan, founder, and St. Albert, confessor.\ 8. C — St. Cyriacus, martyr.\ 9. D — St. Romanus, martyr.\ 10. E — † *St. Lawrence, martyr.*\ 11. F — St. Tiburtius and St. Susanna, martyrs.\ 12. G — St. Clare, virgin.\ 13. A — St. Hippolytus and St. Cassian, martyrs.\ 14. B — St. Eusebius, confessor.\ 15. C — ✠ *The Assumption of Our Lady.*\ 16. D — St. Roch and St. Hyacinth.\ 17. E — St. Liberatus, abbot.\ 18. F — St. Helena, empress, widow, and St. Agapitus.\ 19. G — St. Magin, hermit and martyr, and St. Louis \[of Toulouse\], bishop.\ 20. A — St. Bernard, abbot.\ 21. B — St. Jane Frances Frémyot \[de Chantal\], foundress.\ 22. C — Sts. Hippolytus, Symphorian and Timothy, martyrs.\ 23. D — St. Philip Benizi, confessor.\ 24. E — † *St. Bartholomew, apostle.*\ 25. F — St. Louis, king of France, and St. Genesius, martyr.\ 26. G — St. Zephyrinus, pope and martyr.\ 27. A — St. Joseph Calasanz, founder.\ 28. B — † *St. Augustine, bishop, doctor and founder.*\ 29. C — The Beheading of the Baptist.\ 30. D — St. Rose of Lima, virgin.\ 31. E — St. Raymond Nonnatus, confessor.

September

1. F — St. Giles, abbot, and St. Lupus, confessor.\ 2. G — St. Antoninus, bishop, and St. Stephen, king.\ 3. A — St. Sandalius, martyr, and St. Nonnus \[?\], confessor.\ 4. B — St. Rosalia, St. Rose of Viterbo, and St. Moses, confessor.\ 5. C — St. Lawrence Justinian.\ 6. D — St. Eugene, martyr.\ 7. E — St. Regina, virgin and martyr.\ 8. F — ✠ *The Nativity of Our Lady.*\ 9. G — St. Gregory, martyr.\ 10. A — St. Nicholas of Tolentino, confessor.\ 11. B — Sts. Protus and Hyacinth, martyrs.\ 12. C — St. Silvanus, bishop.\ 13. D — St. Philip, martyr.\ 14. E — The Exaltation of the Holy Cross.\ 15. F — St. Nicomedes, martyr.\ 16. G — Sts. Cornelius and Cyprian, pope \[and bishop\] and martyrs.\ 17. A — St. Peter of Arbués, St. Lambert, and the Stigmata of St. Francis.\ 18. B — St. Thomas of Villanova, bishop.\ 19. C — St. Januarius, bishop and martyr.\ 20. D — St. Eustace, martyr.\ 21. E — † *St. Matthew, apostle and evangelist.*\ 22. F — St. Maurice, martyr.\ 23. G — St. Thecla, virgin and martyr.\ 24. A — Our Lady of Mercy.\ 25. B — St. Mary de Cervelló \[Santa María del Socós\], virgin.\ 26. C — St. Cyprian and St. Justina, martyrs.\ 27. D — Sts. Cosmas and Damian, martyrs.\ 28. E — St. Wenceslaus, and Blessed Simon de Rojas.\ 29. F — The Dedication of St. Michael the archangel, and St. Plautus \[?\], martyr.\ 30. G — St. Jerome, doctor and founder.

October

1. A — St. Remigius, bishop and confessor.\ 2. B — The Holy Guardian Angel.\ 3. C — St. Candidus, martyr.\ 4. D — St. Francis of Assisi, founder.\ 5. E — St. Froilán, bishop, and St. Placid and companions, martyrs.\ 6. F — St. Bruno, founder.\ 7. G — St. Mark, pope and confessor.\ 8. A — St. Bridget, widow, and St. Reparata.\ 9. B — St. Denis the Areopagite and companions, martyrs.\ 10. C — St. Francis Borgia, and St. Louis Bertrand.\ 11. D — St. Nicasius, bishop and martyr.\ 12. E — Our Lady of the Pillar.\ 13. F — St. Edward and St. Gerard.\ 14. G — St. Callistus, pope and martyr.\ 15. A — St. Teresa of Jesus, virgin and foundress.\ 16. B — Blessed Mary of the Incarnation.\ 17. C — St. Hedwig, widow.\ 18. D — St. Luke, evangelist.\ 19. E — St. Peter of Alcántara, confessor.\ 20. F — St. John Cantius, confessor, and St. Caprasius, martyr.\ 21. G — St. Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins, martyrs.\ 22. A — St. Mary

Salome, widow.\ 23. B — St. John of Capistrano, and St. Peter Paschal.\ 24. C — St. Raphael the archangel, and St. Bernard Calvó.\ 25. D — St. Gavinus, martyr, and Sts. Crispin and Crispinian.\ 26. E — St. Evaristus, pope.\ 27. F — Sts. Vincent, Sabina and Christeta, martyrs.\ 28. G — † *Sts. Simon and Jude Thaddeus, apostles.*\ 29. A — † *St. Narcissus, bishop and martyr.*\ 30. B — St. Claudius, martyr.\ 31. C — St. Quentin, martyr.

November

1. D — ✠ *All Saints.*\ 2. E — The Commemoration of the Faithful Departed.\ 3. F — The Innumerable Martyrs of Saragossa.\ 4. G — St. Charles Borromeo.\ 5. A — Sts. Zachary and Elizabeth, parents of the Baptist.\ 6. B — St. Severus, bishop and martyr, and St. Leonard, abbot and confessor.\ 7. C — St. Florentius, bishop and confessor.\ 8. D — The Crowned Martyrs \[the Four Crowned Martyrs\].\ 9. E — The Dedication of the church of the Saviour in Rome \[the Lateran\], and St. Theodore, martyr.\ 10. F — St. Andrew Avellino, confessor.\ 11. G — St. Martin, bishop and confessor.\ 12. A — St. Martin, pope and martyr, and St. Didacus of Alcalá.\ 13. B — St. Stanislaus Kostka, confessor.\ 14. C — Sts. Rufus and Serapion, martyrs.\ 15. D — St. Eugene, archbishop and martyr.\ 16. E — St. Rufinus, martyr.\ 17. F — St. Gertrude, virgin.\ 18. G — The Dedication of the basilica of the Apostles \[Peter and Paul\].\ 19. A — St. Elizabeth, queen of Hungary, widow.\ 20. B — St. Felix of Valois, founder.\ 21. C — The Presentation of Our Lady.\ 22. D — St. Cecilia, virgin and martyr.\ 23. E — St. Clement, pope and martyr.\ 24. F — St. John of the Cross, confessor.\ 25. G — St. Catherine, virgin and martyr.\ 26. A — St. Peter of Alexandria, martyr.\ 27. B — Sts. Facundus and Primitivus, martyrs.\ 28. C — St. Gregory III, pope.\ 29. D — St. Saturninus, martyr.\ 30. E — † *St. Andrew, apostle.*

December

1. F — St. Eligius, bishop and confessor.\ 2. G — St. Bibiana, virgin and martyr.\ 3. A — St. Francis Xavier, confessor.\ 4. B — St. Barbara, virgin and martyr.\ 5. C — St. Sabas, abbot.\ 6. D — St. Nicholas of Bari, bishop.\ 7. E — St. Ambrose, archbishop and doctor.\ 8. F — ✠ *The Conception of Our Lady.*\ 9. G — St. Leocadia, virgin and martyr.\ 10. A — Our Lady of Loreto.\ 11. B — St. Damasus, pope and confessor.\ 12. C — St. Synesius, martyr.\ 13. D — St. Lucy, virgin and martyr.\ 14. E — St. Spyridon, bishop.\ 15. F — St. Eusebius, bishop.\ 16. G — St. Valentine, martyr.\ 17. A — Sts. Lazarus, and Franco of Siena, confessors.\ 18. B — Our Lady of Expectation \[Nuestra Señora de la Esperanza\].\ 19. C — St. Nemesius, martyr.\ 20. D — St. Dominic of Silos, abbot.\ 21. E — † *St. Thomas, apostle.*\ 22. F — St. Zeno, martyr.\ 23. G — St. Victoria, virgin and martyr.\ 24. A — St. Delphinus, bishop.\ 25. B — ✠ *The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.*\ 26. C — ✠ *St. Stephen, protomartyr.*\ 27. D — † *St. John, apostle and evangelist.*\ 28. E — † *The Holy Innocents, martyrs.*\ 29. F — St. Thomas of Canterbury, bishop and martyr.\ 30. G — The Translation of St. James the apostle.\ 31. A — † *St. Silvester, pope and confessor.*

Days on which the Saints Are Kept that, Having No Fixed Day, Are Not Included in the Foregoing List

The second Sunday after the Holy Kings \[Epiphany\]: The most sweet Name of Jesus.

If the year is a leap year, St. Modestus is celebrated on 24 February and St. Matthias on the 25th.

The Friday after Passion Sunday: The Sorrows of Our Lady.

The third Sunday after Easter: The Patronage of St. Joseph.

The Sunday after Pentecost: The Most Holy Trinity.

The day after the octave of Corpus Christi: The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The Sunday after the Assumption of most holy Mary (which is 15 August): St. Joachim, father of Our Lady.

The Sunday after St. Augustine (which is 28 August): Our Lady of Consolation, or of the Cincture \[*de la Correa*\].

The Sunday after the Nativity of Our Lady (which is 8 September): The Most Sweet Name of Mary.

The third Sunday of September: Our Lady of Sorrows.

The first Sunday of October: Our Lady of the Rosary.

The second Sunday of October: Our Lady of Remedies.

The second Sunday of November: The Patronage of Our Lady. On that day a plenary indulgence may be gained by hearing the High Mass.

---

[2] *Indulgentiarum doctrina*.

[3] Rom. 1:14.

[1] Cf. also the list on p. 26.

1. First Sunday of Advent: On the Last Judgement

Vol. I, pp. 27–34. Reading for the First Sunday of Advent. Gospel: Luke 21:25–33. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the First Sunday of Advent

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 21 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus said to his disciples: Prodigious signs will be seen in the sun, the moon and the stars; and on the earth the nations will be dismayed and bewildered by the roaring of the sea and of the waves, men withering away with fear and dread at the things that are to come upon the whole world; for the powers of the heavens, or the heavenly spheres, will be shaken \[*estarán bambaleando*, will be tottering\]. And then they will see the Son of Man coming upon a cloud with great power and majesty. But you, my faithful disciples, when you see these things begin to happen, open your eyes and lift up your heads, take heart, for your redemption is drawing near. And he put this comparison to them: Look at the fig tree and the other trees: when they begin to put forth their fruit, you know that summer is near. So also you, when you see these things carried out, understand that the kingdom of God is near. I give you my word \[*Os empeño mi palabra*, I pledge you my word\] that this generation will not pass away until all that I have said is fulfilled. Heaven and earth will be changed, but my words will not fail.

2. My brethren, what the Church sets before her children on this First Sunday of Advent are objects of terror: these objects are the signs that will precede the day of judgement. All this is to put the fear of God into their hearts and to oblige sinners to be seriously converted. She also sets these signs before the just, to awaken in their souls feelings of joy and consolation at the sight of their approaching reward. This last judgement is what will be the subject of this instruction: pay attention to me \[*estadme atentos*\].

3. You have heard of the universal flood, which buried in an immense abyss of waters all the men there were on the earth, except Noah and his family. You must know that Sodom and Gomorrah, with the two other cities, Admah and Zeboiim, whose inhabitants committed abominable sins, were reduced to ashes and consumed with fire from heaven.[1] It is well known that from time to time there have been earthquakes so violent that they have swallowed whole countries, destroying cities and leaving most of their inhabitants buried under the ruins of their houses. But how imperfect are all these things as images of the last judgement! On that day a flood of fire will overwhelm the universe, and in this flood all the buildings, all the men and all the animals of the world will perish and be consumed. After this frightful burning a loud trumpet will be heard throughout the universe, and it will be the signal of the general resurrection and of the coming of the

supreme Judge. Does it not seem to you, my faithful, that you already hear this terrible trumpet? Long ago its sound, merely imagined, made the great Father St. Jerome tremble.

4. Then the Angels will command all men to come out of their graves to go and receive their sentence. Picture to yourselves that prodigious number of bones which, coming out of the earth and the sea, will join one to another, forming skeletons which, clothed again with flesh, will take once more the shape of a human body and will be united again with their souls. Then the cross of Jesus Christ will appear as the sign of his triumph; the Son of God will be seated on a throne of majesty to judge all men, and around him will be all the Saints, to reproach the devils and the wicked together with him. Prayers, entreaties, all will then be useless: all the honours and all the goods that men enjoyed in the world will be of no avail. Kings will be without power, the rich without riches; there will be no difference between the prince and the little shepherd, between the master and the servant. There will be a difference only between the saints and the reprobate, between the children of the kingdom and the wicked. We shall bring to the judgement only our works, good or bad, and on them we shall be judged.

5. St. John in the Apocalypse gives us in outline a terrible image of the Judge before whom we must appear. He says that his eyes will flash like fire and his face be more brilliant than the sun; that his words will be more terrifying than thunder, and that from his mouth will come a sharp two-edged sword.[2] What a display \[*¡Qué aparato este!*\] is this, my brethren! The same Apostle tells us that this sight filled him with such dread that he fell as though dead and remained motionless for some time. If, when a king of the earth appears seated on his throne, with the crown on his head and the sceptre in his hand, clothed in his royal mantle and surrounded by courtiers and guards, one can scarcely bear his presence, and even the boldest are obliged to lower their eyes, what will be our terror when we appear, to be judged without appeal, before that Lord in whose presence the kings, the princes and all the great ones of the world are nothing but dust and ashes?

6. But let us pass to the judgement. The Son of God will command his Angels to separate the sheep from the goats, that is, the just from the sinners; he will have the one placed at his right hand and the others at his left. What a sad separation! Perhaps the father will be placed on one side and the son on the other; a mother will be among the children of the kingdom and a daughter among the strangers; husband and wife, who will have lived together thirty or forty years, will be separated never to see each other again: the one kept for glory, the other destined to be punished eternally. Of two intimate friends, perhaps the one will be placed in the rank of the saints and the other left among the reprobate. What a frightful separation!

7. This done, a book will be opened, Holy Scripture tells us. But this book is nothing other than the consciences of all men, which on that day will be laid open in public. All good and bad works will be seen, down to the smallest circumstances of those works.[3] It will begin with those of the just: before the whole world will be revealed all the good works they have done, prayers, fasts, almsgiving, good thoughts, pious desires, humiliations, and all the good examples they have given. Then it is that Jesus Christ will have public satisfaction given to his Saints for the ill-treatment they received from worldly people. Servants of God, in this life you are despised, you are looked on as the refuse of the world; people have the impiety to call you hypocrites, to treat you as ridiculous or as fools; you are deceived, your goods are taken from you, your simplicity is mocked and jeered at. Poor of the Lord, the wicked rich oppress you and grow fat on your substance; but a day will come when you will be given full satisfaction, you will see the vengeance of heaven upon your enemies and, in the expression of the Holy Books, you will wash your hands in the blood of sinners.[4] Terrible words, my brethren! Terrible words, which show the whole extent of a full vengeance! Poor village people, little shepherds, day labourers who bear the burden of the day and the heat, and who are looked upon as despicable people: if you are patient in your troubles, if you carry your cross well, if you suffer it with resignation and for the love of God, on the day of judgement you will see at your feet those great ones of the world who will have abused their greatness and their riches; and you will then receive the reward of your troubles and of your good life. The Son of God will then decree in favour of his elect the

reward of an eternal happiness. Come, he will say to them, come, blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. Come, my beloved disciples, enter into my eternal rest: you humbled yourselves, and I will exalt you; you deprived yourselves of the passing sweetness of life, and I will inebriate you with a torrent of delights.

8. Then the elect will know the designs of divine Providence, which are now so little known. That poor man who lived and died deprived of almost all temporal help will see that he would have been lost had he lived in abundance; all those persons who were reduced to a narrow middling condition \[*estrecha mediocridad*\], or who ate nothing but brown bread in the sweat of their brow, will see that a state in which they would have had the means to live in comfort would have been for them the cause of an eternal misery. Then the blessed will break out into a thousand exclamations of joy and thanksgiving.

9. But what do I see! And what a frightful difference! The sovereign Judge is about to examine the sinners. All the thoughts, all the desires, all the actions of the reprobate will be made plain to the whole world. How many sins, how many crimes will be uncovered there! All the evil words they spoke, all the calumnies, the backbiting, the oaths, the curses, the obscene conversations, the impure songs, all will be put on view. All the evil actions committed against the law of God will also be seen. It will be known that this lewd man spent his life in every sort of impurity; his dealings with those prostitutes will be known, and those adulteries that filled a faithful Christian wife with bitterness. It will be known that this proud young woman, infatuated with her beauty, thought only of showing herself to men; that by her vain adornments and her forwardness she drew them to herself, lost her innocence, and was a snare for countless souls who were lost through her fault. It will be known that those men given to wine lived in gluttony and intemperance; that merchants and dealers never ceased cheating everybody \[*engañar al mundo*\]. Crimes committed in secret will be uncovered and made public: all the infamies, the abominations, the thefts, the murders, the poisons given; in a word, all the malice of the heart will be laid before heaven and earth. You, lewd man, had committed the sin in a secret place, and perhaps in the darkness of the night; but God will show the whole universe even your smallest excesses. You, forward woman, single or married, had hidden those frequent dealings, those criminal liberties; you had escaped a mother’s watchfulness or deceived a husband; but all this will be made plain, whether you like it or not \[*mal que te pese*\].

10. Picture to yourselves now what the confusion of sinners will be at that moment \[*en aquel lance*\]. If at this instant an Angel come down from heaven were to write on the walls of this church some shameful sin of someone in this congregation, what would be the confusion of that unhappy person? Would he not rather be shut up in a dark dungeon for the rest of his days than suffer so great a disgrace? What, then, will be the confusion of sinners on the day of vengeance, when the secrets of their consciences are revealed before all the Angels, all the Saints and all men? The Gospel tells us when we read in it that these unhappy people will say to the mountains and the hills: Fall upon us and hide us.

11. The sins of omission will also be seen: all the good works you failed to do when you could; the word of God that you paid no heed to; the poor you did not help when you had the means; the divine offices you failed to attend; the fasts you did not keep; the Sacraments you were so careless in frequenting. How many will be found who made sacrilegious communions? Still more: all the means of salvation they had will be recalled, and they will be reproached for not having profited by them. They will remember so many graces received, so many good thoughts stifled, so many good examples set before them. They will hear the voice of the Son of God saying to them: What could I do for you that I did not do? I used solicitations, invitations, promises, threats, the rigours of my justice to turn you from your wanderings; but all this was useless. You abused prosperity, and neither adversity nor afflictions could correct you. I waited for you many years and gave you ample time to do penance; but you used it to multiply your crimes. Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire: depart from my presence, and never hope to see me.

12. Consider, my brethren, the terms of this terrible sentence. *Depart from me*: here is the pain of loss, which consists in an eternal separation from God, in the privation of all good, of all pleasure and of all consolation. *Into the everlasting fire*: here is the pain of sense, which contains the cruellest and sharpest torments.[5] What will then be the dismay, what the despair, when they see themselves cast out from God and lost for ever? Then, seeing the just enter the kingdom of heaven, they will say with an oppressed and anguished heart: Behold those who were once the object of our laughter and mockery, of whom we spoke only with contempt. Fools that we were, their life seemed to us madness; now we see them raised to the dignity of children of God, and their lot is among the saints! Truly we strayed from the way of truth; we wearied ourselves in the path of iniquity and perdition, and we did not know the ways of the Lord. What has the vain show of riches profited us? All these things have passed away like a shadow; we could show in ourselves not the least trace of virtue; we have been consumed in our wickedness. This, say the Holy Books, is what sinners will say in hell.[6]

13. Upon this will follow the bitter reproaches they will make one to another. Wicked children, the parents will cry, your disobedience and your licentiousness are the cause of your unhappiness and of ours. Cursed fathers, cursed mothers, the damned children will say, your bad examples and your indulgence in putting up with our disorders are the cause of our eternal perdition. Husbands and wives will accuse each other, and the same will happen in every other state of life.

14. My brethren, can you hear such strange truths without feeling yourselves seized by terror and dread? On which side will you be? Will you be on the side of the reprobate, or on that of the saints? You still have the chance to make your lot secure. Take advantage of this short time to escape the misfortune of being among the number of the reprobate. The only means is to be converted, to leave sin, to make a good confession, to take up \[*entablar*\] a Christian life: with this you will appease the sovereign Judge and secure your entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Say the act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the First Sunday of Advent

On the Last Judgement.

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

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Signs of the last judgement: motives of fear for the wicked, of consolation for the just.

3. You have heard of the flood, the Sodomites, earthquakes, the flood of fire… trumpet.

4. Angels… Resurrection… the Cross. Judge, good and bad, everyone.

5. What St. John says… If an earthly king appears…

6. Separation of good and bad, of sheep and goats.

7. The books will be opened. It will begin with the good…

8. The poor will see the providence of God…

9. The crimes of the wicked made manifest.

10. Confusion and shame \[*bochorno*\] that the wicked will suffer.

11. Reproach for omissions of good works, for contempt of graces.

12. Sentence: pain of loss and pain of sense. What will they say on seeing the just glorified?

13. Curses the wicked will hurl at one another…

14. Reflections for the congregation, and act of contrition.

---

[1] Source note: Deut. 29:23.

[2] Source note: Apoc. 1:14 ff.

[3] The "book" is Apoc. 20:12.

[4] Psalm 57(58):11 in the Vulgate: *manus suas lavabit in sanguine peccatoris*, an image of the vindication of the just.

[5] *pena de daño, poena damni*. *pena de sentido, poena sensus*.

[6] Wisdom 5:3–13, the lament of the wicked, freely paraphrased.

2. Second Sunday of Advent: On the Virtues of the First Christians

Vol. I, pp. 35–42. Reading for the Second Sunday of Advent. Gospel: Matthew 11:2–10. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Second Sunday of Advent

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 11 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time, John, having heard in prison of the wonderful works of Christ, sent two of his disciples to ask him: Are you the Messiah who is to come, or must we wait for another? To which Jesus answered them: Go and tell John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the Gospel is preached to the poor; and blessed is he who shall take no occasion of scandal from me. As soon as these had gone, Jesus began to speak of John, and said to the people: What was it you went out into the desert to see? Some reed that sways with every wind? Tell me, then, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in luxury and effeminacy? You know that those who dress so are in the palaces of kings. In short, what did you go out to see? Some prophet? That indeed, I assure you, and even much more than a prophet. For he it is of whom it is written: Behold, I send my Angel before your face, who shall go before you preparing your way.

2. In this Gospel, my brethren, you will have noticed that instead of answering the disciples of St. John, who asked him whether he was the one who was to come or whether they must wait for some other, Jesus Christ worked many cures in their presence; after which he said to them: Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: that the blind see, that the lame walk, that the deaf hear, that the lepers are cured, and that the dead rise again. Jesus Christ refers them to his wonders and his miracles, as if he said to them: I must be the one who is to come, that is, the Messiah, since I work the miracles that the Messiah is to work according to the prediction of the Prophets. This teaches us that we must show what we are by our actions rather than by our words. To this end, my brethren, I will ask you: Could you prove by your actions that you are Christians? For this it would be necessary to show that you live as every true Christian ought to live. But so that you may judge whether you live in this way, I have resolved to speak to you of the virtues of the first Christians, showing you how the faithful lived in the first centuries of the Church.

3. For your edification, my brethren, I thought I ought to give you an idea of their life. I will tell you at once that in general they strove to practise the most perfect virtues with such care that they shone in the midst of the pagans more than the stars in the darkness of the night: *tanquam lucernæ ardentes in caliginoso loco*, like lamps burning in a dark place.[1] And so as not to go on too long, I will confine myself to speaking to you of those virtues that are, as it were, the origin and source of all the others. Of these virtues, four look to God, four to our neighbour and four to ourselves. The four towards God are faith, hope, charity and religion.

4. First: faith. But what faith? A submissive and obedient faith, a faith so well established and supported that everything that commonly makes the human mind waver only confirmed those men the more in their faith.

5. Second: their hope was so lively, and they awaited the goods of heaven with such confidence, that they aspired only to that happiness and looked on everything else with contempt. We, on the other hand, are so stuck to the world and go so eagerly after the goods of the earth, as if we doubted that those of heaven are meant for us. They, on the contrary, since they hoped to enjoy an eternal life, took no account of the goods of the present life; amusements, the things that so excite the vanity and curiosity of worldly people \[*personas del siglo*\], made not the least impression on them, so that they were taunted with being people from another world, savages, who fled from amusements and from the shows.[2]

6. Third: their charity was so ardent that they said with St. Paul: Who shall separate us from the love of Jesus Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, hunger, nakedness or persecution? They flew to martyrdom as bees to their hive, says St. John Chrysostom; and before the persecution they prepared themselves for this grace by great fidelity to their calling and by admirable piety.

7. Fourth: the spirit of religion that animated them led them to assist at the holy sacrifice with a modesty, a respect and a humility that cannot be described. They prostrated themselves, they trembled in the presence of God; they called the Mass "the tremendous mysteries", and to the Eucharist they gave the name of "the most tremendous victim".[3] St. Ambrose treats as irreverence and want of respect the noise that some people in his time made by spitting or coughing during the divine office. Judge how he would have cried out and been indignant from the pulpit had he seen people chattering, looking about in every direction or sleeping, as happens in these deplorable times. A holy bishop of the fourth century says that no other noise was heard in church than the sobs, sighs and groans of devotion.

8. If such were their sentiments towards God, no less admirable were those they had towards their neighbour. They practised towards their fellow men justice, brotherly love, liberality and patience. Charity was so precious to them that they called one another brothers. See, said the pagans, how the Christians love one another, and how ready they are to die for one another.

9. Let us make a reflection here, my brethren. The Church is like a lady who has been robbed: even though her house has been robbed and sacked, the same chests, the same writing-desks and the other furniture that were there before have remained; but the silver, the money, the diamonds, the jewels, the precious stones, all have been carried off. We have the same faith, the same mysteries that there were in the primitive Church; but what has become of the precious things, that is, the interior dispositions and the solid virtues? They have disappeared and been eclipsed.

10. Mass was said; we say it now too; but with what a difference! The priests said it with great piety and devotion, seeing Jesus Christ upon the altar; the faithful assisted at it with the same sentiments. At Mass it was said: Peace be with you; it is said now too; but what a difference there is! Those who had had some cause of complaint were reconciled and embraced each other; now two persons, relatives or neighbours, will be at the same Mass and at the same holy table, and months and whole years will pass without their greeting each other, without their speaking, and without their being reconciled. The early Christians had faith, and so do we; they were baptized, and so are we; they were in the true Church, and so are we; but it must be added that they were good servants of God, and that we are so only in name. Sinners, hear and tremble: if on top of the years you have you were to live sixty years more, unless you are converted, at the hour of death you will hear from God that you have not been Christians, but worldlings, pagans, people without religion.

11. Sinner who have wallowed in the filthiest pleasures of the flesh, if God asked you now whether you are a Christian, what would you answer? He will perhaps ask you on one of these days, and at the hour of your death. Will you dare to say that you are? You lie, he will tell you: you have not been a Christian, but a worldling. You have followed the precepts of the world, not those of Jesus Christ; you have made a god of your belly; you have placed all your happiness in carnal pleasures. Vindictive man, if you are asked what you are, will you dare to say: a Christian? You lie, he will tell you: you are not a disciple of Jesus Christ but of a

pagan; for to return insult for insult, to take revenge for a slightly discourteous word said to us, is to act according to the maxims of the pagans. Jesus Christ teaches us the very opposite: he wants us to forget all injuries, to pray for those who persecute us, and to return good for evil. My brethren, I fear that at the judgement of God it will be shown of many who are in this parish that they have not been true Christians nor disciples of Jesus Christ, but his enemies and his persecutors.

12. But let us pass to the other virtues of the Christians. We have said that they loved one another with a brotherly love; but they were not content with a barren affection: they exercised charity towards all the needy, not only towards their brethren but also towards strangers and unbelievers. They were not content to do good to the poor of their own town and country; they sent great alms to the Christians of Jerusalem. What shall I say of their patience in suffering evil? They were treated as the worst men on earth, and they were said to be the cause of all the evils that afflicted the State: if there were floods, earthquakes or plagues, it was said that the Christians were the cause of them. Everyone was permitted to kill them wherever they found them. They could have defended themselves had they wished, for sometimes there were whole legions of Christian soldiers in the armies; but they did not defend themselves, because our Religion does not allow us to wish evil. Their patience was founded on this beautiful maxim of our Religion: that everything that happens in this world, from whatever side it comes, is sent to us by God: afflictions, sicknesses, poverty and all other tribulations.

13. Their humility was so profound that they looked with contempt on everything that had any appearance \[*visos*\] of glory and worldly vanity. Because they were humble of heart, they obtained from God the grace to be chaste of body as well: they valued purity so highly that they feared the least impurity, even if only of thought, more than death. At gatherings they were never seen to go so far as certain games and liberties that people of today allow themselves, and which are the bait and lure of sin. Among them no double meanings or conversations hinting at the sin of impurity were heard. Married people kept great modesty \[*recato*\] with each other; knowing that God is everywhere, they honoured his presence in every place; they were very far from allowing themselves so many liberties, or from falling into so many sins of impurity as people fall into today, through married people imagining that everything is permitted in marriage. But let no one wonder that they were chaste, since they were such enemies of the two vices that drag one into incontinence, namely intemperance in eating and drinking, and idleness; and since they practised with such care the two opposite virtues, that is, abstinence and continual work. Indeed, nothing was more frugal than their meals; many also fasted on bread and water; and although their fasts were very strict, they did not on that account stop working unceasingly, for apart from the time they spent praying in church, they spent the whole day and part of the night working to earn their food or to give alms.

14. Having, then, as the Apostle says, this great cloud of witnesses, that is, the example of so many Saints who have given such illustrious testimony in favour of the truths of the Gospel by practising them so faithfully, let us run with patience the race on which they entered, and let us fight like them against sin: *Et nos tantam habentes impositam nubem testium, per patientiam curramus ad propositum nobis certamen.* They taught us how we must live in order to be saved. Ah! when I consider the life of those first Christians who went before us, and compare it with ours, I would not hesitate to say that I am a Christian only in name and by Baptism, but not in morals and conduct. On the day of judgement they will confound and condemn us by the contrast of their virtues with ours; for, after all, were they not subject to the same temptations as we? Were they not frail as we are? Were they not made of flesh and blood as we are? And have we not the same God, and do we not adore the same Jesus Christ as they? We receive the same Sacraments, we are in the same Church, the same Gospel is preached to us; and would we enjoy without labour the same paradise that cost them so dear? And would there be any reason in that? What did not all those Saints suffer who obtained for us the happiness of being Christians! What journeys did the Apostles not make to preach the faith to our fathers! What torments did the Martyrs not suffer to keep and defend this faith! It is enough to know that they

gave their life for it. How many holy bishops, how many holy doctors sweated, kept vigil and laboured to fight against the heretics, to keep this faith pure and spotless for us! Ah, my brethren, let us fear lest this faith be lost among us; let us fear lest God withdraw it from our country in punishment for our sins and transplant it to other countries where the peoples will make better use of it than we.[4] To avoid, then, this misfortune coming upon us, let us fix our eyes on Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of faith, as the Apostle charges us: *Aspiciamus in auctorem fidei, et consummatorem Jesum*. Let us fix our eyes on him, not only to imitate him but to implore his help, to ask him for the grace to live according to our faith; so that, as he is the author of our faith, he may also be its finisher, that is, its last end; that he may be the reward and the crown, through the eternal glory he promises us. Let us ask his pardon; let us say: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Second Sunday of Advent

On the virtues of the primitive Christians.

> *Tu es qui venturus es, an alium expectamus? (Matth. 11:3).*
>
> *Are you the one who is to come to save the world, or must we wait for another?*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Jesus answered with actions. Our works must bear witness to what we are.

3. Life of the primitive Christians. Virtues: four that look to God, four to our neighbour and four to ourselves.

4. Virtues that look to God. Faith… But what faith?

5. What lively hope!… They lived only for heaven.

6. Their charity was so ardent that… they flew to martyrdom.

7. The spirit of religion that animated them.

8. Sentiments towards the neighbour. Virtues: justice, brotherly love, liberality and patience. What charity!…

9. What are we? Like the house of a lady that has been robbed.

10. Comparison of the primitive Christians with those of today.

11. Sinner, are you a Christian? Vindictive man, are you a Christian? You lie.

12. What charity! What patience they had!

13. What profound humility! What chastity! They were enemies of intemperance and idleness…

14. They give us the example. What confusion!… Fear of losing the faith.

Let us run to Jesus Christ. Let us ask his pardon.

---

[1] Source note: “1 Petr. i, 19”, properly 2 Peter 1:19 (“a lamp shining in a dark place”).

[2] Tertullian, *De spectaculis*.

[3] *tremenda mysteria*.

[4] A common theme of the period (cf. Apoc. 2:5, the lampstand removed).

3. Third Sunday of Advent: On Pride

Vol. I, pp. 43–47. Reading for the Third Sunday of Advent. Gospel: John 1:19–28. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Third Sunday of Advent

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 1 of St. John, which reads as follows:

1. At that time, when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to John to ask him: Who are you? he confessed the truth and did not deny it, but declared plainly: I am not the Christ. Who are you, then? they said to him. Are you Elijah? And he said: I am not. Are you the Prophet? He answered: No. Who are you, then, they said to him, so that we may give some answer to those who sent us? What do you say of yourself? I am, he then said, the voice of one crying in the desert: Make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah has said. Be it known that those sent were of the sect of the Pharisees. And they asked him again, saying: Why, then, do you baptize, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet? John answered them, saying: I baptize with water; but in the midst of you stands one whom you do not know: he it is who is to come after me, who has been preferred before me, and the strap of whose shoe I am not worthy to untie. All this took place in Bethany, the one on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

2. The Gospel of this day, my brethren, presents us with an excellent model of Christian humility in the person of St. John. The humility of this great Saint was founded on the truth; for this virtue does not consist in imputing to ourselves defects and weaknesses that we do not have, but in rejecting all the false qualities that our self-love and the praises given us can persuade us are found in us. This is what St. John did, rejecting all the titles the Jews attributed to him. How many Christians must there be who are very far from this humility? Most are full of pride, which is the sin entirely opposed to this virtue. On this subject I have resolved to speak to you, setting before your eyes the ugliness of pride, which, as you know, is one of the seven capital sins.

3. Our Lord Jesus Christ has declared to us in the Gospel that he who exalts himself will be humbled. Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh, Haman and Antiochus are great examples of this truth in Holy Scripture. I will speak of Nebuchadnezzar, because his way of thinking expresses perfectly what goes on in the heart of all who are possessed by pride. The prophet Daniel says that this proud Monarch was walking in his palace contemplating the magnificence of his court and the greatness of Babylon, and, puffed up with vanity, he said: Is not this the great Babylon which I have built by the strength of my power for my royal dwelling? Let us reflect on all these words. *He was walking in his palace*: see here his vain self-satisfaction. The proud man walks about within himself, contemplates his perfections, admires his wit, the fine figure of his body, the nobility of his lineage, the richness of his clothes and the perfection of his works. *Is not this*, said Nebuchadnezzar, *the great Babylon?* See here vain display. The proud man wants all the world to see his works, admire them and say of him: Look at this great man. If his profession is war, he talks of nothing but his exploits; if he is a craftsman, he wants his work admired; if he is a father of a family, he wants everyone to praise his children. The truly humble man does all his works in secret as far as he can. The proud man thinks he does nothing unless he is seen: he toils after praise; and if others do not praise him he praises himself, wearies people with the account of all he has done, and sometimes glories in his very sins.

4. After this comes arrogance. *I have built this Babylon*, said Nebuchadnezzar, which was false: he had indeed adorned it, but the one who had built it was Belus or Nimrod.[1] He wants this city to be his palace and the rest of the world his kingdom. In the same way the proud man often attributes to himself what he has not done; he wants to be above all and to dominate in everything. But what happened to this proud Monarch? While he was in these thoughts he heard a voice from heaven saying to him: Nebuchadnezzar, you shall be cast out from among men, you shall be deprived of your kingdom, you shall dwell in the fields and be like a beast for the space of seven years, to teach you by this that God is the king of kings and gives crowns to whom he pleases. This it said to him, and this was done with him. His understanding was disturbed; he imagined himself a beast; he began to go on all fours; he was deprived of his kingdom, cast out of his capital, and he grazed the grass like the ox. His nails grew like those of birds of prey; his nature was changed into that of a wild beast; his body was exposed to the inclemency of the weather; all this for the space of seven years. Such was the humiliation to which he saw himself reduced: an image of the ordinary punishment of

the proud. To Nebuchadnezzar it was said: You shall be deprived of your kingdom; and the proud man is deprived of the kingdom of the virtues, of which the Gospel says: The kingdom of God is within you. You lose the merit of good works when you do them in order to be seen by men.[2]

5. The prophet Daniel prayed to God for Nebuchadnezzar, fasted, did penance and had alms given for him; and in this way he obtained from God his conversion and his restoration.[3] God gave him back his reason; he came to himself, knew his misery and lifted up his eyes to heaven. Do the same yourselves: give to God the glory of all the good that is in you. Say with St. Paul: By the grace of God I am what I am; or, as the same Apostle says elsewhere: What distinguishes you from the sinner? The mercy of God. What have you that is good and praiseworthy that you have not received? And if you have received it, why do you glory? All that we have of ourselves is weakness and ignorance, falsehood and sin.[4] If you were well persuaded of this truth, you would not be pleased with yourselves; you would not make a show of the outward advantages you may have had; you would not desire to be praised, nor glory when you are praised. If you humbled yourselves like Nebuchadnezzar, your humility would have the same effects as his. It has been said that he recovered his reason, and rightly was it put so; for, to tell the truth, there is no one with less sense than a proud man who presumes on himself: in the judgement of God he is what madmen are in the opinion of men. If anyone thinks himself to be something, he deceives himself, says St. Paul.

6. Let us, then, hear with respect and put into practice this wholesome warning that the Holy Spirit gives us: The greater you are, the more humble yourself in all things.[5] As if he said: If you are small in birth, in fortune, in condition and in virtue, you need no charge to be humble; you have reason enough to be so: if you were proud you would seem a monster, for there is nothing so hateful to God and to men as a proud poor man. If, being poor in temporal goods or in understanding, you are proud, you are like a madman who imagined himself a king. If you are great in the world's eyes, because you are great in riches, honours or dignities, be humble and fear. Not seldom what is high in the eyes of men is abominable in the eyes of God.

7. When you pass through a low doorway there is no danger in stooping as low as you can, says St. Bernard; but if you raise yourself ever so little more than you should, you will knock your head and hurt yourself. The same happens with the soul: the least swelling of the heart is to be feared; but there is nothing to fear when someone humbles himself as much as he can. Be humble, then, in all your actions; always take the last place: it is the Saviour who tells us so. If your office obliges you to be in the highest place, be in the lowest with your heart and your desires; and be sure that sooner or later that oracle of the Son of God will be fulfilled: He who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted.[6] Forgive, Lord, my pride: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Third Sunday of Advent

On pride.

Tu quis es? (John 1:19).

Who are you?

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Humility of St. John. In what does humility consist?

3. Pride. He who exalts himself will be humbled. What Nebuchadnezzar said and what the proud man says.

4. Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance: so the proud man. What happened to Nebuchadnezzar? What will happen to the proud man?

5. How Nebuchadnezzar was changed. Come, Christian: the proud man is a madman.

6. If you are poor, humble yourself; if you are rich, humble yourself and fear…

7. Humble yourselves; passing through a low doorway…

Repent of your pride, and say: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

---

[1] Cf. Gen. 10:8–10.

[2] Matt. 6:1–6; Luke 17:21. Matt. 6:1.

[3] Dan. 4:24 Vulg.

[4] 1 Cor. 15:10; 1 Cor. 4:7; Gal. 6:3.

[5] Source note: Eccli. 3:20 (Sirach 3:18 in modern numbering).

[6] Source note: Matt. 23:12. “Take the last place”: Luke 14:10.

4. Fourth Sunday of Advent: On Penance

Vol. I, pp. 48–53. Reading for the Fourth Sunday of Advent. Gospel: Luke 3:1–6. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 3 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate governing Judaea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the province of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being high priests, the Lord made his word known to John, son of Zechariah, in the desert; and he, obeying at once, came through all the country along the Jordan, preaching a baptism of penance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words or prophecies of the prophet Isaiah: The voice of one crying in the desert shall be heard: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths: let every valley be filled up, every mountain and hill be levelled; and so the crooked ways shall be made straight and the rough ones made smooth; and all men shall see the Saviour sent by God.

2. My brethren, in the present Gospel St. Luke teaches us that to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Son of God, which is the subject of the great feast of Christmas, now so near, we must fill the emptiness of our life with virtues and good works; and this is what he wants us to understand in the figure of the valleys that must be filled. The pride of our souls must be destroyed and brought to nothing if we are to receive Jesus Christ; and this is what he means when he says that the hills shall be brought low. Lastly, he wants our disordered and corrupt habits to be reformed by the law of God; and this is what is meant by the crooked ways that shall be made straight. But above all, these words that he says to the Jews, and that another Evangelist also records, deserve notice: *Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* This same exhortation I am going to make to you today, setting before you the need you have to do penance.

3. St. Augustine and the other holy Fathers of the Church, speaking of penance, say that it is a second plank after shipwreck;[1] for whoever has fallen into mortal sin after Baptism has suffered shipwreck of his innocence, and he has no other way of escaping damnation and reaching the harbour of salvation than the refuge of penance. The Council of Trent calls penance a bitter and laborious baptism.[2] It is a second baptism because, when it is done as it should be, it restores us to the state we were in after Baptism and makes us recover the goods we had lost by sinning. But it is a laborious baptism, because we must be punished for having so foolishly lost the precious graces and excellent gifts with which we had been enriched.

4. When you received Baptism you gave yourself to God and made a covenant with him; you were made an adopted son of God, a living member of the Saviour’s body and a temple of the Holy Spirit. And every time you have thought that you were all this, so many stings of sorrow and lively repentance should have pierced your heart; for to commit sin was the same as to lose all these beautiful qualities in a deplorable shipwreck, and that for a mad passion. Out of attachment to a vile creature you have broken the promises you had made

to your God, you have violated the covenant made with the Lord, you have renounced the grace he had done you in adopting you as his son, and the right you had to his inheritance; you have trampled on the blood of the testament, you have grieved the Holy Spirit by profaning his sanctuary and driving him out of your heart, which was his temple, to receive into it the idols of carnal pleasures. And will it not be just that you pay the penalty of your folly and perfidy?

5. Hear what the apostle St. Paul tells us on this matter in his Epistles, which are part of the New Testament: "Of old," says the Saint, "whoever broke the law of Moses was condemned to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses. And will not he deserve greater punishments who has trampled on the Son of God, profaned his precious blood and outraged his divine Spirit?"[3] These words, says St. John Chrysostom, are to be understood of Christians who offend God mortally. And what is the punishment that awaits them? Without doubt eternal death, unless they do serious penance. But what is the sign of a true penance? It is the conversion of the heart. But how shall we know that we are truly converted? A truly converted man is a new man, a new creature: he must renounce vanities, the profane customs of the world, himself, his tastes, his whims, his bad habits and his vicious inclinations; he must have a new heart, a new spirit and entirely new affections.[4] Did you greatly esteem the riches of the earth and the delights of the flesh? After this conversion you must take no account of those who enjoy them, unless they are good and virtuous people. Before, you liked the gatherings where people amused themselves, the parties of both sexes, gaming and other unlawful pleasures. After your conversion you must abhor all this, and take pleasure in the church, the divine office, sermons, retirement and work.

6. If you ask St. John Chrysostom what are the fruits of true conversion, he answers that they are to practise the virtues contrary to the sins one has committed. For example: you have taken what belongs to another; you must restore it promptly. You have done some injustice; it must be repaired. You have wallowed in the mire of impurity; you must mortify and chastise your flesh with fasting and continual work. You have given yourself to drunkenness; you must renounce this so criminal vice, using great temperance and moderation in drink, always taking care to keep your reason whole. You have offended your neighbour by word or deed; you must return good for evil to those who wrong and offend you. If you ask St. Augustine what are the fruits of true penance, he answers that they are resolutions of vengeance that the penitent conceives against himself; that is, to will and to try to exercise great severity on himself, so as to engage the goodness of God to exercise his mercy towards him. And indeed, penance is a true will to satisfy the justice of God for the offences we have done him by sin; but a will is not pure and sincere if it does not strive to achieve its effects.

7. Besides all this, true penance is not for a certain space of time; it is not for one day, it is not inconstant: it must always persevere. Do you think that a life all mixed up of vices and apparent amendments is a Christian life? Do you think in good faith that those confessions after which one falls again so soon into the same sin, then confesses, then falls again, are good and wholesome? Are they not rather a dazzlement and a delusion? If the institution of confession were what you think, it would discredit the Church of Jesus Christ. Unbelievers would say that the Christian religion gives men a kind of passport, or permission to commit every sort of sin without fear, and as often as they like, since by confessing them to a priest and saying a few prayers their debt is paid. Ah, so far are true penitents from returning to their abominations that, on the contrary, the spirit of contrition lasts them all their life, and they say with David: I have always before my eyes the cause of my sorrow and my pain: *Peccatum meum contra me est semper*;[5] and with the holy king Hezekiah: I will go over all the years of my life in the bitterness of my heart.

8. Perhaps there will be no lack of acquaintances who say to you: Don't torment yourself so much, don't fret; why do you want to make yourself ill? God is good and merciful; the preachers exaggerate things. On the other hand, the flesh and the love of your comforts make you say: I have examined my conscience, I have confessed all my sins, I have done the penance that was imposed on me, and so I trust that I am in the state of grace. But what does the Holy Spirit say in the divine Scriptures? Never hold yourself entirely assured that

your sins have been forgiven you.[6] The penitent David said: I am in great anguish, and my spirit is restless and tormented over my sin. Do you not know that where there is danger one must use greater caution? We trust in a few little tears, which ordinarily come from natural tenderness; we are content with a slack and barren sorrow that is on the surface of our heart, or perhaps only in the imagination: and if this repentance is insufficient in the eyes of God, what will become of us?

9. On the contrary, if your penance is true, you will not have merely a passing regret on the day of your confession; your sorrow will be continual and you will carry it everywhere; this feeling will penetrate your heart, and you will say within yourselves: I have offended my God, I have trampled on his commandments, I have preferred a brutish pleasure to his adorable will. You will ask God to preserve you from all fault, and to overwhelm you with a thousand evils first rather than allow you to fall back into sin. At night you will sigh for some while, and by day you will groan in your heart: O my God! Why did I offend you, and where were my reason and my judgement? What would have become of me if I had died in that state? Such are the sentiments of a true penitent: for him the joys of this world are nothing; he uses earthly goods only as far as is necessary to preserve life; he deprives himself of every superfluous amusement; everything he does and suffers serves him as penance, and in the same spirit of mortification he accepts the pains and tribulations of this life.

10. It is true that this penance cannot be the work of man; it must be the effect of the mercy of God. Ask him for it often and with affection; say to him frequently what the Church says in the Litany: Deign, Lord, to lead us to true penance, *ad veram pœnitentiam nos perducere digneris*. He leads and disposes us to it by good works, by alms and by prayer; he leads us to it by the mortifications we practise, because bodily austerities are dispositions for compunction of heart; he leads us to it by the intercession of the Saints and by the examples of their virtues. Implore, then, their help with affection and devotion; read, or have read to you, the story of their life; and at the sight of their austerities, stir yourselves to do penance as far as your strength allows. In that case your penance will be for you a second baptism that will give you back the innocence of the first; it will be a plank that will save you from shipwreck and bring you to the harbour of eternal happiness, which is what I wish you. Say all of you: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

On penance.

> *Omnis vallis implebitur, et omnis mons, et collis humiliabitur (Luke 3:5).*
>
> *Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. What we must do to receive the Lord. Good works, penance.

3. Penance: what is it? The second plank: a bitter and laborious baptism.

4. Motives of penance: to think what you have lost by sinning.

5. Punishment deserved by the one who sins. Sign of true penance.

6. Fruits worthy of penance.

7. True penance perseveres.

8. What will your friends say to you? What does self-love say? What does the Holy Spirit say? What did David say?

9. What you will do if your penance is true.

10. Ask God for it: good works, alms and prayer.

[1] *Ep.* 84.6; 130.9.

[2] *laboriosus quidam baptismus*.

[3] Heb. 10:28–29, freely paraphrased.

[4] Interior conversion of heart:; “new creature”, 2 Cor. 5:17.

[5] Ps. 50(51):5. Hezekiah: Isa. 38:15.

[6] Cf. Eccli.

5. Sunday within the Octave of Christmas: That the Gospel Must Be the Rule of Our Faith

Vol. I, pp. 54–60. Reading for the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas. Gospel: Luke 2:33–40. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 2 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. At that time, the father and the mother of Jesus listened with wonder to the things that were said of him. Simeon blessed them both, and said to Mary his mother: Behold, this Child whom you see is destined for the ruin and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and to be the target of men’s contradiction (which will be for you yourself a sword that will pierce your soul), so that the thoughts hidden in the hearts of many may be revealed. There was living then a prophetess named Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, who was already of very advanced age; who, married in the flower of her youth, lived with her husband seven years, and had remained a widow until the eighty-fourth year of her age, not leaving the temple, and serving God there day and night with fasting and prayer. She, then, coming up at the same hour, likewise praised the Lord, and spoke of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Israel. And Jesus and Mary,[1] having fulfilled all things ordained in the law of the Lord, returned to Galilee, to their town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the Child grew and became strong, full of wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.

2. In this Gospel, my brethren, the holy old man Simeon tells us that Jesus Christ would be exposed to the contradiction of men. He means by this that bad Christians will contradict him in the truths he has taught us in his Gospel. To avoid this misfortune, then, my brethren, we must be well persuaded that the Gospel must be the rule of our faith and of our conduct. This truth is what I am going to explain in this instruction, to oblige you to put into practice the doctrine of the Gospel of our divine Saviour.

3. To this end I wish first to show you the excellence of this divine book, and at the same time to show you that the doctrine it contains must be the rule of our faith and of our life. Second: you must know that the Apostles and their disciples gave various names to this admirable book. They called it the New Testament of Jesus Christ. You all know that this expression \[*testament,* will\] means what we wish to be observed and carried out after our death. Notice now, I beg you, how fortunate we are to know what is the will of our God and Lord. Had he left us without the Gospel and without Holy Scripture, in what darkness would we not find ourselves?

4. The word Testament also means covenant, contract, pact; and the Gospel is called the New Testament in contrast to the Old Testament, which was a covenant that God made through Moses with the Jewish people, in which it was said that the people would keep the commandments of God and that God would give them temporal goods. This covenant was confirmed with the blood of a victim with which the people were sprinkled. But in the law of grace, under which we live, God has made with men, through Jesus Christ, a new covenant, by which it has been ordained that men shall live as Christians, that is, according to the doctrine of their divine Master, and that God will give them heaven as a reward: a covenant that has been confirmed, not with the blood of an animal, but with the adorable blood of Jesus Christ our Lord; and the written proof of

this covenant is the book I am speaking to you about. From this you can understand what the excellence of this sacred book must be.[2]

5. The third name that Scripture gives to the New Testament is Gospel, a word that means good news. Indeed, was there ever news more happy or more certain than that the Son of God has come down from heaven, has taken a body and a soul as we have them, has died on a cross to free us from eternal death, having assured us that if we keep his commandments and live as Christians we shall one day be in the kingdom of heaven and shall enjoy eternally a happiness that exceeds all we can imagine? Was there ever happier news?

6. Hence it comes that the least words of the Gospel, when they fall on a well-disposed soul, are a fruitful seed that produces wonderful fruits and effects. St. Antony and St. Francis, hearing these words of the Gospel read at Mass: If you would be perfect, sell all that you have and give it to the poor,[3] took them to heart as if they had been said to them in particular; and I could cite to you an infinite number of Saints who did the same. These examples and these reasons show that if you do not wish to stray from the road of your salvation, the doctrine of the Gospel must be the rule both of our faith and of our life; that is, that in order to know what you must believe concerning God, his designs, his judgements and what you will be after death, you must not hold to your weak imagination but to the Gospel, since it is the rule and pattern by which Christians must be guided.

7. This rule teaches us how we must behave towards God, towards our neighbour and towards ourselves. With regard to God, it teaches us that this Lord is spirit and wishes to be honoured in spirit and in truth, as Jesus Christ said to the Samaritan woman; that is, that the moving of the lips, kneeling down and the other outward actions serve little to honour God if they do not come from the heart; that the chief honour he asks of us is that we have a sublime idea of his power, his wisdom and his goodness; that we humble ourselves profoundly in his presence; that we submit willingly to the orders of his providence; that we receive with resignation all that he sends us, not excepting sicknesses, misfortunes and other adversities.

8. The Gospel teaches us how we must pray to God. For this it sets before us the example of a man who was a sinner and a publican, who, entering the temple, did not place himself near the altar, holding himself unworthy to approach the sanctuary, but remained at the back \[*á los pies*\] of the temple, and with a contrite and humbled heart struck his breast, saying: My God, be merciful to this poor sinner; and Jesus Christ tells us that this man went out of the temple justified.

9. The Gospel likewise teaches us that God must be loved, and how he must be loved. In it the Son of God tells us: You shall love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your thoughts and with all your strength; that is, to love him well, his love must rule in our heart over every other love; our affections, our words and our works must be referred to his glory, and we must do them all with the aim of pleasing him and doing his will.[4]

10. It also teaches us how we must behave towards our neighbours. First, towards our superiors: the apostle St. Paul tells us that everyone is to be subject to the higher powers, since there is no power that is not established by God; and that whoever resists them resists the order of God and brings upon himself his ruin and condemnation. Servants, obey your temporal masters with fear, respect and without reluctance, as if it were Jesus Christ himself whom you obey.[5]

11. Second, towards our equals: the apostle St. Peter tells us: Live in good understanding and harmony with one another; love one another with a brotherly love; bear one another's faults, not returning evil for evil, but rather do good and bless those who curse you. The apostle St. Paul uses the same language: Have, he says, bowels of mercy towards others; be humble, modest, kindly and patient.

12. Third, with regard to our inferiors, Jesus Christ tells us: Let him who is greatest among you be as the least, and he who commands as he who serves. And his Apostle adds: Do nothing out of envy or vainglory, and let each one hold his brother better than himself.

13. Lastly, the Gospel orders our life, our conduct and our thoughts with regard to ourselves. Let us strive to arrive, the Apostle tells us, at a perfect holiness by means of a religious fear of God: *Perficientes sanctificationem in timore Dei*. Whatever is true, whatever is pure and honest, whatever is just, whatever is holy, whatever can make us lovable, whatever is reputed good among men, let that be the object of your thoughts.[6]

14. Likewise it orders our affections: Do not love the world, the apostle St. John tells us, nor anything that is in it, because this love is incompatible with that which is owed to God: those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into the snares of the devil, and into pernicious desires that plunge men into perdition. It orders our words: I say to you, do not swear at all; and this precept Jesus Christ himself gives us. Let no obscene or scurrilous words be heard among you, says St. Paul, for they are not becoming in the mouth of Christians, who must be holy. The Gospel orders our actions: Work with your hands, says the same Apostle; and if anyone will not work, let him not eat. It orders even the dress of women, to whom it says that they are to dress with modesty; that there be nothing in their clothes that can offend chaste eyes; that the cloth be not too rich; and finally that they do not appear with their hair curled: St. Peter charges them with the same.[7]

15. See here the Testament of our Father and Lord, and the conditions under which he promises us heaven, and not otherwise. This is the Gospel by which our life must be ruled. But how will you keep this rule, you who never read it, or who never think of having it taught to you? Is it not a shame to see Christians of more than middling standing by the world's measure who have never read the Gospel and do not even have it in their house? Believe me, my brethren, and every day from time to time read a chapter of this holy book; read it with great respect, adoring Jesus Christ, who is truth in essence; and ask him for his grace, so that you may profit by your reading. And when you hear this divine word in the public instructions given you in church, listen to it attentively, go over it within yourselves, apply it to yourselves as if it were said expressly for you. When you read or hear these words: Unless you do penance you shall perish, say inwardly: If I do not do penance, I shall certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. Be sure that when you enter the dread tribunal of God, those who flatter you now will not plead for you; those who tell you, to please you, that it is no great evil to swear, to get drunk, to dance, above all on feast days, with persons of the other sex, to take liberties with them, will not excuse you then. When God judges you, he will do it not according to your thoughts, your opinions, your reasonings, nor according to the maxims of the world, but according to what is written in the book of life, which is the Gospel. Your thoughts are far from the truth and from justice; God's thoughts are most true, they are truth itself: *Omnes viæ tuæ veritas*, says the Royal Prophet. The thoughts and ways of God are further from yours than heaven is from earth: God himself says so through his prophet Isaiah: *Non enim cogitationes meæ cogitationes vestræ*. You will not be judged according to your thoughts nor according to your maxims, but according to the thoughts and maxims of God; and this is so certain that heaven and earth shall fail before a single word of the Gospel fails to be fulfilled.[8]

16. Finally, I will tell you in conclusion: see here an irrevocable decree of the eternal Truth, against which no excuse, pretext or argument avails: Those who do not obey the Gospel, says the apostle St. Paul, inspired by God, shall suffer eternal punishment: *Qui non obediunt Evangelio, pœnas dabunt in interitu æternas a facie Domini*. As, on the contrary, Jesus Christ says in St. Mark that if you deprive yourselves of a pleasure or a profit for love of him, he will give you a hundredfold in this life; that is, he will give you graces and consolations worth a hundred times more than what you have left for love of him; and besides this he promises to give you eternal life in the other world. I wish it to you, etc. My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas

That the Gospel must be the rule of our faith.

Positus est hic… in signum cui contradicetur (Luke 2:34).

This one has been set as a target of contradiction.

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Bad Christians will contradict us.

3. The Gospel is the rule of our faith: it is the will of God.

4. The Gospel is a pact with God; it is a covenant confirmed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

5. It is called Gospel, that is, good news: what Jesus Christ has done and suffered.

6. What effects it produces in a well-disposed soul, as in St. Antony, St. Francis.

7. It teaches us how we must behave towards God, towards our neighbour and towards ourselves.

8. It teaches us how we must pray to God…

9. It teaches us how we must love God.

10. It also teaches us how we must behave towards our neighbours: 1st, towards our superiors…

11. 2nd, towards our equals.

12. 3rd, towards our inferiors.

13. The Gospel orders our thoughts.

14. It orders our affections, our words, our actions, our dress.

15. Do you keep this rule?… Do you read the Gospel? Read, listen, apply it to yourselves… Think of the judgement…

16. Those who do not obey the Gospel will suffer eternal punishment. Repentance.

---

[1] *Jesús y María*.

[2] Old and New Covenants:; the blood of the covenant, Exod. 24:8, Heb. 9:18–22, Matt. 26:28.

[3] Source note: Matt. 19:21. St. Antony of Egypt (St. Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 2) and St. Francis of Assisi (St. Bonaventure, *Legenda maior* 3.3).

[4] Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30.

[5] Rom. 13:1–2; Eph. 6:5.

[6] Also 1 Pet. 3:8–9 and Col. 3:12 (para. 11); Luke 22:26 and Phil. 2:3 (para. 12).

[7] 1 Tim. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:3.

[8] Ps. 118(119):151 (*Omnes viæ tuæ veritas*, “all your ways are truth”); Isa. 55:8–9; Luke 13:3; Matt. 24:35. Apoc. 20:12.

6. Sunday between the Circumcision and the Epiphany: On the Duties of Fathers and Mothers towards Their Children

Vol. I, pp. 61–66. Reading for the Sunday between the Circumcision and the Epiphany. Gospel: Matthew 2:19–23 (as given in the book: the flight into Egypt, Matt. 2:13–15). Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday between the Circumcision and the Epiphany

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 2 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time, after the Magi had departed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in his sleep, saying to him: Arise, take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you; for Herod will

seek the child to kill him. Rising, Joseph took the child and his mother by night and withdrew into Egypt, where he remained until the death of Herod, so that what the Lord said by the mouth of the Prophet was fulfilled: Out of Egypt I called my son.[1]

2. You have seen in this Gospel, my brethren, that the most holy Virgin and St. Joseph obeyed the orders of the Angel and carried off the divine Child so that he should not fall into the hands of Herod. From this circumstance of our Gospel we can draw a very important truth: that fathers and mothers must watch with great care over the conduct of their children, and try to preserve in their hearts the grace of Jesus Christ that they received in Baptism, keeping them away from the occasions that might make them fall into the hands of some Herod, that is, of the wicked who might ruin them. This gives me occasion to instruct fathers and mothers on the obligations they have towards their children.

3. Fathers and mothers have three principal obligations towards their children: in the first place you must feed and maintain them; in the second place you must instruct and teach them; and lastly you must watch over them and correct them.

4. First: you must maintain them. There is no beast, however fierce, that does not take care to feed its young; but there are fathers more cruel than the beasts of the field. Some spend their means on getting drunk or on feasts while their children have no bread to eat; on a Sunday or feast day they squander what would have been enough to keep their family the whole week. Others, by an altogether opposite disposition, will lay out nothing for the upbringing of their children, refusing to spend on them what is necessary, without considering that the neglect in which they leave them is always the cause of their ruin. That girl, seeing that her father takes no notice of her, will go into service to have what she needs; she will perhaps enter the house of some vicious man who will corrupt and ruin her. That lad will leave his home country, will find bad company, will join it, will be lost, and in the end will see himself arrested and punished by the law.

5. Second: you must instruct them. When a child is of tender age he is nothing more, so to speak, than a tablet ready and prepared as much for good as for evil; he is ignorant, coarse and very prone to every vice. But if you take care to instruct him, you will form him for virtue, you will destroy his bad inclinations, you will make of him a child of God and a good fruit of blessing: the eyes of his understanding will open little by little, and he will gradually become docile in obeying and in practising good works. If children were not given their breakfast before they had first commended themselves to God and said some devotions, if the father or mother took them to church now and then, they would become devout, obedient and submissive to your orders; and in this way the instructions you give them would be more effective, and would be impressed much more vividly on their heart than all other lessons, because of the affection they naturally have for you and that they see you have for them. Do you want to be happy with your children when they are grown? Inspire in them in good time a great horror of sin and much love of virtue: have them commend themselves to God evening and morning; have them keep holy the feast days and venerate the divinity of our Saviour and the other mysteries of our holy Religion. Do not imitate those worldly people who speak to their children only of trifles, of the advantages of riches, of amusements, of making a fortune, of vanity, of rich clothes. There are many mothers who accustom their daughters to dress immodestly, and who never speak to them of God or of Religion, or of the inestimable treasure of purity and virtue.

6. Third: you must watch over their conduct. For example, you know, or ought to know, that for your daughter to speak frequently with a man, whoever he may be, is an occasion of many sins, either of will or of thought. Do you not know, perhaps, that the misfortune of other young women began with such conversations? You, mother, allow her to go out of the house; she makes you believe that it is to go to the sermon or the rosary: can you not follow her sometimes? Have you no one you trust to watch where she goes and learn with whom she keeps company? In general you must also find out what your children do with your neighbours' children, when they are lads with girls, and when they seek secrecy and solitude. And for greater safety, do not let them play together once they are a little older, but let boys play with boys; above all take

care that from the age of six or seven onwards they never sleep together. Lastly, you must punish them severely if they are vicious and disobedient. The father of the young Tobias is an excellent model of how parents should bring up their children. This holy man taught his son from childhood to fear God and abstain from all sin; and although on every occasion he gave him holy instructions and wholesome advice, he did so more particularly when, having been blinded by an unforeseen accident, he believed his end was near. Then it was that he called his son Tobias and said to him: My son, hear what I am going to tell you; keep my words in your heart and regard them as the foundation on which you must build your conduct. As soon as God has received my soul, bury my body; and honour your mother as long as she lives, for you must remember what she suffered and to what danger she was exposed when she carried you in her womb; and when the end of her life has come, bury her beside me. Keep God present all the days of your life, and beware of ever consenting to any sin or breaking the precepts of our God and Lord.[2]

7. We have another example, taken from Holy Scripture, which proves to us how God punishes the excessive indulgence of parents towards their children when they let them live in disorder. Eli, high priest of the old law, and of a blameless life in the eyes of the people, had two sons, priests of the same law. Scripture calls them sons of Belial, that is, without yoke, without law and without conscience; they inflicted the most unjust oppression on the people, they kept them away from the sacrifices of the Lord, and to this perverse conduct they added other shameful disorders. Their father, who was very old, rebuked them for these sins. Why, he said to them, do you do what I hear said of you, and commit these detestable sins all the people tell me of? Do these things no more, my sons; for it is not good that it should be published of you that you drag the people of God into breaking his commandments. If a man sins against another, God may be appeased in his favour; but if a man sins against the Lord, who shall pray for him?[3]

8. The sons of Eli paid no heed to their father's wholesome counsel. A man of God went one day to seek out this high priest to reproach him on the Lord's behalf for the indifference he showed for the interests of God in the disordered conduct of his sons, and to warn him of the misfortunes that were to come upon his posterity. He gave him as a sign of the truth of his word that his two sons, named Hophni and Phinehas, would die on the same day; which indeed happened, for they were killed in a battle between the Israelites and the Philistines; and their father Eli, having heard that the ark of the Lord had been taken by the enemy, was struck with such great grief that he fell backwards from his seat, broke his head and died. What can be said against this man, except that he was too indulgent with his sons, who were wicked, and that against their disorders he did not use all the authority his quality as father gave him, though on the other hand he gave them loving remonstrances and set their obligations before them? That is why, when words do not produce the hoped-for amendment, it is absolutely necessary to go on to threats and punishments; in a word, one must use the most severe and effective means to correct them when they are bad. The example of Eli should terrify parents who keep some feeling of Religion, and who have vicious children and do not use all the authority God has given them over them to draw them out of their disorders, or to punish their stubbornness and rebellion with all the severity they ought.

9. Besides what has been said, I charge you, my brethren, with one thing of great importance: that to be loved by your children and to keep peace among them, you must be very careful not to show more affection to some than to others; for this kind of preference and partiality is a spring of dissensions, envies and hatreds that produce great evils in a family. If, then, you seek the salvation of your children, correcting their vices or inspiring in them love of virtue; if you would rather they lived in a narrow middling state \[*estrecha medianía*\] and with need to work than leave them property gained against your conscience, you will obtain the blessing of God, who will say to you as to Abraham: Because you have been faithful to me and have not spared your son for love of me, I will fill your family with blessings. But on the contrary, if you act like Eli, you will be punished like him. Finally, if your children are virtuous, you will enjoy great peace of conscience; and as a reward for your care you will obtain eternal life, which is what I wish you.

Say the act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Sunday between the Circumcision and the Epiphany

On the obligation of fathers and mothers towards their children.

Accipe puerum, et matrem ejus, et fuge in Ægyptum (Matth. 2:13).

Take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt.

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. What parents must do to preserve their children.

3. Three duties of parents…

4. First duty: to feed their children.

5. Second duty: to instruct their children.

6. Third duty: to watch over their conduct. Example of Tobit.

7. Criminal indulgence of Eli towards his sons Hophni and Phinehas.

8. Punishment of Eli and his sons.

9. You must have an equal love for your children; you must correct their vices and inspire them with love of virtue.

---

[1] Hos. 11:1.

[2] Tobit 4:2–6 (Vulgate), freely abridged.

[3] 1 Sam. 2:12–25 (1 Kings in the Vulgate).

7. Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany: On the Obligations of Children towards Their Parents

Vol. I, pp. 67–72. Reading for the Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany. Gospel: Luke 2:42–52. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 2 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. When the child Jesus was already twelve years old, having gone up to Jerusalem as they were accustomed at that solemnity, when those days were over, as they were returning, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem without his parents noticing it. Rather, supposing that he was coming with someone of their company, they went a whole day’s journey looking for him among their relatives and acquaintances. But as they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem in search of him. And three days after they had lost him, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, now listening to them, now asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his wisdom and his answers. On seeing him, then, his parents were astonished; and his mother said to him: Son, why have you behaved so with us? See how your father and I, full of affliction, have been looking for you. And he answered them: How is it that you were looking for me? Did you not know that I must be busy with the things that concern the service of my Father? But they did not then understand the meaning of his answer. Then he went with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them. And his mother kept all these things in her heart. Jesus meanwhile grew in wisdom, in age and in grace before God and men.

2. In this Gospel, my brethren, you have just seen that Jesus Christ remained in Jerusalem without his parents noticing it, and perhaps you are surprised that he did not follow them. But this is a lesson that the divine Saviour wished to give to children, teaching them that although they have a father and mother, they also have a Father in heaven, to whom they owe the most profound and respectful obedience, chiefly in the things that concern the glory of God and their salvation. And when Jesus Christ said to his mother the most holy Virgin, Do you not know that I must be busy in the service of my Father? he means to teach fathers and mothers by this that they have no right to employ their children in whatever pleases them without first examining well whether that is the vocation to which God destines them. The Gospel also tells us that the child Jesus was subject to his parents, and that he grew in wisdom, in age and in grace before God and men. A beautiful and exemplary lesson, my brethren, for children and for the young of both sexes! Today I wish to address my words to them, showing them their grave obligations towards their fathers and mothers.

3. It is to you I speak, boys and girls. Do you know the commandments of God very well? What does the fourth say? Honour your father and mother, that you may have a long life. I will explain to you in what this honour consists, which is your first obligation towards them. For this you must know that our fathers and mothers are images of God on earth, who has made use of them to give us being and to preserve it for us. Hence we must always honour them, even when they have great defects.

4. You must, then, esteem your father in your heart, have a good opinion of him, look on him as your superior, revere him and respect his authority; and since he cannot know what is within you, you are obliged to show him by outward signs the honour and reverence you bear him: speak to him with respect and humility, uncover your head when you come near him or speak to him; speak of him with esteem among others, and say nothing that could be taken as contempt of him. To honour your father and your mother it is also necessary to take their advice before doing anything of importance, such as if you want to marry, undertake a journey or engage in some business of consequence: always, always you must ask their opinion and follow it.

5. Those children sin against this obligation who take no notice of their father or mother, who mock their advice, who speak insulting words to them, who frequent dangerous amusements and the company of libertines. Know, I tell you, that the impiety of a child towards his parents is so abominable before God that in the Old Testament he was condemned to death, not only if he laid hands on his father or mother, but also if he cursed them, that is, if he wished them some evil: *Qui maledixerit patri vel matri, morte moriatur*.[1] What do I say, if he cursed them? If he was merely notably rebellious and disobedient to them, he incurred the same penalty. Here are the words of the sacred text: If a man has a rebellious and unruly son who does not listen to his father or his mother, and who after being punished continues to disobey them, they shall take him and bring him to the judges of the city and say to them: This son of ours is rebellious and unruly, he pays no heed to our warnings, and spends all his time in feasting and drunkenness; then all the inhabitants of the city shall stone him, so that so perverse a son may be wiped out from among you, and all Israel may tremble on hearing this example.[2]

6. The second obligation of children towards their parents is love. For if an ancient author said that it is a cruelty not to love one’s friend, will it not be an injustice, an ingratitude, an inhumanity not to love the father and mother who have loved them so long and so tenderly? The love they have had for you was not in word but in deed: do not be content, then, with saying that you love them; let this love be seen by its effects. For example, when they are very worn out by old age, count it a great favour to take them into your house, and help them in all their needs: this will be a spring of blessings for you. Do not repay with a horrible ingratitude the many obligations you owe them. But what shall we say now of those children who by their bad conduct cause great grief to their father and mother, who are the torment of their life, who, for example, afflict their poor mother and make her shed a torrent of bitter tears? Let them hear what the Holy Spirit says to them in the book of Ecclesiasticus: Never forget the groans of your mother; remember what she has suffered for you.

Indeed, what ills did she not suffer when she carried you in her womb, what discomforts, what faintings, what pain and fears of dying when she gave you birth! When the Holy Spirit wants to express excessive pain, he compares it to that which your mother suffered when she bore you. How many bad nights! How much fatigue! How many times you broke her sleep! How many times she left her meal to feed you, and what cries and importunities did you not cause her in your absence! And to thank her for so much care would you be her executioner, her cross, and make her wither away with grief? As for your poor father, consider how many labours, cares, journeys and hardships he has suffered to provide you with food, for your education, to acquire some means for you, so as not to leave you an orphan, poor and helpless. Know for certain that you will never be able to repay as they deserve the tenderness and affection your father and mother have had for you. Your least discomfort made them ill; when you were happy they could not contain their joy; when you were sad they grew sad and afflicted. And after so many marks of affection as they have given you, not to love them, not to do all you can to make them happy, not to comfort them, but on the contrary to cause them continual sorrows and torments and fill their old age with bitterness? This is to be more cruel than tigers and more inhuman than the fiercest beasts.

7. But if your duty and the close obligations you have to them make no impression on you, at least let self-love and your own interest move you, in view of the promises God makes you in his commandments. He promises you a long life if you honour your father and mother, inasmuch as whoever is grateful for a benefit deserves that it be continued and increased. He who honours his mother, says the Wise Man, gathers as many goods as if he found a treasure; he who honours his father will receive joy from his children. The father's blessing establishes, strengthens and fills with prosperity the house of the children. Remember Ham, of whom Holy Scripture says that he mocked his father, and his children were cursed, his posterity rejected by God, and his grandchildren already idolaters.[3] We see every day that those who have been ungrateful to their father or mother are unfortunate in their posterity: most commonly they have rebellious, dissolute and vicious children who do to them the very same as they did to their parents.

8. But turning back to you, fathers and mothers: if you want your children to honour you, obey you and be virtuous, give them a good example; let them see that you are true Christians. Speak to them often of God, of the benefits he has done you, of his providence over your family, of the accidents and countless ills from which he has preserved you; impress on their mind the maxims of Christianity. Above all beware of scandalizing them by your words or your works, and do not show that you set great store by the grandeurs and pomps of this world. If they see you given over to pleasures and to intemperance in eating and drinking, they will take bad example from your vices; and this is often the reason why sins are perpetuated from family to family. If you see your children fall into some disorder, imitate St. Monica, who wept bitterly to see her son still given over to impurity, and begged the Lord for mercy on him. Feel keenly the offence they give God; let this be your greatest affliction; and pray and do penance for them. In this way you will procure their conversion, and you will succeed in making them children of God, co-heirs of Jesus Christ and your companions in the possession of the kingdom of heaven. Which is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany

On the obligation of children towards their parents.

> *Et erat subditus illis (Luke 2:51).*
>
> *And he was subject to them.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Lesson that Jesus Christ gives to children, and to parents too.

3. Young people, honour your parents; they are images of God.

4. Esteem your parents; ask their advice in matters of importance.

5. Children sin who take no notice of their parents, who mock… Of old they were punished with death.

6. The love and care that children owe their parents.

7. Take care of your parents for the good that will come upon you and the evils from which you will be freed.

8. Parents, if you want your children to be good, be good yourselves.

---

[1] The book gives "Exod. x, 16"; the text is Exod. 21:17 (Lev. 20:9).

[2] Deut. 21:18–21.

[3] Gen. 9:20–27.

8. Second Sunday after the Epiphany: On Matrimony

Vol. I, pp. 73–81. Reading for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany. Gospel: John 2:1–11. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 2 of St. John, which reads as follows:

1. At that time a wedding was held at Cana of Galilee, where the mother of Jesus was. Jesus too was invited to the wedding with his disciples. And as the wine came to run short, his mother said to Jesus: They have no wine. Jesus answered her: Woman, what is that to me and to you? My hour has not yet come. His mother then said to the servants: Do whatever he tells you. There were standing there six stone water-jars, set for the purifications of the Jews, each of which held two or three measures. Jesus said to them: Fill those jars with water; and they filled them to the brim. Then Jesus said to them: Draw some out now in a cup and take it to the chief steward. They did so. As soon as the chief steward tasted the water turned into wine, not knowing where it came from (though the servants who had drawn it knew), he called the bridegroom and said to him: Everyone serves the better wine at the beginning, and when the guests have drunk their fill they bring out the weaker; you, on the contrary, have kept the good wine until last. Thus at Cana of Galilee Jesus worked the first of his miracles, by which he manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him the more.

2. Jesus Christ, my brethren, chose to attend a wedding to make us see that he must be invoked by those who embrace the state of matrimony if they wish to draw his blessing upon themselves. You know already that matrimony is one of the seven Sacraments, and that to receive it worthily one must bring all the dispositions that so holy a thing requires. So I have resolved, my brethren, to show you, first, how great this Sacrament is; second, the obligations it lays on you; third, the honour with which you must treat it.

3. I say, first, that matrimony is a great Sacrament. Before me the apostle St. Paul said it: *Sacramentum hoc magnum est: ego autem dico in Christo et in Ecclesia*: this Sacrament is great; I say, in Christ and in the Church.[1] You have just heard, my brethren, that Jesus Christ was present at the wedding of Cana, to teach us by this example that he is always present, though invisibly, at the weddings of the faithful who are well disposed and in grace. It is the Lord who gives you your wife: yes, he himself gives her to you; see after this whether you ought to love her. He is the mediator of your covenant; it is he who joins you and who says: *Ego vos conjungo*. Besides this, this Sacrament is a figure of the union of the divine Word with the humanity of Jesus Christ, and of Jesus Christ with the Catholic Church. This is what the Church says of Matrimony in the preface of the Mass, in these words: O God, who hast consecrated marriage by so excellent a mystery that the nuptial covenant is a figure of the sacred union of Jesus Christ and his Church. See here, my brethren, why in this Sacrament God confers many graces when it is received with the dispositions and sentiments of devotion

that it deserves. By virtue of this Sacrament God gives you for your whole life very great helps to resist temptations, to rule your family well, to bring up your children well in the holy fear of God, to bear with patience the weaknesses of the other spouse, and to endure the burdens and discomforts of matrimony. You deprive yourselves of all these graces when you marry in mortal sin, and with a heart full of brutish affections and desires.

4. You must also know, my brethren, that the marriage of Christians is indissoluble: Jesus Christ says so expressly in his Gospel: The man shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. Let not man, then, separate what God has joined.[2] See what the apostle St. Paul says on this: The married woman is bound by the law of matrimony to her husband as long as he lives; and so, if while her husband is alive she marries another, she shall be held an adulteress. Hear what he says elsewhere: Let marriage be treated by all with honour, let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will condemn fornicators and adulterers.[3] In view, then, of such express authorities, you will be able to understand, my brethren, what an enormous crime adultery is. So great is God's horror of it that for this sin he repented of having made man; for this sin he opened the floodgates of heaven and sent the flood to drown everything that had life; for this sin he reduced to ashes the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and put to the edge of the sword twenty-four thousand men of his people who had sinned with the Moabite women.[4]

5. But adultery in the new law is a sin incomparably more criminal than it was in the old. And why? Because your body is a thing wholly holy: it was consecrated to God by Baptism, sanctified by the holy chrism of Confirmation and by the presence of the sacred body of Jesus Christ that you have received in the Eucharist; and this body you stain with adulteries, and prostitute it to infamous and abominable actions. What perfidy to break the faith that you, husband, have promised your wife, and you, wife, your husband; and that in the presence of God, in the sight of the Angels and before the Church! Think, I beg you, of the terrible consequences of the sin of adultery. You beget children who will deprive your legitimate children of a part of their inheritance, which will fall to the child of adultery; and with this you burden yourselves with restitutions that you will never make, and you get into a labyrinth from which you will never be able to get out.

6. Let us now see the obligations of married people. The Apostle says: Husbands, love your wives as Jesus Christ loved his Church and gave himself up to death for her to sanctify her. And further on he says that the wife must love and honour her husband as the Church honours Jesus Christ.[5] The priest who marries you asks God to communicate this love to you when he blesses the ring he gives you, which signifies that your love must be from the heart and persevering to the end. And if these qualities are lacking, what does your love come to? It is nothing but a feigned and apparent love; for you give your body, and your heart is elsewhere \[*enajenado*\]. You do what an ancient tyrant did, who bound a dead body to a living one.[6] When you have no affection for the person you marry and have an inclination for another, you give your spouse a dead body; you give your body without your soul, because the soul is where it loves. Others love their wives only with a sensual and worldly love, in so far as they indulge their vicious humours; they act like Adam: they eat of the forbidden fruit, they allow them the vanities of the world, they tolerate their going about immodestly dressed; and afterwards they want them to be chaste and faithful. This, says St. John Chrysostom, is the same as if you threw a tasty bait into the river and did not want the fish to take it. Others love their wives with a fickle and inconstant love: they love them when they are young and healthy and when they can be of use to them; but if they reach an age when they are faded or sickly, they abandon them as if they were strangers: this is to love in the way the pagans love their wives. You must love yours with a sincere and cordial love, open your heart to them and share your thoughts with them. And you, wives, must love your husbands as the Church loves and honours Jesus Christ. You must love each other with a pure love; you must help each other to work out your salvation, sharing with each other the good thoughts that God gives you, charitably reproving each other for the faults that might hinder the attainment of so holy an end, and

receiving well the warnings you give each other.

7. The apostle St. Paul wants you, husband, to be holy and also to give an example to your wife; to convert her if unhappily she were an unbeliever or outside the bosom of the Church. Likewise he desires that the wife make her husband holy, even if he were a pagan and idolater: *Sanctificatus est vir infidelis per mulierem fidelem*.[7] But this will never be achieved if you deafen him with your complaints, your abuse, your tempers and your wild shouting. On the contrary, you will obtain what you desire if you do as those holy women did who, suffering with patience the insults and defects of their husbands, not answering them when they are angry, speaking to them of God more by their good example than by their reproaches, and showing them unceasingly a sincere, tender, faithful and constant love, often soften and convert them. Everything must be in common between you: goods and ills, joy and sadness. When one is ill, the other must feel it and console him. Is it not a shame to see that not a few husbands would rather lose their means at gaming, or squander them amid the clamour of swearers, than eat them in peace with their wives; and that they show such affection to strange women, while being so hard and harsh with a wife who has served them so wholeheartedly all her life, and who was given to them as a thing sanctified by the Sacraments of the Church?

8. Would you see, my brethren, a good model of the conduct that a Christian wife should have? You have it in St. Monica. This holy woman had been brought up according to the strictest rules of decency and temperance; from childhood she had grown used to living with the submission she owed her parents; and so it cost her no effort to submit to the one they gave her as husband when she was of an age to marry. She obeyed him as her superior and left nothing undone to see how she might win him for God, for he was still a pagan; though she spoke to him of God only by her conduct and the purity of her life, by which she made herself not only lovable and pleasing, but also worthy of respect and admiration. However much her husband was unfaithful to her, she never had the least quarrel with him on this point, always waiting with patience for God in his mercy to give him chastity together with faith. Although he loved his wife tenderly, he was nevertheless of a violent and proud nature; but she had resolved never to resist him in his outbursts nor to answer him the least word, and only when he had come to himself did she give him the reason for her conduct. Another great gift that God had placed in St. Monica was that she made peace everywhere as far as she could. It happened often enough that some women who had quarrelled came, each on her own side, to complain, saying atrocious things of the other that hatred and revenge put in their mouths; but she never repeated to either party anything but what was most suited to appease them and make them friends. God at last granted this woman the grace of winning her husband, who embraced the faith shortly before leaving this world, so that he no longer gave her any cause of complaint in his conduct. In a word, St. Monica was the servant of all who served God; she was as St. Paul wants Christian widows to be: she had had only one husband; she had done for her parents all that gratitude obliged her to do; she had governed her family according to the rules of piety; her good works had borne witness to her faith; she had taken the greatest care to bring up her children well; and whenever she saw them stray from the path of virtue she felt anew pangs stronger and more terrible than those she had felt at the time of their birth.[8]

9. I return to those words of St. Paul: Treat matrimony with respect, *honorabile connubium*. Honour it in the intention you have in marrying; for if this intention is bad and vicious, it will vitiate and corrupt everything that follows from it. Would you know why God is not in your marriages? Because you did not keep him in view at the time of marrying: you married out of a mad passion for an object that pleased you for your sensual pleasure; or out of ambition, because that man was well thought of and well off; or out of avarice, because he abounded in riches: these are not Christian intentions. Whoever marries must do it to give children to God and to the Church, to have a posterity that may serve this Lord in his stead and when he is no longer on earth; or as a remedy for concupiscence, so that, this being appeased, the spirit may remain freer to serve, love and honour God.

10. Respect matrimony in the choice of the person. For this you must pray much to God and ask him to let you find a person such as suits you, so that you may work out your salvation together. And to obtain this grace you must live holily and do good works, to which respect and obedience towards your fathers and mothers contribute much; and so you must not marry without their consent, for in this way God will bless your marriage more and more.

11. Respect matrimony in the contract and in its use: let there be no deceit, fraud or guile in marrying. This is the cause of the complaints and reproaches that the one makes to the other once it is done: This is not what you promised me, they say; you had not told me you had debts or arrears; which is sometimes the cause of the most scandalous divisions.

12. Respect the betrothal \[*esponsales*\], and do not profane it with unlawful familiarities, for great abuses are ordinarily committed on this point. The bride-to-be sometimes allows criminal liberties to the man who is arranged to marry her; and flattering herself that he is to be her husband, she says nothing to the priest when she goes to confession to be married; in this way she communicates unworthily and receives the sacrament of Matrimony in a bad state. Acting so, how is God's blessing to be drawn down, when the marriage has begun with sacrileges?

13. Respect matrimony in the solemnity of the wedding. For what is the use of those great feasts, those dances and those follies that are so common on such occasions? They are useless expenses which, for the sake of one day's merrymaking, often cause hardship for a whole life; besides, the care of preparing the wedding occupies your mind on the day when it should be most recollected and devout.

14. My brethren, to receive so great a Sacrament with good dispositions and gather its due fruit, one must hear Mass with great attention, adore the mystery of the Incarnation, ask God for the grace proper to this Sacrament, invoke the Saints who were married, such as St. Joseph, St. Joachim, Zechariah, St. Anne, St. Elizabeth, St. Monica, and chiefly the most holy Virgin; and banish like a plague those brazen women and those young men who in the presence of the bride are wont to utter the most infamous and scandalous expressions.

15. Lastly, honour the sacrament of Matrimony because it is a perfect sharing of hearts and of spiritual and temporal goods. You must bear with one another, the Apostle tells you. Your husband is the head of the family: you must tolerate his imperfections with humility and submission. Your wife is the weaker part: you must bear her weaknesses out of charity.[9] Jesus Christ said in the Gospel: A man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife. Your wife has done what you ought to have done, says St. John Chrysostom: she has left her father and her mother to come and put herself in your arms, hoping to live in peace the rest of her days and to work out her salvation in your company; and instead of being father and mother to her as you should, you are a tyrant and an executioner to her. Think how horrible you are before God, who is so displeased by cruelty that he charges us so insistently to be kind even to strangers. What punishment, then, must you not expect for being so cruel to that poor woman whom God has given you, whom the Church has entrusted to you, and whom you promised to treat with every kind of charity and gentleness?

16. When you are not in agreement with your wife, but the one wants one thing and the other another, your house is a hell: everything is oaths, insults, curses, hatreds, jealousies, bitterness; your affairs go to ruin, your children become licentious, your servants do not do their duty, and your neighbours laugh at you and mock you. But on the contrary, if you live in peace and help each other to serve God; if you treat your wives as companions and not as slaves; if you come to an understanding with each other in the government of your family, your house will be an earthly paradise, an image and prelude of the heavenly mansion, into which, acting in this way, you will one day enter to share in the incomparable glory that God has prepared for his elect. Which is what I wish you, etc.

Say the act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany

On matrimony.

> *Nuptiæ factæ sunt in Cana Galilææ (John 2:1).*
>
> *A wedding was held at Cana of Galilee.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Jesus Christ attended the wedding: and why?

3. What is matrimony? God gives the wife. God marries. Graces it gives.

4. Matrimony is indissoluble; it must not be stained…

5. How criminal the adulterer is!

6. Obligations of married people: mutual love, pure, chaste, rational.

7. How you must treat each other… With charity, patience…

8. Model of married women: St. Monica.

9. In marrying you must keep God in view, and not sensuality, greed, vanity…

10. To find a good partner you must use prayer, counsel and frequent Sacraments.

11. There must be truth in the contract.

12. Respect the betrothal. Do not do beforehand what is not lawful.

13. Respect matrimony in the solemnity of the wedding.

14. Spiritual means you must use.

15. Honour matrimony for the sharing of hearts it brings: the evil done by the husband who does not treat his wife as he should.

16. Good you will enjoy if you behave as you should; misfortunes that will come if you behave badly…

---

[1] Source note: Eph. 5:32.

[2] Source note: Matt. 19:5–6.

[3] Source notes: Rom. 7:2–3 (book: “iii, 2”); Heb. 13:4.

[4] Gen. 6:5–7; 19:24; Num. 25:1–9 (Scripture has 24,000 dead).

[5] Source note: Eph. 5:25, 23.

[6] Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.485–488.

[7] Source note: 1 Cor. 7:14.

[8] St. Augustine, *Confessions* 9.9.19–22. 1 Tim. 5:9–10 on widows.

[9] 1 Pet. 3:7; Eph. 5:22–23; Col. 3:18–19.

9. Third Sunday after the Epiphany: On Sin and the Evils It Brings

Vol. I, pp. 82–87. Reading for the Third Sunday after the Epiphany. Gospel: Matthew 8:1–13. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Third Sunday after the Epiphany

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 8 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time, Jesus having come down from the mountain, a great crowd of people went following him. Then a leper coming to him worshipped him, saying: Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus, stretching out his hand, touched him, saying: I will: be made clean; and at once he was cured of his leprosy. And Jesus said to him: See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them. And as he entered Capernaum a centurion came to meet him, and begged him, saying: Lord, a servant of mine is lying in my house paralysed, and suffers very much. Jesus said to him: I will come and cure him. And the centurion replied: Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter my house; but command it with your word and my servant will be cured. For I too, who am only a man under others, as I have soldiers under my command, say to one: Go, and he goes; and to another: Come, and he comes; and to my servant: Do this, and he does it. On hearing this Jesus showed great wonder, and said to those who followed him: Truly I tell you, not even in the midst of Israel have I found such great faith. So I declare to you that many Gentiles will come from the East and the West and will sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the children of the kingdom (the Jews) will be cast out into the darkness: there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then Jesus said to the centurion: Go, and be it done to you as you have believed; and in that same hour the servant was healed.

2. In this Gospel, my brethren, you see a man covered with leprosy who goes to ask Jesus Christ to deign to cure him. This leprosy is a figure of mortal sin, and the cure of the leper signifies the conversion of the sinner. I propose, then, today to make you conceive a great horror of sin, by showing you the evils it causes: lend me your attention for a moment.

3. For what end did God create this visible world? You understand at once, my brethren, that God did not make it for the Angels, because, being free of all matter, they have no need of the stars, nor of the elements, nor of the other material creatures. Nor did he make it for the beasts, which have no spirit to know, notice and admire the wisdom and astonishing skill with which the world is built and governed. He made it, then, for man. And for what did he make man? This is one of the first questions you were asked in the catechism. For what end are you in this world, man, woman? Is it perhaps to eat and drink, to amuse yourselves and satisfy all your desires and appetites? If so, you have received a rational soul, a spirit, an understanding in vain; then you are no more than the beasts, which use their instinct only in eating, drinking and preserving their life. But God created you for his glory. And what is the glory of God? That God be known, loved, served and obeyed. All the actions you do that serve this end are good, virtuous and meritorious; and all that are not directed to this object are bad and vicious: *Omnia in gloriam Dei facite*.[1] If you work at your trade to earn your living, and out of the inclination and obligation that parents have to support their children, this being your only motive and your last end, you do no more than the pagans and the beasts, just as a swallow makes thousands and thousands of journeys to bring food to its young. But on the contrary, if you work in order to obey this commandment, You shall eat bread in the sweat of your face; and if you bring up your children in the love and fear of God, in that case you serve the glory of God, and this Lord is obeyed and loved by you.

4. When you eat, drink, sleep; when you spend some time in some honest recreation so that your mind may rest and to restore your strength, and not simply for your own satisfaction, that recreation, that rest, that amusement are directed to the glory of God. But to waste time or money, or the opportunity of doing good, spending it in drunkenness, passing feast days and Sundays, and even whole afternoons, at the dance, in the occasions of sin, or in conversations in which so many sins are committed: all this is against the end for which you are in the world. They are, you say, innocent amusements; we do no harm to anyone; I don't get drunk, I don't curse, I don't swear, I cheat no one. Very well, so be it \[*Sea así en buen hora*\]; but if you do nothing, or almost nothing, for God; if you spend your life in actions not directed to his glory, or if, though you work, it is only for yourself; if you alone are the end of all your actions; if you think of nothing but satisfying yourself or establishing your fortune, do you not fear that it will be said of you at the hour of your

death: Take that useless servant and cast him into the exterior darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth?[2]

5. To rise to heaven it is not enough to be innocent and to have a pure and clean heart: one must also not have received a rational and Christian soul in vain. You earn your living, you preserve your health, you support your children: and would you not do the same if you had the soul of a pagan or the instinct of a beast? If a wholly animal life, whose actions bear no relation to the glory of God, is not a Christian life, will it not at least be a criminal life? The glory of God is that he be known, honoured, loved, served and obeyed: you do the very opposite when you commit sin, and instead of making him known you yourselves disown him.

6. And if it is a great evil to abuse the benefit of creation, how much greater will it be to abuse that of redemption, which cost the Son of God so dear? For what is the fruit that the Saviour seeks to draw from his divine passion and death? It is, says St. Bernard, to make known the malice of sin. Ought we not to be ashamed of our miseries, seeing that to cure them it was necessary for the Son of God to die on a cross? They were, then, so great that they moved him to a compassion and mercy without limit. What prince was ever so gentle, so loving towards his subjects as our divine Saviour? He saw our soul all stained and infected with the stain of original sin; he considered that in its origin it was perfectly beautiful; he shed all his blood, he drained all his veins to cure it of the leprosy of sin that infected it, and he washed it in his own blood: *lavit nos in sanguine suo*, as the great Apostle says.[3] He endowed it with the gifts of the Holy Spirit; he took it as his bride: *desponsabo te mihi in fide*; he gave it his body, his spirit, his treasures, his merits. And after so many favours it is unfaithful to him, it breaks the faith it has promised him; it quenches in its heart the love and fidelity it owes to so lovable a spouse; it binds itself in affection to a slave, it abandons itself to this unclean body, it soils itself with a leprosy still more loathsome than that from which its spouse had freed it. Is this not to be ungrateful to the last degree? Is this not to despise the benefits of this divine spouse? Is it not to make sin live again, which the Lord willed to destroy by his death? Is it not to deserve the punishments with which St. Paul threatens when he says: How much greater punishment do you think he deserves who has trampled on the Son of God, who has held the blood of the covenant a vile thing and has outraged the spirit of grace?[4] By sin you throw down the work of redemption. The Son of God became man to make you his son, and you make yourself a slave of the devil by sin; he instituted the Eucharist to sanctify your flesh, and you stain it shamefully with your impure passions; he rose again to give you life, and you give yourself death by sin. You ruin and destroy in yourself all the works of the Holy Spirit, who tries to win you by every possible way: he solicits you with his inspirations, with the remorse of your conscience, with the voice of preachers, with the examples of good people; and you resist everything, and cannot be overcome either by gentleness or by threats. In this way sin makes you abuse all the graces and inspirations of God.

7. If time allowed me, I would show you still many other evils that sin causes. Beware of falling into it, my brethren; for after all you know what the penalty of mortal sin is: it is hell. Then the sinner will know its malice, but too late.[5] In life men play with sin; they draw reasons from everything for letting themselves be carried away by it; a man excuses himself and treats very grave sins as a weakness worthy of pardon. But in hell the reprobate will know that sin must be punished with rigorous and eternal pains. Fear to fall into it, sinners who hear me; enter into yourselves and say from the bottom of your heart: Unhappy me, because I have sinned; unhappy me, again and a thousand times, if I am still in sin. When shall I have pity on my soul? When shall I come out of sin? When shall I break the bonds that tie me to it? If courage or strength fails you, stretch out your hands to God, who does not will the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. If sin has led you too far astray, cry out in repentance and make your way to Jesus Christ, who came to seek sinners and to save those who were perishing; so that his charity may go before you, his mercy receive you, and his grace make you walk to the end in the paths of penance, and that through it you may deserve to see yourself crowned in heaven. Which is what I wish you, etc.

Let all say: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Third Sunday after the Epiphany

On sin and the evils it brings with it.

Cum descendisset Jesus de monte (Matth. 8:1).

Jesus having come down from the mountain.

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Leprosy is a figure of sin.

3. For what end was man created?… What does he do? How must he do it?

4. Do you act in keeping with your end? Against your end?

5. What do you do? How do you do it? Like the beasts; not like Christians.

6. He who sins abuses the benefit of creation. He abuses the benefit of redemption. How much Jesus Christ has done and suffered… the outrage the sinner does him.

7. The penalty of mortal sin is hell… There it is understood…

---

[1] 1 Cor. 10:31: "Do all to the glory of God."

[2] Matt. 25:30.

[3] Apoc. 1:5 (St. John, not St. Paul, as the book says).

[4] Source note: Heb. 10:29.

[5] Ezek. 33:11; 1 Tim. 1:15; Luke 19:10.

10. Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany: On Temptations

Vol. I, pp. 88–92. Reading for the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany. Gospel: Matthew 8:23–27. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 8 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus got into a boat with his disciples. And behold, so violent a storm arose on the sea that the waves covered the boat; but Jesus was sleeping. And his disciples, coming to him, woke him, saying: Lord, save us, we are perishing. Jesus said to them: Why are you afraid, O men of little faith? Then, rising to his feet, he commanded the winds and the sea to be calm; and there followed a great calm. At this all who were there were astonished and said to one another: Who is this, that the winds and the sea obey him?

2. The storm that arose on the sea at the very time Jesus Christ was in a boat is a figure of the temptations to which our life is subject. The disciples, seeing the boat covered with waves, wake Jesus Christ and say to him: Lord, save us, for we are in danger of perishing. All this warns us that we must have recourse to Jesus Christ in all the temptations and dangers in which we find ourselves and to which we are exposed in this life, for they besiege and surround us on every side.

3. The devil, who knows from his own experience how weak the creature is, since a thought of pride cast him down into hell, never ceases to lay snares for men, and like a roaring lion always seeks some prey to devour.[1] He knows that the slightest temptations are capable of overthrowing the strongest, and he uses them skilfully to make us fall into sin. So he has done since the beginning of the world: see here some examples. Our first father Adam was the most perfect of all men; he had been created in the state of innocence and placed in a place of delights where he lacked nothing. He was assailed by temptation; but by what temptation? By a simple invitation from his wife to eat, after her example, of a fruit that God had forbidden him to eat; and in

spite of the threat of death his Creator had made to him, he yields like a coward and falls into the temptation.[2]

4. Samson, that prodigy of strength who with the jawbone of an ass killed a thousand well-armed men; who tore the gates of cities from their hinges and carried them up the mountains; who broke new ropes as if they were threads of tow, let himself be overcome, not by an army of enemies, but by the feeble charms of a worthless woman \[*mujerzuela*\]. From that moment he is no longer a raging lion that overturns and destroys everything, but a wretch deprived of his sight, condemned to turn a mill-wheel, and, what is far more terrible, abandoned by the Spirit of God.

5. It was also temptations apparently weak that made David and his son Solomon fall into sin. They were kings, they possessed abundant goods and lacked nothing; and yet, to satisfy an impure passion, they sacrificed their conscience and their good name. The one, from prophet, saint and friend of God, became an adulterer and a murderer; the other, from the wisest of men, became a slave through his love of women and gave himself up to idolatry.

6. Judas was of the number of the Apostles; he had already spent a good while in the apostolate, and he was chosen from among the others to be the keeper of the alms given to the disciples of the Saviour. A temptation of avarice assails him; he lets himself be carried away by it, and falls into the basest and most unworthy action a man can commit. And what was it that led him to the infamous treason he committed? Was he offered the government of some province, or great treasures? Not at all: what they offered him was thirty pieces of silver, a sum in truth rather small and contemptible.

7. What is it that every day makes so many persons fall miserably, even of those who have lived a long time blamelessly; in a word, so many Christians of every age and condition? It is a temptation to impurity; it is the desire to see and speak to a person who is for them nothing but matter for falling into sin; it is a desire for revenge, a vanity, a self-satisfaction in one's way of dressing, human respect, and carelessness in praying without seeking one's salvation. By taking no account of small things, then, one falls into mortal sins. For, my brethren, if you consider the falls you have had in your whole life, you will agree that they have arisen from causes that seemed to you of little consequence. How many times, for a word let slip involuntarily, have you let yourselves be carried away by anger and tried to take revenge? How many times has a paltry interest or an inch of land made you quarrel with your relatives and friends and kindled hatred and enmity among you? How many other times has a look, a gesture, a free word, a single thought made you commit some impurity? What is the cause of so many enormous crimes, of so many killings and murders? As a rule a slight temptation that one did not take care to reject at the beginning. From this, my brethren, you can understand how important it is to resist temptations. But what are the means you should use? Here are the chief ones in a few words.

8. The first is to think that God is present everywhere. A soldier fighting in sight of his king would not dare to commit an act of cowardice. In the same way, if we consider that our God and sovereign Lord is always present and always ready, either to reward us if we fight valiantly against the enemy of our salvation, or to punish us if we follow his suggestions and have the misfortune to let ourselves be led into the evil he inspires, how is it possible for us to make up our minds to commit sin? On the contrary, what courage shall we not have in thinking that God sees us, and that we are continually before his eyes?

9. The second means is to distrust ourselves and put all our hope in God. But we presume too much on our own strength; we do not fear the assaults of the common enemy, and that is why we fall into sin. Therefore in temptations we must imitate the Apostles, who, according to our Gospel, finding themselves caught by a storm, had recourse to their divine Master and said to him with confidence: Lord, save us, we are perishing.

10. The third means of resisting temptation is to turn the mind and imagination at once away from bad thoughts, and to turn the eyes away from the deceptive and dangerous object that presents itself to us, trying to call to mind some holy meditation capable of keeping us from sin. It is also an effective remedy to think of

death, and how uncertain it is whether or not we are very near it; and likewise to consider the judgements of God and see how terrible and rigorous they are, since a single mortal sin can suddenly plunge us into an eternity of misery and unhappiness.

11. The fourth means, and a most excellent one, is to flee the occasions that can arouse temptation in us; for there are many that as a rule cannot be overcome except by flight, by withdrawing from the objects that cause them: such are those of anger, of revenge and of impurity. Fight, then, my brethren, against temptations with invincible courage; and for this remember the expression of the apostle St. Paul when he says that only he will be crowned who has fought well and come off victorious.[3] If you faithfully put into practice the means I have just taught you; if you do yourselves violence, since Jesus Christ tells us in his Gospel that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, that is, that we must do ourselves violence, and that only those who do themselves violence carry it off and obtain the crown of heaven; if you put into practice any one of these means, you will come out victorious over temptations, you will walk with firm step along the road of salvation, you will persevere faithful to your God, and the Lord too will be faithful to you in his promises, granting you the eternal glory with which you will be crowned in the other life, and which I wish you.

Say the act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

On temptations.

> *Ascendente Jesu in naviculam… ecce motus magnus factus est in mari (Matth. 8:23–24).*
>
> *Jesus going up into the boat… a great commotion arose on the sea.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. The storm is a figure of temptations: we must have recourse to Jesus.

3. Satan’s malice. How he made our first parents fall.

4. How Samson fell.

5. How David and Solomon fell.

6. How Judas fell.

7. How do so many men and women fall? Alas! through…

8. Means not to fall. The first is to think that God is here.

9. The second: to distrust oneself, trust in God and have recourse to him.

10. The third: to turn the imagination away from that object. To think of death, of the judgements of God.

11. The fourth: to keep away from occasions, especially if they are of anger, revenge and impurity.

---

[1] 1 Pet. 5:8.

[2] Gen. 3.

[3] 2 Tim. 2:5; Matt. 11:12.

11. Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany: On Presumption on the Goodness and Mercy of God

Vol. I, pp. 93–97. Reading for the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany. Gospel: Matthew 13:24–30. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 13 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus put this parable to the people, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men were sleeping, an enemy of his came and sowed cockle among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat was already in blade and the ear was showing, the cockle also appeared. Then the servants of the householder came to him and said: Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have cockle? He answered them: Some enemy of mine must have sown it. The servants replied: Do you want us to go and gather it up? To which he answered: No, lest in pulling up the cockle you pull up the wheat with it. Let both grow until the harvest, and at harvest time I will say to the reapers: Gather first the cockle and make bundles of it for the fire, and then put the wheat into my barn.

2. This man who sowed the good grain represents, my brethren, Jesus Christ, who sowed the word of the Gospel; the field signifies the world; the good grain represents the good; the cockle represents the wicked; the enemy who sows the cockle among the good grain is a figure of the devil, who mixes the wicked among the good; the time of harvest signifies the last judgement; the reapers who bind the cockle in bundles represent the Angels, who will separate the good from the wicked. Each one of you, my brethren, now flatters himself that he is not of the number of the wicked. But great sinners flatter themselves so too. And why? Because they hope to obtain mercy from God even though they continue to offend him. But how much it is to be feared that their hope will be cast down and confounded! Against this danger I wish to forewarn you today, by showing you that one must not presume vainly on the goodness and mercy of God.

3. Many abuse the goodness of kings to exalt themselves insolently and make themselves little tyrants, said King Ahasuerus in the book of Esther.[1] This saying, my brethren, is much more true with regard to the King of heaven than to those of the earth; for people abuse his divine goodness, using it to offend him more boldly and to commit the sin that infinitely displeases him. Listen to the conversations of sinners, and you will see that their usual refrain is that the goodness of God is infinite, that his mercy has no limits and will not allow his creatures to be lost, and that therefore they may act as they please, follow their inclinations and satisfy their passions and appetites without any fear. But it is very easy to show you how these people deceive themselves and how guilty they are. For I will ask them: You who talk like that, do you hope that God will forgive you when you have offended him, or not? If you do not hope so, on what do you found your security, and why do you say that God is good and that one act of contrition is enough to appease him? And if you hope that he will forgive you, is it not great malice to use the goodness of God to displease that very goodness, and to take the pretext that God is good for being worse yourself every day? God is good, God is merciful: you say well; but you have not said it all yet. You do not say that he is just; you do not say for whom he is good; you do not say at what time he exercises his mercy and at what time his justice. Do you want to know for whom he is good? Hear his holy word in Psalm 72: O Israel, how good God is to those who are upright of heart! And in Psalm 124: My God, you will do good to those who are good: *benefac, Domine, bonis*. Would you know for whom he is just? Hear his holy Scriptures: The wrath of God is upon those who do evil. It is quite certain, said Job, that you leave no sin unpunished. The prophet Isaiah says: Woe to the wicked man who does evil, for he shall receive retribution according to his works.[2] The Lord says through the prophet Ezekiel: I will pour out my fury upon you, I will judge you according to your works, I will have no pity, and my eyes shall not spare you. The apostle St. Paul says: Wrath, indignation, tribulation and anguish shall overwhelm the soul of every man who does evil. Yes, God is good and merciful, and he is so infinitely more than you can imagine; but he has not promised his mercy to any sinner in particular; he uses it only with whom he sees fit; he does not promise his mercy to those who offend him; he promises it to those who are keenly sorry for having offended him; and you will not be able to have this keen sorrow nor this true contrition unless God in his goodness gives it to you, for he has never promised it to any creature.

4. You imagine that the goodness of God is very favourable to you because he bears with you, preserves you, feeds you and fills you with prosperity; but you deceive yourselves, fools: his goodness is one of the perfections you dare to offend; it cries out and calls for vengeance against you. And do you know this goodness? God says to you through his prophet Isaiah: My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways.[3] If a supreme judge, speaking of a man accused of high treason, were to say to his friends: This man flatters himself that he will go free and be acquitted, but it is far from being so; his thoughts are not mine; what could be hoped from that? You think like this: God is merciful; and though I am cruel to that widow, to those orphans; though I keep back their property; though I have criminal dealings with that married woman or that single one, God will show me mercy. But God, on the contrary, says to you: My thoughts are far from yours; my ways are justice and uprightness; they are far from tolerating your injustices and your infamous life. My goodness is not as you think; it is not an indolent goodness that favours sin or protects malice; it is a goodness that is employed in avenging the harm done to one's neighbour; a goodness that opposes evil, and opposes it in such a way that it punishes it.

5. When Holy Scripture exhorts us to hope in the goodness of God, it warns us at the same time to fear and to do good. Hope in God and do good, says the Royal Prophet; and elsewhere: God takes pleasure in those who fear him and hope in his mercy.[4]

6. Know, my brethren, that all who rest falsely in this way on the goodness and mercy of God are hardened sinners; and the Holy Spirit says: The hardened heart shall fare ill at the end of its hardness, and he who loves danger shall perish in it. Sinners who hear me, is not your heart well hardened, since you offend that divine goodness which preserves you, feeds you and bears with you? You live untroubled and confident in a goodness that is only for good people, and you do not fear that severity which is for the vicious: you are in great danger and exposed to being lost in it. Who has told you that God will give you the grace to repent of your sins? It may be that he will give it to you, but it may also be that he will not; and if you do not repent of your sins, how will you be saved? See in what uncertainty and in what evident risk you place your salvation. Say no longer: God is good, I mean to be ungrateful to him by offending him continually. Say rather: You are good, my God; be pleased to exercise your mercy towards me, not by giving me earthly riches or the pleasures of this life, but your grace, so that, keeping your holy commandments, I may be the object of your goodness in eternal life. I wish it to you.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

On presumption on the goodness and mercy of God.

> *Simile factum est regnum cœlorum homini qui seminavit bonum semen in agro suo (Matth. 13:24).*
>
> *The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. What the parable signifies.

3. Sinners abuse the goodness of God. What do sinners say? Alas! God is good, and you are bad. God is just.

4. The thoughts of men are very different from those of God.

5. We must hope in God, fear him and do good, and not evil.

6. Those who rest falsely on the goodness of God have a hardened heart.

---

[1] Esther 16:2–3 (Vulgate; Greek Additions to Esther E 2–3), the edict of Artaxerxes/Ahasuerus.

[2] Pss. 72(73):1; 124(125):4; Job 10:14; Ezek. 7:3–4, 8–9; Rom. 2:9. Source note: Isa. 3:11.

[3] Source note: Isa. 55:8.

[4] Pss. 36(37):3; 146(147):11.

12. Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany: On the Word of God

Vol. I, pp. 98–101. Reading for the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany. Gospel: Matthew 13:31–35. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 13 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus put this parable to the people, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like the grain of mustard seed that a man took in his hand and sowed in his field; to the eye it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it grows it becomes greater than all the garden plants and turns into a tree, so that the birds of the air come down and settle in its branches. And he added this other parable: The kingdom of heaven is like the leaven that a woman took and mixed with three *sata* or pecks \[*celemines*\] of flour, until the whole dough was leavened. All these things Jesus said to the people in parables, without which he did not usually preach to them; so that what the Prophet had said was fulfilled: I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will publish mysterious things that have been hidden since the creation of the world.

2. The kingdom of heaven, says today's Gospel, is like a grain of mustard seed that a man sows in his field. By this it means, my brethren, that the doctrine of the Gospel, or the word of God, represented by the grain of mustard seed, leads us to heaven when we observe it faithfully. And so it seems fitting to me to make you know the excellence of the word of God contained in the holy Gospels, and the obligation you have to practise it.

3. To make you understand how important the word of God is for our salvation, consider that the devil, the enemy of our happiness, does all he can to prevent this word from producing any fruit in our souls. In former times God sent Elijah and other true prophets to stir up the Israelites to penance and draw them out of deceitful idolatry; and the devil sent the false prophets to flatter kings and peoples and keep them amused with feigned promises. The Son of God came on earth to teach men the way to heaven, and the devil raised up the Scribes and Pharisees to contradict the Saviour: they called him a seducer and a deceiver; they tried to catch him in his words; they spied on his conduct; they accused him of stirring up sedition in his nation, and finally they had him put to death on a cross. In our days, when some souls are moved by the instructions and exhortations of good preachers and want to leave the vanities and entertainments of the world to be sincerely converted, the devil uses the mouths of sinners to say that these instructions are scruples that take hold of the heads of simple people; that this is being too strict, since they themselves have not separated themselves entirely from the world; that there is no need to be so severe, nor is it fitting to drive everybody to despair.

4. Such, in short, are the devil's wiles to prevent the word of God from bearing fruit in us. But most of those who talk like this do not come to hear the divine instructions; or if they come, they are not duly attentive; or if they listen, they do not believe; or perhaps they come only to criticize the preacher. They do even more: they hate those who preach with great zeal and bear fruit in their hearers, because the truths these proclaim come to disturb them, so to speak, in their pleasures, and pour a certain bitterness into them by the threat they hold over them of the judgements of God and of an unhappy eternity. When at night you light a bonfire in the middle of a wood, the birds of the air flock to its brightness; but wolves, wild boars and foxes draw back and flee in haste. When in a town there is a good preacher who fervently proclaims the word of God and tells the truth to everyone, the good souls who want to attain their salvation flock to hear him; but those who steal other people's property like wolves, those who abandon themselves to filthy pleasures and relish them like the wild boars that wallow in the mud, those who are sly and deceitful like foxes, do not come to the sermon,

because in it their vices are laid bare; or if they come, it is without attention and without care, turning their thoughts to other things that are vain and even harmful. Not so the God-fearing souls, the children of God; for Jesus Christ says in his Gospel that he who is of God hears his words gladly; and so those who will not hear them are not his children.[1] The children of God not only hear them, but believe them and approve them, and never say, like the libertines, that they are exaggerations to frighten people, or that their doctrines are impracticable. Good souls, seeing that the truths that are preached are of great importance for their eternal salvation, are not content with hearing and believing them; they meditate on them, apply them to themselves, make good use of them and put them into practice.

5. Finally know, my brethren, that the most effective remedy for bringing straying souls back to the right road is the word of God. For the Lord in his divine Scriptures threatens the reprobate soul, as with a great punishment, under the figure of an abandoned vineyard over which he has forbidden the clouds to pour their wholesome rain. We see that he threatens the city of Jerusalem with taking away from it the prophets who could give it good warnings; he threatens the land that he will send it a famine, not for want of bread and water, but of the word of God.[2] When the sick man no longer takes food, or having taken it throws it up, his recovery is despaired of; when a baby refuses the breast, it is very near its end; when a Christian soul takes no care to hear the word of God, or having heard it pays no heed to it, it is very near its eternal damnation. Therefore, my brethren, strengthen more and more in your heart the desire to hear the divine word; say with the prophet David: Your word is the torch that lights my steps and the light of my paths: *Lucerna pedibus meis verbum tuum, et lumen semitis meis*; and add also: I have loved your precepts more than gold and precious stones: *Dilexi mandata tua super aurum et topazion*.[3] May God grant you the grace to know these truths, so that, ordering your actions by them, you may attain blessedness, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

On the word of God.

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

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. The grain of mustard seed is a figure of the divine word.

3. How hard Satan worked to prevent the fruit of the divine word in ancient times, at the coming of Jesus Christ, and even now.

4. Who come, and who do not come, to hear the divine word. Simile of the bonfire. The birds come; and the wolves, wild boars and foxes flee.

5. Alas, when God does not send anyone to preach the divine word!… Alas for the one who does not listen when God sends!… Come, listen, and listen gladly.

---

[1] John 8:47.

[2] Isa. 5:6; Amos 8:11.

[3] Source notes: Ps. 118(119):105 (the book misprints “108”) and 127.

13. Septuagesima Sunday: On the Importance of Salvation

Vol. I, pp. 102–106. Reading for Septuagesima Sunday. Gospel: Matthew 20:1–16. Original preacher not named.

Reading for Septuagesima Sunday

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 20 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus told his disciples this parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out at daybreak to hire labourers for his vineyard; and having agreed with them for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. Going out again about the third hour, he found others standing idle \[*mano sobre mano*, hand over hand\] in the market place, and he said to them: You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just. And they went. Twice more he went out, about the sixth hour and about the ninth hour, and did the same. Finally he went out about the eleventh hour and saw others still doing nothing, and he said to them: Why do you stand here idle all day? They answered him: Because no one has hired us. He said to them: Then you too go into my vineyard. When the sun had set, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward: Call the labourers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last and ending with the first. When those came who had gone about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. When at last the first came, they imagined they would be given more. But these too received each his denarius. And on receiving it they murmured against the householder, saying: These last have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the heat. But he answered one of them: Friend, I do you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go: I choose to give to this last as much as to you. May I not do what I will with what is mine? Or is your eye evil, or envious, because I am good? So the last in this world shall be first in the kingdom of heaven, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen.

2. It is right, my brethren, that I explain to you the parable of the householder who takes workmen to his vineyard to work in it. I will tell you, then, that this householder represents God the Father; the vineyard is a figure of the Christian, who is obliged to work for the good of his soul, that is, for his salvation; the price agreed on is the eternal reward that has been promised to us; the different hours at which each one is called to work are the different times of life at which he must apply himself to the work of his salvation, that is, some are converted earlier and others later; and the end of the day signifies the end of our life. In this you see, my brethren, that God calls us all to work in the vineyard of the Householder, that is, in the salvation of our souls. On this truth I am going to instruct you today, showing you how important it is for you to busy yourselves with the work of your salvation.

3. The last end of man is to work out his salvation for the glory of God. All Christians aspire to this end, but very few take the proper means to reach it. You see some people who have much intelligence, sound judgement and great learning, and who could merit great crowns for eternity, but who spend their whole life building fine houses, heaping up much money and acquiring inheritances; while others, with very little intelligence and even less learning, conquer paradise and build themselves a dwelling among the Saints and the blessed. Know, then, my brethren, that God wishes to lead you to heaven, not by your great intelligence nor by sublime learning, but by the practice of good works; and for this reason you must first of all work very earnestly to obtain your salvation.

4. Indeed, when Holy Scripture speaks of paradise and of the glory of heaven, it treats of it as of the hire of a house or of a farm, to teach us that if we wish to attain eternal life we must work, sow and fight. Each one shall receive his reward according to his labour, and a man shall reap only what he has sown.[1] A servant who had done no harm, but had spent the whole day, and even the whole year, in continual idleness, would he dare to ask for his wages? Consider your life here; see how you spend your time from morning to night, and from the beginning of the year to the end. What work do you do for God, or what alms do you sow in his bosom? For the ground and the soil in which we sow alms and works of charity is the bosom of God. Against what temptation do you fight? You think nothing of spending your money on feasting and other dangerous amusements, and you will not give a small alms each week to the shamefaced poor \[*pobres vergonzantes*: the respectable poor who are ashamed to beg\]; you let yourselves be carried away by every temptation that

presents itself; you give fresh liberty to your senses; you indulge your sensuality in everything; and what likelihood is there that you will receive the wages, the harvest, the reaping, which is the crown God has prepared for his faithful servants?

5. Second. You must work solely at the business of your salvation. This is what the Son of God taught St. Martha, telling her that she was too anxious and divided her cares among many different things, when only one was necessary: *Porro unum est necessarium*.[2] In the bosom of the Church there are various vocations and different professions: one is a merchant, another a craftsman, another a farmer, and so on. But to tell the truth, each of us has only one business, which is our salvation; the others, compared with this one, are nothing but pastimes and children's games.

6. The trouble is, says St. John Chrysostom, that we do as bad servants do, who, when their masters send them on some errand or business of importance, amuse and distract themselves with anything else. You do the same: God has sent you into this world to work out your salvation, and you do none of it; you busy yourselves with everything, neglecting what matters most to you; and when the hour of death approaches and you go to present yourselves at the judgement of God, then you will find yourselves without virtues, without merits, and perhaps laden with a thousand sins and abominations.

7. Reason and experience show you that the greater a loss, the more the danger of it is feared; and the more terrible an evil, the more one tries to avoid it. On a journey, for example, if you have to cross a river, you would rather cross it by a safe bridge than in a little boat. And is not the greatest of all losses to lose the kingdom of heaven and the possession of God? Is it not a great evil to be condemned to eternal torments and burn in hell? It is necessary, then, to avoid not only the danger, but even the shadow and the least appearance of falling into it. And since the Gospel and all the Saints, by their words and examples, condemn ambition, luxury, attachment to the goods of the earth and worldly amusements, you cannot doubt that in these things there is at least danger to salvation, and that you expose yourselves to damnation. Would it not be safest, in so important a business, to avoid all these things and to practise what the Gospel, the holy Fathers and the preachers teach you? All of them tell you that the surest way to go to heaven is to lead a Christian, devout, retired and penitent life. And if you find some flatterers who tell you that there is no need to be so strict, that you are not anchorites, that it is no great harm to want to get rich, to enjoy vanity, to spend your life in worldly amusements, would you not be out of your mind to believe them, to leave the certain for the uncertain, and the narrow road of the Christian life for the broad path of perdition? If, then, you have any prudence at all, must you not choose the most suitable means of obtaining an end so holy and so precious as the salvation of your soul and eternal happiness?

8. The true reason why so many people wish to be saved and so few succeed is that few set their hand to the work, or that they have only languid desires and imaginary plans. You must, then, apply yourselves in earnest to this business; look carefully at what hinders you from working out your salvation, and put it away from you: whether it is the habit of swearing, bad company, a near occasion of falling into sin; or whether it is that you go to confession only very seldom, or do not say the prayers proper to a Christian. My brethren, we must follow the advice of St. Paul, who wishes us to work effectively at the business of our salvation. What you must save is your soul; you have only one; if you lose it, all is lost for ever, without remedy, without recourse and without hope. The Saint wishes us to work with fear and trembling: *cum metu et tremore*.[3] What fear could be more reasonable than that of losing the kingdom of heaven and the possession of God? If you, a man of such intelligence, do not have this fear, you have no judgement; you are a fool. Seek, then, what is safest, my brethren; live holily all your life; and besides this say with David: To You, my God, it properly belongs to give salvation: *Domini est salus*.[4] Of myself I can only lose myself and fall headlong into sin. We humbly ask you for your divine grace, that, strengthened by it, we may obtain the death of the just, so as to bless and praise you eternally in heaven. Which is what I wish you, etc.

Let us say the act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for Septuagesima Sunday

On the importance of salvation.

Ite et vos in vineam meam, et quod justum fuerit dabo vobis (Matth. 20:4).

You too go and work in my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. What the parable signifies.

3. What is the end of man? What means do men use?

4. What works must be done to be saved?

5. We have only one business, that of being saved.

6. Simile of the servant who gets distracted.

7. We must leave what is dangerous and keep to what is safest.

8. We must apply ourselves in earnest to this business.

---

[1] Source notes: 1 Cor. 3:8; Gal. 6:7.

[2] Luke 10:41–42.

[3] Source note: Phil. 2:12.

[4] Ps. 3:9 (Vulgate) / 3:8.

14. Sexagesima Sunday: On Hardness of Heart

Vol. I, pp. 107–112. Reading for Sexagesima Sunday. Gospel: Luke 8:4–15. Original preacher not named.

Reading for Sexagesima Sunday

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 8 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. At that time, on the occasion of a very great gathering of people who were hurrying to Jesus from the towns, he told this parable: A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he scattered it, some fell along the path, where it was trodden underfoot and the birds of the air ate it; some fell on stony ground, and as soon as it sprang up it withered for lack of moisture; some fell among thorns, and the thorns, growing up with it, choked it. Some finally fell on good soil, and when it had sprung up it bore fruit a hundredfold. Having said this, he cried out in a loud voice: He who has ears to hear, let him attend well to what I say. His disciples asked him what the meaning of this parable was. He answered them thus: To you it has been granted to understand the mystery of the kingdom of God, while to the others, in punishment of their malice, it is spoken in parables, so that seeing they may not perceive, and hearing they may not understand. Now the meaning of the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The grains sown along the path signify those who hear it, yes; but then the devil comes and takes it out of their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. Those sown on stony ground are those who, when they have heard the word, receive it, yes, with joy; but it does not take root in them; and so they believe for a while, and in time of temptation they fall away. The seed that fell among thorns are those who heard it; but with the cares and riches and pleasures of life they end by choking it, and it never comes to bear fruit. Lastly, what falls on good soil denotes those who with a good and very sound heart hear the word of God and keep it carefully, and by means of patience bring forth ripe fruit.

2. You have just seen in the Gospel, my brethren, that the grain of seed spoken of signifies the word of God;[1] that this grain fell in four different places, and that only what fell on the good soil produced abundant fruit;

the rest bore no fruit because it fell on stony places. And what do the stony places signify? They are, my brethren, obstinate and hardened hearts; in these hearts the word of God bears no fruit. Nothing is more dangerous for salvation than this unhappy state, and this is what I propose to show you today.

3. Hardness of heart is a punishment from God far more to be feared than all temporal afflictions and troubles; it is the presage of reprobation and the last step towards eternal damnation. It is true, my brethren, that one does not fall suddenly into so deep an abyss; one goes down into it by various steps, and it is good to learn them so as to have a just fear of them. The first is abandonment by God, who, in punishment for the little account we have made of serving him, for our resistance to his inspirations and our ingratitude for his benefits, by a secret judgement, but always most just and most adorable, abandons a soul, withdraws from it his extraordinary favours, his protection and his particular assistance, and permits sin to penetrate to the centre of the heart and to unite itself with it in such a way that it seems impossible to root it out. Do not mistake what I have just told you: I do not say that there is any sinner so great, so sunk in crime, so desperate, that he cannot obtain pardon for his sins. It is certain that you can obtain pardon for all of them, however enormous, if you repent as you ought, if you ask pardon in good faith, and if you are resolved to do penance; but I say that there is a certain number of sins after which God, according to the ordinary course of his providence, does not grant those privileged graces with whose help the sinner is sincerely converted.[2]

4. You will tell me that the mercy of God is very great. Yes, certainly, very great, and more than can be imagined; it is immense, it is infinite; but God is not only merciful, he is also just, and these two perfections are not contrary to each other. He is merciful, because he waits for us patiently a long time and forgives us many sins; but he is just, and his justice must take its course; for there is a certain measure of sins, says St. Augustine, and each one is called to the judgement of God sooner or later, according as he has filled up his measure.

5. From this abandonment by God one easily goes down to the second step, which is insensibility. The sinner's heart becomes so hardened that it receives nothing good, and seems to be covered with a mass of lead. Lead, the weakest of all metals, which gives no ring when it is struck, is the symbol of the stupor that makes us insensible to all the spiritual losses that sin brings us, and even to all the painful accidents of life, which ought to make us enter into ourselves again and turn to God. It is to you I speak, hardened sinners: you are as it were proof against all the afflictions God sends you to draw you out of evil. You have lost a lawsuit, your wife or your child has died, you are continually ill, and nothing, nothing moves you to be converted. Not feeling the evils that befall you, nor those you do, you easily grow used to them, and you fall into the third step, which is relapse into sin.

6. I make the same reflection about married and single women. When someone first begins to persuade you to yield to an impure action, what alarm, what horror, how you draw back, how you refuse it! The first and second time you fell, what repugnance, what fear, what shame! After you had fallen, what sadness, what repentance, what remorse of conscience! It seemed to you that everyone was looking at you; and yet you have since yielded without resistance, you have committed the sin with full consent; and this is the fourth step of hardening, which consists in boldness and shamelessness in committing it. Decent modesty no longer covers your brow; all shame has disappeared; everyone knows your life, people talk of nothing but your infamous conduct, you are the subject of conversation and gossip, and in spite of this you go about with your head held high: what shamelessness! In this way one falls into the unhappy state of hardening. The hardened heart of a sinner has no horror of itself because it does not know itself; it is a state of lethargy, which means that the sinner is not only extremely ill and at the last extremity, but no longer feels his illness. Is it not true, O sinner, that you are stamped with this mark, that your heart is of this temper, and, what is worse, that you have no horror at seeing yourself in such a state? Is it not true that you are not sad or moved to repentance after committing many mortal sins, that you are not troubled, that you sleep, play and eat as cheerfully as if you had done nothing? You are never moved by any feeling of devotion. The holiest feasts, Christmas,

Easter, Pentecost, pass without these solemnities softening you or bringing you to confession. The admonitions of your father or mother, friends and relatives make no impression on you; sermons, the threats of eternal death, the affliction God sends you, nothing, nothing moves you. You are shameless in words and even in indecent actions; you do not fear imminent dangers; you make long journeys, you put out to sea, you quarrel with everyone, and you put yourself in danger of having your life taken from you in a state of mortal sin and damnation. Between you and hell there is almost nothing, and yet you do not tremble!

7. You have no compassion for the poor; your bowels are a tiger's, and the miseries of others do not move you to pity. With your buffoonery you despise and profane devotion, and the servants of God and religious souls with your backbiting, Christian virgins with your looks and impure desires, the churches with your irreverence, the Sacraments with your sacrileges, and the holy name of God with your blasphemies. You forget the sins of your past life, paying no heed to the strict account you will have to give; in a word, you respect neither God nor men, you do not fear divine justice, you think nothing of the warnings of men, and perhaps even what I am now telling you does not move you. These considerations do not enter your soul or make any impression on you; you want to stagnate in your vices and iniquities. It is a very bad sign, and you have much reason to fear that the measure of your sins is already full and that you are of the unhappy number of the reprobate. See here the wretched end to which hardness of heart leads. Ah, my dearly beloved brethren! I turn at this moment to those who perhaps have not yet fallen into this sad state. If any trace of good will still remains in you, follow the counsel of the Holy Spirit, who says these words: My son, if you have committed some sin, do not add obstinacy to it, nor insist on persevering in so bad a state; do not add impudence and shamelessness, nor glory in your sin.[3] Be ashamed and humble yourself; go with your head bowed and your heart pierced with sorrow, lest these words of the prophet David be said to you: Why do you glory in your malice, you who make your power serve iniquity? Therefore God will destroy you for ever.[4] God takes pleasure in confounding the proud, and the highest degree of pride is to make a display of sin. If you have offended God through the frailty of your flesh, appease him with the humility of your spirit.

8. *Non adjicias*: do not add sin to sin, do not go on offending the Lord further, lest your wound become altogether incurable. *Non adjicias*: do not add insensibility; feel the loss of grace you have incurred, and believe firmly that no greater evil can befall you than to offend God. *Non adjicias*: do not add even one sin to the one before: perhaps, if you relapse again, this fall will deal the last blow to your eternal damnation, and this new sin may be the one that fills the measure. Pray God that, if your sins have resolved him to abandon you, he may change his sentence on seeing that you change your life and conduct; that he may forgive you your past sins, preserve you from those to come, and give you his grace in this world and his glory in the next. I wish it to you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for Sexagesima Sunday

On hardness of heart.

> *Exiit qui seminat, seminare semen suum… et aliud cecidit super petram (Luc. 8:5–6).*
>
> *The sower went out to sow his seed… and some fell upon rock.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. What the parable signifies.

3. Hardness of heart, and the steps by which one goes down… If the rain is withheld, clay hardens; so God withdraws his graces… and this is the first step.

4. God is merciful, and he is also just… the number of sins.

5. Second step: insensibility to warnings, like lead, which neither rings nor takes an impression; so the sinner receives nothing good and makes no answer. Third step: not feeling the evils God sends to wake him; he attributes everything to other causes, but not to God.

6. Fourth step: boldness and shamelessness in sinning. Example of a sinful woman.

7. How the hardened sinner behaves.

8. Sinner, do not add sin to sin.

---

[1] *grano de mostaza*.

[2] Cf. Gen. 15:16; Matt. 23:32.

[3] Cf. Eccli.

[4] Source note: Ps. 51 (Vulgate; 52:3, 7).

15. Quinquagesima Sunday: On Intemperance, or Excess in Eating and Drinking

Vol. I, pp. 113–117. Reading for Quinquagesima Sunday. Gospel: Luke 18:31–43. Original preacher not named.

Reading for Quinquagesima Sunday

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 18 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus, taking the twelve Apostles aside, said to them: You see that we are going up to Jerusalem, where everything that was written by the Prophets about the Son of man will be fulfilled. For he will be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, and mocked, and scourged, and spat upon; and after they have scourged him they will put him to death, and on the third day he will rise again. But they understood none of these things; rather this was a language unknown to them, and they did not understand the meaning of the words spoken. And as he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; and hearing the crowd of people passing by, he asked what was happening. They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by on his way. And at once he began to cry out: Jesus, son of David, have pity on me. Those who went in front rebuked him to make him keep quiet. But he cried out much louder: Son of David, have pity on me. Jesus then stopped and ordered him to be brought to him. And when he was near, he asked him: What do you want me to do for you? Lord, he answered, that I may have my sight. Jesus said to him: Have it; and know that your faith has saved you. And at once he saw, and he followed him, proclaiming the greatness of God. And all the people, when they saw this, praised God.

2. The Church, my brethren, knowing the great disorders that reign at this time of Carnival among many of her children, has thought it very fitting to set before them the Gospel in which Jesus Christ warns his disciples of his approaching death and of all the outrages he was to suffer. She has supposed, with more than enough reason, that there would be some who would let themselves be carried away by the excesses to which others give themselves up, and for this she sets before them the thought of the death of their divine Saviour. Indeed, is there anything more shameful for Christians than to busy themselves with the follies commonly committed in these days, when their profession is to imitate their divine Master? For what does “Christian” mean, if not a disciple of Jesus Christ? Nevertheless I will say, to the confusion of those who say they profess the Christian religion, that most of them close their eyes to the example this divine Master gave them, and seem to have forgotten that they are Christians, boasting of committing the greatest excesses in eating and drinking, imitating in this the pagans in their profane festivals. Against these excesses I must speak to you today, showing you to what sins intemperance and gluttony lead.

3. You know well, my brethren, that the sixth commandment of the law of God, Thou shalt not commit fornication, forbids us every action, every word and every thought of impurity. You should likewise know that this same commandment forbids us intemperance, that is, all excess in eating and drinking, inasmuch as these excesses kindle in us the flames of concupiscence and incite us to impurity. The apostle St. Paul says so in very express terms: Beware of drunkenness, for it begets lust: *Nolite inebriari vino, in quo est luxuria*.[1] And so, my brethren, I propose to show you: first, the causes that usually lead us to intemperance; second, the bad effects it produces; third, the remedies that must be applied.

4. The propensity to gluttony is as it were rooted in our nature; we have inherited it from our first mother, who let herself be carried away so far by this vice that she ruined all her posterity through the craving for an apple.[2] She believed what the cunning serpent told her when he assured her that she would not die; and she also believed that her fault would be pardonable. So the first cause that makes us fall into this sin is that we ordinarily flatter ourselves and imagine a thousand pretexts to persuade ourselves that there is no fault at all in satisfying our sensuality. It is no wrong to feed ourselves, people commonly say; this is necessary so as not to weaken our strength and not to shorten our days. Others fall into this sin out of compliance with those who invite them to some feast or other dangerous amusements, after the example of Adam, who ate of the apple to please his wife.

5. Second. The vice of intemperance is contracted by habit and custom, and this habit is a source of countless sins. For indeed, what impious words are not spoken in public places, what mockery is not made of holy works, of devotion and of devout people! What oaths, what filthy and disgusting expressions! In these gatherings, when the blood is inflamed with wine, people pass to quarrels, to blows, and sometimes to killings. In them you spend, eating and drinking to excess, the little money you have, while your children cry that they are hungry, and at the same time you leave your poor wife without bread and without comfort; and this regularly happens on a feast day or a Sunday, which aggravates your sin much more, so that Sunday is no longer the day of the Lord but the day of Bacchus and the other infamous divinities of the pagans. While you are in these places of riotous and senseless amusement, you abandon your children to themselves, and they hasten to go astray after your example. When you come home from those gatherings, you throw everything into disorder, as a furious beast would, and there you utter a thousand follies and impertinences, so that by this bad behaviour you make your children lose the respect they owe you. And will you be surprised that, giving them such a bad example, you lose all your authority over them, and all your warnings make not the slightest impression on them?

6. Such are the evils into which intemperance ordinarily plunges people. Do you who are subject to this sin wish to free yourselves from it? Then leave the occasions; flee those false friends who are accustomed to lead you into the near occasion of falling into vice; and you will easily avoid meeting them if you come often to the High Mass, if you attend the sermon and the divine offices. Break with them courageously once and for all; find some decent excuse for not going to the festivals of this or that town, to the banquets, the picnics \[*meriendas*\] and other occasions of intemperance; ask your confessor to give you this as a penance, and it will be an offering very pleasing in the eyes of God, which costs nothing and does not harm your health. At the same time, in satisfaction for so many sins as you have committed, you should make a firm resolution to abstain for a year, two, three, as long as you can, from going to the places where time is spent in foolish and harmful amusements. At first it will seem a little difficult to you; but if you are well resolved to live as Christians and to work out your salvation, you will easily overcome this difficulty; and once you have managed to abstain from such vain pleasures, it will no longer cost you the least effort.

7. I have told you that the vice of intemperance is contracted by bad habit; now I tell you that it is lost by a contrary custom and by ceasing from it. Accustom yourselves little by little to sobriety; get used to mixing water with your wine, for it is better to do this than to stagnate in your bad habit. I have pointed out to you the terrible evils drunkenness brings with it: by it you will lose consciousness and the use of reason, for you

make brutes of yourselves, you put yourselves in the class of the beasts and even somewhat lower, since a beast never drinks except when it is thirsty. You ruin your health, you destroy your body, your good name, your temporal goods, and, what is more than all, you lose your soul. Hear these words of St. Paul: I assure you that those who commit drunkenness and excesses in eating and drinking shall not possess the kingdom of God.[3] And see what the Holy Spirit tells us in the book of Proverbs: Who is it that falls into many misfortunes? Who makes a father unhappy? Who is subject to quarrels, to wounds and other grievous accidents? Is it not those who take pleasure in drinking? And so let us say with the Wise Man: Take away from me the intemperance of the mouth: *Aufer a me ventris concupiscentias*. Let us ask him for the grace not to eat and drink like brutes, but to restrain our sensuality, so that we may become worthy to be admitted one day to the table of the Lord in his kingdom and to taste there the eternal delights with which God fills his Saints. Which is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for Quinquagesima Sunday

On intemperance, or excess in eating and drinking.

> *Caecus quidam sedebat secus viam (Luc. 18:35).*
>
> *A certain blind man was sitting by the way.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. The excesses of Carnival; reminders of the Passion of Jesus Christ.

3. In the sixth commandment intemperance is forbidden to us.

4. We go to excess in the same way as Eve, as Adam…

5. Intemperance is the source of countless sins.

6. To free yourselves… flee your companions, avoid the occasions…

7. Accustom yourselves to the contrary; have a horror of the harm that follows…

---

[1] Source note: Eph. 5 (v. 18).

[2] Gen. 3:6.

[3] Source note: Gal. 5:21.

16. First Sunday of Lent: On Abstinence and Fasting

Vol. I, pp. 118–123. Reading for the First Sunday of Lent. Gospel: Matthew 4:1–11. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the First Sunday of Lent

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 4 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be tempted there by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. Then the tempter came to him and said: If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread. But Jesus answered him: It is written: Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word or decree that comes from the mouth of God. After this the devil took him to the holy city of Jerusalem, set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him: If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here; for it is written: He has given you into the charge of his angels, who will bear you up in the palms of their hands, lest your foot strike against a stone. Jesus answered him: It

is also written: You shall not tempt the Lord your God. Again the devil took him up a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and said to him: All these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me. Then Jesus answered him: Begone from there, Satan; for it is written: You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve. With that the devil left him; and behold, angels came and ministered to him.

2. Jesus Christ, my brethren, allowed himself to be tempted in order to teach us in this way how we must resist temptations. He did not do what the devil suggested to him, but always set the word of God against him. This is the example the divine Saviour gives us for such occasions, namely, always to set against the devil the commandments of God and the precepts of his Gospel. But he did not stop there; he also set against him the powerful weapon of fasting, for Jesus Christ had already fasted forty days and forty nights when the devil dared to tempt him; which teaches us that fasting and prayer are a great remedy against temptations.

3. Since we are at the beginning of Lent, the time when the Church has prescribed to her children abstinence from meat and the observance of fasting, I have thought it fitting to instruct you on this subject.

4. I have to show you, my brethren, that the abstinence from meat and the fast you must observe in this holy season is a precept that binds every Christian, being a commandment that God lays upon us through his Church, which imposes this obligation on us, commanding us to fast on the four Ember Days, several vigils and all of Lent; and Jesus Christ moreover tells us in his Gospel that he who will not hear the Church is to be regarded as a heathen and a publican.[1] Not to fast when there is no legitimate excuse is to disobey the Church and to break an apostolic commandment. I say apostolic, because the institution of Lent and of the fast has its origin in the time of the Apostles; for all the ancient Fathers of the Church who lived in the first centuries speak of fasting in their writings as a practice that had always been in use: witnesses of this are St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Jerome and Tertullian. The most ancient councils establish penalties and pronounce anathemas against those who, without bodily necessity, violate the fasts of the Church; and you should know that this loving mother has had various excellent reasons for this institution. First: to honour the retreat and fast that the Lord kept in the desert for forty days, and to imitate it in some way; that is, to suffer something in a spirit of penance and for the love of God. The apostle St. Paul declares it in very express terms: Let us show, he says, by fastings, watchings and labours, that we are servants of God.[2] Second: Lent was instituted for the salvation of our souls, to purify us from our sins by the practice of penance, and to dispose us to receive Jesus Christ in the holy Eucharist at the great festival of Easter. Third: Lent is also kept in order to celebrate with works of penance the death of the Lord, that is, the time in which he deigned to suffer the torments of his Passion and to die shamefully on a cross. No doubt you will understand that this time must be spent in sadness and not in merriment; in going without many amusements that are allowed you at other times; in a word, this time must be spent in suffering and enduring something for a God who, as St. Paul says, loved us first and gave himself up to death for us. See, then, the reasons why abstinence and the observance of fasting have been commanded by the Church.

5. I know well that the libertines, those who love their bodies too much, those who like ease and comfort, those who, as St. Paul says, have no other God than their belly,[3] put forward plenty of pretexts to exempt themselves from keeping Lent. They say that abstinence and fasting weaken the body, ruin the health, shorten life, and that he who fasts is his own murderer; but these pretexts are false and childish. Is it found, perhaps, that good Christians who keep Lent and fast live a shorter time on that account than others? Reason and experience show the very opposite; for it is noticed that most of those who lead an orderly life enjoy it for longer. Besides, fasting was not instituted to flatter the flesh but to mortify it, and to serve as matter for the penance we are all obliged to do. The law of Christianity is a law of mortification; and to this the words of the apostle St. Peter allude when he says: Jesus Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps; and likewise those of St. Paul: If we suffer with Jesus Christ, we shall also reign with him.[4]

6. But let us suppose for a moment that by fasting one's health is upset and weakened a little: are we then dispensed from fasting? That will depend on the circumstances. I know well that the Church is an indulgent mother who makes allowance for the weakness of her children and does not oblige them to fast when they cannot do so without notable inconvenience, or when their occupation obliges them to very heavy labour which they could not perform while fasting. But who would dare to say that one ought not to fast and practise certain mortifications, on the advice of a prudent confessor, to tame the flesh when it rebels and incites us to sin, even if it were thought that such penances might weaken our body a little? No director, no preacher will ever say so. On the contrary he would say: My brother, you, for example, are in the flower of your age; your nature feels the flames of concupiscence; nothing is closer to it than your soul; if the fire is kindled in your body, there is great danger that your senses will perceive it and give some consent to impurity. What, then, will the Christian do to prevent his soul, so closely united to his body, from falling into eternal torments? Will it not be better, without ruining and destroying the body, to weaken it somewhat with fasts and mortifications? In doing so he commits no injustice; rather he does his body a good, because he spares it the punishments it has deserved; for nothing so appeases the wrath of God as fasting and other mortifications, when they proceed from a true conversion and repentance of heart. Finally, if it were permitted not to fast or practise other austerities on the specious pretext that they shorten life, we should have to condemn all that the ancient anchorites did, all the first Christians who kept such long fasts, and the pious souls who, fasting frequently, also interrupt their sleep to spend themselves in prayer and meditation. But let us leave all these frivolous pretexts which little religion, self-love and the softness that reigns in our days suggest to most Christians; let us hold only to the words of the apostle St. Paul in the epistle of this day, in which he tenderly exhorts the Corinthians to imitate the example of the Saviour: Let us show ourselves, he says, such as the ministers of God ought to be, in much patience, in evils, in pressing needs, in extreme afflictions, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, in purity and constant meekness, in kindness and sincere charity.[5]

7. What a lesson for us, my brethren! Show also that you are servants of God by patience and meekness in the evils of this life, and by fasting and charity. These are the virtues and dispositions that must accompany our fasting, and that we must practise especially in Lent in order to conform ourselves to the intentions of our mother the Church. The practice of all of them helps to purify us from our sins, and this is the fruit we must draw from this holy season. Fasts, watchings, retirement, silence, prayers, alms: in these we must spend ourselves. Those who have not the health or strength for the one must apply themselves with more zeal to practising the other; in this way they will show that they are servants of God and true children of the Church.

8. A woman will say that she cannot fast because she is pregnant or nursing. Very well, says St. John Chrysostom, God excuses you; but he asks another fast of you: he asks you to abstain from irritation and anger, to bridle your tongue and not to make rash judgements; this abstinence will not harm the fruit you carry within you.

9. You cannot fast, one will say to another, because you have a weak stomach. Very well, God may accept this excuse from you; but can you not forgive your enemy, purge your heart of that hatred which fills it with gall and bitterness, and say some gentle word to your neighbour to win his heart? You are ill, one will say to that other woman; you must eat meat. Obey the doctor and the confessor; but eat only what has been prescribed for you, and mortify your whims in everything else.

10. And you who fast, do not fast with your mouth alone: it is not the mouth alone that has offended God. Make all the members of your body fast too; restrain your looks and your words; mortify all your senses with great modesty; keep retired, and do not allow yourself the satisfactions that might be permitted you at another time. Give alms to the poor; give them what you would spend if you did not fast, so that the Saviour may say to you: I was hungry, and you gave me to eat. Visit the sick, and practise the other works of charity and mercy.[6] In this way you will fast as true Christians, you will obey the Church and imitate in part the fast of Jesus Christ; you will honour the time of his passion and death, you will be well disposed to receive him at

Easter, and you will deserve to see him one day face to face in heaven. Which is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the First Sunday of Lent

On abstinence and fasting.

> *Cum jejunasset quadraginta diebus et quadraginta noctibus, postea esuriit (Matth. 4:2).*
>
> *When Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Jesus allowed himself to be tempted to teach us how we must defend ourselves.

3. Because it is the beginning of Lent I will speak of fasting…

4. God commands it through his Church: it is an apostolic commandment. Reasons: to imitate Jesus; to do penance; to honour the passion and death of Jesus.

5. The pretexts of worldly people are frivolous and of no value.

6. We are obliged to fast to save our soul.

7. We must accompany fasting with the other virtues.

8. Whoever cannot fast, let him mortify himself in other things.

9. You cannot fast because you are weak, ill? Mortify yourself…

10. You fast? Fast also with your faculties and senses…

---

[1] Matt. 18:17.

[2] 2 Cor. 6:4–5.

[3] Phil. 3:19.

[4] 1 Pet. 2:21; 2 Tim. 2:12 (cf. Rom. 8:17).

[5] Source note: 2 Cor. 6 (vv. 4–6), the Epistle of the First Sunday of Lent in the old Missal.

[6] Matt. 25:35–36.

17. Second Sunday of Lent: On the Commandments of God

Vol. I, pp. 124–128. Reading for the Second Sunday of Lent. Gospel: Matthew 17:1–9. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Second Sunday of Lent

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 17 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus took with him Peter, and James, and John his brother; and going up with them alone on a high mountain, he was transfigured in their presence, so that his face became shining like the sun, and his garments white as snow. And at the same time Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with him about what he was to suffer in Jerusalem. Then Peter spoke up and said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, let us make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah. Peter was still speaking when a bright cloud came and covered them; and at the same instant a voice sounded from the cloud, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him. At this voice the disciples fell on their faces to the ground and were seized with great fear. But Jesus came to them, touched them, and said to them: Rise, and do not be afraid. And lifting up their eyes they saw no one but Jesus alone. And as

they came down from the mountain Jesus charged them, saying: Tell no one what you have seen until the Son of man has risen from the dead.

2. It was said in the Gospel of this day that Jesus Christ was transfigured on Mount Tabor; that is, that he showed himself in all his glory, splendour and majesty, between Moses and Elijah, to his beloved disciples St. Peter, St. John and St. James. No doubt you will want to know, my brethren, why Jesus Christ chose to appear in this state of transfiguration. The holy Fathers say that it was to give us some signs of the brightness that glorified bodies are to have, and so that the thought of this state to which we are called might sweeten the afflictions and labours we have to suffer in this life. It was also said that on the same mountain a cloud appeared, and from it came a voice that said: This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear him. But what is it to hear Jesus Christ, if not to hear his word and put it into practice? This truth gives me occasion to speak to you today about the observance of the commandments of the law of God.

3. It is a wonderful thing, my brethren, to see the force and urgency with which God charged his people to remember his commandments and keep them faithfully. First: he himself wrote them with his finger on two tablets of stone, to make us understand that we should take care to engrave on our hearts what the Lord deigned to write with his own hand. Second: he had a tabernacle built, and in it placed an ark of incorruptible wood, all covered with fine gold, to keep these tablets in it. Third: he commanded that the king of his people should write these holy commandments with his own hand. Fourth: he commanded that they be written at the entrance and over all the doors of the houses, that they be imprinted deeply on their minds, taught to their children, and meditated on in the city and in the field, day and night.[1]

4. And since rewards are the spur of the human heart, he made the most advantageous promises to those who would keep them exactly. If you keep my commandments, he told them, I will send you the rain in due time and in the favourable season; your land will be very fertile and the trees laden with fruit; your harvests will be so abundant that you will scarcely have time to gather them in.[2] Note, my brethren, that the Lord made these great promises to the Jews, whom he was accustomed to reward even in this life with earthly goods when they kept his commandments, and to punish with temporal penalties when they broke them, because they were ungrateful and coarse. But to those who faithfully observe his law he has promised spiritual and heavenly goods, eternal rewards so great that the happiness I have just spoken of is only a shadow and figure of them.

5. And this is why we must keep the commandments of God, not in a self-interested and covetous spirit, but out of filial love; not as slaves, but as grateful and submissive children. Thus when the Israelites went every year to the temple, they sang along the roads Psalm 118, which speaks of nothing but the commandments of God;[3] to teach us that in order to go to heaven we must necessarily keep them from the heart and with great affection. This is what the Royal Prophet did, who repeats so many times in his Psalms: I have loved your law, I have relished your commandments; they are the joy of my heart: *Exultatio cordis mei sunt*; I have loved them more than gold, more than precious stones and all the riches of the world; and they are sweeter to me than honey: *et dulciora super mel et favum.*[4]

6. Finally, to make you understand how reasonable, just and lovable these commandments are, let us suppose that there are only two cities in the world, but peopled with all the men on earth; and that in one all the inhabitants, great and small, men and women, keep all the commandments of God exactly, while in the other all the inhabitants break them openly and do not hesitate to do whatever they please. Would not the first city be an earthly paradise, a place of peace and quiet, an image of the state of innocence? There would be no envy, backbiting, quarrels, enmities or injustices; no one would fear being deceived, betrayed or robbed; the mother would not mistrust the prudence of her daughters, nor the husband the fidelity of his wife, nor the master the honesty of his servants; there would be no need of bolts on the doors, keys on the chests or watchmen in the vineyards. On the contrary, the second city, in which no one would think himself bound to keep the commandments of God, would be a forest peopled with robbers who would rob one another, and a

sty of swine wallowing in the mire of every kind of infamy.

7. My brethren, have we not reason to give thanks to God for having given us such holy, such just and such wholesome commandments? Is it not a signal favour that he has deigned to speak to us and make his will known to us? He has not done so with every nation, says the Royal Prophet: *Non fecit taliter omni nationi*.[5] Must we not, then, submit to them with the greatest respect? And is there anything more ungrateful than to live against the will of him who gave us life, and to refuse to obey one who commands us only so as to have reason to reward our obedience and submission? When an earthly king publishes edicts and commands something, you do not resist or say "It is impossible for me to obey"; and when the King of heaven publishes his ordinances, you pay no heed to his divine laws. The kings of the earth command with threats: "This is our pleasure," they say, "under pain of such and such a punishment." The King of heaven commands with kindness and gentleness, saying to us: Hear, my people, believe me, acknowledge no other God but me.[6] The kings of the earth sometimes make ordinances that are difficult and very burdensome to their subjects; they punish those who break them, but they do not reward those who keep and fulfil them. The commandments of the King of kings are easy: *Mandata ejus gravia non sunt*. Not to swear, not to steal, not to kill, not to commit adultery or fornication: all are for the benefit of his subjects. For in truth, what interest has God in whether you steal or not, in whether you honour your father or not? But for you your salvation is at stake in it, as the Lord says: *Ut bene sit tibi*, that it may be well with you;[7] for when you do not keep them you are tormented by remorse of conscience, by your passions, and by fear of the punishments that are prepared for you.

8. My brethren, let us say with St. Augustine: Lord, you may command whatever you please, *jube quod vis*. You cannot command anything that is not just, because you are perfectly fair; you command nothing that is not sweet and useful, because you are a Father and your yoke is light; but give us what you command: *da quod jubes*.[8] There is much opposition in our corrupt nature to your divine commandments; but you are almighty and can communicate your divine grace to us, so that, strengthened by it, we may find it easy to subdue and overcome that nature. You have promised through your Prophets that you would write your laws on our hearts;[9] these are as hard as stones: soften them, and engrave your holy laws in their innermost depths, so that we may observe them, and you may have reason to crown our merits, which are your gifts, in eternal blessedness. Which I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Second Sunday of Lent

On the commandments of God.

> *Hic est Filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi bene complacui; ipsum audite (Matth. 17:5).*
>
> *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Why was Jesus Christ transfigured?

3. The force with which God commanded his commandments to be kept. He gave them. A golden tabernacle to keep them. The king was to write them. He commanded them to be written on the doors of the houses…

4. Temporal and spiritual promises to those who keep the commandments.

5. The Hebrews, when they went to the temple, recited Psalm 118; so we…

6. Comparison of two cities, in one of which the commandments are kept and in the other not: what a difference!…

7. We must thank God for having given us these commandments: we must keep them. An earthly king commands… the King of heaven commands… what a different manner!…

8. Command, Lord, and give us grace to do what you command.

---

[1] Exod. 31:18; 25:10–16; Deut. 17:18; 6:6–9.

[2] Lev. 26:3–5.

[3] Psalm 118 in the Vulgate numbering (Psalm 119 in modern Bibles).

[4] Ps. 118 (119):111, 127, 47; Ps. 18 (19):11.

[5] Ps. 147:20 (Vulgate 147:9).

[6] Cf. Ps. 80 (81):9–10.

[7] Deut. 5:16; Eph. 6:3.

[8] St. Augustine, *Confessions* X, 29.

[9] Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:26.

18. Third Sunday of Lent: On the Sin of Impurity

Vol. I, pp. 129–135. Reading for the Third Sunday of Lent. Gospel: Luke 11:14–28. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Third Sunday of Lent

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 11 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus was casting out a devil, and it was dumb; and when he had cast out the devil, the dumb man spoke, and all the people were greatly amazed. But there were some there who said: It is by Beelzebub, prince of the devils, that he casts out devils. And others, to tempt him, asked him to show them some sign from heaven. But Jesus, seeing into their thoughts, said to them: Every kingdom divided into opposing parties will be destroyed, and a house divided into factions goes to its ruin. If, then, Satan is also divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? since you say that I cast out devils by Beelzebub. And if I cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub, by whose power do your sons cast them out? Therefore they themselves shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the finger or power of God, it is evident that the kingdom of God has already come upon you. When a strong man, well armed, guards the entrance of his house, all his goods are safe. But if one stronger than he attacks and overcomes him, he will strip him of all the armour in which he trusted so much, and divide his spoils. He who is not with me is against me; and he who does not gather with me scatters. When an unclean spirit has gone out of a man, it goes through dry places seeking a place to rest; and finding none, it says: I will return to my house from which I came out. And coming to it, it finds it swept and well adorned. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits worse than itself, and they enter that house and make their dwelling there; so that the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. As he was saying these things, behold, a woman raised her voice from the midst of the people and cried out: Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that nursed you. But Jesus answered: Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice.

2. The Gospel of this day tells us through St. Luke that Jesus was casting out a devil, and that it was dumb; and when he had cast out the devil, the dumb man spoke, and the crowds marvelled. Such is the state of a man abandoned to his passions, who lives in mortal sin without any remorse. His perverse inclination makes him as it were the slave of the devil; he entirely forgets God, never thinks of his divine majesty, never speaks of his divine attributes; and he is dumb in everything that concerns his salvation. There is yet another circumstance in our Gospel that deserves your attention: that this impure spirit of which Jesus Christ speaks wants to return to the house he left, and finding it clean and adorned, goes to take seven other spirits worse than himself, who enter the house and live in it, so that the last state of this man is worse than the first.

3. All this, my brethren, represents the state of a soul that had fallen only once into a sin of impurity and, having confessed and done penance, had recovered its first state; but which, having grown slack in devotion and not keeping watch over itself, listened to the temptation of the evil spirit, threw itself into other similar sins, heaped them one upon another and became so habituated to them that it became the devil's prey to such a degree that this impure spirit has his home and dwelling in it. A horrible state into which the sin of impurity unhappily brings a good many Christians. I wish, therefore, my brethren, to instil in you a great horror of it; and on this I have resolved to instruct you today.

4. You already know what the sixth commandment says: Thou shalt not commit fornication. What God forbids us in this commandment the catechism teaches you: he forbids us every kind of impurity in deeds and words; he forbids also everything that can lead us to this vice, such as excess in eating and drinking, shows, the reading of love stories \[*libros amorosos*\], obscene pictures, looks, indecent words and immodest dress. On this I will tell you, my brethren, something that will seem strange to you, but which is all too true: namely, that there is no commandment broken so frequently, in so many places, or by so many kinds of people.

5. Notice, I beg you, that there is no kind of vice that has so many circumstances that change the species of the sin as this one. The others usually have only three or four circumstances at most; but this one has many, which must be declared in confession when one has fallen into it in deed or in desire; for there is no kind of vice in which so great a number of sins is committed as in lust. A drunkard gets drunk once a day at most; a thief does not steal every day; a killer kills only on occasions usually far apart from one another; but he who has abandoned himself to the vice of impurity commits mortal sins without number, because he may think of committing this sin many times in a single day, and the voluntary thought alone is a sin, even if there is no intention of going on to the deed; so that if with full deliberation you dwell on the thought of the impure act, you break this commandment. Consider, besides this, the whole malice of this sin, for there is no faculty of your soul or of your body that it does not turn into a weapon to offend God. You use your understanding to see how you may deceive married women or single ones; your will to idolise a wretched creature; your memory to recall the criminal pleasures to which you have given yourselves. You employ your eyes in casting immodest and lustful glances, in looking at nude pictures or figures, or in reading books that are dangerous and harmful to modesty. You use your ears to listen to the endearments of men who seek only means to ruin you, or who sing you indecent songs. You use your tongue to say filthy and provocative things; in a word, you use all your members, which should be the members of a child of God, to make them the instruments of a harlot. And finally you use your clothes and whatever is meant to cover your head as snares to ruin souls, through the studied vanity you put into all these things.

6. Nor does it stop there: this sin often causes your temporal ruin and makes you lose your goods; for when you are slaves of this passion you stop at nothing to satisfy it: you must humour the wishes of that unhappy woman, give her presents, and provide everything that flatters her vanity or her gluttony. It may also happen that, on the occasion of this criminal intercourse, you lose your life at the hands of that woman's husband, or that a woman loses hers at the hand of her husband; and carried in this state to the judgement of God, you cannot but fall into hell; and then, in the midst of the torments, you will recognise your folly, but you will no longer be able to remedy it. Wretch that I am, you will say: for a passing pleasure, for an instant's delight, I find myself dead and punished, and shall be so for ever. This sin makes you die a spiritual death and an eternal death. The lot of the lustful, it is said in the Apocalypse, is a pool of fire and burning sulphur.

7. My brethren, in order not to fall into this sin and to resist temptation, it is necessary first to acknowledge with Solomon that no one can be continent unless God gives him this virtue;[1] we must, then, ask God for the gift of purity with all the strength of our hearts; implore the intercession of the most holy Virgin, mother of all purity; and consider all that the Holy Spirit tells us of this vice in Holy Scripture. Do you not know, says the great apostle St. Paul, that your bodies are members of Jesus Christ? And shall I dare to take from Jesus

Christ the members that are united to him and make up his body, and make them the members of a shameless woman? Do you not know that your members are temples of the Holy Spirit? God will destroy him who violates his temple.[2] If you live according to the flesh, you will die; if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you will live.[3] Know and understand well that no fornicator or unclean person has any share in the kingdom of Christ and of God.[4]

8. Call to mind that countless number of Saints who have won the kingdom of heaven by the victories they gained over this enemy within the house \[*enemigo doméstico*\]; think of the multitude of virgins who chose rather to hand their bodies over to torments and death than lose their virginity.

9. We have great examples of the way the Saints fought and overcame temptations to impurity. St. Benedict, patriarch of the monks of the West, who lived in the sixth century of the Church, having renounced everything at the age of sixteen, shut himself up in a cave to give himself entirely to prayer and keep himself pure from the corruption of the world; but even so he could not avoid temptation. The thought of a woman he had once seen in Rome came into his imagination so strongly that, to free himself from it, he went and rolled among thorns and nettles. On this occasion the pain he felt stifled in him all the evil thoughts with which the tempter had tried to corrupt him; and having come out victorious from so hard a combat, he received from God, as the reward of his fidelity, the grace of being thereafter free from such temptations.[5]

10. St. Bernard, first abbot of Clairvaux in the twelfth century, had received an excellent upbringing from his mother, and God granted him the gift of inviolable purity of body and soul, a virtue that young people ought to prize highly. The impure spirit attacked him in many ways, and there was an occasion when the tempter thought he had gained some advantage over him. The Saint's eyes had lingered in looking at a woman; and although it seemed that his heart had not the least part in it, he looked at her with too much curiosity. But no sooner had he reflected on his fault than he resolved to make up for it with rigorous satisfaction: moved by a holy indignation against himself, he went and plunged up to his neck into a pond of water as cold as ice, where he stayed so long that the cold almost extinguished all the natural heat of his body. With this the grace of God cooled in him all the ardour of concupiscence and gave him an ardent and inviolable love of chastity.

11. St. Thomas Aquinas, who lived in the thirteenth century and had been brought up in devotion, having renounced the world, had to suffer great opposition from his relatives, and above all from his brothers, who had him shut up in a castle, to which they brought a woman of evil life to corrupt him. But the holy young man, who felt within himself a more dangerous enemy, had no other weapons than fervent prayer against so terrible a temptation; and finding himself hard pressed by the insolence of that woman, moved by the Spirit of God he seized a burning brand from the fire and chased the unhappy woman with it until he put her to headlong flight. Having come out victorious from this combat, he recognised that he owed the victory to the goodness of God, whom he begged with such fervour, sighs and tears to preserve him from such temptations that at last he received from his Majesty the gift of continence, in such a way that, as he himself declared at the end of his days, he never again felt the stirrings of concupiscence.

12. Marvel, then, at these examples; make them serve for your edification; and seeing that you are so far from them, humble yourselves before God, acknowledging your misery and the need you have to implore his help with fervent prayers. Keep far away from all the occasions of this sin, and take care to avoid the flattery and the shameless words of libertine young men. As soon as anyone says to you the least word tending to dishonour you and touching your modesty and decency, tell your father or your mother; if you do not, you expose yourselves to ruin. Flee the occasions, dangerous conversations, and being alone with suspect young men. My brethren, you can never take enough care to watch over your sons, and still more over your daughters, so as to know, when you do not see them, how they behave with the men you are obliged to keep in your house.

13. If we all knew how great an evil it is to offend God, we should fear more than death not only sin but also whatever can serve as an allurement or an occasion of it, both in ourselves and in our neighbours. Leave the house in which there are dangerous occasions for you; leave it at once, or leave the place if necessary, without waiting for anything; for the salvation of your soul must be more precious to you, and you must value it more than all the things of the world. If for the love of God you give up the advancement of your affairs or the hope of your wages, God will provide by some other way you do not know; he will bless this courageous act and make it serve for the temporal good of your body and the eternal good of your soul. Which is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Third Sunday of Lent

On the sin of impurity.

> *Cum immundus spiritus exierit de homine… dicit: Revertar in domum meam unde exivi (Luc. 11:24).*
>
> *When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man… he says: I will return to my house from which I came out.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. The state of a soul that, forgiven the sin of impurity, falls back into the same.

4. The sixth commandment forbids impurity and all the things that lead to it.

5. The sin of impurity is horrible by reason of its circumstances; the number of sins; the faculties and senses.

6. It makes one lose temporal goods, life, heaven…

7. In order not to fall, you will make use of prayer; of reflection…

8. Call to mind the Saints who have gained the victory…

9. How St. Benedict was tempted, and how he conquered.

10. How St. Bernard punished a look at a woman.

11. How St. Thomas was tempted, and how he conquered.

12. Marvel at these examples; keep away from the occasions.

13. If one understood what it is to offend God, how one would flee sin and all its occasions!…

---

[1] Wis. 8:21.

[2] Source note: 1 Cor. 6 (vv. 15, 19); 1 Cor. 3:17.

[3] Source note: Rom. 8:13.

[4] Eph. 5:5 (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9–10).

[5] St. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* II, 2.

19. Fourth Sunday of Lent: On Confession

Vol. I, pp. 136–141. Reading for the Fourth Sunday of Lent. Gospel: John 6:1–15. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Fourth Sunday of Lent

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 6 of St. John, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus went over to the other side of the sea of Galilee, which is the lake of Tiberias. And as a great multitude of people followed him, because they saw the miracles he worked on the sick, he went up a mountain and sat down there with his disciples. The Passover, the great feast of the Jews, was already near. Jesus, then, lifting up his eyes and seeing a very great crowd coming towards him, said to Philip: Where shall we buy bread to feed all these people? But he said this to test him, for he himself knew well what he would do. Philip answered him: Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to take a mouthful. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him: There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fishes; but what is that among so many? But Jesus said: Make the people sit down. The place was covered with grass. So they sat down, about five thousand men. Jesus then took the loaves and, after giving thanks to his eternal Father, distributed them through his disciples among those who were seated; and he did the same with the fishes, giving everyone as much as they wanted. When they were filled, he said to his disciples: Gather up the pieces left over, so that nothing may be lost. They did so, and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over after all had eaten. When they saw the miracle Jesus had worked, those men said: This is surely the great Prophet who is to come into the world. Therefore Jesus, knowing that they were about to come and take him by force and make him king, fled again to the mountain by himself.

2. The miracle Jesus Christ worked, feeding five thousand men abundantly with five loaves and two fishes, should make us understand that if we approach the Son of God with the same confidence as those people did, he will now extend his providence to all our needs as he did then. You certainly marvel, my brethren, that Jesus Christ fed five thousand men with so few loaves; but he works the same miracle with us, for he feeds all men with the grains of wheat that he multiplies every day in the earth; which is no less wonderful, and ought to be meditated on with more leisure and care.

3. After these reflections on our Gospel, I come to a circumstance from which I shall draw the matter of this instruction: when Jesus Christ worked this miracle, it is said that the Passover was very near, the great festival of the Jews, and that a countless number of them came from all parts of Judea and gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate it. The Passover of the Jews, my brethren, was a figure of the Pasch of Christians: in this one we do not eat a sacrificed lamb as in that one; rather we eat the spotless Lamb, and we are fed with the sacred body and precious blood of Jesus Christ. This Pasch is, as you know, the greatest feast of Christians, and from the beginning of Lent it gathers into the churches a great number of the faithful who come to hear the instructions and prepare to celebrate it worthily. But what, my brethren, is the most important preparation for so holy an action? It is to be converted; and for this it is necessary to confess our sins with the proper dispositions. This is the subject on which I am to speak to you, hoping you will give me your closest attention.

4. Confession, my brethren, is the second part of the sacrament of Penance: it is an accusation of all our sins made to the priest so that he may absolve us from them. The holy Council of Trent and the Fathers of the Church teach us that confession was instituted for three principal reasons: to punish us, to humble us, and to remedy our vices. First, to punish us: since we have lost the grace of God by not fulfilling the promises we made in Baptism, it is right that we should bear the penalty of our sin and the punishment of our rashness. Second, to humble us: because without the virtue of humility the soul does not repair the breaches it has made in purity, charity and the other Christian virtues; and it is very right that the sinner who has offended the infinite majesty of God should humble himself profoundly before it, to acknowledge his sin and obtain pardon. Third, as a remedy for our vices; and this is why the Royal Prophet says to God: Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.[1] And this is the reason why we must uncover our wounds if we wish to be healed of them.

5. First of all you must choose a good confessor, one who is not lax, timid, indulgent or a flatterer; who has the courage to refute your frivolous excuses and your pretexts for not leaving the occasion of sin, or for not

restoring what you have taken unjustly, or for not being reconciled with your enemy; who makes you feel and know the gravity of sin; who opens your eyes so that you see the unhappy state of your soul; who rebukes your disorders as is right, prescribes the remedies for your ailments, and has all the firmness necessary to correct you and to refuse you absolution when you will not break off that friendship or that frequent and dangerous dealing, or give up that office or employment in which you are damning yourself. But even if you have found this good confessor, what use will he be to you if your confession is not good? And how will it be good when, instead of humbling yourself, you excuse yourself, or instead of condemning yourself, you justify yourself?

6. We note in Holy Scripture that God, in order to pardon men, has always asked them to acknowledge and confess their fault: If we confess our sins, says the apostle St. John, God is so faithful and just that he will forgive them to us.[2] And so, that God may show you mercy, you must not justify yourselves but humble yourselves, and say, for example, to your confessor: Father, I am the most ungrateful of all men, the most ungrateful of all creatures, for I owe so much to God, who has done me particular favours, and yet I have been so wretched and unfaithful as to offend him. I have committed such and such a sin voluntarily and with full deliberation, out of pure malice, and this in spite of the remorse of my conscience, of the instructions I had received, of the inspirations God gave me to keep me from sin. I have done these things with scandal, before my children, my servants, giving them bad example; in church; in Lent, etc. I claimed to be in the right in such a lawsuit, in such a quarrel, but at bottom I was not in the right: my passion, my pride, my avarice, my impatience and my being so pleased with my own opinion \[*el estar pagado de mi dictamen*\] are the cause of all the harm.

7. And to show that your confession is not a pretence or a disguise of penance, and that you have a true will to be punished for your sins and cured of them, you must allow the salutary and fitting remedies to be applied to you. If you have sinned by avarice, by usury, by cheating in selling or buying, by tricks in some lawsuit, or by some other injustice, you must carry out what the confessor obliges you to restore, as well as giving alms or practising other works of charity. If you have sinned by intemperance, by impurity, by indecent actions, by evil thoughts, by dissolute words, by backbiting, you must accept the penances he imposes, which suit these sins as the most capable of preventing you from falling into them again.

8. Note carefully that it is to God that you confess, for the priest is only his lieutenant or vicar; and therefore you must confess with as much sincerity as if it were God alone to whom you were confessing. If you hide your sins, if you disguise them, or if you have no will to keep your promises, you will be told what St. Peter said to Ananias: You have not lied to men, but to God.[3] Perhaps you will tell me that shame and confusion do not let you reveal certain sins; but to overcome that shame, consider well the qualities of the confessor: he is a man, he is a Christian, he is a priest. He is a man, and so he knows human frailty; he experiences it himself every day; frail as he is, he has his faults and is subject to temptations as you are. It may be that at some time he committed the same sins as you, or would have committed them if God had not preserved him by a particular grace: when you confess a great sin to him he says within himself, I would do as much if God abandoned me to that point. He is a Christian, a child of the same Church, a member of the same body as you: when you reveal a secret sin to him you show him affection and that you have great confidence in him; he would be like a tiger if he did not look on you with gentleness and charity. He is a priest, and as such he is the Angel of the Lord, says the prophet Malachi;[4] and the Angels rejoice in heaven, says the Saviour, over the conversion of a sinner;[5] and your confessor rejoices with the Angels when he sees you come to confession to be truly and sincerely converted. He is your spiritual father; you give him this name, and so you must have complete satisfaction and confidence in him. Finally, he is your judge; he questions you judicially, since he stands in the place of the sovereign Judge, not to condemn you but to absolve you if you tell the truth, if you are truly sorry, and if you fulfil the penance he imposes on you; for without these conditions your confession would be entirely null. Make your confessions, then, my brethren, with sincerity;

say with the Prophet: I will confess against myself my iniquity before the Lord.[6] Note well that he says *against myself*; so you must be the opposing party to yourselves, and not plead in your own favour to avoid the correction you deserve. Is it not truly a great pity that the confessor, who is there to be your judge, must also be as it were your opponent, and waste his time scolding penitents to oblige them to be reconciled and to leave the occasions of sin? He also says *before the Lord*; for what is done with God must be done well. I have told you that it is to God that you confess, and that the priest is only his substitute. Do it, then, seriously and sincerely; for if you do so you will be able to say after your confession what the same Prophet adds: And you have forgiven the wickedness of my sin. God will show you this mercy, and you will then be on the road that leads us to eternal salvation. Which I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Fourth Sunday of Lent

On confession.

> *Erat autem proximum Pascha, dies festus Judaeorum (Joan. 6:4).*
>
> *Now the Pasch, the festival day of the Jews, was near.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. The Pasch of the Jews; the Pasch of Christians. We must prepare by means of a good confession…

4. What is confession?… It was instituted to punish us, to humble us and to cure our vices.

5. Look for a good confessor who has the proper qualities.

6. You must humble yourselves, confessing your sins, and you must never excuse yourselves.

7. You must accept the directions of your spiritual Father.

8. Bear in mind that the priest takes the place of God. You would be lying not to men but to God. Do not let yourselves be deceived by shame… What is the confessor? He is a man, a Christian, a priest, a father, a judge.

---

[1] Ps. 40 (41):5.

[2] Source note: 1 John 1:9.

[3] Acts 5:4.

[4] Mal. 2:7.

[5] Luke 15:7, 10.

[6] Source note: Ps. 31 (32):5.

20. Passion Sunday: On Contrition

Vol. I, pp. 142–146. Reading for Passion Sunday. Gospel: John 8:46–59. Original preacher not named.

Reading for Passion Sunday

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 8 of St. John, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus said to the Jews: Which of you will convict me of any sin? If I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me? He who is of God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not of God. To this the Jews answered him: Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a devil? Jesus answered them: I am not possessed by the devil, but I honour my Father, and you have

dishonoured me. But I do not seek my own glory; there is another who promotes it, and he will vindicate me. Truly, truly I say to you, whoever keeps my teaching will not die for ever. The Jews said: Now we know that you are possessed by some devil. Abraham died, and the Prophets died too, and you say: Whoever keeps my teaching will not die eternally. Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died, and than the Prophets, who likewise died? Who do you make yourself out to be? Jesus answered: If I glorify myself, my glory, you will say, is worth nothing; but it is my Father who glorifies me, he whom you say is your God. You, however, have not known him. I do know him, and if I were to say that I do not know him, I should be a liar like you. But I know him well, and I keep his words. Abraham your father longed ardently to see this day of mine; he saw it and was filled with joy. The Jews said to him: You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham? Jesus answered them: Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am. At this they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself miraculously and went out of the temple.

2. You have heard in the Gospel, my brethren, how prejudiced by envy the Jews were against Jesus Christ, and that, blinded by this passion, they would not believe in him; which teaches you that you must never let yourselves be ruled by envy against your neighbour, because envy extinguishes in us every feeling of charity and prevents us from knowing the truth. Notice, then, that Jesus Christ declares very clearly in the Gospel that he is the Son of God, saying to the Jews these words: My Father, whom you say is your God; for the Jews adored the true God, and Jesus Christ called this true God his Father. But attend to these words: Which of you will convict me of sin? We, my brethren, are not so fortunate that we can speak thus of ourselves, frail and sinful as we are; but we can obtain the pardon of our sins and become children of God if, approaching the sacrament of Penance, we have true sorrow or true contrition for our sins, with a firm purpose of never sinning again. Then the confession I spoke to you about last Sunday will be useful and profitable to you, and will moreover make you worthy to fulfil the Easter precept. On contrition, then, I have resolved to speak to you this day.

3. You know from the catechism, my brethren, that contrition is the first part of the sacrament of Penance. There it is said that contrition is a sorrow of the soul and a detestation of the sins committed, with a firm purpose of never falling into them again.[1] This detestation must include the purpose of never sinning again and of beginning a new life; and this resolution must be effective and not remain mere wishes. You will be able to know that you have this contrition if you faithfully practise the means necessary to preserve yourselves from sin. These means are flight from the occasions, prayer, retirement, and application to destroying your bad habits. It must be supernatural; that is, it must be aroused by a movement of the Holy Spirit and not merely by a movement of nature. It must be sovereign in esteem \[*sumamente preferida*\]; that is, it must be so preferred above all the goods of the world that, if it were necessary to offend God in order to obtain them, the penitent must be ready not to commit a sin for any advantage or profit that might follow from it. It must be universal; that is, we must detest all the mortal sins we can remember after a careful examination. It must include a beginning of the love of God, and this must be a love that makes us prefer God to creatures and fear to offend him mortally more than all the goods of the world are worth. Contrition also includes a desire to satisfy the offended justice of God by doing penance; and this will to do penance is essential to contrition, and when this desire is genuine it produces fruits worthy of penance.

4. The names that Holy Scripture gives to contrition show us what it essentially consists in. It calls it compunction: *compuncti sunt corde*, they were moved to compunction, it says, speaking of the Jews who heard St. Peter preach.[2] God, as the prophet David puts it, heals those who have a contrite heart: *qui sanat contritos corde*.[3] It is also called compunction because it pricks and stings, as does the stroke of the lancet that pierces an abscess. And so it is not enough to say with the mouth or inwardly: My God, I am sorry for having offended you, I repent greatly of having committed the sin because it displeases you; rather one must really be sorrowful, grieved and pierced with sorrow. Just as you took pleasure in doing your own will and satisfying your passion, so you must also feel displeasure and regret at having had that will. You must, then,

fervently ask the Lord to arouse true contrition in your heart. God, says Tertullian, does not forgive us our sins unless we buy pardon with the coin of repentance;[4] and just as in trade those who sell some goods examine the coin the buyer presents before handing them over, so God, before granting us the pardon of our sins, examines our repentance, which is the only coin with which we can buy so precious a merchandise. False repentance is not effective and produces no good works, but contents itself with fine words and great promises. True repentance sets its hand to the work, so that we apply ourselves to reforming our life and practising solid virtues.

5. We see in Holy Scripture that King Antiochus and Zacchaeus are both converted with what appears to be the same disposition, but with a great difference in the outcome. Antiochus, having only a feigned repentance of false outward show, contents himself with making fine protestations. Ah, he said, if God gave me back my health, I would restore with increase what I have robbed from his temple, and would go through the whole world to publish his glory and his clemency.[5] Zacchaeus, on the contrary, having true repentance, does not say "I will do" but "I do"; he does not say "I will give, I will restore," but "I give half my goods to the poor."[6] And as the disposition of the two was very different, so was the result. The Holy Spirit, speaking of Antiochus, says: This wicked man prayed to God, and yet God was not going to show him mercy. And of Zacchaeus the Son of God said: Today salvation has come to this house. In the same way, my brethren, you may conjecture with good grounds that you have true contrition when it moves you actually to do praiseworthy and virtuous actions, and when you do not content yourselves with saying to your confessor: Father, I will make restitution, and I will be reconciled with my enemy, I will send away that person who is a near occasion of sin for me, I will burn those bad books, I will make good the damage I have done; but rather you say to him: Father, before coming here I made restitution; I have been reconciled, I have put that person out of my house, I have burned those bad books. But if you only content yourselves with doing what Antiochus did, with saying fine words, with promising good works, without doing anything or being willing to leave the occasion of falling into sin, your contrition is false, deceitful, apparent; it is a phantom, a mere figure of repentance, however much sensible devotion you may feel.

6. Nor is this all. You know that a coin is not accepted, but is sent back to the mint, when it does not bear the head of the monarch; in the same way contrition is not accepted by God when it is not marked with his stamp, that is, when it does not proceed from the grace of God but comes from pure self-love, from a natural and human fear that makes us fear punishment. So the Council of Trent has declared, anathematising anyone who dares to say that man, without the prior inspiration of the Holy Spirit, can believe, hope, love and repent as is necessary to receive the grace of justification.[7]

7. Examine yourselves, then, and sound your hearts; for if your sorrow is tainted with even one of these defects, it is base alloy \[*liga falsa*\], invalid and fruitless. But if it is free from these defects, if it is true and sincere, if it abhors every kind of sin and detests it from a supernatural motive, it will be received as good coin before the justice of God; it will pay your debts, it will be the redemption of your sins, and it will put you in possession of the kingdom of heaven. Which I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for Passion Sunday

On contrition.

> *Quis ex vobis arguet me de peccato? (Joan. 8:46).*\
>
> *Which of you shall convict me of sin?*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. What is contrition? It must be supernatural; sovereign in esteem \[*summe appretiativa*\]; it must have a beginning of the love of God, and the desire to make satisfaction.

4. Contrition is called compunction. The simile of the coin.

5. The repentance of Antiochus and of Zacchaeus.

6. The simile of the coin without the monarch's head.

7. Examine your heart well.

---

[1] Council of Trent, Session XIV, ch. 4.

[2] Source note: Acts 2:37.

[3] Source note: Ps. 146 (147):3.

[4] Cf. Tertullian, *De paenitentia* 6.

[5] 2 Macc. 9:13–17.

[6] Luke 19:8–9.

[7] Source note: Session VI (canon 3 on justification).

21. Palm Sunday: On the Dispositions for Communion, and on Bad Communions

Vol. I, pp. 147–152. Reading for Palm Sunday. Gospel: Matthew 21:1–9. Original preacher not named.

Reading for Palm Sunday

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 21 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time, as they drew near to Jerusalem and came within sight of Bethphage, at the foot of the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them: Go to that village you see opposite you, and without further trouble you will find an ass tied, and her colt with her: untie them and bring them to me. And if anyone says anything to you, answer him that the Lord needs them, and at once he will let you take them. All this happened in fulfilment of what the Prophet said: Say to the daughter of Sion: Behold, your King comes to you full of meekness, seated on an ass and her colt, the foal of one used to the yoke. The disciples went and did as Jesus had commanded them; and they brought the ass and the colt, and put their garments on them, and made him sit on them. And a great multitude of people spread their garments on the road; others cut branches or leaves from the trees and laid them where he was to pass. And both the people who went in front and those who came behind cried out, saying: Hosanna, salvation and glory to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heavens!

2. You have just heard in the Gospel, my brethren, how Jesus Christ made his triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem, which took place some days before his Passion and death. He made this so solemn entry to show the joy with which he was going to die; for although all the people who accompanied him did him great honour and cried Hosanna to the Son of David, Jesus Christ nevertheless saw very well that he was about to be handed over to his enemies. He knew all their hatred and depraved designs; it was not hidden from him that those people who showed him such zeal would very soon abandon him; he foresaw that they would not have the courage to oppose the violence of the Pharisees and of the priests of the Jews, who had decreed his death, and that no one would come forward to defend him: a clear image of what is going to happen in this holy season. Jesus Christ, my brethren, will make his entry into our hearts through Easter Communion; a great number of Christians will prostrate themselves before this adorable victim, will address prayers to him, will acknowledge him as the Son of David, as their Saviour, and will promise to be faithful and grateful to him. But alas! how many of them will dare to approach him without having yet left sin; and like that fickle

people they will abandon him at the first temptations, and thereby make the fruits of their Easter useless! On this subject I must instruct you today, showing you how you must prepare yourselves for holy Communion, and how great a sin it is to receive the body of the Lord unworthily.

3. This is a great undertaking, said David when he planned to build the temple of Jerusalem: *Opus grande est*. He had prepared the materials at great cost, a great quantity of gold and silver, of bronze, of cedar wood, of marble, of precious stones; and even so he thought he had done nothing, because, he said, it is not for a man but for God that a dwelling is being prepared: *Neque enim homini, sed Deo praeparatur habitatio*. It is not child's play but a matter of great importance to dispose yourselves for holy Communion: it is not for a wretched creature that you are preparing a dwelling, but for an infinite Majesty, and consequently one worthy of the greatest honour and praise.

4. Let us suppose for a moment, my brethren, that the sacrament of the Eucharist had not been instituted, and that no one had ever received Communion; and in that case suppose I were to tell you: In Paris, or somewhere else, there is a creature for whom Jesus Christ has a particular esteem; he loves and values her so much that from time to time he comes down from heaven expressly to visit her; he places himself before her, converses with her, and she speaks to him familiarly, kisses his feet, receives him into her heart; and the Lord unites himself with her as really and truly as he was in the womb of the Virgin. You would not want to believe it; but if you knew I was telling you the truth, what would you think, and how you would marvel at the happiness of this chosen creature! Would you not say that she was obliged to be as virtuous, as pure and as perfect as the most holy Virgin, and that even if she spent day and night on her knees thanking God for such a favour, she could never do so worthily enough? She ought to live, you would say, retired, recollected and withdrawn from everything that might make her fall into the least sin; if she receives this visit once a year, she ought to prepare herself long beforehand with fasts, alms, prayers and other exercises of piety and devotion. If I told you that this person so favoured by God does not indeed do acts that are manifestly criminal, but frequents dances, wastes her time in gambling, likes to hear or say tender words, goes about dressed with a worldly and forward air, is vain and haughty, and cannot bear an injury with patience, you would rightly say that she is a monster of ingratitude, who deserves not only to be deprived of this favour but to be punished with the greatest severity. Well, my brethren, apply the comparison to yourselves. Tell me honestly: seeing your conduct, would anyone say that you believe you receive Jesus Christ in the holy Eucharist? Certainly not; and if you do believe it, you show very little sense; for if God did this favour to you alone, you would think you were obliged to live in solitude with all possible purity and holiness. But because he has granted the same grace to many others, are we any less obliged to him for it?

5. Having made known to you the purity of heart and the holy dispositions with which you must prepare to receive Jesus Christ in Communion, I must explain to you how rash are those who receive Communion in a bad state, without having first been cleansed of all mortal sin. They should know that they do a most enormous injury to Jesus Christ and commit an act that deserves eternal punishment. Hear what the apostle St. Paul says about this: Whoever in former times broke the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses; how much greater punishment, then, do you think he deserves who has trampled the Son of God underfoot?[1] Or do you perhaps think he will go unpunished after so grave a profanation? Every man, says the law of Moses, who being unclean approaches the victims the children of Israel have offered to God, shall perish before the Lord.[2] On which St. Basil says: If so great a penalty was laid down against those who touched irreverently the dead flesh of bulls, how much greater will it be against those who touch the living and immaculate flesh of Jesus?

6. To avoid so extreme a misfortune, we must first look for the causes that may bring it upon us, and then weigh the reasons that should keep us from them. The first cause is blindness of mind; for St. Thomas warns us that we may receive Communion unworthily without realising it, because of our negligence in examining ourselves. We are very ingenious, says St. Gregory, in deceiving ourselves: we imagine we have dispositions

that we do not really have; we judge ourselves to be far from sin when we are still clinging to it; and we take the thoughts of the mind for affections of the heart. The true proof to assure ourselves whether we love God and hate sin is works. If you content yourselves with saying, I will never swear, I will never give myself up to intemperance, these are no more than futile thoughts and empty words. To know whether you have really turned away from these sins, you must have spent some time without swearing, without getting drunk or exposing yourselves to the other occasions of sin. Indeed, what boldness, what presumption, what rashness to approach these tremendous mysteries knowing that our affection is not well detached from all sin! \[The second cause is thoughtlessness:\] to receive Communion unworthily is a monstrous ingratitude towards the incomprehensible charity of Jesus, who pours out on us the treasures of his goodness by means of this divine Sacrament. Here he is our father, who feeds us at his table as his children; he is our advocate and our mediator with his Father; he is our physician, to cure the illnesses of our soul. If, instead of profiting from these good offices that Jesus Christ exercises towards us in this Sacrament, we receive him with a bad disposition, we commit the most detestable and enormous ingratitude imaginable.

7. A father, an advocate, a physician give only their goods or their services; but Jesus Christ gives himself, and gives himself in his own flesh, to unite himself to our soul as closely and perfectly as bread is united to the body it nourishes. Could there be a greater affront and injury than to join two things so contrary: the Holy of Holies with a sinner, light with darkness, Christ with Belial, the Son of God with Satan?[3]

8. You offend not only Jesus Christ; you offend also the eternal Father, who sees his beloved Son, the brightness of his glory and the figure of his substance,[4] plunged into the depths of an unclean conscience. You offend the divine Word, who sees the humanity personally united by him to his divinity treated as unworthily as it was in his Passion. The Jews tore to pieces the holy humanity of Jesus Christ, and you receive it into your soul, which is a sink of filth and uncleanness. You offend the Holy Spirit, who formed that divine and adorable body which you treat so insultingly. You offend the most holy Virgin, who sees that the Son she gave to the world for the salvation of men serves you as a snare and as condemnation through the bad use you make of him. You offend the Church triumphant and the company of the Saints, who see that their heavenly bread, the bread of Angels, the Holy One par excellence, is here thrown to the dogs.[5] You offend the Church militant, which sees the richest of her treasures, the most august of her Sacraments, horribly profaned, for she sees her divine Spouse crucified anew: *rursum crucifigentes sibimetipsis Filium Dei*, as the Apostle says.[6]

9. My brethren, let us say with the Church: Lord, do not allow us to fall into so great a sacrilege; grant that the Sacrament you instituted for our salvation may be the remedy of our ailments, the payment of our debts and the propitiation for our sins; grant that it may be for us a treasure of graces, the strengthening of our weakness, a feast of delights, a beginning of our resurrection and a pledge of eternal life. Which is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for Palm Sunday

On the dispositions for Communion, and on bad Communions.

> *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini (Matth. 21:9).*
>
> *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem signifies his entry into the soul through Communion.

3. What did David say and do to build a house for God? So much more must he do who prepares for Communion…

4. The simile of a soul to whom God comes from heaven to…

5. Woe to those who receive Communion badly! What St. Paul says, St. Basil…

6. Causes of receiving Communion badly. First: blindness of mind. Second: thoughtlessness. One does not consider the ingratitude committed against so good a father, advocate and physician…

7. These give their goods or their services, but Jesus Christ gives himself: with what union! And to join such opposite things!…

8. He who receives Communion badly offends not only Jesus Christ but also the Father and the Holy Spirit, the most holy Virgin, and the Church triumphant, militant and suffering.

9. Lord, may holy Communion be for good and not for evil.

---

[1] Heb. 10:28–29.

[2] Lev. 7:20.

[3] 2 Cor. 6:14–15.

[4] Heb. 1:3.

[5] Matt. 7:6; Ps. 77 (78):25.

[6] Heb. 6:6 (the source note prints “Hebr. vi, 6”; the Vulgate reads *rursum crucifigentes sibimetipsis Filium Dei*).

22. Good Friday: Before the Cross

Vol. I, pp. 153–155. Reading for Good Friday. This homily has a Reading only, with no Outline, and closes with a note by the compiler. Original preacher not named.

Reading for Good Friday

On this holy day, my brethren, the Church celebrates the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. She sets before you the image of his cross, to bring to your memory the state in which he died for our sins; she invites you to come and render him your adoration and homage. Look on it, then, as an obligation to consider this great mystery; read in the Gospel some circumstance of the Passion of our divine Saviour, so as to meditate on it for some time. Everywhere you will see shining forth his humility, his patience, and a meekness and charity without limit. What confusion, what humiliation, what sorrow should the mere account of his sufferings and his death not produce in us! Meditate, then, on these great subjects with a heart pierced with compunction; pour out your heart at the foot of the cross, to learn to respond to the intention of this divine Saviour, and so that the purposes of his death may be fulfilled in you.

From the height of his cross he preaches to you lowliness, poverty, suffering, renunciation of yourselves, contempt of the world, the giving up of pleasures, the necessity of penance. Recognise, then, that this God has every right to condemn pride and sensual pleasures, he who, after a laborious life full of afflictions, died amid ignominies and torments. In the sight of a God plunged in sorrow, how are we not ashamed still to seek what flatters the flesh and the sensual appetites? How can we keep feelings of vanity and pride at the feet of a crucified God? How can we nourish feelings of revenge when we see the Saviour’s blood flowing for the redemption of sinners, and hear him ask his eternal Father to pardon his very executioners? Is there any passion, however dominant, that ought not to be overcome in the sight of the holy cross? It is above all at its foot that you must feel the obligation you have to renounce your evil inclinations, to bear injuries with a patience without limit, to crucify your flesh with its passions and vices, to endure afflictions and hardships with perfect resignation, to subject your will in all things to that of God, to sacrifice, if need be, the life of the body to secure eternal life for your soul, and to devote every instant of your frail and short life to your salvation.

Come, then, on this holy day and prostrate yourselves at the foot of the cross; humbly lay before Jesus Christ the state of weakness to which you are reduced, and implore with confidence his almighty help. Make this reflection: it was the Jews who heaped outrages on Jesus Christ, who crucified him and put him to death on a cross; and there is no one who does not condemn and accuse them. Yet, if one stops to think, sinners do every day what they themselves condemn in the Jews. These crucified Jesus Christ without knowing him; for, as the Apostle says, if they had known him they would never have crucified the King of glory.[1] They failed to recognise him before the fulfilment of the prophecies, and at a time when he was clothed with the marks of weakness and mortality; but Christians fail to recognise him when he is immortal and glorious in heaven. The Jews failed to recognise him without having promised him anything and without ever having acknowledged him; but Christians fail to recognise him after having promised him in Baptism to renounce the devil and his pomps and to be faithful to Jesus Christ.

If you consider these differences, you will certainly understand how right St. Augustine was to say: "It seems that the height of all crimes is to have crucified Jesus Christ; but a greater crime is committed by those who not only refuse to lead a Christian life, but also hate the precepts of the truth for which the Son of God was crucified." Take care, my brethren, not to be among these bad Christians, and let the piteous spectacle of the cross move your hearts. The Gospel tells us that after they had nailed Jesus Christ to the cross, they sat down and watched him: *sedentes servabant eum*.[2] Will you be like the soldiers, standing as they did at the foot of the cross, at the foot of the altar on which this spotless Lamb renews before his Father's eyes the offering he made to him, without taking part in the sacrifice he offered and still offers for you? Be rather like those holy women who wept as they followed Jesus Christ to Calvary.[3] So, my brethren, fixing your eyes on Jesus Christ lifted up on the cross, ask him for the grace to offer yourselves with him, so as to have a share in his offering. Know, then, that we must offer ourselves every day in sacrifice to God before death actually sacrifices us to this Lord. Ask Jesus Christ that his adorable blood may be applied to you, and that he may make you gather the graces and mercies that flow from his sacred wounds; that he may soften the hardness of your hearts and purify your consciences from dead works, as the Apostle says,[4] that is, from sin; so that you may deserve the eternal inheritance to which God has called you, and which Jesus Christ has merited for us by his blood. Which I wish you, etc.

Note.[5] It is much to be desired that in all parishes, churches and chapels (and in their homes, for people who cannot go) the Stations of the Way of the Cross be made. Every day is good for this holy exercise, but Good Friday morning is the most suitable time of the year. For this purpose one may use the book written by Us entitled *Camino recto y seguro para ir al cielo* \[*The Straight and Sure Way to Heaven*\].

If there are many tabernacles \[*sagrarios*\] in the town, when people go to visit them they should go very modestly, recollected and devout, thinking of how Jesus Christ went through the streets of Jerusalem, from one tribunal to another, each worse than the last… bound and ill-treated, slandered and condemned to death. If seeing an executed man fills us with grief and pity, even though he is a stranger and unknown to us, even though he is a criminal, what an impression it must make on us if we consider that the one condemned to death is Jesus, so good, who is our Father! Let us keep company with most holy Mary, St. John, the Magdalene and the other Marys, and follow Jesus to Calvary, to the tomb: until we see him risen, until we follow him to heaven.

---

[1] Source note: 1 Cor. 2:8.

[2] Matt. 27:36.

[3] Luke 23:27.

[4] Heb. 9:14.

[5] *Nos*.

23. Easter Sunday: On the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Vol. I, pp. 156–159. Reading for Easter Sunday. Gospel: Mark 16:1–7. Original preacher not named.

Reading for Easter Sunday

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 16 of St. Mark, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices to go and anoint Jesus. And setting out very early on Sunday, the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had already risen. And they said to one another: Who will roll away for us the stone from the entrance of the tomb? for it was indeed very large. But looking up, they noticed that the stone had been rolled back. And entering the tomb, or burial cave, they found a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a white robe, and they were astounded. But he said to them: You need not be afraid: you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. But go and tell his disciples, and Peter especially, that he will go before you into Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.

2. What a solemn and holy day this is, my brethren! Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, after suffering so many outrages and affronts from his enemies in his Passion, as you know, and after expiring on a cross, shows himself the conqueror of death; he comes forth triumphant from the tomb, casts aside the stone that covered it, and leaves an Angel in his place to announce his glorious resurrection. This resurrection, my brethren, must be the greatest cause of joy for Christians. This is why cries of joy resound in the whole assembly of holy Church. This is the day, the Church sings, which the Lord has made; let us celebrate it, rejoicing in it: *Haec est dies quam fecit Dominus: exultemus et laetemur in ea*.[1] All her prayers are nothing but thanksgivings and praises she offers to God for the triumphant resurrection of her divine head; and with good reason, for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of our faith, the support of our hope and our most solid consolation in the evils and labours of this life. So it is indeed; for if Jesus Christ had not risen, as the Apostle says, we should believe in him in vain; his death would be of no use to us; we should be the most miserable of all men, for, having pains and afflictions as our inheritance on earth, we could not console ourselves with the hope of the eternal goods of the other life.[2] But since Jesus Christ came forth alive from the tomb, his resurrection confirms the truth of all that he told us in his Gospel; it proves to us that he is the Son of God; it is a pledge and an assurance that our bodies are to rise to an immortal and eternal life, and that we are to be rewarded with the heavenly dwelling of the just.

3. But the risen Jesus Christ must be not only the subject of our joy but also the subject of our imitation. The apostle St. Paul teaches us this doctrine. “As Jesus Christ,” says the Saint, “rose from the dead by the glory of his Father, so we must walk in an entirely new life: knowing,” he adds, “that our old man was crucified with him, so that the body of sin may be destroyed, and that we may no longer be subject to sin.”[3] This is why the Apostle proposes as a model to risen souls the life Jesus Christ led on earth \[after his resurrection\]; that is, a life wholly separated from the world, having nothing in common with human corruption and misery. He wants risen souls, after renouncing sin, never to fall back into it; to be, to use his own terms, a wholly new lump \[*masa*\] and new creatures formed according to the holiness of God; to renounce the flesh and its works, and to live by the spirit.[4]

4. Such is the idea the Apostle gives us of a Christian who has risen with Jesus Christ. To rise with Jesus Christ, then, is to take up, like Jesus Christ, a new life. This new life for Christians consists in renouncing all sin and living for God alone. See whether these signs fit you, at least in some respect. You will know that you have renounced sin when you flee all the occasions of sin; you will know that you live for God if you despise all that the people of the world love and seek, such as honours, pleasures and intemperance; if you relish the things of heaven; if you love everything that leads to God, such as prayer, the reading of good books, attendance at Mass, and in a word all Christian and pious actions. But if you see none of these signs in yourselves, how can you flatter yourselves that you have a share in the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

5. There are too many among you, my brethren, who think they have fulfilled all their obligations as Christians as soon as they have complied with the Easter precept and have gone to holy Communion, however much they may still be the same as they were before. That is, there are many who, after receiving Communion, keep the same manner of life; are possessed by the same avarice, the same desire for earthly goods, the same aversion, the same envy against their neighbour, the same bad faith, the same inclination to wine and to criminal pleasures, the same passions, the same sins, and that with the same licence as before: a sure proof that most of them have not sincerely renounced their faults, although in confessing they protested that they would turn from them; and a sure proof also that all their resolutions went no further than vain and sterile wishes. How much is it to be feared that, having thus persevered in the bonds of sin, they have made a sacrilegious and unworthy Communion!

6. Take care, my brethren, not to be among the number of these Christians; their crime is like that of Judas. Examine yourselves carefully, sound your dispositions, and see whether the resolutions you have formed to renounce sin are quite sincere. You will know that they are if you take effective measures not to suffer any more fatal falls, and if you carefully avoid all the occasions of sin. It will be known that you have risen with Jesus Christ if you have renounced the works of the flesh, if you appear entirely new men, if you have pure desires, new inclinations and a new conduct. Above all, take care not to imitate that multitude of Christians who make the Easter feasts a time of dissipation, so that the festival of the Lord's resurrection is for them a new season of relapse into sin. Likewise be frequent in attending the divine offices of the Church, renewing in this holy season, in the presence of Jesus Christ, and particularly in this octave, the vows of your baptism; for in it you made to God, through your godparents, the solemn promise to renounce Satan, his pomps and his works; and even though they made it for you when you were incapable of any understanding, you are not on that account any less obliged to observe it most exactly. Give God infinite thanks for having adopted you as his children; live as the dignity of Christians demands; do not dishonour it with sin; and watch over yourselves to preserve the precious grace given you by sharing in the Paschal Lamb, which you have received or will have the happiness to receive. This is the only means of gathering the fruit of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and of keeping Easter in a holy manner. Which is the happiness I wish you, etc.

Outline of the Plática for Easter Sunday

On the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

> *Surrexit, non est hic (Marc. 16:6).*
>
> *He is risen, he is not here.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel. It is the greatest proof of his divinity. It is the hope of what we shall be; we shall rise…

3. We must imitate Jesus.

4. We must rise with Jesus, renounce all sin and live only for Jesus.

5. There are some who after Communion continue in the same bad habits: a sign that their Communion did not go well.

6. They act like Judas. Examine yourselves well… Do not profane the Easter feasts as some do. Attend the services of the Church. Renew your baptismal promises.

---

[1] Ps. 117 (118):24, sung throughout the Easter octave.

[2] 1 Cor. 15:14–19.

[3] Source note: Rom. 6 (vv. 4, 6). The source note prints "vi, 7".

[4] Source notes: 1 Cor. 5:7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24; Gal. 5.

24. Low Sunday (Quasimodo): On Relapse into Sin

Vol. I, pp. 160–165. Reading for Quasimodo Sunday, the Sunday after Easter. Gospel: John 20:19–31. Original preacher not named.

Reading for Quasimodo Sunday

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 20 of St. John, which reads as follows:

1. At that time, on the first day of the week, when it was already very late, and the doors of the house where the disciples were gathered were shut for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and, appearing in their midst, said to them: Peace be with you. Having said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at the sight of the Lord. He said to them again: Peace be with you. As my Father has sent me, so I also send you. Having said these words, he breathed on them, and said to them: Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you retain, they are retained. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples told him afterwards: We have seen the Lord. But he answered them: Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the hole they made in them, and my hand into the wound in his side, I will not believe. Eight days later the disciples were again in the same place, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut again, and stood in their midst and said: Peace be with you. Then he said to Thomas: Put your finger here and examine my hands; and bring your hand and put it into my side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing. Thomas answered and said to him: My Lord and my God! Jesus said to him: You have believed, Thomas, because you have seen me: blessed are those who have not seen me and have believed. Jesus also worked many other miracles in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, you may have eternal life in his name.

2. The Gospel of this day, my brethren, tells us that Jesus Christ showed his Apostles that he had truly risen and was not a phantom. He showed them also the scars of his feet, his hands and his side; and he persuaded them of this truth by inviting them to touch him, speaking to them, eating and drinking with them. This is certainly all that one can do to prove that one has a real and living body. But you should notice that every time Jesus Christ appeared to his disciples he wished that peace might be with them. But what peace is this, my faithful people, that Jesus Christ wished them? This peace is that of a conscience that reproaches us with nothing when we are reconciled with God: it is the fruit of his death and resurrection. This same peace is what God gave you when, being well disposed, you received absolution from your sins, which were then forgiven you by the power of the sacrament of Penance. You also asked it of the spotless Lamb when you fed on his sacred flesh, and he, always merciful, has never refused it to you. But what a misfortune yours would be if, after being at peace with God, you became his enemies again by sin! This, unhappily, is where a countless number of Christians end up after Easter. They are seen to return to their criminal habits, to fall back into sin, and so to lose the fruit of the graces they had received. Against this misfortune I mean to forewarn you in this discourse.

3. Today I have resolved to show you that those who fall back into mortal sin after being converted and receiving the grace of God in the divine Sacrament make themselves unworthy of pardon and run great risk of being damned. This relapse into sin has three circumstances that make it very criminal, unworthy of pardon and worthy of punishment: it is a sin of ingratitude, of perfidy and of contempt. First, it is a sin of ingratitude; and this ingratitude is criminal in proportion to the many sins God had forgiven you. You must know that ingratitude consists in forgetting the benefit received and returning evil for good, and that it reaches its height when the benefit is used to offend the benefactor. This is exactly what you do when you

fall back into sin, for you abuse the mercy God has shown you and the pardon he has granted you, in order to offend him with more rashness and effrontery. Second, relapse is a sin of perfidy, because you break the covenant you made with Jesus Christ in holy Communion; you fail in the promises you offered him in confession; you renounce his love to give yourselves to a vile creature, and you leave his side to follow that of his enemy. Third, it is a sin of contempt, because by losing so easily the grace God has given you and the pardon he so generously granted you, you despise the treasures of the riches of his goodness;[1] you are the cause of the evil spirit's insulting the Son of God in some way and boasting of your swift relapse. There is more: since he has recovered his prey, do not think that he will loosen his grip and let it escape easily. He does as the governor of a city does who has been forced to leave it because it was taken from him by surprise: if he can recover it, he keeps it well and does not let himself be surprised again; he entrenches himself, fortifies it, doubles the guards and omits nothing to defend himself. It is our Lord who used this comparison in his holy Gospel.

4. When the impure spirit has been cast out of a soul by a true conversion, he has the greatest desire to return to it and possess it; he takes with him seven other devils worse than himself to tempt it more furiously than ever; if it yields to the temptation, they enter it and dwell there, and then this soul is in a worse state than before, that is, weaker and more subject to the devil and to sin than ever: *Et fiunt novissima hominis illius pejora prioribus*.[2] And what follows? God withdraws from you more and more, and no longer gives you so many graces to be converted, because you have abused them. It follows also that you lose your taste for the remedies, seeing that they have been useless; you grow weary, seeing that you have fallen again in spite of your resolutions, and you do not dare to make new ones, fearing to break them like the earlier ones; you are ashamed to go back to confession, fearing that your relapse will be bitterly thrown in your face; you sink deeper and deeper into sin, and you stagnate and persevere in your criminal habits. But know also that after relapse you are more blameworthy and much worse in the eyes of God than Jews and pagans. St. Peter affirms this: It would be better, says the Saint, for those who let themselves be overcome, entangling themselves again in the corruption of the world, it would be better for them not to have known the way of justice than to turn back after having known it; and he compares them to a dog that returns to swallow what it had vomited.[3] When you give yourselves up to your impure passions, when you abandon yourselves to a sensual pleasure, God abhors you; but if after going to confession you relapse into the same sins, then he abhors you still more. And is this not what a countless number of Christians do? So it certainly is: you fall into sin and you confess; you fall again and you confess again; and so from Christmas to Easter and from Easter to Christmas; it is now two, three, four years, and perhaps more, that you have behaved in this same way. Is this living as Christians? Have you ever read, or heard read, that a single one of those who are canonised, or whom we regard as Saints, did what you do, lived in a continual alternation of confessions and relapses, was converted and fell back, and was converted again and fell back again? Do you not see that these are tricks of the devil, who dazzles you and keeps you in a bad state all your life? He leaves you alone for seven or eight days in Holy Week, and takes hold of you again after Easter; he gives you a few truces and takes hold of you again after the feasts. Finally a day will come when he will hold you so tightly that it will not be easy for you to escape from his claws any more. Consider, I beg you, that the last sin you committed is perhaps the last one God is willing to forgive you; perhaps one of these days you will fall again, saying within yourself, I will confess this sin and obtain pardon as for the others; but God will abandon you and allow you to die without confession, or, if you do confess, to have no true repentance.[4]

5. The way to avoid this misfortune, my faithful people, is to take a good safeguard against relapse, and this must be the exercise and practice of good works. The apostle St. Peter exhorts us to it in these words: Strive, my brethren, to make your calling and your election sure by good works; for by acting in this way you will never sin.[5] Engrave these words on your minds, put them into practice, and you will not fall; or your falls will be only the effects of human frailty and not of obstinate malice. See on this point what the Son of God had said to the Bishop of Philadelphia: I know that you are weak; but in spite of your weakness you will not

fall, because I esteem you, and I will deliver you from temptation, since you have been faithful in keeping my word and have not denied my name. In the same way, the more good works we do, the more pleasing we shall make ourselves to God, the more he will love us, and the more graces he will open to us; for to love is to will good, and God does all that he wills. And when a soul is much loved by God because of its great fervour in practising every kind of good work, by prayer, fasting, almsgiving, flight from the world and from all that can lead to sin, the Lord strengthens it against the attacks and assaults of its enemies and brings it victorious out of all temptations. When God inspires you to do a good work, do not say that it is not one of those that are obligatory and that you can omit it without any harm; follow then the impulses he gives you, for example, to go to the sermon, to read a devout book, or to visit that poor sick person. These good works and others like them will serve you as a bridle to hold you back when some occasion of sin arises; they will confirm you in your good resolutions, and you will walk in this way with firmness and ease along the path that leads to blessedness. Which I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for Quasimodo Sunday

On relapse into sin.

> *Pax vobis (Joan. 20:19).*
>
> *Peace be with you.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Those who relapse sin by ingratitude, by perfidy and by contempt.

4. He who relapses puts himself in a worse state than he was before.

5. The safeguard is the exercise of good works, and hope in the Lord who loves us and helps us.

---

[1] Rom. 2:4.

[2] Source note: Luke 11:26.

[3] 2 Pet. 2:20–22.

[4] Matt. 18:22.

[5] Source note: 2 Pet. 1:10.

25. Second Sunday after Easter: On the Causes of Sin and the Remedy against It

Vol. I, pp. 166–170. Reading for the Second Sunday after Easter. Gospel: John 10:11–16. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Second Sunday after Easter

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 10 of St. John, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus said to the Pharisees: I am the good Shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep. But the hireling, who is not the shepherd and whose own the sheep are not, when he sees the wolf coming, abandons the sheep and flees; and the wolf seizes them and scatters the flock. The hireling flees because he is a hired man and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd; and I know my sheep, and my sheep know me. As the Father knows me, so I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. I have also other sheep that are not of this fold, which I must gather in; and they will hear my voice, and of

all there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

2. You have heard in this Gospel that Jesus Christ is the good shepherd, as he himself says. Yes indeed; he is the good shepherd because he knows his sheep and gives his life for them. Now perhaps you will ask me, my brethren, what his flock is. It is the Church, and his faithful sheep are the just and the holy. Do you want to know the signs by which to recognise the faithful sheep of Jesus Christ? We are his faithful sheep if we hear his voice, if we follow him, if we do not leave him, and if we guard ourselves against the devil, who is represented by the wolf that seizes and scatters the sheep. You will also want to know what it is to follow Jesus Christ. It is to put into practice the virtues the Lord practised, and to be governed by the maxims he taught us in his holy Gospel; and this is precisely what the faithful sheep do. Therefore, my brethren, those who after Easter fall back into the same sins, who do not hear the voice of Jesus Christ but the voice of the world, the voice of the flesh and its corrupt inclinations, are not among the Saviour's faithful sheep: they are the prey of the wolf, that is, of the devil. A deplorable state, my faithful people, into which a countless number of Christians unhappily fall. Last Sunday I showed you the misfortune of relapse into sin, and today I propose to show you the causes that make us fall back into it, and at the same time to set before you the effective remedies we must use to preserve ourselves from this relapse.

3. It has been shown to you in many instructions how great an evil it is to fall into mortal sin; and today it is necessary to teach you by what means we can avoid it. For this purpose you must first examine very carefully the most ordinary causes of the sins that are committed, and what remedies we must apply to free ourselves from them.

4. These causes are nature, habit and occasion. I say first nature, because original sin has so worn down and corrupted it that there is no faculty in our soul that does not suffer some defect: the understanding is darkened, the will disordered, and sensuality has become in us a bait and a disposition for every kind of sin, which puts us in danger of falling into them at every time and on every occasion. Second, habit, which is like a second nature, as strong, as impetuous, as hard to break as the first. From this it comes that when a man is habituated to sin, unless God works a kind of miracle, all the admonitions of confessors and all the exhortations of preachers are entirely fruitless. Experience shows all too well the danger of a vicious habit: it breeds dullness, makes us insensible to the dangers that threaten us, and takes away the desire to have recourse to the salutary remedies that would preserve us from it. Third, occasion: corrupt nature and bad habit do not usually produce evil actions unless they are stirred up by the occasion; and hence it often comes about that the occasion makes us commit sins to which we were not accustomed. At first you went to gambling, to dances, to the places of drunkenness and disorder and to the gatherings of the two sexes; but you went with distaste; you went only rarely, and you had scruples about everything. Now you go with great eagerness, you drag others along too, and there you will meet a thousand occasions of sin, and these occasions make you fall; and God alone knows the thoughts, the passions, the evil desires you have when you find yourselves at these gatherings.

5. Let us come now to the remedies to forearm ourselves against sin. In ancient times a holy man used three means to free himself from it, and he said: I pray, I work, and I flee.[1] These three safeguards he faithfully put into practice, because he knew very well that they are the most effective remedies we can use against the three causes that lead to sin. Against corrupt nature we must use prayer; against bad habit we must work and fight with all our strength to overcome it; and against the occasion it is indispensable to flee from it. Hear a comparison: a horse or a lion does not tame itself; in the same way man cannot tame himself either. To tame those beasts a man is needed, who is of a nature far superior to them; and to tame man we must have recourse to God, who is infinitely superior to him. And if you tame a horse you did not make, with how much more reason will the Lord, who created you from nothing, be able to tame you? Therefore you must put all your confidence in him and implore his divine mercy.

6. But we must also work on our own part, especially if the habit is grafted onto a bad nature. In such a case you must cry out with David: I am sunk in the mire of the deep, and there is no footing in it: *Infixus sum in limo profundi, et non est substantia*.[2] Indeed, perhaps you are deep in the mire of impurity; perhaps also an inveterate habit of blaspheming, swearing, backbiting or getting drunk dominates you, without your ever being satisfied; rather you sink deeper and deeper into your vices every day. Cry out to God like David, *laboravi clamans*;[3] ask him to stretch out his hand to you, to help you to rise; but help yourselves too as far as lies in you. It is no slight evil to be in the habit of a sin; and you will master it if you watch over yourselves and if you fear divine justice, for bad habit is restrained by fear. Fear the judgements of God; fear that he will abandon you if you so frequently commit the sin he so abhors; and tremble to consider that the new sin you commit again may fill up the measure. Fear the pains of hell, meditate on them frequently, and believe that a criminal habit is the sure road to perdition.

7. But after all that has been said, the great secret for avoiding sin is to flee the occasions. See what the Lord tells us about this in his Gospel: If your eye scandalises you, pluck it out; if your hand or your foot scandalise you, cut them off;[4] that is, if a post, a trade, an office or a person is an occasion of sin for you, even if it were as precious to you as your eye, as useful as your hand, as necessary as your foot, you must deprive yourselves of it and separate yourselves from it. Believe me, and do what Joseph of old did; for when the shameless wife of Potiphar solicited him to sin, the holy young man saved his chastity by flight, leaving his garment in the hands of that dissolute woman, who had seized him by it, and thus freeing himself all the more quickly from her importunate pleas.[5] Do the same when that bad man importunes you and solicits you to evil: do not stop to answer him or to preach to him; flee swiftly, avoid meeting him, turn your eyes from him as if you saw a serpent: *quasi a facie colubri fuge peccata*; this is the Wise Man's counsel. Humble yourselves greatly before God at the sight of your evil inclination; acknowledge your weakness and your inability to overcome it, and the need you have of the Lord's grace for this. Every morning, after adoring him and giving him thanks, ask him with great affection for this particular favour, that you may not fall into the sin to which you continually find yourselves most inclined. During the day, and from time to time, lift up your mind to God to renew the same prayer. Implore often the intercession of the most holy Virgin, of the Saints and of your Guardian Angel, and ask them to obtain for you what God-fearing people desire. Work on your part to root out your bad habits; make every night a short examination on those that dominate you most; go frequently to confession, and to the same confessor, so that the shame of always confessing the same sin and the fear of being rebuked, together with the penance he will impose on you, may serve you as a salutary bridle. You may also impose some penance on yourselves when you have fallen into sin; in this way you will show our God and Lord that if you have fallen, it was through frailty and not through malice. Flee the occasions; avoid the gatherings of the two sexes, the conversation of people without religion, dances and the other amusements that incite to sin. Thus your bad habits will cool little by little and finally be extinguished altogether; in their place will come good habits, which will produce good actions; and these will increase the grace of God in you and lead you to eternal glory. Which I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Second Sunday after Easter

On the causes of sin, and the remedy against it.

Ego sum Pastor bonus (Joan. 10:11).

I am the good Shepherd.

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. You must examine the causes that make one fall into sin.

4. The causes are nature, habit and occasion.

5. The remedies are prayer, work and flight. Prayer is the first and principal remedy; God is superior to you.

6. Work, work and pray. Fear God, fear hell.

7. Flee the occasions, like the chaste Joseph. Have recourse to the most holy Virgin, the Angels and the Saints. Make the examination every day. Impose some penance on yourselves.

---

[1] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Arsenius 1–2.

[2] Source note: Ps. 68 (69):3.

[3] Ps. 68 (69):4: "I have laboured with crying."

[4] Source note: Matt. 5:29–30 (printed "v, 18").

[5] Gen. 39:7–12.

26. Third Sunday after Easter: On Trials and Afflictions

Vol. I, pp. 171–177. Reading for the Third Sunday after Easter. Gospel: John 16:16–22. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Third Sunday after Easter

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 16 of St. John, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus said to his disciples: A little while and you will no longer see me; and again a little while, when I have risen, you will see me again, because I go to the Father. Hearing this, some of the disciples said to one another: What does he mean by saying to us, A little while and you will not see me; and again a little while and you will see me again, because I go to the Father? So they said: What is this little while he speaks of? We do not understand what he means. Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, and said to them: You are discussing and asking one another why I said, A little while and you will no longer see me, and again a little while and you will see me again. Truly, truly I say to you, you will weep and lament, while the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman in the pains of childbirth is full of sorrow because her hour has come; but once she has brought forth the child, she no longer remembers her anguish, for joy that she has brought a man into the world. So you also now indeed have sorrow; but I will visit you again, and your heart will be bathed in joy, and no one will take your joy from you.

2. Today's Gospel shows us that Jesus Christ said to his Apostles: In a little while you will no longer see me; but after this little while you will see me again. These words, my brethren, mean that he would be absent from them by dying, and would make himself present to them again after his resurrection. The divine Saviour wished to test them by withdrawing from them for a time, and to console them again with his presence, so as to make them constant in all the events of this life. But attend to the words he says to them: You will weep, and the world will rejoice. These words are addressed to all true Christians; for their ordinary lot is to suffer the pains and afflictions God sends them to test them, and the lot of the world is to rejoice. At the same time Jesus Christ teaches us that the sorrow of his Apostles would be turned into joy; that is, that both they and all just souls would pass into a joy that no one could take from them, because this joy would be that of heaven. From this you must understand that, on the contrary, the joy of worldly people will be turned into eternal sorrows. The sorrow that true Christians suffer in this life usually comes to them from the trials God sends them to purify them; and this gives me occasion to speak to you of tribulations, and to show you how they must be accepted so as to be meritorious.

3. You know by experience, my brethren, that in this life we are all exposed to countless pains and trials; for in truth, who could count the evils to which man is subject? Illnesses of the body, passions of the soul, sufferings of the mind, persecutions by his enemies, loss of his goods, the bankruptcies of his debtors, the importunities of his creditors, the loss of the persons he values most, the labours of life and the pains of death: all, all of it distresses and afflicts him. But know, my brethren, that religion alone can sustain you in such varied causes of affliction. It is true that faith does not make us insensible; rather it makes us patient and consoles us, obliging us to believe that everything that happens in this world, except sin, comes to us from God; that the crosses, afflictions and trials that befall us are effects of his most adorable will; and that it is this Lord who sends them to us, who wills and ordains them, not inasmuch as they are pains, but inasmuch as they are fitting or necessary means for our benefit and profit. The Holy Spirit testifies to this truth in the book of Ecclesiasticus when he says: Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, come from God. And the prophet Isaiah says that God unfurls the banners and sounds the trumpet for war; and he adds in the same place: King Nebuchadnezzar is called the rod of the Lord and the instrument of his indignation.[1]

4. The Fathers of the Church, who received the light of the Holy Spirit to understand the sacred Scriptures, all agree on this point. Hear what Pope St. Gregory says about it: In all causes of affliction it is a great consolation for us to know that they befall us by the will of God, who cannot will anything that is not just; and so, since we can suffer only what God wills, all that we suffer will be very just. St. Augustine thinks the same: Everything that happens to us in this world against our will, he says, even if we do not know why, never happens except by the will of God, by his providence and by his order. I say by his order; for when the body of your son or your husband is carried out to be buried, the Church, which cannot err because she is the organ of the Holy Spirit, says to God in the prayer for the deceased: O God, who have commanded that your servant N. should depart this day from this world.[2] But you will say: My husband was treacherously murdered. Well, God commanded that he should leave this world in that way. Another will say: My son was killed with poison by wicked men. And I will always say to you: God willed that he should leave this world in that way. What disturbs and troubles you on these occasions is that you confuse the malice of the action with the effect that proceeds from that action. God abhors and punishes the malice, and wills the effect, because he directs it to some good end known to God alone. Sickness, poverty and any other evil we suffer, when it proceeds from the malice of some creature, is the effect of a very hateful cause; but inasmuch as it proceeds from the will of God, it is the effect of a very just and very holy cause. And so in all our afflictions we must take great care not to stop at the will of the secondary causes, which are men, and which is ordinarily bad; we must rise to the will of the first cause, which has permitted such an event; and this cause is always most just, and cannot will anything that is not good. The great secret of human life, the true way to sweeten all our sorrows and inner pains, is to be persuaded that everything that happens has been disposed by the supreme will of God and by his incomprehensible wisdom, and that consequently we must esteem his orders and submit ourselves humbly to them. This practice makes our afflictions sweeter and more bearable than if we tried to kick against the goad;[3] for if we consider the crosses and adversities of this world without thinking of the will of God, which is their origin, we shall find that they hold nothing for us but bitterness; but if we regard them as sent according to God’s good pleasure, they will seem light to us and useful for our salvation. In fact all the misfortunes that befall us in this life are scourges God sends us to detach our hearts from earthly and perishable goods; they are instruments of his divine justice and the rods with which he chastises us to make us expiate our sins.

5. Can there be a greater example of patience in trials than that of holy Job? He was stripped of all his goods, deprived of all his children by an unforeseen collapse, struck with a sore over all his members, reduced to extreme poverty, tormented day and night by the cruellest pains, insulted by his own wife and slandered by his friends, reaching the point of seeing himself abandoned by all human help; yet he bears all these evils with invincible constancy. Many persons come one after another to announce to him the saddest news: the death of his relatives, the theft of all his beasts, the loss of his flocks consumed by fire from heaven, and the

collapse of a house that buries all his children. What does this man of God do? What does he answer to such pitiful and sad news? He tears his garments and lies prostrate on the ground to pay homage to the will of God; he adores it in a profound abasement of himself and with entire submission to the orders of his divine Majesty. "Naked," he says, "I came out of my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there: the Lord gave me everything, the Lord has taken it away; nothing has happened but what he had already disposed; blessed be the name of the Lord." And this was not all: the devil strikes him with a horrible sore from the soles of his feet to his head. Seated on a dunghill, abandoned by all, reduced to the greatest misery, scraping with a potsherd the matter that oozes from his sores, he is insulted by his wife, who laughs at his simplicity and tries to incite him to curse God who treats him in this way. But what does he answer to this? You speak, he tells her, like a foolish woman. If we have received good things from the hand of the Lord, why shall we not receive also the evils he sends us? In the midst of all this Job did not sin with his lips, nor say anything rash against God or against his providence, as the Holy Spirit bears good witness.[4] Who, then, can fail to marvel at the sight of such patience and endurance?

6. When our flesh shrinks from the cross, say those words the Saviour said in the garden of Olives: "Shall I not drink the cup which my Father has given me?"[5] These few words, *my Father has given me*, express the three dispositions with which we must receive the evils God sends us, namely: with fear, with confidence and with honour. *Has given*: it is God who gives trials; we must, then, take them. *Me*: they are for us, for our good and our salvation. *Father*: God is our father; he never ceases to be so, and consequently he is worthy of being honoured even when he afflicts us. Let all the earth fear God, says the prophet David,[6] because all things in the world are his creatures, at his service and disposal, and ready to avenge the offences done to his Majesty. If, then, a man wants to ruin you, fear God; and if the devil weaves some plot against you, fear God always. All creatures are subject to him whom you must fear, and none can harm you or do the least thing to you without his permission.

7. Have confidence, then, in the Lord, who values you more than you value your children. The Prophet says that our good God carefully weighs the trials and pains he sends us, and disposes everything with such weight and measure that he never afflicts us more than his infinite wisdom tells him is necessary;[7] and he does this, not to ruin us as if he were our enemy, but to save us, as befits a supremely charitable and loving father.

8. Honour his power: God is so great, so worthy of love and respect, that he deserves to be honoured even if he did us no good at all. When you have lost a lawsuit, when hail has battered your land \[*se ha apedreado vuestra heredad*\], or your house has been ruined, God cries out to you by the voice of his Prophet: *Ego Dominus creans malum*: I am the one who has caused that havoc.[8] Then say to him humbly: I adore your will, my God; be angry no more with so unworthy a creature, who by her sins deserves greater punishments; punish me in this life and spare me in the next. Honour also his goodness, and pray him to deign to accept the misfortunes that befall you in satisfaction for your sins. Is it not an admirable goodness that, if through your intemperance or impurity you have fallen into some illness, or into poverty through your dissolute ways, that illness, that misfortune, that poverty will be meritorious for you if you bear it with patience, with resignation to the will of God, and for his love? Finally, honour his mercy towards you, giving him thanks because he deigns to punish you as a father in this world so as not to punish you eternally in the next. And since he deigns to take in his hand the rod of his justice, may it be to soften your hardened heart, to draw tears of penance from your eyes, and to compel you with a gentle violence to enter the road that will lead you to eternal blessedness. Which I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Third Sunday after Easter

On trials.

Amen, amen dico vobis: quia plorabitis et flebitis vos, mundus autem gaudebit: vos autem contristabimini, sed tristitia vestra convertetur in gaudium (Joan. 16:20).

Truly I say to you, you will lament and weep, and the world will rejoice; you will indeed be made sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel. The sorrow of the good, and the joy of the wicked.

3. Description of the… Religion alone can console. It teaches that everything comes from God except sin. This is established from the holy Scriptures.

4. The holy Fathers teach it. One must not confuse the action with its effect. We must not look at secondary causes but at the first cause, which is the will of God.

5. The example of Job.

6. Let us imitate Jesus Christ, who said to Peter: Shall I not drink the cup my Father has given me? Let us receive \[trials\] with fear, confidence and honour.

7. Have confidence in the Lord, who is so good.

8. Honour his power: I adore your will, Lord. Honour his goodness. Honour his mercy.

---

[1] Cf. Isa. 5:26; 7:18; 10:5.

[2] *Deus, cui proprium est… / quam hodie de hoc saeculo migrare iussisti*.

[3] Acts 26:14.

[4] Job 1:13–22; 2:7–10.

[5] Source note: John 18:11.

[6] Source note: Ps. 32 (33):8.

[7] Cf. Wis. 11:21; 1 Cor. 10:13.

[8] Source note: Isa. 45:7.

27. Fourth Sunday after Easter: On the Injury Sin Does to God, and the Evils It Brings on Man

Vol. I, pp. 178–183. Reading for the Fourth Sunday after Easter. Gospel: John 16:5–14. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Fourth Sunday after Easter

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 16 of St. John, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus said to his disciples: Now I am going to him who sent me; and none of you asks me, Where are you going? Because I have told you these things, your heart is filled with sorrow. But I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go, the Comforter or advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convince the world concerning sin, concerning justice and concerning judgement. Concerning sin, because they have not believed in me; concerning the justice of my cause, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more; and concerning judgement, because the prince of this world has already been judged. I have yet many other things to tell you, but for now you cannot grasp them. But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will teach you all the truths necessary for salvation; for he will not speak on his own, but will say all that he has heard, and will foretell to you the things to come. He will glorify me, because he will receive of what is mine and announce it to you. All that the Father has is mine. That is why I said that he will receive of what is mine and announce it to you.

2. St. John tells us in today's Gospel that Jesus Christ said to his disciples: I am going to him who sent me; it is to your advantage that I go; for if I do not go, the Holy Spirit will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. See why. First, it was necessary that Jesus Christ should be bodily absent so that he might be known by faith alone. Second, the gift of the Holy Spirit was to be the fruit of the labours of Jesus Christ. Third, the attachment the Apostles and disciples had to the humanity of Jesus Christ prevented them from raising their minds to his divinity. Further on in the same Gospel Jesus Christ says that when the Holy Spirit comes he will convince the world of sin, of justice and of judgement. He means that he will convince the world of the sin of unbelief; of the justice there is in detaching oneself from creatures; and of the judgement pronounced against the devil, by which he is stripped of his empire over men. These words can also be explained by saying that, as the Holy Spirit is the master we must listen to, so we must learn from him the nature and enormity of sin; secondly justice, to learn its rules and discern good from evil; and finally judgement, to convince us that there is no evil that does not deserve its punishment. Let us dwell, then, on one of these truths, namely, that the Holy Spirit will convince the world of sin, whose enormity he will make known. On this point I wish to speak to you this day, showing you the injury sin does to God and the evils it brings on man.[1]

3. When we consider the horrible evils sin brings with it and the fatal effects it causes in the world, we must confess that it is very just that God should punish it severely. When you commit a mortal sin you offend the unity of God, who will have no other God but himself: *Non erit in te deus recens*. You set up in your heart a new God, a foreign God, when you idolise a creature or a metal dug out of the earth. If you place your last end in it, then you value it more than the will of God and his holy grace; you sacrifice to it, not a bull, but your soul and your salvation; you offer it, not incense and perfumes, but your thoughts, your tenderness and your affections. St. Paul, speaking to the Colossians, told them that avarice is idolatry;[2] and elsewhere, speaking of gluttons, he says that their God is their belly. Hence St. Augustine says very well: *Quidquid in dilectionis lance praeponderat, Deus est*: Whatever weighs most in the scale of our love is our God.

4. Your soul is the image of the most holy Trinity, made by the hand of God, and it bears an august character that was imprinted on it in holy Baptism. And will it not be an enormous injury to soil this image with the filth of sin, and that in the presence of God? You also offend his justice, for you despise his holy laws and abuse his mercy and his patience. Finally you commit against God the greatest ingratitude, since you are so unthankful for all the graces he has done you and is doing you.

5. Nor is even this all, my brethren: mortal sin also does the greatest harm to the one who commits it. It degrades man from his nobility, takes from him the honourable quality of child of God, strips him of all his merits, ruins grace in him, makes him the slave of the devil, and, to say it once and for all, deprives him of God and consequently of every good. When a blind man lifts his head to the sky, if it is daytime he has the light of the sun upon his eyes, and he does not on that account cease to be blind or to say that he has lost the light, because it is of no use to him; in the same way, although God is everywhere, you are none the less deprived of him, and his presence is of no use to you except to preserve your life for as long as he pleases; but in reality you are unhappy because you are deprived of every good. However much you play the braggart, the bold and the carefree; however great, powerful, rich, happy and sensible you may seem in the eyes of the world, there is nothing in you but weakness, folly, misery and nothingness: *Et nescis quia tu es miser, et caecus, et nudus*.

6. Understand well, I beg you, that there is in God an infinite hatred and horror of sin, because it is contrary to his glory and to the good of the creature. He has so great an antipathy to it that he punishes everything that has any relation to it; he has so great a horror of it that he pursues even the mere shadow of an appearance of sin; for, as the prophet Isaiah says, he crushed in his fury his own and only Son, because he saw in him the likeness of sin.[3] Finally, he shows that the hatred he has for sin is immense, for he condemns the sinful soul to an infinite penalty which is to last for all eternity.

7. Let us conclude from this, my brethren, that just as God hates sin because he loves himself, so the love of God must be the principle and cause of the hatred we must conceive against sin. *Qui diligitis Dominum, odite malum*, says the Royal Prophet: you who love the Lord, hate evil.[4] If you hate sin only because it has ruined your goods, your health, your honour, or because it has made you deserving of eternal flames, then you hate it only out of love of yourselves; and this hatred, though good, is not perfect. You must hate it because it displeases God, because it offends him, and because, being infinitely good, he deserves to be infinitely loved; and as the hatred of sin is infinite in God, so also must the hatred in the souls of true Christians be in a certain way infinite. This hatred is absolutely necessary in order to be on the road of salvation; but if you do not hate sin more than poverty, sickness and death, you are certainly not in a good state.

8. You must judge your progress in perfection by how much this hatred of sin has grown in your heart. If you have a great aversion to it for the love of God, you are already well advanced in perfection; but if you do not, you are still very imperfect. And just as God will arm the elements and creatures to destroy sin, so everything must be left and suffered to flee it and avoid it. If you must leave the house you live in, the city, the command \[*el mando*\] or your post, to avoid the occasion of sin, you must do it; and you will be doing nothing that thousands of holy solitaries, noble, rich and learned, have not done before you. And you must not only avoid sin in yourselves; you must also, as far as you can, prevent your children, your servants and your friends from committing it; and when you know that they have committed it, you must feel it keenly and say with the Royal Prophet: *Defectio tenuit me pro peccatoribus derelinquentibus legem tuam*: I fainted with grief to see sinners violating your holy law.[5]

9. Let us ask the Saviour, my brethren, for these holy dispositions, and say to him with the Church: *Ab omni peccato libera nos, Domine*. We beg it of you, Lord, by the mystery of your Incarnation, since your beloved disciple said that you had come to destroy the works of the devil.[6] We beg it of you by your passion and death, since your Precursor said that you would be a Lamb sacrificed on the cross to take away the sins of the world: *Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi*.[7] We beg it of you by the glory you deserve, since your prophet David said that by delivering us from sin you would give us cause to thank you, to bless, praise and glorify you in the heavenly dwelling. Which is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Fourth Sunday after Easter

On the injury sin does to God, and the evils it brings on man.

> *Cum venerit Spiritus Sanctus, arguet mundum de peccato (Joan. 16:8).*
>
> *When the Holy Spirit comes, he will convince the world of sin.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. The malice of sin. The sinner makes himself a new God whom he loves more than the old one, and puts the old one after him: he offers to it… he sacrifices to it…

4. It soils the image of God, and in the presence of God himself. You offend his justice; you abuse his patience and mercy.

5. Oh, what harm sin causes!… It strips man of everything, as with Adam. The simile of the blind man who… has lost the light…

6. God hates sin because it is contrary to his nature and to the good of the creature: he has an antipathy, a horror of it…

7. If we love God, we shall hate sin.

8. Progress in the love of God will be known by the hatred you have of sin: if we leave everything, if we sacrifice everything rather than sin.

9. Let us pray God to deliver us from all sin, through the merits of Jesus Christ.

---

[1] John 16:8.

[2] Source note: Col. 3:5 (printed “iii, 3”); Phil. 3:19 for the “belly”.

[3] Cf. Isa. 53:5, 10 and Rom. 8:3 (“in the likeness of sinful flesh”); 2 Cor. 5:21.

[4] Source note: Ps. 96 (97):10.

[5] Source note: Ps. 118 (119):53.

[6] 1 John 3:8.

[7] John 1:29.

28. Fifth Sunday after Easter: On Prayer

Vol. I, pp. 184–188. Reading for the Fifth Sunday after Easter. Gospel: John 16:23–30. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Fifth Sunday after Easter

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 16 of St. John, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus said to his disciples: Truly, truly I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will grant it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. I have said these things to you in parables. The time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in parables, but will tell you plainly of the Father. On that day you will ask in my name; and I do not say to you that I will intercede with my Father for you; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world; now I leave the world and go again to the Father. His disciples said to him: Now indeed you are speaking plainly, and not in proverbs. Now we know that you know all things, and need no one to question you; by this we believe that you came from God.

2. The Gospel of this day announces to us that Jesus Christ said to his disciples: Whatever you ask my Father in my name, he will give you. What is it to ask in the name of Jesus Christ? It is to ask God in the name of the Mediator between God and men, relying entirely on the merits of his death. You see that the Church does so, and that she ends all her petitions “through Jesus Christ our Lord”. Perhaps you will say to me: Although Jesus Christ assures us that whatever we ask in his name he will grant us, how is it that we often do not obtain it? To this I answer you that God always hears us, but does not always grant us what we ask of him, especially when the petitions we make are contrary to our salvation; and besides, if he does not hear us, this arises from the imperfection of our prayers. You do not receive, says St. James, because you do not ask as you ought.[1] This subject gives me occasion, my brethren, to speak to you about prayer, showing you how we must pray so that our prayers may be pleasing to God and heard by his divine goodness.

3. Prayer is one of the three kinds of satisfactory works, that is, works that are to serve to make satisfaction for our sins; for fasting, almsgiving and prayer are the principal matter of our penance. But for our prayer to be well made and to be heard, we must pray with humility, with fervour and with perseverance: three essential conditions in which you must be perfectly instructed.

4. First, we must pray with humility and reverence, interior and exterior. Interior humility consists in a profound abasement and annihilation of our soul in the presence of God; in being keenly penetrated by our lowliness, our littleness, our miseries and weaknesses; in acknowledging ourselves unworthy to speak to the sovereign majesty of God, like the holy patriarch Abraham, who said: Shall I dare to speak to the Lord, I who

am but dust and ashes?[2] For example, when you come to church you must come with the feelings of a poor man who begs alms of a rich man, of a sick man on his way to a doctor to be cured, of an accused man going to his judge, and say to him with St. Augustine: You are infinitely merciful, and I am supremely miserable; you are a true physician, and my soul is full of illnesses. This interior disposition leads to exterior reverence, by which we bow and prostrate ourselves before God; and if we cannot always do so, at least we shall put ourselves in a modest and respectful posture. When we go to speak to one of the great of the earth, do we not try to compose our bearing, our words, our gestures and our movements, so that there may be nothing in us to displease him? This, then, is what it is to pray with humility. Do most of you pray in this way, my brethren? Are there not very many who come to church with a haughty and bold air, thinking of how they are dressed, full of vanity if they have a finer outfit than some others, saying their prayers without devotion, with a distracted air, and turning their heads this way and that? Such conduct does great harm to prayer, takes us away from God, and is the reason the Lord does not hear us.

5. Second, we must pray with fervour; that is, we must have a great desire to obtain what we ask. It is commonly said that a thing is worth nothing if it is not worth asking for. A thing, then, must be asked for with all the more ardour the more precious it is; and what is more precious than the love of God, his grace and the salvation of our soul? And so when we pray slackly and lukewarmly, as a mere formality, we show that we do not set great store by God's favours; and not setting great store by them, do we not make ourselves unworthy of obtaining them? See how sailors pray in a storm, how they cry out to the most holy Virgin and to the Saints. We are in greater danger for our salvation than they are of losing their lives: they are tossed by only two or three winds, and we by the temptation of pride, of avarice, of envy, of lust and of many other passions. Between them and death there are only a few planks; between us and hell there is nothing but our will, which is frailer than the weakest plank. The poor who beg alms give us a fine lesson, if we reflected on it well: they hurry to the churches and to all the places where they know there are many people; they direct their pleas to rich or charitable persons; they show their sores, try to arouse compassion, and find words and reasons to move us to help them. Why do you not turn in the same way to the friends of God, to the Saints, who are rich in merits and have influence with the Son of God and with the most holy Virgin, his tender Mother? Why do you not show your sores to the eyes of the infinite mercy of God? Why do the poor find so many words to beg alms, while you find none to ask of the Lord and do not know what to say to him? What is the reason for this? It is that they have a great desire to be given alms, and we desire only by halves the graces we ask of him.

6. Third, we must pray with perseverance. We must pray always, Jesus Christ tells us in the Gospel, and not grow weary of doing so.[3] What, then, prevents you from praying much to God? You say you have no time, that you have too much business, and very important business. For that very reason you are obliged to pray to God much more: the more serious your affairs are, the more it matters to you to succeed in them; and to conduct yourselves well you must turn to the Father of lights.[4] You have business, very well; but you do not think of the business that is much more important than all the others, the business of the salvation of your soul. You have no time to pray to God; but you would have it if you would divide it well. Cut out superfluous visits, useless conversations and the amusements in which you spend almost the whole of the feast day, and use a part of it in praying to God. Are you so weighed down with business most of the day that you cannot find a quarter of an hour for mental prayer, to say the Rosary or to read a little in some book of devotion? Who prevents you, even while you are working, from lifting up your heart to God from time to time, asking him for his love, his grace, and that he bless your work? What, then, is it that prevents you from praying to God? You say that you are great sinners and have offended him too much. This is the same as if you said: I am too poor, I must not beg alms so often; I am too ill, I must not go to the doctor so often. But this is precisely what should move you most to have recourse to the divine physician of our souls.

7. This Lord tells you in the Gospel: Come to me, you who are burdened, and I will refresh you.[5] However many and great your sins may be, if you have a keen sorrow for them, if you desire to obtain pardon, this is the best reason you can set before God to obtain his mercy. This is what David did: I lack everything, and I am poor, he said to God.[6] The publican said: My God, have pity on me, for I am a great sinner.[7] God sees you, hears you, is near you, and is pleased that you ask of him if you do it with fervour and humility. If he seems indifferent, if he is slow to hear you, it is to exercise your patience, to quicken your desire, to test your perseverance and to increase your merit. If you have patience, if you persevere in crying out, if you knock unceasingly at the door of his mercy, sooner or later he will hear you, will stretch out his beneficent hand to you, will satisfy your desires, and will give you his grace in this world and his glory in the next. Which is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Fifth Sunday after Easter

On prayer.

> *Si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis (Joan. 16:23).*
>
> *Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Fasting, almsgiving and prayer are the three parts of penance. Prayer, to be good, must go with humility, fervour and perseverance.

4. First, with humility, interior and exterior. Interior: knowing what we are, like a poor man who begs, like a sick man, like an accused man… The exterior proceeds from the interior, and so we kneel, we prostrate ourselves…

5. Second, we must pray with fervour, as sailors pray in a storm. The poor: to whom do they beg? How do they beg? How do they show their sores and…?

6. Third, we must pray with perseverance. Excuses: I have no time… I am a sinner… Ask for grace, love, salvation…

7. Jesus said: Come to me, you who are oppressed… The publican… David. If he delays, wait: he will come, for your greater merit…

---

[1] James 4:3.

[2] Source note: Gen. 18:27.

[3] Luke 18:1; cf. 1 Thess. 5:17.

[4] James 1:17.

[5] Matt. 11:28.

[6] Cf. Ps. 39 (40):18; 85 (86):1.

[7] Luke 18:13.

29. Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension: On the Sacraments in General

Vol. I, pp. 189–194. Reading for the Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension. Gospel: John 15:26–16:4. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapters 15 and 16 of St. John, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus said to his disciples: When the Comforter comes, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, and whom I will send you from my Father, he will bear witness to me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. I have told you these things so that you may not be scandalised or troubled. They will put you out of the synagogues; and indeed the time is coming when whoever kills you will think he is doing a service to God. And they will treat you in this way because they have not known the Father nor me. But I have warned you of these things so that, when the hour comes, you may remember that I had already told you of them.

2. Today's Gospel tells us that Jesus Christ calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of truth. He calls him so in order that we may know how to distinguish the Spirit of God from the spirit of the world, which is a spirit of falsehood, and to know whether our thoughts are from God or from the devil. The Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ adds, will bear witness to me. And how? Because the Holy Spirit, working in hearts with his grace, persuaded men that Jesus Christ was God. The Apostles also bore witness to it by preaching him courageously and confirming their preaching with wonders and miracles. And we, my brethren, can likewise bear witness to Jesus Christ by ordering our lives according to his.

3. Jesus Christ also foretold to his Apostles that they would be put out of the synagogues and put to death. This prediction concerns all who devote themselves to the service of God and wish to live devoutly and as Christians, for they are often persecuted in various ways by worldly people. But far from being troubled, they should bear in mind that Jesus Christ foretold their sufferings, and that they must therefore bear them for his love and rejoice that they suffer for justice, consoling themselves with the hope of the eternal happiness that is promised them. These, in a few words, are the instructions we should draw from our Gospel. Now, my brethren, I am going to deal with another subject; for since I intend to speak to you in a few days about the sacrament of Baptism and that of the Eucharist, and in the course of the year I shall have occasion to explain the other Sacraments to you, I have thought I ought to devote a particular instruction to the Sacraments in general; for it is necessary that you be instructed on this subject, and I am obliged to make you understand this matter well.

4. The Sacraments, according to the Catechism, are a sensible sign instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ to sanctify us. They are a sensible sign because they make known to us the invisible grace they work in our soul; and they are also sensible because they are made perceptible to our senses. Indeed they are composed of sensible things: such as water in Baptism; the confession of sins in the sacrament of Penance; the anointing with holy chrism and the laying on of the Bishop's hands in Confirmation; bread and wine in the holy Eucharist; the holy oils in Extreme Unction; the laying on of hands in Holy Orders; and the consent of those who marry in Matrimony. These seven Sacraments were instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ; and you should know that they produce sanctifying grace in those who receive them with the necessary dispositions. Jesus Christ, the God-Man, makes them produce this effect by the merits of his passion; for this Lord is the meritorious cause of our justification. You will perhaps ask me what purpose Jesus Christ had in instituting the Sacraments. He meant to give us in them salutary means to blot out our sins and make us just and pleasing to God. For some of them, such as Baptism and Penance, put us in the grace of God by blotting out our sins; and the others, such as Confirmation, the Eucharist and the rest, preserve us in his grace or increase it after we have received it.

5. Know, my brethren, that the sanctifying grace conferred on us by the Sacraments is the greatest good and the most precious gift God can give to a mere creature. It is a most excellent quality, for it makes us children of the eternal Father, brothers and co-heirs of Jesus Christ, living temples of the Holy Spirit, and partakers of the divine nature, as the apostle St. Peter says: *Divinae consortes naturae*.[1] Partakers: ah, what a great thing for anyone who knew how to consider it well! This grace is also called habitual because it remains in us, unless we lose it by mortal sin. Besides this, the Sacraments give not only sanctifying and habitual grace but

also actual graces, which help us to attain the end for which each Sacrament was instituted. Thus when you marry in a good state and in a Christian way, the sanctifying grace you receive is like a promise God makes you to give you, in the troubles of this life, actual graces to live in peace with your spouses, to bring up your children well, to keep conjugal fidelity, to resist the temptations that might make you lose it, and to practise the other virtues to which marriage obliges. On the contrary, when you marry like pagans and in mortal sin, full of impure thoughts and carnal affections, you deprive yourselves of the graces God would have given you to live peacefully and as Christians with your family. Learn from this, my faithful people, that you must approach the Sacraments with great reverence and devotion. Jesus Christ has not only instituted them; it is he himself who confers them. Yes, he himself: it is he who baptises that child, and he who marries those persons; for the priest is nothing but his minister. How, then, do you dare to attend that baptism or the celebration of that marriage without fear and without a spirit of devotion? How do you dare to behave irreverently during these acts, and even talk of profane matters?

6. When remedies are useless to a sick man, it is a sign that his illness is incurable, and the consequence is that the doctors abandon him. When the Sacraments do a soul no good, when it does not amend after so many confessions, it is a sign that its heart is very corrupt and in danger of being lost for ever. Where does this come from, my brethren, and what produces this misfortune? Since our Sacraments are treasures in which Jesus Christ has deposited all his merits, how is it that we approach them so many times and still remain so poor and helpless? And since they are also most salutary and effective remedies, what is the reason that we take them so many times and are always so sick?

7. The apostle St. Peter answers this question when, using a comparison, he says: The sow, after being washed, has gone back to the mud to wallow in it again.[2] Suppose this unclean beast bathes in the clearest spring in the world: certainly it will muddy it and turn it into a mire. In the same way many people are unclean beasts and not true Christians. When they marry they take no care to have Christian intentions so as to receive the Sacrament well; they do not marry to give children to the Church, nor to leave after their days persons who will serve God; they have only brutish inclinations, and from a spring of living water they make a filthy mire. There are others who receive Communion at Christmas and Easter without paying what they owe, without having been reconciled with their relatives or their neighbours, without having put out of the house that person who is an occasion of sin to them, without having left their criminal habits; and instead of being sanctified by means of the Sacraments, they come away from them more unclean and loathsome.

8. This will make you extremely guilty, my brethren, at the judgement of God. What will make you die of grief at the hour of death will be to see that you have had such salutary remedies and have been so careless in profiting by them. Know, then, that the Sacraments of the Church are talents of inestimable value, but that they have been given us with the obligation of making them yield a return. You see in the Gospel that the servant who had not made the one talent given him yield a return was thrown into a dark dungeon and bound hand and foot.[3] And what will the divine Judge say to us, and what lot will he prepare for us as punishment for having abused so many confessions and Communions? Ah, what regrets, what grief, what anger against ourselves for having lost through our own fault such favourable opportunities to work out our salvation!

9. In the Old Testament Moses promised and gave, on God's behalf, earthly goods in abundance, and the Jewish people gathered them eagerly; but Jesus Christ esteemed them too little to give them to Christians, and in place of these fleeting and perishable goods he has left them the holy Sacraments. There are many among you who pay no heed to them because they hold them in little esteem; they do not know their wonderful effects, they take no care to go to confession and approach our holy mysteries, and they even mock those who do. But when they are in the other life they will recognise their folly in having lost such fine opportunities of enriching themselves for eternity. On the contrary, those among you who live as Christians and frequent the Sacraments with devotion will rejoice and recognise their wisdom in having received them worthily; for they will see that the Sacraments, which seemed so small a thing, were precious treasures and

sure pledges of the glory they will possess in heaven. Which I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension

On the Sacraments in general.

> *Spiritus veritatis qui a Patre procedit, ille testimonium perhibebit de me (Joan. 15:26).*
>
> *The Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Jesus foretells the persecutions, and how the \[faithful\] must have patience…

4. The Sacraments: their matter, their purpose.

5. The grace they cause: sanctifying,… habitual, actual… Jesus Christ himself confers them; the priest is a minister.

6. The lack of disposition in us is the reason they do not produce \[their fruit\]…

7. St. Peter's comparison of the sow.

8. What grief at the hour of death, at the judgement, for not having traded with these talents, which are the Sacraments!

9. Moses promised and gave the Hebrews bodily goods, and Jesus Christ spiritual goods, the Sacraments. Some do not value them…

---

[1] Source note: 2 Pet. 1:4.

[2] Source note: 2 Pet. 2:22.

[3] Matt. 25:24–30.

30. Pentecost Sunday: On the Establishment of the Faith

Vol. I, pp. 195–202. Reading for Pentecost Sunday. Gospel: John 14:23–31. Original preacher not named.

Reading for Pentecost Sunday

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 14 of St. John, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus said to his disciples: Whoever loves me will keep my teaching; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling within him. But he who does not love me does not practise my teaching. And the teaching you have heard is not mine alone but the Father's, who sent me. These things I have told you while I was with you. But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom my Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of all I have said to you. Peace I leave you; my peace I give you; not as the world gives do I give it to you. Let not your heart be troubled nor afraid. You have heard me say to you: I am going away, and I am coming back to you. If you loved me, you would surely rejoice that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.[1] I tell you now before it happens, so that when it happens you may be confirmed in faith. I will not speak much more with you, for the prince of this world is coming, though there is nothing in me that belongs to him. But so that the world may know that I love the Father, and that I do as he has commanded me… Arise, let us go hence.

2. You have heard, my faithful people, in the Gospel of this day that Jesus Christ said to his disciples: Whoever loves me will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling in him. He who does not love me does not keep my word. Do you really understand what a great happiness it is that the most holy Trinity should make its dwelling in the heart of the Christian who sincerely loves God and keeps his word? Certainly this should engage us to have a great horror of sin, for it banishes God from our heart, and likewise to avoid the least faults, because these dishonour a temple in which God has established his dwelling. Jesus Christ goes on to tell his disciples that he gives them his peace. This peace of Jesus Christ consists in the reconciliation of man with God, in the tranquillity of his spirit through the calming of the passions, and in the union of man with his fellows by charity. This peace is interior, true and solid; quite the opposite of the peace the world gives, which is only exterior, uncertain, deceptive and short-lived. These are the principal instructions this Gospel gives us; but let us pass to the object of the solemn feast the Church celebrates this day, calling it Pentecost, a word meaning "fiftieth", because it was on the fiftieth day after Easter that the Holy Spirit came down on the Apostles and the first faithful.

3. The epistle that has just been read at Mass tells us of this prodigious event.[2] It says that on this day, when all the disciples were together in one place, there was suddenly heard a great noise as of a rushing and violent wind coming from heaven, which filled the whole house where they were sitting; that at the same time they saw appear what seemed to be tongues of fire, which rested on each one of them; that immediately they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in various tongues; that afterwards they announced the Gospel, that is, declared to the people that Jesus Christ had been appointed by God to be the judge of the living and the dead; that they baptised in his name those who came forward; and finally that they confirmed their preaching with countless miracles and wonders. Today, my brethren, was the day when Jesus Christ established his great work, which was to form his Church, to have his Gospel proclaimed and to spread the Christian faith throughout the whole world. This will be the matter I am to speak to you about on this great day, and I hope you will give me your deepest attention.

4. The establishment of the Christian faith by the Apostles is the greatest of miracles, and proves perfectly that it is the work of God and that our holy Religion is the only true one.[3] Consider what credit, what power is needed to introduce the least change in a city, or even in a village community. "It is not the practice," people say, "and it is against established custom." What, then, would it be to try to abolish customs as ancient as the worship of the false gods, not in one city or one province, but in all the kingdoms and nations of the earth? The Apostles undertake to persuade them that the gods of the nations are demons, their oracles lies and their sacrifices sacrileges.

5. All the sublime precepts and counsels of the Gospel are so many features that seemed extravagance and folly to the pagans. These gave themselves up to every kind of dissoluteness, spent their lives in the pleasures of the senses, and thought only of getting rich and taking revenge on their enemies. The Apostles, then, go and say to these people: Blessed are the poor; do good to those who persecute you; mortify your flesh; and they mean to persuade them to observe all this for the love of a man whom the Jews put to death on a cross as a criminal. Did this not certainly seem an absolutely impossible undertaking? And what talents did the Apostles have to attempt such a design? They were Jews, they were unlettered men, without learning or eloquence, and they claimed to make the world adore a man of their own nation. There is more: they were few, only twelve, and they wished to contradict, as they did, all men in a matter which is usually defended with the greatest zeal, namely religion.

6. Either the Apostles had judgement and common sense or they did not. If they had it, even a little, how did they undertake a thing which, by every human appearance, could not succeed for them? And if they had no common sense, how did they carry it out? And yet they achieved their object, as we see, and in a very short time, helped by no one but God. Besides this, either God communicated to them the gift of tongues or he did not. If he communicated it, then he spoke through their mouths, and they must be believed. And if he had not

given them this gift, how could twelve unlettered men have spoken to so many nations of such diverse languages and made themselves understood? Did they work miracles or not? If they did, then they preached the true religion, for it is impossible that God should work the least miracle to confirm a lie. And a proof that they did work them is that at the sight of their miracles thousands of men were converted; many of them faced the greatest torments to uphold the faith, choosing rather to die in torments than to adore idols and renounce Jesus Christ. And after all this, is it not the greatest of miracles that the Apostles, being so few and destitute of all human power, converted so great a number of peoples and nations?

7. You will have heard tell in what excesses of every kind of crime the pagans were sunk: they gave to vile statues the honour due only to the supreme Majesty. The apostle St. Paul says that God had given them up to a reprobate sense, to infamous passions against nature; that they were full of all malice, iniquity, avarice, envy, deceit and impurity.[4] These were our ancestors, and this is what we should be without the inestimable benefit of the redemption. We are that chosen race, that holy nation of which St. Peter speaks.[5] Do you know how much you owe God for having caused you to be born in the true religion? Let us suppose that we were certain that all the ships that have sailed from one of our ports for America in the last fifteen years had been wrecked, and that every year I had prevented you from embarking on those ships: you would certainly be very much obliged to me, in proportion to the vessels lost. Count, if you can, how many idolatrous mothers there have been, not only in the last fifteen years but in fifteen hundred, two thousand, four thousand, six thousand years: so great is the debt you owe to God for not having infused your soul into one of those mothers; you might very well have been the children of one of those idolatrous women whose salvation has suffered shipwreck. God has preserved you from the shipwreck; he has picked you out and set you apart from so many idolaters. What a great debt! But for what purpose has the Lord shown you such clemency? Surely so that you may live otherwise than they lived.

8. God chose us in Jesus Christ, says St. Paul, so that we should be holy: *ut essemus sancti*.[6] What good will it do you not to have been born among pagans, to have been brought up in the bosom of the Christian Church, to have received the holy Sacraments, to have heard the word of God, and to have had a thousand means of sanctifying yourselves, if you do not live holily and do not keep his commandments in accordance with the profession of Christianity? The first of these commandments tells you: You shall adore one God only. Therefore, if what you adore is not God, you are idolaters and will be punished as such. My brethren, the idols, says St. Augustine, are not yet banished from our churches; there are often some in the four corners and in the middle; but they are idols of flesh and vanity: women adorned in an entirely worldly manner and dressed expressly to attract attention. I call their conscience to witness; and if I asked one of them in particular, I would say to her: Is it not true that you are very pleased because they see you and admire you, and that you much like the faithful to honour you, to think of you, to have their imagination occupied with you, precisely in this place, to which you should come only to adore our Saviour, to think of his mysteries, and to be wholly occupied with what belongs to this Lord? Is this not to be an idol? Is this not to set the idol Dagon beside the ark?[7]

9. Nor is this all, my brethren. If you love a creature with a disordered love, you raise an idol in your heart and adore it. If you are intemperate, if you give yourselves to drunkenness and gluttony, St. Paul tells you that your God is your belly; if you are avaricious, he declares that gold and silver are your idols; if you are lustful, you adore an idol of flesh. Your idol is also that son whom you idolise; it is self-interest; it is the desire to make your fortune at any price; finally your idol is the world and its pomps and vanities. Whatever weighs most in the scale of your love is your God, says St. Augustine. The idolater, the pagan, offers grains of incense to a statue of stone or silver; but you offer to a mass of flesh, to an impure woman, what is much more: your thoughts and all the affections of your heart. The idolater sacrifices to a false god an ox or a ram, which costs only a moderate sum of money; but you sacrifice to that creature your soul and your salvation, which cost the blood of the Son of God. He who loves his God refers to him all he does, all he says, all he has

and all he is. Look at all you think, say and do from morning to night, and you will see that you have sacrificed it all to the idol you adore: you have referred it to that gambling, to that son, to that woman, to vanity, to greed and to all the other vices.

10. My dearly beloved brethren, I am in this pulpit to teach you the way of your salvation, and so I must fulfil what my ministry commands me. I tell you, then, and I declare to you, that the Gospel teaches us that to be saved it is not enough to have faith, to be in the true Church, to do no evil; we must do good and practise good works.[8] If you are no more virtuous than the pagans, what reward will you have? says the Saviour.[9] The same Gospel states that heaven and earth will pass away before one word or one letter of Holy Scripture fails to be fulfilled.[10] And consequently, since Scripture teaches us that no lustful persons, thieves, misers, drunkards and slanderers will ever possess the kingdom of God,[11] if you do not correct yourselves of all these vices, it is very certain that you will be excluded from this kingdom and will be among the number of the reprobate. There is more: the Saviour tells us that unless our justice or virtue is greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees, we shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.[12] Add to this the words of the apostle St. James: If anyone says he has faith and does not do good works, do you think his faith can save him?[13]

11. And what works do you do, you sinners who hear me? What Christian works are yours? What do you do more than the pagans or the Pharisees? You earn your living, you work, you support your children: the pagans did that too. You do not deny your God: neither did they. You come to church sometimes: the Pharisee in the Gospel came there too, and said his prayer better than you, and gave thanks to God for the favours he had granted him.[14] And you, during Mass, sit motionless as a log, letting your mind run on a thousand frivolous and perhaps criminal thoughts, without attention to your prayers, or perhaps not praying at all, and looking this way and that; instead of occupying yourselves only with devout thoughts, trying to keep a modest posture and a respectful and recollected air, as one should before God.

12. My dearly beloved hearers, if you do not change your conduct your salvation is at risk; you must do Christian works in keeping with our faith. You must order your lives by the maxims of the Gospel, dedicate to God every morning the work of that day, and often offer him your heart by addressing to him some short prayers. When you attend Mass or the divine offices you must occupy yourselves, not in looking at how this man or that woman is, but in adoring our Lord in the most holy Sacrament, acknowledging him as your God and your Redeemer, asking him for pardon of your sins, his grace and his love, and rendering him the deepest thanks for the benefits he has done you. The Lord is not content that you should not commit adultery; he wants you to follow your confessor's advice when it is a question of rejecting evil thoughts, of mortifying the passions and that curiosity which leads you to look at objects that may be dangerous to you. He is not content that you should not kill; he wants you to tame your anger and to refrain from saying any insult to your neighbour. He is not satisfied that you love your friends; he wants you also to love your enemies, to do them good, to speak to them kindly and charitably. Show your faith by your works, says St. James;[15] and what are these works? They are an entirely Christian conduct, in which all the rules of the Gospel are observed. This is the only means for your faith to be living, and thereby for you to attain the inheritance promised to the children of faith. Which I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for Pentecost Sunday

On the establishment of the faith.

> *Si quis diligit me, sermonem meum servabit (Joan. 14:23).*\
>
> *If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Narration of the Epistle and the mystery of the day.

4. It is an entirely divine work to destroy idolatry and to plant Catholicism.

5. The doctrine the Apostles preached.

6. The Apostles either had common sense or not; they either had the gift of tongues or not; they either worked miracles or not.

7. What customs the Gentiles had! What would we be? We were born among Catholics: what thanks we owe!

8. What good will it do you, Christians, if you do not keep the law of a Christian? Alas, something other than God is loved!

9. What is the God or idol you adore, and to whom do you offer incense?

10. It is not enough to have faith; good works are needed.

11. What works do you do? Do you do more than the pagans? than the Pharisees?

12. Are your works in keeping with the faith? with the Gospel? When you attend church, do you occupy yourselves in…? God is not content that you should not kill, not fornicate, not steal; he wants you also to refrain from… and to do…

---

[1] John 14:28.

[2] Acts 2:14–41; 10:42.

[3] Cf. St. Augustine, *City of God* XXII, 5.

[4] Rom. 1:23–31.

[5] 1 Pet. 2:9.

[6] Eph. 1:4.

[7] 1 Sam. 5:2.

[8] Gal. 5:6.

[9] Matt. 5:46–47.

[10] Matt. 5:18.

[11] 1 Cor. 6:9–10.

[12] Matt. 5:20.

[13] James 2:14.

[14] Luke 18:11–12.

[15] James 2:18.

31. Trinity Sunday: On Baptism

Vol. I, pp. 203–212. Reading for the Sunday of the Most Holy Trinity. Gospel: Matthew 28:18–20. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday of the Most Holy Trinity

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 28 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus said to his disciples: All power has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and instruct all nations in the way of salvation, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you. And be certain that I myself will be with you always, to the end of the ages.

2. St. Matthew in his Gospel shows us this day that Jesus Christ said to his disciples: To me has been given all power in heaven and on earth. Consider that he says these words before sending them to preach the Gospel throughout the whole universe. The reason for this was to make them understand that they needed his power to found his Church throughout the world, and that without this power their undertaking would have been fruitless and rash. Indeed, twelve poor men, without learning, without eloquence and without authority, could never have carried out the great work of the conversion of mankind had they not been clothed with the power of the Most High. The holy Gospel also says that Jesus Christ ordered his disciples to baptise all peoples in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, to show us by this that the new birth we obtain by Baptism comes equally from the three Persons, and that one same worship and one same adoration is due to all three, because they have the same divinity. Note well, my brethren, the order Jesus Christ gives his disciples: he wants them to teach the peoples and to baptise them. Thus the door by which we enter the Christian religion is Baptism, by which we become Christians; and since this Sacrament stands at the head of all the others, it gives me occasion to instruct you on a subject of the greatest importance.

3. You already know, my brethren, that by Baptism we have been made Christians, and that by it we receive the spiritual life of grace; but you must also know that this is the first and the most necessary of the seven Sacraments, because all of us who are born are, from our conception, guilty of original sin, which was the sin of our first father Adam;[1] we are all born enemies of God, objects of his wrath and slaves of the devil. Your heart, then, must not be troubled at the sight of this abyss of the judgements of God; on the contrary, we must firmly believe that all his judgements are most just; and so, though it matters little not to know how those who are born are guilty of this sin, it matters greatly to know how they must and can be drawn out of so unhappy a state. Original sin is an evil so incurable that no creature would have been capable of remedying it, since nothing less was needed to repair so great an evil than the Incarnation of the Son of God and his death. And this was because of the malice of sin, which is the only thing that offends the infinite majesty of God. But you must know that although the precious blood of Jesus Christ and the infinite merits of his death are more than sufficient to free us from original sin, these merits would be useless and ineffective for us if they were not applied to us by the sacrament of Baptism. Jesus Christ himself says so in his Gospel: He who is not born again of water and the Holy Spirit cannot enter the kingdom of God.[2] Our Saviour, says the apostle St. Paul, saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit: *Salvos nos fecit per lavacrum regenerationis et renovationis Spiritus Sancti* \[He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit\].[3]

4. This so important truth should serve as a lesson to fathers of families, who must take great care that their wives, their daughters, their maidservants and household know well all that is necessary to know when, in case of necessity, they are obliged to baptise a child who has not been baptised and is very near death.

5. Married women must know that they are very guilty before God if their child comes to die without Baptism, whether because they delay it too long waiting for some godfather, or out of some other human respect, or because they have miscarried. When this happens through no fault of theirs, their innocence must console them, and they must adore the providence of God. But if they have miscarried through their own fault, by dancing, by flying into violent anger, by carrying loads that are too heavy, or for any other reasons, this is an evil that has no excuse, and they must weep for it all their lives.

6. Now that I have shown you the absolute necessity of Baptism for our salvation, and that any person may administer it when there is urgent necessity, I must now explain to you the ceremonies the Church practises when she confers this Sacrament, for they contain many and great instructions. The three principal ones are the exorcism, the catechism or instruction, and the anointings.

7. First, the exorcism is done in order to exorcise, that is, to cast out the devil, so that he may not hinder the effects of baptismal grace. He is cast out with spittle and by touching the child, and above all with breathing upon him; in imitation of the Son of God, who freed a man possessed by the devil who tormented him, by

applying his spittle to him and putting his finger into his ears;[4] and because with a breath of his mouth he gave the Holy Spirit to his Apostles and disciples when he sent them to preach the Gospel and to destroy the empire of the devil.[5]

8. Second, the catechism or instruction; because before Baptism the one who is to be baptised must be taught, so as to dispose him to receive this Sacrament worthily, according to the precept of Jesus Christ, who, sending his Apostles to preach the Gospel, told them to teach all nations and baptise them. So it was that in the early Church the catechumens, that is, those who wished to become Christians, were instructed for a long time. They were taught not only the mysteries of faith, such as those of the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Redemption, but also the practical truths, such as the fear of God, the malice of sin which so offends him, the terror of his judgements, and the spirit of piety, humility and charity with which the faithful must be filled.

9. Nowadays the children who are baptised are incapable of instruction before Baptism; but the Church leaves this care to fathers and mothers, and, failing them, to the godfather or godmother. So do not deceive yourselves; do not think that to be a godfather or godmother there is nothing else to do but give your name to the child, hold it over the font, bring it back home and give some little present. Know that you take on many other obligations, for you stand surety for the child, whom the Church does not admit to Baptism except on the promise you make to instruct it in the faith and in good conduct; but unfortunately none of this is done, and this is the reason why nothing is seen everywhere but a deplorable ignorance. And if you do not instruct your servants, nor even your own children, how will you do so with those of whom you are only godfather or godmother? Is it not a great pity to see how little fruit the grace of this Sacrament produces in you?

10. A child who has received Baptism has consequently received the grace of God, and with it the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gift of wisdom, of understanding, of knowledge, of counsel, of piety, of fortitude and of the fear of God, the supernatural habits and the infused virtues; and yet when he is grown he feels nothing of all this; no fruit of such fine plants is seen in him. He is as unruly, as unchaste, as intemperate and as vicious as if he had not been baptised; and this is because those good plants have not been cultivated. On the contrary, concupiscence has continually been increasing in this child; he hears talk only of vanity, of games, of pastimes, of company of young people of both sexes, of immodest conversations; and so it is no wonder that this plant produces the bitterest fruits. The grace of Baptism has languished and never finds matter on which to work. You never speak to your son about God, about Jesus Christ, about his perfections and benefits, about the happiness enjoyed by those who are friends of devotion and piety; perhaps you do not make him pray to God, or accustom him to give alms, to love the poor, to forgive injuries, to mortify his self-love and to break his will; and so it is no wonder that grace is idle and barren in him. It is like ground in which very good seed has been sown, but which has never been watered or warmed by the rays of the sun: in it the good grain remains sterile, and the thistles grow in abundance. “The brambles of the lusts of the flesh grew up over my head, and there was no charitable hand to root them out,” says St. Augustine, speaking of himself: *Ascendebant vepres libidinis super caput meum, et non erat manus eradicans* \[The brambles of lust grew up over my head, and there was no hand to root them out\].[6]

11. My brethren, the holy Doctor used to say, and I too say it to all who are godfathers and godmothers, that they have stood surety before God for their godchildren, and have bound themselves to care for them and to do for them what true charity commands. Indeed, however little love of God you have, and however little charity towards your neighbour, when you have a godchild you should have him come to your house from time to time, instruct him in the mysteries of our holy faith, exhort him to the practice of the Christian virtues, and remind him that you answered for him to God and to the Church; that he renounced the devil and his works; that he promised to live as a good Catholic; and that on this promise he received the holy anointing, so as to obtain the honour of having a share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. For you must know, my brethren, that by Baptism we were consecrated to God and made sharers in the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ. The apostle St. Peter calls Christians a holy nation, royal priests: *regale sacerdotium, gens sancta* \[a

royal priesthood, a holy nation\].[7] In this way, by the holy anointing you received on the day of your baptism, you were made worthy to approach God on behalf of his Son and to offer him spiritual sacrifices, that is, prayers and holy actions.

12. The other ceremonies are also mysteries fulfilled in you, and they make known to you the obligations you contract. First: you were given a name in Baptism to teach you that until then you were nothing in the eyes of God, and that you had begun to be his children; you were given the name of a Saint to move you to invoke and imitate him: but do you do so?

13. Second: they put blessed salt in your mouth to teach you that, having been made members of the divine Word, all your words should be seasoned with moderation, gentleness, charity and purity: is that perhaps what happens?

14. Third: they apply spittle to your senses to teach you that you must use them only with great prudence and discretion: see to what you apply them and what use you make of them.

15. Fourth: they made the sign of the cross on your head, on your breast and on your shoulders to make you know that the cross is the inheritance of Christians, and that you must carry it in body and soul. But unhappily, do you not do quite the opposite? Are you not enemies of the cross? Do you not flee like death from everything that mortifies and humbles you? Do you not seek your own taste and your own satisfaction in everything that concerns your person and your convenience?

16. Fifth: they consecrated you by the anointing with holy oil and chrism to make you sharers in the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ: do you not profane this consecration with infamous actions, unworthy of a Christian?

17. Sixth: they put a lighted blessed candle in your hand to teach you that you must be the light of the world; that is, that you must enlighten by your good example all who witness your actions.

18. Seventh: they put on you a white garment or little tunic to represent the garment with which you are clothed by the grace of Baptism; that is, that you have been clothed with Jesus Christ. The apostle St. Paul says so expressly: All of you who have been baptised have put on Jesus Christ.[8]

19. Almost all the ancient Fathers of the Church and ecclesiastical authors mention the white garment that used to be put on the newly baptised as a sign of the justice and innocence they had received in Baptism. The band still put on the head of children is a vestige of this ceremony. “You received a white garment,” says St. Ambrose, “to signify that you have laid aside the sins in which you were as it were wrapped, and that you have been clothed with the chaste veils of innocence.” The newly baptised, who were called neophytes, wore this garment for seven days in succession, and did not leave it off until the Saturday after Easter; but although they left it off outwardly, they took great care to remember the words that had been said to them: Keep this garment without stain until the day you appear before the judgement seat of Jesus Christ. And see here why this baptismal garment was kept with such esteem.

20. On this subject we read in an author of the fourth century a most memorable incident that took place in Africa at the time of the persecution of the Vandals. A holy deacon of Africa, who had held over the baptismal font a certain Elpidophorus, who later became an apostate and persecutor, when he was about to be tortured on his orders, spread out in the sight of all the linen cloths in which he had wrapped him on coming out of the font, and which he had kept hidden until that moment. Then, reproaching him with his apostasy and cruelty, he said to him these words, which made the Christians weep: “Elpidophorus, minister of error, these are the cloths that will accuse you when the supreme Judge comes full of majesty; they will torment you more keenly than you torment me here, because you have clothed yourself with cursing as with a garment, and with it you have miserably lost the faith of your baptism.”[9]

21. A celebrated author of the life of St. Louis relates that this young king set so much store by the grace of his baptism that he liked his castle of Poissy better than any other place, because he had received the grace of Baptism there; and when he wrote to his friends he often signed himself Louis of Poissy, without even taking the title of king. Thus this young Prince extended the memory of his baptism even to the place where he had received it.

22. To celebrate the anniversary of one's baptism as a feast day was an ancient devotion that still survived among Christians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This custom seems to be founded on the words of St. Ambrose: "Go over in your mind," he says, "what was asked of you when you were baptised; recognise what you answered: you renounced the devil and his works, the world and its corrupt pleasures."[10] To renew the promises of your baptism at least once every year, on the day you had the happiness of receiving it, and even to do so at the foot of the baptismal font if possible, so as to stir yourselves more and more to gratitude for so great a benefit, is a very praiseworthy practice that you should always keep.

23. The same St. Ambrose says something capable of making those tremble who have lost the innocence they received in Baptism: "I have more easily found," he says, "persons who have kept their innocence than persons who have done fitting penance after having sinned": *Facilius inveni qui innocentiam servaverint, quam qui congrue egerint poenitentiam* \[I have more easily found those who kept their innocence than those who did fitting penance\].[11] And this is, adds the Saint, because one must renounce the world and lead an entirely Christian life. That is why Jesus Christ is quite right to say that whoever wishes to follow him must deny himself, take up his cross and follow him. And yet how many Christians, though so clothed, plunge into a thousand dissolute ways, into drunkenness, into impure actions!

24. Finally, in Baptism you gave yourselves to Jesus Christ; you renounced Satan; you said three times *abrenuntio,* I renounce Satan, his pomps and his works. And do not think that the promise you made is forgotten: it is written in heaven; you cannot go back on it, and it will be the ground of your eternal condemnation \[if you break it\]. You renounced the pomps and works of the devil; and yet how many of you take them up again! Those vanities in dress, those worldly airs, those gatherings, those dances you frequent, those endearments to persons of the other sex, those hatreds, those blasphemies: what are all these things but works of the devil?

25. Some holy Doctors tell us that after the death of a bad Christian, when his soul is about to be judged, the devil will present himself before the tribunal of the supreme Judge to demand justice against it: "This man," he will say, "considered himself a Christian; he was marked with the sign of the cross; he heard the Gospel preached; but he busied himself with everything except what the Gospel teaches. On the contrary, he obeyed all my laws, he let himself be carried away by all my temptations; he was mine during his life, and he must be mine after his death." In the time of the Apostles and their disciples, when a Christian fell into some great sin, he was put back among the catechumens, as if he had not been baptised, and was not allowed to remain in the church while the high mysteries were going on. So should all of you who have gravely offended God do: you should stay at the foot of the church, and with a contrite and humbled heart strike your breast like the publican, saying: My God, be merciful to this poor sinner; grant me the favour of converting me, of satisfying your justice and appeasing your wrath; renew in me the grace I received in Baptism, so that I may one day be received at the marriage feast of the spotless Lamb. Which I wish you, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Sunday of the Most Holy Trinity

On Baptism.

> *Euntes docete omnes gentes, baptizantes eos in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti (Matth. 28:19).*
>
> *Go, teach all nations, and baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel. Mission, instruction and baptism.

3. Original sin, the merits of Jesus Christ, and the application of these merits by Baptism and the other Sacraments: necessity of Baptism.

4. Everyone should try to know what is necessary for Baptism.

5. When married women are guilty, or not, of their children's failing to receive Baptism.

6. Necessity of Baptism: who may baptise. Ceremonies.

7. First, exorcism: casting out Satan, with spittle and breath.

8. Second, catechism: truths and virtues.

9. Parents must instruct; godparents too are teachers and sureties.

10. What has a child received in Baptism? The good plants have not been cultivated… and so there is nothing but weeds and thorns.

11. What godparents should teach their godchildren.

12. You were given the name of a Saint: and why?

13. Why did they put salt in your mouth?

14. Why the spittle on the senses?

15. Why did they make the sign of the cross on your head, breast and shoulders?

16. Why the chrism?

17. Why the light in your hand?

18. Why the white garment?

19. The care with which the white garment was kept.

20. The case of Elpidophorus.

21. The case of St. Louis, King of France.

22. Celebrate the anniversary of your Baptism. Renew the vows and promises.

23. Innocence is more easily kept than penance is done after sinning.

24. What was renounced?

25. What will Satan say at the judgement about a bad Christian?

---

[1] Eph. 2:3.

[2] John 3:5.

[3] Titus 3:5.

[4] Mark 7:33 (the deaf-mute; the preacher conflates him with a possessed man).

[5] John 20:22.

[6] St. Augustine, *Confessions* II, 3, 6.

[7] 1 Pet. 2:9.

[8] Gal. 3:27.

[9] Cf. Ps. 108 (109):18.

[10] Cf. St. Ambrose, *De mysteriis* 2, 5 and *De sacramentis* I, 2.

[11] St. Ambrose, *De paenitentia* II, 10, 96.

32. Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi: On the Holy Mass

Vol. I, pp. 213–218. Reading for the Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi. Gospel: Luke 14:16–24. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 14 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus told the Pharisees this parable: A man prepared a great supper and invited many people. At the hour of supper he sent a servant to tell those invited to come, for everything was now ready. And they all began, as if by agreement, to excuse themselves. The first said to him: I have bought a farm and I must go out and see it; I pray you, hold me excused. The second said: I have bought five yoke of oxen and I am going to try them; hold me excused, I pray you. Another said: I have just married, and so I cannot go. When the servant returned, he reported all this to his master. Then the father of the family, angered, said to his servant: Go out at once into the squares and streets of the city and bring here all the poor, and the crippled, and the blind, and the lame you find. Afterwards the servant said: Lord, what you commanded has been done, and there is still room. The master answered him: Go out into the roads and hedges and compel those you find to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you solemnly that none of those who were invited before shall taste my supper.

2. St. Luke relates in the present Gospel that Jesus told the Pharisees the parable of a certain man who prepared a great supper and invited many. And at the hour of supper he sent a servant of his to tell those invited to come, because everything was now prepared; but all, as if agreed, began to excuse themselves, refusing under various pretexts to attend the banquet. Then the father of the family, annoyed, ordered the servant to go through the streets and squares and bring the poor and the weak, and the blind and the lame; and seeing that there were still seats to spare, he told him: Go out into the roads and towards the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled. The man who gives the supper represents God the Father; the great supper represents heaven, where souls will be fully satisfied with God; the servant sent is Jesus Christ. The first guests, who excuse themselves and do not come, represent: first, those who let themselves be possessed by the goods of the earth, or who so load themselves with temporal business that they have no time to meditate on God; second, those who think only of acquiring vain and useless knowledge; third, those who are attached to the pleasures of the world and of the flesh. The second guests represent those who, lacking the goods of the earth, are more disposed than rich people to let themselves be won by the hope of the goods of heaven. The third represent the Gentiles, whom it was necessary to bring to believe the Gospel by the force of miracles.[1]

3. It may also be said that this great supper is a figure of the holy and divine Eucharist, to which Jesus Christ invites all Christians, as is said in the Proverbs of Solomon, where Wisdom, that is, the divine Word, speaks in these terms: Come, eat the bread I give you, and drink the wine I have prepared for you: *Venite, comedite panem meum, et bibite vinum quod miscui vobis* \[Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine I have mixed for you\].[2] Those who excuse themselves from approaching it represent a vast number of Christians who, sunk in the love of earthly things, have great indifference towards this heavenly manna. The other guests are a figure of Christians who have the proper dispositions to attend the heavenly banquet. In one of the preceding instructions I showed you what these dispositions must be; I then considered the holy Eucharist as a Sacrament, and today I want to make you consider it as a sacrifice. This sacrifice is the one in which Jesus Christ presents himself to God the Father on our altars under the species of bread and wine, and in which he offers him the death he suffered on Calvary. You will understand, my brethren, that I wish to instruct you on the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

4. The Mass is a most august and venerable sacrifice: in it the body and blood of Jesus Christ are offered for the remission of sins. We must try to attend it as often and as devoutly as we possibly can. The altar is the throne of his grace; on it Jesus Christ is present, full of goodwill towards us; he receives our homage and grants us his benefits. The time of Mass is the favourable time, *in auxilio opportuno* \[for timely help\]. Let us then approach this throne of grace with confidence: *adeamus cum fiducia ad thronum gratiae ejus* \[let us go with confidence to the throne of his grace\], the Apostle tells us.[3] This is the most fitting occasion to treat with God the business of our salvation, to appease his wrath and win his goodwill. The Angels are then beside the altar, and represent to Jesus Christ what he has done for us.

5. There is no devotion easier, more useful or more pleasing to God than that of hearing Mass devoutly. You sometimes allege that you cannot meditate, that your imagination is fickle and inconstant, that it wanders without your wanting it to, and that meditation costs you great effort. I believe it; but who prevents you from profiting by the prayers that the priest and the whole Church make during Mass for all who attend it, from having a share in the graces granted in so divine a sacrifice, in the merits of the Saviour which are then distributed to those present, and in the prayers that Jesus Christ makes for them in the most holy Sacrament?

6. Let us repeat it: I have said that the Mass is a sacrifice, and on this, my brethren, I must instruct you. You must consider, then, who offers the sacrifice, what is offered, and the manner in which it is offered. First, the one who offers it is our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, and the object of the Father's good pleasure; for the priest who says Mass is only his instrument and his minister; and when he says, "This is my body", it is evident that he does not speak of his own body but of that of Jesus Christ; it is not properly he who speaks, but Jesus Christ who speaks through his mouth.

7. Second, what is offered is not the dead flesh of a lamb, an ox or some other animal, as in the sacrifices of the old law, but the precious and adorable flesh of the Son of God; it is his own body immolated on the cross.

8. Third, the manner in which this sacrifice is offered is admirable, and gives God great glory: it is a most perfect holocaust, which in a certain way destroys and consumes the victim. In it God is perfectly honoured as first principle and as the last end in which we find our rest and our beatitude; for the most praiseworthy ambition we can have in serving him is to serve him, and the most praiseworthy and happiest end is to die and to be consumed and destroyed for his honour and in homage to him. And see here why in the holocaust the creature is immolated, destroyed and burnt. Besides this, in this sacrifice the Son of God honours the justice of the Father, inasmuch as he confesses that he has deserved death for the sins of men, for whom he stood surety. He honours his mercy, inasmuch as the Father transferred to his innocent Son the debts of sinners, and accepted the sacrifice of this precious body and the mystical shedding of his blood in place of the true and real death we had deserved. He honours him as last end, inasmuch as for his honour he loses his sacramental being through the holy host being consumed, which is a mystical death, since Jesus Christ could not really die more than once.

9. Therefore, my faithful people, since Jesus Christ is the principal offerer in this sacrifice, and since he himself is the victim offered, you will no doubt understand that the Mass is the most excellent, the noblest and the most divine sacrifice that can be offered, and that it must be most pleasing to God. And it is not only pleasing to God but also most advantageous to men; for when we offer God the precious body of his Son, we give him a payment capable of discharging the great obligations we owe to God's goodness; we have in it a most powerful means of obtaining all the graces necessary for the salvation of the soul and for the health of the body. There is more: the sacrifice of the Mass also serves for the remission of sins; that is, if, being unhappily in mortal sin, you attend Mass with great devotion and with a heart pierced with sorrow for having offended God, this divine sacrifice obtains for you actual graces, good impulses and inspirations of the Holy Spirit to enter into yourselves again, to leave sin and be converted, if through your hardness you do not resist the inspirations of grace. And if you are in grace, you gather the fruit of the merits, the torments and the satisfactions of Jesus Christ, of the payment he made with his blood on the cross to satisfy your debts and

lessen the penalties due to your sins. Read all the books of devotions and prayers, and it is quite certain you will find no prayer more powerful and effective than this. Have you greatly offended God, deserved his justice and his wrath, and do you fear the effects of his vengeance? Then attend Mass with respect and devotion, as I have just told you; offer the eternal Father the precious body of his Son which is sacrificed to him, that blood which was shed for us all, that passion which is here represented, and have confidence that God will be appeased and will hear your prayers.

10. Since the sacrifice of the Mass has so powerful a virtue, is there not reason to be astonished that a man who has committed great sins, who has nothing to do, who knows that Mass is being said in a church not far from his house, stays quietly at home and wastes his time in idleness? Listen to this comparison: if a good sum of money were being distributed to all who went to the house of a very rich gentleman a quarter of a league from here, and you knew that a man loaded with debts did not trouble to go there, but preferred to stay at home with his arms folded, would you not be astonished at his stupidity and sloth? Would you not say he deserved to remain in his poverty for ever? Would you pity him if his creditors had him thrown into prison? Certainly not. Well, sinners who hear me, apply the comparison to yourselves: you are infinitely in debt to the justice of God, and you have nothing of your own with which to pay the least part of your debts. The merits of Jesus Christ are more than enough to satisfy for them; by attending Mass they can be applied to you; and you prefer to stay at home, amusing yourselves with frivolous and useless things.

11. Let us think about it, my brethren: this is of the greatest importance to us. You will certainly die one day, and so will I; after our death, if God wills, Masses will be said for us; but if death catches us in mortal sin, they will be of no use to us. But since God leaves you some time of life, make use of it to work out your salvation: leave sin, attend Mass every day, or as often as you can, with the greatest devotion and in a spirit of humility and contrition, laying your miseries there before the throne of mercy. This holy action will be able to soften your heart and stay the vengeance of God; it will give you a share in the fruit of the sacrifice, lessen the penalties due to your sins, and bring you back to the way of salvation. Which I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi

On the holy Mass.

> *Homo quidam fecit coenam magnam, et vocavit multos (Luc. 14:16).*
>
> *A certain man prepared a great banquet and invited many.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel. This banquet is a figure of glory.

3. It is also a figure of the Eucharist, as Sacrament and as sacrifice.

4. What is the Mass? How should we attend it?

5. There is no devotion easier, more useful, more pleasing to God…

6. The Mass is a sacrifice. Who offers?

7. What victim does he offer?

8. The manner, or how it is offered…

9. It is the means for obtaining graces: remission of sins…

10. Comparison of a man who, being in need, does not go to…

11. Come, attend Mass…

[1] Luke 14:23.

[2] Prov. 9:5.

[3] Heb. 4:16.

33. Third Sunday after Pentecost: On Hope in God's Mercy

Vol. I, pp. 219–224. Reading for the Third Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Luke 15:1–10. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Third Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 15 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. At that time the publicans and sinners used to come near to Jesus to hear him; and the Pharisees and scribes murmured at this, saying: See how he makes himself familiar with sinners and eats with them. Then he put this parable to them: Which of you, having a hundred sheep and having lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the pasture and go in search of the one that was lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he puts it on his shoulders full of joy; and when he reaches home he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them: Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost. I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just who have no need of repentance. Or what woman, having ten drachmas or silver coins, if she loses one, does not light a lamp and sweep the house well and search everywhere until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying: Rejoice with me, for I have found the drachma I had lost. So, I tell you, the Angels of God will rejoice over one sinner who does penance.

2. Today's Gospel shows us a man who, having a hundred sheep, loses one, and leaving the ninety-nine in the desert goes in search of the one that has strayed, and having found it carries it joyfully on his shoulders and brings it back to the fold. This man who has lost a sheep is a figure of Jesus Christ, who is a good shepherd; for a good shepherd is full of care for his sheep. This stray sheep represents the sinner who by his disorders has wandered away from the flock, that is, from the company of the good. Notice, I beg you, that when the good shepherd has found his sheep he puts it on his shoulders; which should make us understand the ardent charity of Jesus Christ towards sinners, and that he is always ready to receive them when they come to him by a true conversion and moved by the desire to do penance. Know also that the Angels show the greatest joy at the conversion of a sinner. All this, my brethren, must be a lesson for us; for if the conversion of a sinner causes so much joy in heaven, you must be convinced that the mercy of God is infinite, and that therefore great sinners must never despair of his goodness. This is the subject that will occupy your attention for this while.

3. Since I am to speak today of hope in the mercy of God, I declare that what I have to say on this subject is not addressed to those who, after being sunk all their lives in the mire of their sins, content themselves with saying at the hour of death, without true contrition: "I have sinned, my God, have mercy on me." I am speaking to those who have obtained from God the grace of true sorrow for their sins and are disposed to do sincere penance for them; and I dare assure them that, however great and enormous their sins may have been, they should have a well-founded confidence that they will obtain pardon for them.

4. Indeed, God speaks thus by the prophet Isaiah: Purify your consciences, banish evil thoughts from your spirit, cease to do evil, begin to practise virtue, relieve the oppressed, protect widows and orphans; and though your soul were dyed with malice like scarlet, it would become as white as snow.[1] And by the prophet Ezekiel he says: If the sinner does penance for all the sins he has committed, if he keeps all my commandments, if he does justice to others as he would do it to himself, he shall have life, he shall not perish, and I will remember no more the sins he has committed.[2]

5. God's forgiving us our sins is not only out of the love he bears us and compassion for our miseries, but out of love for himself and for the interests of his glory; for by this he shows his generosity, forgetting the injuries done to him and showing that he is above the malice of men. He shows his power likewise, for there is no illness so desperate that this divine Physician does not cure it when he pleases, by the strength of his grace and by the infinite value of the merits of his Son.

6. Therefore the enormity and number of your sins must not take away your confidence; and however grave and many they may be, you always have reason to hope, because our hope rests not on our own merits but on the goodness of God, on the merits of his Son Jesus Christ, and on his infinite mercy. Indeed, God has exercised this mercy towards men who had committed great sins, such as King David, King Manasseh, the Magdalen and many others.

7. In the fourth century, in a city of Egypt, there was a courtesan named Thaïs, who had for a long time been living in the greatest disorders, when God made use of a holy abbot named Paphnutius to convert her.[3] This holy old man, who acted beyond all suspicion and moved by the Spirit of God, went to find this sinner, and was greatly surprised to hear her speak of God; for she told him, among other things, that there is no place that can be hidden from his eyes. "I know more," she added; "I know that there is a kingdom to come for good people, and a hell where the wicked will be eternally punished." "Then if you know these things," said Paphnutius to her, "why do you cause the ruin of so many souls, and put yourself in the way of being justly condemned not only for your own sins but also for those of others?"

8. At these words Thaïs, recognising that this was a man of God, threw herself at his feet, dissolved in a sea of tears, and said to him: "My father, impose on me whatever penance you wish, for I hope that through your prayers God will have mercy on me; I will stay wherever you please and do whatever you command." Then, having gathered all the jewels she had acquired by her sins, she burned them in the middle of the city and went to the place where the Saint had told her she would find him. The holy Abbot placed her as a religious in a convent; she shut herself in a little cell, whose door she had walled up, leaving only a small window to pass in her food, which came down to a little bread and water that the sisters brought her each day. When Thaïs asked the holy Abbot how she should pray to God, he said to her: "You are not worthy to pronounce his holy name, for your lips are full of iniquity, nor to raise your criminal hands to heaven; be content to turn towards the East and often repeat these words: You who created me, have mercy on me." Thus Thaïs spent three years shut up, until Paphnutius, having compassion on her, knew it was the will of God that he should free her from that prison. So he went to the monastery and had the door of the little cell opened, although she begged him to be pleased to leave her always in that state. He said to her: "Come out, for God has forgiven you your sins." She then answered: "I call him to witness that since I came in here I have set all my sins like a heap before my eyes, never ceasing to weep as I considered them." "That is why," St. Paphnutius told her, "God has forgiven them to you, rather than for your penance." When this holy penitent had come out, she lived only fifteen days more, and died in the peace of the Lord.

9. My brethren, if we see in the holy Scriptures that God rejected and reproved the penance of some, it was because their conversion was not true, but was a false, apparent and feigned penance.[4] Such is your penance, sinners who hear me, if you examine it closely. You confess at Easter that you have sworn, that you have got drunk, and sometimes also that you have fallen into shameful sins against purity: do you not say the same at Christmas and at the Easter before, and this perhaps for three, four and perhaps more years? Is this not just dallying with wickedness? "Where there is no amendment of vices, penance is frivolous and vain," says Tertullian: *Ubi nulla emendatio, ibi poenitentia vana* \[Where there is no amendment, penance is vain\].[5] True penance is called conversion because it changes the whole man: one then has thoughts, affections and a conduct entirely contrary to those one had before.

10. When God tells us by his prophet Isaiah that the soul that repents will become white as snow,[6] he teaches us what he means by penance: "Cast far from you," he says, "the evil thoughts of your heart, cease to do evil,

practise good works, succour the oppressed, help the orphans and protect the widows." The penance of Esau was deceitful and frivolous; he did not refrain constantly from sin, and he said within himself: "My father will not live for ever; when he dies I will kill my brother Jacob."[7] You may well deceive men, but you cannot deceive God, who sees what passes in your heart. If there still remains in it some evil will for the future, some secret desire to return after Easter to the occasions of offending God, such as drunkenness, dances, gatherings of men and women, you are not truly converted; for one of the signs that you have not given up the attachment to sin for ever is that you are not willing to do all you can to avoid the occasion. So all those tears you sometimes shed in confession, that sensible devotion, that tenderness of heart, are almost always the effects of mere illusion, because they come from nature and not from grace.

11. The kings and the others I have spoken to you about, who obtained pardon from God, were not content with acknowledging their fault and shedding a few tears; they laid aside the purple and their rich garments, covered themselves with sackcloth and haircloth, fasted austerely, and prayed to God for a long time with great fervour, with sobs and groans. By behaving in this way, my brethren, you too will draw upon yourselves the mercy of God, who, appeased by your humiliation and your sincere confession, will forgive you your sins however great they may be; and on the strength of this conversion you must hope in his mercy. I wish it to you with all my heart, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Third Sunday after Pentecost

On hope in the mercy of God.

> *Congratulamini mihi, quia inveni ovem meam, quae perierat (Luc. 15:6).*
>
> *Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that had strayed.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. There are two kinds of sinners, and which kind should hope in mercy.

4. What God says through the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel.

5. By forgiving, God shows his generosity and his omnipotence.

6. Our hope rests on the goodness of God, on the merits of Jesus Christ and on his infinite mercy.

7. Paphnutius converts Thaïs.

8. The repentance of Thaïs.

9. Where there is no amendment of vices, there is no true penance.

10. True penance is what God describes through Isaiah. False penance is that of Esau.

11. Imitate the true penitents.

---

[1] Isa. 1:16–18.

[2] Ezek. 18:21–22 (the source gives 18:23).

[3] The story of St. Thaïs and Paphnutius comes from the *Lives of the Desert Fathers* (*Vitae Patrum*).

[4] Antiochus (2 Macc. 9:13) and Esau (Heb. 12:17).

[5] Cf. Tertullian, *De paenitentia* 2.

[6] Isa. 1:18.

[7] Gen. 27:41.

34. Fourth Sunday after Pentecost: On the Importance of Salvation

Vol. I, pp. 225–229. Reading for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Luke 5:1–11. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 5 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. At that time, when Jesus was beside the lake of Gennesaret, the crowds pressed around him, eager to hear the word of God. Then he saw two boats at the edge of the lake, whose fishermen had got out and were washing their nets. So getting into one of them, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And sitting down in it, he preached from the boat to the great crowd. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon: Steer out into the deep, and let down your nets for a catch. Simon answered him: Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at your word I will let down the net. And when they had done so, they caught so great a quantity of fish that the net was breaking. So they signalled to their companions in the other boat to come and help them. They came at once, and filled both boats so full of fish that they almost sank. When Simon Peter saw this, he threw himself at the feet of Jesus, saying: Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man. For amazement had seized him and all who were with him at the sight of the catch they had just made; and so too James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon: You have nothing to fear; from now on it is men you shall catch, to give them life. And they, bringing their boats to land, left everything and followed him.

2. Today's Gospel tells us that Jesus, being beside the lake of Gennesaret, got into a boat that belonged to Simon Peter, from which he taught his doctrine to the crowds that followed him; and that afterwards, when he ordered Peter, who had been able to catch nothing all night, to let down the nets, the multitude of fish he drew up in them was so great that he, together with John and James, were amazed, brought their boats to land, and leaving everything followed the Lord. St. Peter's boat, which Jesus Christ entered to teach the people, is a figure of the Church, in which the Lord teaches. Those represented by St. Peter, who had toiled all night and caught nothing, are those who in the night of sin have exerted themselves greatly in running after the goods and pleasures of the earth, and who at the hour of death find their hands empty of good works. The miraculous catch, in which St. Peter and his companions took so great a quantity of fish, signifies the conversion of the peoples who were to enter the boat of St. Peter, that is, the Catholic Church, through the preaching of the Apostles and the divine power God gave to their words. Finally, the docility of Simon Peter and his companions, who left everything to follow Jesus Christ, is a great lesson for us: it means that we must leave everything and overcome every obstacle that presents itself in order to follow Jesus Christ. The Lord has called you to faith and to eternal salvation, and he wants you to work unceasingly to obtain it, since it is the most important business you have in this world; and this is what I have set myself to show you briefly.

3. Yes, my brethren, it is the most important business. The Son of God tells us that all the treasures of the earth and all the empires of the world cannot be compared with our soul, which is so precious and excellent.[1] For this reason, seeing how people toil in the world to acquire a temporal good, surely, if we have even a little prudence and love for ourselves, we shall work with all our heart to obtain the salvation of our soul. And first we must work promptly; for we see in the Gospel that Jesus Christ always reproved the delays of those who put off obeying his warnings, however plausible their excuses. St. Luke tells us that a man who felt inspired to follow Jesus Christ said to him: "Master, I wish to follow you; but first let me dispose of my goods." The Saviour answered him: "Go, you are not fit for the kingdom of heaven."[2] In the same chapter he says to another: "Follow me." The young man answers: "Allow me first to go and bury my father." The Son of God replies: "Let the dead bury the dead."[3] It was not that he objected to this man burying his father, but that he wanted to do it before following Jesus Christ. So it is with you, sinners: you say, "I will leave my sin and give myself to the service of my God when I have brought up my children, when I have won that lawsuit, when I have got that post." Very well; but if you put yourselves in a good state from now on, you would

bring up your children and pursue that lawsuit in grace and with the blessing of God.

4. In the second place, we must work at our salvation seriously; that is, with the resolve to attain it, by the grace of God, at any cost, even at the price of the greatest sacrifices. The Son of God tells us in the Gospel that the kingdom of heaven is won only by force, that we must do ourselves violence to conquer it, that the way that leads to it is narrow, and that we must make the greatest efforts to enter it.[4] What do merchants who want to grow rich not do? What do young people seeking an advantageous match not do? And what of the ambitious who want to obtain a post? What cares, what journeys, what expenses do they not undertake to succeed in their enterprise? Consider, then, that to acquire virtue we must not behave slackly; and how can you change your bad habits, contracted over a long time, without efforts of spirit and without mortification? St. John Chrysostom says very well that the general who wants to make himself master of a fortress suffers much: he toils, he sweats, he keeps watch by night and sleeps on the ground. You want to make the conquest not of a fortress, not of a city or a province, but of the kingdom of heaven, which is so far from you; and precisely you do nothing that is difficult, you make no effort, you overcome no resistance to obtain it. The more important an undertaking is, the greater the care, the more circumspection, diligence and activity must be put into it to succeed. Then what care, what diligence must we not have when it is a question of avoiding eternal damnation, separated from God for ever and among endless torments, or of living with God eternally, being with his elect and tasting heavenly delights?

5. You say your prayers every morning with slackness and negligence; you will not fast, give alms, forgive those who offend you, restore the property you hold unjustly, or avoid the occasions of sin; and you make no effort for your salvation. Can so great a good be obtained without working with energy and diligence? Just call to mind what the Saints did to win heaven: the austere life they led, the fasts, the mortifications and the retirement they observed. But we must not only work seriously at the business of our own salvation; we must also work with perseverance. What is not done in the world to obtain a small reward, uncertain and temporal though it be? Among the great, in the army, at court, we see people who live like slaves for two-thirds of their lives in the mere hope of being great for the other third. We must also work with patience. “The farmer,” says St. James, “clears the land, tills it, manures it, sows it,” at the risk of never seeing its fruit; and sometimes on the eve of harvest the hail ruins all his hopes.[5] Yet he does not lose heart: the following year he cultivates his field again, until at last there comes a year so fruitful that it makes up for the barrenness of the others. See here, my brethren, an excellent model of the energy with which you must work at the task of your salvation without ever losing courage, always hoping that by your good works you will obtain the reward promised to those who live holily. Which I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

On the importance of salvation.

> *Relictis omnibus, secuti sunt eum (Luc. 5:11).*
>
> *Leaving all things, they followed him.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Saving one’s soul is the most important business. We must attend to it promptly. Woe to those who make excuses!…

4. We must work seriously. We must do ourselves violence; the way, the gate, everything is narrow. What do worldly people do for their interests? Simile of a fortress one wants to conquer…

5. What did the Saints do to be saved? What do the people of the world do? What do farmers do to reap?…

[1] Cf. Matt. 16:26.

[2] Luke 9:61–62 (the source cites Luke 9:61).

[3] Luke 9:59–60.

[4] Matt. 11:12; Matt. 7:13–14; Luke 13:24.

[5] Cf. James 5:7.

35. Fifth Sunday after Pentecost: On the Spirit of Christianity

Vol. I, pp. 230–234. Reading for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Matthew 5:20–24. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 5 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus said to his disciples: Unless your justice is fuller and more perfect than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to your elders: You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be condemned to death in judgement. I tell you more: whoever takes a grudge against his brother will deserve to be condemned by the judge. And whoever calls him *raca* will deserve to be condemned by the council. But whoever calls him fool will be liable to the fire of hell. Therefore, if when you are presenting your offering at the altar you remember there that your brother has some complaint against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then you will come back and present your offering.

2. In today's Gospel the Lord threatens with the gravest punishments anyone who wounds or kills his neighbour, or offends him with insults and abuse. All who grow angry with their neighbour and in their resentment break out into insults against him deserve these punishments in the judgement of Jesus Christ, and this wicked way of behaving is very dangerous for their salvation. But our divine Saviour goes still further: he wants that if, when we go to offer something at the altar (which may be understood of the offering we make to God in our prayers, or when we prepare ourselves for holy Communion), he wants, I repeat, that if we have offended our brother, or if we have some rancour against him, we should leave our acts of devotion there and go and find our neighbour to be reconciled with him. This precept is our Saviour's; it is now for you to see whether you observe it. But I beg you to notice these words he says to his disciples: If your justice is not more perfect than that of the doctors of the law and the Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. By this he means, my brethren, that Christians must perform all their actions with higher ends than those with which the Jews performed theirs; that is, our actions must be animated by the spirit of Christianity. This, then, is what I propose to show you in this instruction.

3. In another part of his Gospel this divine Saviour says that to whom much has been given, much will also be asked.[1] We have received incomparably more than the Jews: they had only the shadows, we have the light; they the prophecies, we their fulfilment; they the promises of the Messiah, we the Messiah himself; they the manna, we the Eucharist; they the sacrifices of animals, and we the sacrifice of the cross. There must, then, be as much difference between the life of the ancient Jews and ours as there is between shadows and light, between a child and a grown man.

4. This difference consists principally in three points. The first is that the scribes and Pharisees in the practice of virtue looked only to the exterior. The Lord rebukes them for this, saying that this people honoured him with their lips, but their heart was far from him.[2] Christians, on the contrary, must take great care of the interior; for elsewhere the Saviour says: Blind Pharisee, clean first the inside of the cup and the dish, so that

the outside also may be clean.[3] This, my brethren, gives me occasion to tell you that what I fear for your salvation is not principally the bodily and exterior vices, such as killing a man, robbing in the solitude of a mountain, getting drunk, and so on. These actions are too horrible and too base to be committed by a decent man. What I fear for you are the spiritual vices: pride, attachment to the goods of the earth, confidence in yourselves, your self-love, the excessive love you have for your children; that you are impatient when you receive an injury, hardened in not forgiving; that you think yourselves deserving of everything, setting before yourselves as the end of your actions only your own interests, and envying those who possess more goods than you. On the contrary, the spiritual or interior virtues should be much more highly prized by you. And so you must have a lofty idea of the greatness of God, an ardent zeal for his glory, a great confidence in his goodness and in his providence and not in your own cleverness. In the management of your affairs you must not trust your own thoughts, your feelings or your inclinations, however good they may seem; you must have a heartfelt affection for all your relatives, and take no account of the honours and goods of the earth. As these virtues have no brilliance in the eyes of the world and are not so attractive in flattering our self-love, they are consequently more precious and more pleasing to God. And this is not to say that exterior actions are not good, but that they must be animated by the interior dispositions, for otherwise they are only empty phantoms of virtue and devotion.

5. The second difference is that the Jews had a spirit of slaves. That is why St. Paul says to Christians: You have not received a spirit of slavery that keeps you in fear; you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, which leads them to love their father.[4] Indeed, Catholics, a son is bound to love his father. Jesus Christ himself says that he came to earth to kindle the fire of the love of God.[5] He gave himself up to the death of the cross to give us proofs of his love, and so that we might return him love for love. But to love him with a true love, we must remove every other attachment from our heart; we must love no creature except in God and for God, that is, to win it for God, or so that it may lead us to God. If this love fills your whole spirit otherwise, it will be the source of a thousand imperfections that will cool the love you should have for this Lord. We must likewise cultivate this love with interior and exterior acts and with the practice of good works. He who has this love is not content to keep the commandments of God; he also does what he knows to be pleasing to his divine Majesty; he has zeal for his service and for the salvation of souls. And since so excellent a virtue cannot come from our own resources, we must often ask God for it with humility and fervour, and say to him with David: Lord, I will love you, for you are my strength.[6]

6. The third difference between the Jews and the children of the Church is that to the Jews who kept his commandments God promised, and gave them, temporal goods in abundance, in their flocks and in their lands; but none of this does he promise Christians. To those who put their trust in him he promises only what is strictly necessary for life, but not earthly riches. Jesus Christ promises Christians nothing in this life but crosses, reverses and persecutions; he says to his disciples: In this world you will be tried with afflictions: *in mundo pressuram habebitis* \[in the world you will have tribulation\].[7] On which St. Augustine makes this remark: It is not likely that Jesus Christ would give his favourites as the reward of their virtue what he grants freely to his enemies and even to the wicked. If temporal goods were the reward of virtue in this life, alas! no one would receive so much of his liberality as so many unbelievers who overflow with earthly goods. And would it not be a horrible disorder to practise virtue only for goods that are fleeting and perishable? It is true that God sometimes gives temporal goods to chosen souls, to show that he can give them to whomever he pleases, and because they use them as instruments for doing good works; and he sometimes takes them from the wicked so that this deprivation may oblige them to detach themselves from them and have recourse to his divine goodness. But as a rule this Lord gives the reprobate the temporal and perishable goods, and reserves for holy souls the eternal and unchangeable ones.[8]

7. So, my brethren, give thanks to God that he has been pleased to make the light of his truth shine in the midst of our darkness, and acknowledge that the life of Christians must be incomparably holier than that of

the ancient Jews. Ask God with the Church for the grace to follow all that is in keeping with the holiness of the Christianity you profess; for it is a vice quite contrary to so holy a profession to have only exterior virtues and to pray to God only with the lips. On the contrary, it is a thing proper to the condition of a Christian to be adorned with interior virtues, to be full of zeal for the honour of God, to fear him with the fear of respectful children, and to serve him for love of him. Say, then, from the depths of your heart: My God, give us your grace so that we may live according to the maxims of Christianity and according to the holiness of our profession; so that in this way we may fulfil the vows we made in holy Baptism, and deserve to reign with you eternally in heaven. Which I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

On the spirit of Christianity.

> *Nisi abundaverit justitia vestra plusquam scribarum et pharisaeorum, non intrabitis in regnum caelorum (Matth. 5:20).*
>
> *Unless your works are better than those of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. The difference between the Jews and us.

4. The exterior of the Jews; the interior of Christians. Interior vices.

5. The servile fear of the Jews; the filial fear and love of Christians. In what does it consist? What does it do?

6. To the Jews temporal goods are promised. To Christians, crosses or temporal sufferings, and spiritual and eternal goods.

7. We must be holier than the Jews.

---

[1] Luke 12:48.

[2] Mark 7:6, quoting Isa. 29:13.

[3] Matt. 23:26.

[4] Rom. 8:15.

[5] Luke 12:49.

[6] Ps. 17 (18):2.

[7] John 16:33.

[8] Cf. St. Augustine, *City of God* I, 8.

36. Sixth Sunday after Pentecost: On Almsgiving

Vol. I, pp. 235–241. Reading for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Mark 8:1–9. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 8 of St. Mark, which reads as follows:

1. In those days, when a great crowd had again gathered around Jesus and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples together and said to them: I have compassion on this multitude, for it is now three days that they have been with me and they have nothing to eat. And if I send them home fasting, they will faint on the way,

for some of them have come from far off. His disciples answered him: And how could anyone in this wilderness provide them with bread in plenty? He asked them: How many loaves have you? They answered: Seven. Then Jesus ordered the people to sit down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves and giving thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute among the people, and they shared them out. They also had a few small fishes; he blessed these too and ordered them to be distributed. And they ate until they were satisfied; and of the leftovers they gathered seven baskets; and those who had eaten were about four thousand. Then Jesus sent them away.

2. St. Mark tells us in today's Gospel that, a multitude of people being with Jesus, he called his disciples together and said to them: I have compassion on this crowd, for it is now three days that they have been with me and they have nothing to eat; and if I send them away fasting they will faint on the way, for some of them came from far off. Then the disciples answered and said: Lord, and who could fill them with bread here in the wilderness? Jesus asked them how many loaves they had, and when they answered seven, he ordered the crowd to sit on the ground, and taking the seven loaves and giving thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to serve to the crowds. They also had a few small fishes, which he blessed and ordered them to be served. All ate and were filled, and they gathered seven baskets of the pieces left over. Those who had eaten were about four thousand; and he sent them away.

3. From this Gospel we can draw many instructions. First: those who followed Jesus Christ and had come from far off fairly well represent the great sinners who return to God after their long wanderings. Second: the great miracle of the multiplication of the seven loaves represents for us the one he works in the hearts of the faithful, whom he feeds spiritually with the hidden power of his Spirit. But what most deserves our attention is the compassion of Jesus Christ towards those people; and his example teaches us that we must have a heart of mercy \[*entrañas de misericordia*, literally "bowels of mercy"\] towards our neighbour and do him all the good we possibly can; and that those people with hearts of iron \[literally "bowels of iron"\], who are not moved by the misery of others and do not help the needy, are quite contrary to the spirit of Christianity. So those who have temporal goods must know that it is God who has placed them in their hands, and that consequently they must use them according to his designs and give some part to the poor. You will understand, my brethren, that I am going to speak to you about the precept of almsgiving.

4. Almsgiving is the third satisfactory work of penance, and it joins with prayer and fasting to obtain for us the forgiveness of sins; moreover, it is commanded us both in the old law and in the new. "If any brother of yours," says Moses by God's order to the Israelites, "falls into poverty, do not harden your heart or close your hand; open it and lend him what you see he needs. Take good care not to turn your eyes away from him, refusing to give him what he asks of you, lest he cry out against you to the Lord and you be guilty of sin."[1] "Give alms out of what is yours," holy Tobit said to his son, "and do not turn your eyes away from any poor man; for in this way the Lord will not turn his eyes away from you. If you have much wealth, give much; if you have little, give gladly of the little you have; for almsgiving delivers from all sin and from death."[2] "Redeem your sins with alms," says the prophet Daniel, "and your iniquities with works of mercy to the poor."[3] And in the new law Jesus Christ says to the Jews: "Give alms, and make yourselves purses that do not wear out; store up in heaven a treasure that never perishes."[4]

5. In the lives of the Saints we have countless examples of their ardent charity towards the poor. St. Martin, while still a soldier, gave all his means to the poor. Having seen at the gate of Amiens, in the middle of winter, a poor man naked and abandoned, he cut his cloak in two and gave him one half. That night Jesus Christ appeared to him in a dream, clothed in the half with which he had clothed the poor man, and saying to the Angels: "Martin, who is still only a catechumen, has clothed me with this garment." Pope St. Gregory took care to give the poor, on the first day of every month, the very produce he collected from the lands of the Church; and so he distributed, according to the seasons, wheat, wine, cheese, chickens and fish, so that the church was like a public store of provisions. Every day of the week he sent people through all the streets

of Rome to bring broth and cooked meat to all the sick, the crippled and those covered with sores; and before he ate, after blessing the food, he sent a dish from his table to some shamefaced poor person who did not dare to beg. St. John of God had such love for the poor that they looked on him as their common father: his house was reckoned the general hospital of Granada, and all his means were like the patrimony of the poor. He never went out without being surrounded by the poor; he procured everything for them; he went through the streets and roads looking for them and bringing them to his house; he gave food to all and served them with his own hands.

6. I tell you, then, my brethren, that all Christians who hope one day to attain the kingdom of heaven are obliged to give alms, each according to his power and means. On the day of judgement Jesus Christ will say to his elect: "Come, blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom of heaven; for I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink." And to the reprobate he will say that they are to depart from him and go into the eternal fire, because they did not give him to eat when he was hungry, nor to drink when he was thirsty.[5] So, either all are saved for having given alms, or they are condemned for not having given it; and this is the reason why almsgiving is obligatory for all of us.

7. Indeed, can one be saved without charity, that is, without loving God and without being loved by God? Certainly not; for his beloved Disciple tells us: "If anyone has the goods of this world, and seeing his brother in need closes his heart and his bowels to him, how can the love of God abide in him?"[6] He does not say "seeing his brother in extreme need", but simply "in need". Therefore it is an error to believe that the commandment of almsgiving obliges only when one's neighbour is in extreme need, and not when he is simply in poverty, such as is found everywhere in these calamitous times. The precept of almsgiving obliges all men, poor as well as rich, to help their neighbour when he is in extreme need; nature teaches this to all without any other law. But it is chiefly on the rich that Scripture lays this commandment, and so they are obliged to give not only in extreme necessity but also in any fairly serious need. For this reason the apostle St. Paul says to his disciple Timothy: "Command the rich of this world to be ready to give";[7] and he gives the reason elsewhere, saying: "We are the parts of one whole, and the members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ; and when one member suffers some ill, all the others feel for it and help to relieve it."[8] St. Augustine also shows the rich that God has done them a great honour in preferring them to others so that they may exercise charity. "The Lord," he says, "gives you leave to take the first share of the goods he has provided you, and all that is necessary for the decent maintenance of your person and family; he only obliges you to give the rest to the poor. God has given you the power and authority you have so that you may protect that widow and that orphan who find themselves oppressed. The intelligence, the knowledge and the skill that are in you, you have received from God so that you may help that countryman. Of those riches you possess God has made you the steward, so that you may give a share of them to the poor."

8. Let us now come to the dispositions with which alms should be given. They should be given, first, with tenderness and a heart of compassion; for this reason it is useful to give them with your own hand, to go into the hospitals and visit the prisons, for the sight of the miseries of others moves our heart and softens us. Second, with gentleness, with signs of affection and goodwill, and without making the poor any reproach that fills them with sadness and bitterness. Third, with humility, thinking that we are not worthy to give alms to God, and that all we give is always less than what we ought to give. Nevertheless, I know well that there must be limits to almsgiving. St. Paul himself, writing to the Corinthians, said to them: "I do not mean that you should make yourselves poor so that others may be comfortable; I only wish to see some equality among those whom the profession of the same Gospel and the hope of the same inheritance have made brothers and equals."[9] But ah! nowadays we are very far from this perfection, because we fall into the other extreme, as if the ground were going to give way beneath our feet, so much do we fear not having enough for ourselves. "We would have the wherewithal to give alms," says St. Augustine, "if we were content with what is necessary and useful; but if we seek vanities, comforts and superfluities, nothing will be enough for us,

because nothing can satisfy our greed." Listen to what the holy Doctor also says: "My brethren, practise mercy; nothing draws the love of God to us more, and there is no other road that leads us to heaven. See what you are buying and how much is asked of you: you are buying the kingdom of heaven; and see how cheaply you can buy it. What a favour, what an incomparable honour, if we could but realise it, to be able to buy with alms the kingdom of heaven, eternal life, the enjoyment of God!"[10] And do not tell me you have no gold or silver to buy it with: a cup of water given to a poor man, the smallest coin if you cannot give more, a small service you do him, can win you heaven.

9. Speaking to the Apostles, who were of poor condition, the Lord said to them: "You will always have the poor with you, and you can do them good whenever you wish."[11] He does not say that they will be able to give to them, but that they will be able to do them good; for many cannot give, but all can do good. You can visit the sick, even if you have nothing to give them; you can console them, exhort them to go to confession, do them some other service, visit them in prison, or run some errands for them. The Lord does not say: "You did not get me out of prison," but "You did not visit me." You are a married woman, and you are not allowed to give large alms out of your husband's means; but it will be a good alms to serve and care for, for the love of God, your father-in-law and mother-in-law, who are old and frail, and to show them kindness and goodwill. You hold some small office in the village, you have some power there, you have many children and little means; but you can help with your advice and your credit that poor widow, that orphan, that peasant, and other such persons despised by all. You are well instructed in the knowledge of our holy Religion; you can teach the mysteries of the faith and all that is necessary for salvation to those of your household, to your neighbours, and to the poor who beg alms. It seems to me that we fall far short on this point: of a hundred poor people who ask you for alms at the door of your house, and to whom perhaps you give it, there are hardly two to whom you speak of their salvation; and yet this is the best alms you could give them. You say your enemy is a bad man who does you the greatest harm in the world: if so, he is poor in virtue. It would then be an excellent alms to procure it for him; and you would procure it for him if you won his goodwill by forgiving him, doing him some kindness, and seeking him out in friendship. For there are two kinds of alms, says St. Augustine, one of the heart and the other of the purse. You may sometimes be excused from the latter, but not from the former: the alms of the heart is to forgive your enemies, to love your neighbour, to have compassion on the poor, and to be sorry that you have nothing to give them. Finally, my brethren, know that the apostle St. James says: "Judgement without mercy to him who has not shown mercy",[12] that is, charity towards his neighbour. If you shut the door of your heart to him, God will shut the door of heaven to you; if you open to your neighbour a heart of mercy, God will open his to you. "Blessed are the merciful," says Jesus Christ, "for they shall obtain mercy."[13] I wish it to you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

On almsgiving.

> *Misereor super turbam (Marc. 8:2).*
>
> *I have pity on this crowd.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Three instructions we are to draw from this Gospel.

4. Almsgiving, besides being part of penance, is commanded.

5. The example of the Saints: St. Martin, St. Gregory, St. John of God…

6. What Jesus Christ will say on the day of judgement.

7. What you have, God has granted you so that you may give alms. He has given you intelligence, knowledge and skill so that you may help your neighbour.

8. The manner of giving alms: first, with tenderness; second, with gentleness; third, with humility; with equality. Be content with what is necessary and useful. Buy the love of God, buy heaven.

9. Not all can give, but all can do good: for example, visit, console, exhort… Daughters-in-law towards their parents-in-law. Teach, forgive: alms of the purse, alms of the heart; love, forgive, have compassion…

---

[1] Deut. 15:7–9.

[2] Tob. 4:7–11.

[3] Dan. 4:24 (Vulgate; RSV 4:27). The source gives “Dan. iv, 4”.

[4] Luke 12:33.

[5] Matt. 25:34–43.

[6] 1 John 3:17 (the source gives “Joan. iii, 17”).

[7] 1 Tim. 6:17–18.

[8] 1 Cor. 12:26, freely paraphrased.

[9] 2 Cor. 8:13–14.

[10] Cf. St. Augustine, *Sermons* 86 and 350.

[11] Mark 14:7.

[12] James 2:13.

[13] Matt. 5:7.

37. Seventh Sunday after Pentecost: On Putting Off Conversion until Old Age

Vol. I, pp. 242–246. Reading for the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Matthew 7:15–21. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 7 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus said to his disciples: Beware of false prophets who come to you disguised in sheep’s skins, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits or works you will know them. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from brambles? So every good tree produces good fruit, and every bad tree gives bad fruit. A good tree cannot give bad fruit, nor a bad tree give good. Every tree that does not give good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. So by their fruits you will be able to know them. Not everyone who says to me, “O Lord, Lord!” will on that account enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my heavenly Father, he it is who will enter the kingdom of heaven.

2. St. Matthew tells us today in his Gospel that Jesus Christ said to his disciples: Beware of false prophets who come to you dressed as sheep but inwardly are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them. A good tree cannot give bad fruit, nor a bad tree give good fruit. By the false prophets of whom Jesus Christ warns his disciples to beware, we must understand not only the heretics who deny the truths of faith, but also all the false teachers who deceive the weak and try to make them believe that to be saved it is not necessary to do oneself violence or to deprive oneself of the pleasures of life. In a word, we must understand all those who can corrupt others with their bad maxims and worse examples; and therefore true Christians must avoid their company and conversations with the greatest care. The parable of the good tree and the bad teaches us that to be saved it is not enough to say a few prayers, but we must do good works. Jesus Christ also says in the same Gospel: Not all who say to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. This shows us, my

faithful people, that we must not put off conversion to the time when we are no longer in a state to bear good fruit, such as the time of old age.

3. I intend, then, to show you in this instruction that the conversion you think of making in the future is, first, uncertain; second, more difficult; third, less fruitful. I say first that it is uncertain, because you all know that God is the master of his goods and gives his gifts to whom he wills. You say you will be converted some time from now, that for now there is no hurry; but know that you will never be converted without a particular grace of God; know also that he owes it to no one and promises it to no sinner;[1] and if you put off leaving your bad life, you give him reason to refuse it to you, for you waste the time, the occasions and the inspirations the Lord gives you. And who has told you that he will give them to you later on, or in old age?

4. You dispose of everything as if you depended on no one but yourselves, and you speak of your conversion as if it depended on you alone. You say: "Now I want to have a good time, satisfy this passion, take revenge on this enemy, acquire an inheritance; afterwards I will be converted." Do you perhaps imagine that God will adapt himself to your miserable plans and regulate his designs by yours? But ah, how you deceive yourselves! You hope to be converted in old age: and if you die in the flower of your age and before you have been converted, what will become of you? And even if you are not surprised by a sudden death, and even if your life were a hundred years long, is it not madness to believe that you will be converted more easily in the last season of your life? It rarely happens that a man turns aside in his old age from the road he took when young. God tells you so: *Adolescens juxta viam suam, etiam cum senuerit, non recedet ab ea* \[A young man according to his way, even when he is old, will not depart from it\].[2] The bad inclinations, the vicious habits that are not given up in time, when one begins to reach the age of reason, say at twenty-five or thirty, are kept until old age; and since old age is weak and sluggish, an age in which one cannot do oneself violence and thinks only of preserving the little life one has left, one rarely rids oneself of one's bad habits. I call to witness of this truth the old men who are listening to me: do they not experience the same habits they had when young, and are they not as inclined to swear, to speak ill, to anger and to avarice as they were at thirty? I know that at their age nature abhors impurity, and yet they sometimes feel so enslaved to it that they can hardly free themselves from its attacks.

5. It has been wisely noted that to raise Lazarus the Son of God acted very differently from the way he acted to raise the daughter of the ruler of the Synagogue. To raise this girl he did no more than take her gently by the hand and say to her: "Little girl, arise",[3] as if he had woken her from a sweet sleep. But to raise Lazarus he groaned twice in his spirit, was troubled, wept, and cried out in a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth."[4] This was not because he had more trouble in raising the one than the other, for at the end of the ages he will raise all men in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, as the Apostle says;[5] it was solely to show that some sinners are converted with more difficulty than others. A man buried and bound by his bad habits, as Lazarus was by his bands, covered with the stone of his hardness, does not return to the life of grace so easily: favours, cries, tears, great efforts and violence on himself are needed; and since habit greatly lessens the feeling of an evil, such a soul does not try to declare war on itself and overcome itself.

6. Hear, then, and practise the advice the Wise Man gives you in Scripture: "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the years come of which you will say: This time displeases me; before the dust returns to the earth from which it was taken, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."[6] He who through my mouth invites you to be converted is God who created you: is not your existence his? To redeem you the Son of God offered his divine and precious life; to save you he employed all its years, all its months, days and moments, from the first instant to the last breath; and you are willing to give him only the last and the worst of your life.

7. "In the days of your youth," when you have strength and vigour to bear the fruits of penance: and is it not right that God should have the finest part, the flower, the first fruits of your life? "Before you come to the years of which you will say: This time displeases me." Do you think that God will be willing to accept the

time of your old age, which will be displeasing to you? You want to present him only with this age that will displease you: and can so unworthy a gift please God? The Wise Man adds that after these days man will go to the house of his eternity.[7] St. Augustine says very well that to merit an eternity of rest and joy an eternity of toil and suffering would be needed; the Lord does not oblige you to so much; by an ineffable goodness he is content with the time of your life, which is so short; and even so you want to cut off a large part of it. The time of this life God destines for his service; the time to come is destined for your beatitude. If you spend the time destined for the service of the Lord on the desires of your flesh and on satisfying your self-love, the time that was destined for your happiness will be spent in your punishment. I hope these truths will make an impression on you and lead you to embrace the service of God, which is the way to merit an eternal reward. I wish it to you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

On conversion, which some put off until old age.

> *Omnis arbor quae non facit fructum bonum, excidetur, et in ignem mittetur (Matth. 7:19).*
>
> *The tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Hoping to be converted in old age is an uncertain thing.

4. It is a difficult thing. Bad inclinations, habits. What does experience say?

5. The difference between the raising of the girl and of Lazarus… so it is with conversion.

6. What did the Son of God do to save you? He spent his whole life…

7. What do you offer God? The years of old age?

---

[1] 1 Tim. 2:4.

[2] Prov. 22:6.

[3] Mark 5:41.

[4] John 11:33–43.

[5] 1 Cor. 15:52.

[6] Eccles. 12:1, 7.

[7] Eccles. 12:5.

38. Eighth Sunday after Pentecost: On Confession

Vol. I, pp. 247–251. Reading for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Luke 16:1–9. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 16 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus said to his disciples: There was a rich man who had a steward, of whom he came to learn by common report that he had squandered his goods. So he called him and said to him: What is this I hear of you? Give an account of your stewardship, for I do not want you to look after my property any longer. Then the steward said to himself: What shall I do, since my master is taking the management of his

goods away from me? I am not fit to dig, and I am ashamed to beg \[literally “I have no face for begging”\]. But I know what I will do, so that when I am removed from my stewardship I may find people who will receive me into their houses. So, calling his master’s debtors one by one, he said to the first: How much do you owe my master? He answered: A hundred barrels of oil. He said to him: Take your bond, sit down, and make out another at once for fifty. Then he said to another: And you, how much do you owe? He answered: A hundred measures or loads of wheat. He said to him: Take your bond and write another for eighty. When the master learned of it, he praised this unfaithful steward, not for his unfaithfulness but for having known how to act shrewdly. For the children of this age, or lovers of the world, are shrewder in their business than the children of light, or of the Gospel, in the business of their eternal salvation. So I tell you: Make friends for yourselves with riches, that source of iniquity, so that when you die you may be received into the eternal dwellings.

2. The Gospel of this day sets before us the parable of a rich man who had his steward, who was accused of squandering his master’s goods; so the master called him and said to him: Give an account of your stewardship, for from now on you cannot hold that post. The rich man, my brethren, of whom our Gospel speaks, represents God, who is the source of all riches, who communicates them to men, and who will require a most exact account of them; for he always keeps the ownership of the goods he distributes, and by this supreme right he also takes them away when he wills and as he wills. The steward represents all men, who, being without goods, receive them in life from the hand of God, but will render him an account of them at the time of their death. Let us think, my faithful people, of these words the master says to his steward, “Give an account of your stewardship”, and let us look on them as though the Lord were saying them to us. They must inspire us with fear for not having made good use of God’s gifts, for having squandered his graces, for having lived forgetful of our obligations, and so having come to the hour of death, when God will say to us: Give an account of your stewardship. To forestall the terrible embarrassment in which we shall find ourselves, we must sound our conscience, examine whether we are fulfilling the obligations of Christians, and, while we enjoy health, give an account of our conduct from time to time, accusing ourselves of our sins and satisfying his justice by penance, so as not to pile up countless debts. You see, my brethren, that I want to speak to you about confession, and to exhort you to approach the sacrament of Penance more often than you do. Nor is this all: it must also be well made. For this I want to instruct you on the conditions a good confession must have.

3. Confession must be simple, humble, pure and faithful. We see in holy Scripture that among the moral virtues simplicity is greatly praised and highly recommended. The Holy Spirit tells us in the book of Wisdom that if we want to find God we must seek him in simplicity of heart.[1] On the contrary, we see that the Lord condemns and abhors those who are ruled by the vice of cunning, deceit and dissimulation. “God abhors the deceitful man,” says the royal prophet.[2] There are, then, deceits or dissimulations on the part of the understanding and on the part of the will, from which your confession must be free if it is to be simple, as it should be.

4. First, dissimulations on the part of the understanding, which you have when you do not simply believe all that the confessor tells you for your salvation; when you agree only to what pleases you and is in keeping with your self-love and your particular attachments. If you are given advice to set you on the way of salvation, you allege countless reasons to excuse yourselves from following it. For example, to dispense yourselves from being reconciled with your enemy, you invent pretexts for not being the first to seek him out and be reconciled; to avoid giving up your usury, or that office whose obligations you are not capable of fulfilling, or to avoid paying your debts, or leaving that house in which you risk losing your modesty or your good name, how many difficulties do you not raise?

5. Second, dissimulations on the part of the will. These consist in wanting a thing and not wanting it. And is this possible? As possible as when you want the end and do not use the means necessary to attain it. You

want, or rather you would like, to go to heaven without taking the road to heaven; to be humble without ever humbling yourselves; charitable without paying out anything; penitent without doing penance; to avoid sin without avoiding the bad company and the occasions that make you sin. And what comes of all this? That you confess at Easter, and a week later you fall back into the same sins; you confess again, and you go back to the same places that have made you sin; and at the hour of death you will find yourselves in the same state you were in thirty years ago. This happens because you have no true will to correct yourselves, since you still have, and there remains in you, some inclination to satisfy your passions. But God abhors this duplicity of heart and deceitful will: *vae duplici corde* \[woe to the double heart\];[3] he also detests dissimulation and duplicity of tongue, which you practise when you have one tongue to accuse yourselves and another to excuse yourselves.

6. Third, confession must be humble; and this is an essential disposition when we want to turn back to God. And yet when the confessor wants to defer your absolution because you are not well disposed, when he wants to oblige you to restore the property of others, to be reconciled with your enemies, to send that person out of the house, to leave the occasions of sin and to be more modest in your manner of dress, you complain, you allege a thousand false pretexts, and perhaps you grumble when he imposes on you a penance somewhat proportionate to your sins, though you deserved a greater one. Therefore, my brethren, you will not be saved by your confession, because God saves only the humble.

7. Fourth, confession must be pure; that is, it must be free of those superfluous words, of those complaints about other people's vices, which are so often mixed into it. And lastly it must be faithful. You must disclose all your sins without exception, candidly and without disguising them. If you make a faithful confession, you make a confession of faith, because by it you show that you have enough faith and give credit to these words of the Saviour: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."[4] When you faithfully disclose your sins, you make a confession of praise: God is glorified in you, for by forgiving you he shows the glory of his mercy, his goodness and his infinite charity. You also make a confession of thanksgiving, for you thank the Lord for having waited for your penance with such kindness, for having drawn you by his grace out of the abyss in which you were, and for having forgiven you with ineffable goodness. Then I shall be able to say with the royal Prophet: "Bless the Lord, my soul; let all that is in me, all the powers of my spirit, all the affections of my heart, praise him, bless him and glorify him for ever and ever."[5] This is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

On confession.

> *Redde rationem villicationis tuae (Luc. 16:2).*
>
> *Give me an account of your stewardship.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Confession must be simple, humble, pure and faithful.

4. Dissimulations of the understanding: excusing oneself from what the confessor says.

5. Dissimulations of the will: wanting and not wanting; this is duplicity of heart.

6. It must be humble: if the confessor wishes to defer absolution so that first one may do… you complain.

7. It must be pure of superfluous words, of telling the sins of others. Tell your own candidly.

[1] Wis. 1:1.

[2] Ps. 5:7.

[3] Sir. 2:14 (Vulgate; 2:12 in modern editions). The source gives “Eccli. ii, 14”.

[4] John 20:23.

[5] Ps. 102 (103):1, paraphrased.

39. Ninth Sunday after Pentecost: On Respect for Churches

Vol. I, pp. 252–256. Reading for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Luke 19:41–47. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 19 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. At that time, when Jesus drew near to Jerusalem and looked at the city, he shed tears over it, saying: Ah! if you too had known, at least on this day that has been given you, what could bring you peace or happiness!… But now it is all hidden from your eyes. The pity is that days will come upon you when your enemies will put up a rampart around you, surround you with a counter-wall, hem you in on every side, and raze you to the ground, together with your children shut up within you; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognise the time when God visited you. And having entered the temple, he began to drive out those who were selling and buying in it, saying to them: It is written: My house is a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves. And he taught every day in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the leaders of the people sought how to put him out of the world, and found no means of acting against him, because all the people hung open-mouthed upon his words.

2. St. Luke tells us today in his Gospel that as Jesus drew near to Jerusalem, seeing the city he wept over it, saying: Oh, if you had known on this your day what leads you to peace! And entering the temple he drove out of it those who were selling and buying, saying to them: My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves. The tears Jesus Christ sheds at the sight of the city of Jerusalem are an instruction for us: he teaches us that we must groan at the sight of the blindness of sinners, weep as we consider the misfortunes with which they are threatened, and use our prayers with God to ask him to convert them. When Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem he did not have only the Jews in view; he was also weeping for the loss of bad Christians, for the abuse they would make of his graces, and for the terrible punishment of divine vengeance that was to fall on them. So, sinners who hear me, I implore you, forestall the effects of the indignation of God; and to avoid it, make good use of the visits God makes you: with the graces he offers you, with the instructions you hear, with the good examples you have before your eyes, with the inspirations he gives you to leave sin, and with the afflictions and temporal misfortunes that befall you. But let us pass to another instruction today’s Gospel gives us. In it we also see that Jesus Christ grew angry with those who were profaning the temple, of which they made a place of trade. In this he showed the indignation he has against all Christians who do not behave modestly in churches; and this should make you understand with what respect you must conduct yourselves in these holy places.

3. “I am the Lord your God: you shall have no strange gods before me.”[1] This first commandment, imposed by God on the Jews and also on us, obliges us to honour with all our heart the most high majesty of God, not only in itself but also in everything that has some relation to the Lord. This gives me occasion to speak to you today of the honour and respect we must have for churches, since they are the house and dwelling of God.

4. You will have heard of the magnificence of Solomon’s temple: it was all gold, precious stones, marble, cedar wood, precious vessels; nothing equalled the splendour of that temple. Yet the simplest and smallest of our churches is beyond comparison more worthy of honour and respect than that temple ever was, or the one

built by Zerubbabel after the first was destroyed. The majesty of God dwelt in Solomon's temple only in shadows and figures; in ours he dwells really, personally and bodily. Our Lord Jesus Christ was presented to God only once, on the day of the Purification, in the temple of Zerubbabel; in ours he is offered every day in the adorable sacrifice of the Mass. In the temple of Zerubbabel he was present only at intervals in the course of thirty-three years; in ours he is present continually, day and night, not for thirty-three years but until the end of the ages. Judge from this what respect, what honour we must have for our churches. I know that great sums are spent in building them and much care is taken to enrich and adorn them; but what is the use of all this if God is not glorified in them, but on the contrary is dishonoured and offended? Jesus Christ tells us in the Gospel that his temple is a house of prayer: *Domus mea, domus orationis vocabitur* \[My house shall be called a house of prayer\].[2] If the church is a house of prayer, it is a criminal abuse to do things in it that are not directed to the service of God, such as being there without recollection or modesty, falling asleep, or making it a place for strolling and amusement. It is a house of prayer: it is therefore profaning it to do things in it that may disturb the devotion of the faithful, to talk loudly, make noise, or look this way and that. It is a house of prayer: it is therefore a crime to make it a den of thieves. This is the reproach Jesus Christ made to those who sold in the temple; and you do the same in our churches: you rob God of the honour due to him, and you commit sin openly in the sight of everyone. Many women come dressed up in a worldly manner, come close to the altar, are a bait for concupiscence, set a snare for the servants of God, cause bad thoughts and perhaps bring death to many souls. A den of thieves: various libertines make appointments there; they come to waylay young women and become a source of temptation to them, following them to the place where they take their seats, without respect for the house of the Lord. What shamelessness! If they followed an unmarried girl into her father's house, they would very soon be thrown out of it. "How is it that thunderbolts do not fall on these criminal heads?" exclaims St. John Chrysostom.

5. A den of thieves through the immodesty committed when people attend baptisms and weddings, through the noise, the worldly conversations and the chatter. Is this not to draw down the wrath of God rather than his blessing? A den of thieves through sacrileges, through the abuse of the Sacraments and through unworthy confessions and communions. Do you know what a sacrilege is? It is one of the most enormous sins, and one of the hardest to be forgiven, that can be committed. If a thief stole a chalice or a ciborium, you would cry out that he was an impious man, a sacrilegious man, and he would be punished with the extreme penalty. You commit an even greater sin: by an unworthy communion you profane a Sacrament, and you think it nothing. How many Christians, after plunging into a thousand disorders all year, are content to tell them to a priest, to say a few rosaries or other prayers, and then present themselves at the holy table! Is this not to do violence to the body of Jesus Christ, as St. Cyprian says?[3]

6. Where can our divine Jesus entrench himself to be sheltered from our persecutions? He is offended at the courts of princes, in palaces, in shops, in the streets, in armies, in homes. If he should be safe anywhere, it was surely in his holy house. In every nation each man is in his own house as in a place of safety; and Jesus Christ is nowhere more offended than in his own.

7. And after this we shall think that we are not to be punished, and that we shall escape the indignation of God! You complain that after putting much work into cultivating your vineyards and sowing your fields, you have harvested and reaped very little. What you earn from your work does you no good; it is that God does not give his blessing to your house, because you take no account of his, and because you commit many sins in it. You take great care that your dwelling is well kept and well furnished; and you do not care whether the church of the village where you have property, where you were baptised, where you receive the Sacraments, is badly roofed, badly paved and utterly poor, as unfortunately is seen in many. Ah, my brethren, say rather with the Prophet: "Lord, I have loved the beauty of your house: do not destroy my soul with the impious and the irreverent."[4] When God inspires in you zeal and great respect for his holy house, it is a sign that he wishes to save you and separate you from the impious. To reward your zeal he will draw you out of sin, hear

your prayers, and receive you into the company of the Saints and into the heavenly temple of paradise. I wish it to you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

On respect for churches.

> *Domus mea, domus orationis est (Luc. 19:46).*
>
> *My house is a house of prayer.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. The honour and respect due to God and to his temples.

4. The magnificence of Solomon's temple. In it was the shadow; in ours the reality. What do Christians do in them? Alas!…

5. Dens of thieves at baptisms, at weddings and at the other Sacraments. What is sacrilege?

6. Jesus is offended everywhere: in his own house, and more than in other places.

7. God punishes you because you take no account of his house.

8. Blessed are those who respect his house.

---

[1] Exod. 20:2–3.

[2] Matt. 21:13; Isa. 56:7.

[3] St. Cyprian, *De lapsis* 16.

[4] Ps. 25 (26):8–9.

40. Tenth Sunday after Pentecost: On Satisfaction

Vol. I, pp. 257–261. Reading for the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Luke 18:9–14. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 18 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus told this parable to certain men who presumed themselves just and despised others: Two men went up to the temple to pray: one was a Pharisee, and the other a publican or tax-collector. The Pharisee, standing, prayed within himself in this manner: O God, I thank you that I am not like other men, who are thieves, unjust, adulterers; nor like this publican either. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all I possess. The publican, on the contrary, standing far off, did not even dare to raise his eyes to heaven, but struck his breast, saying: My God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I tell you, then, that this man went home justified, and not the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

2. Today's Gospel, my faithful people, speaks to us of the Pharisee and the publican. The Pharisee is a figure of all those who, being very pleased with themselves and blinded by their pride, believe that they alone are just and look on others as sinners. Indeed he put himself outside that number, and praised himself for many good works he did. The publican, on the contrary, stood apart from the sanctuary, showing by this how far he

was from the holiness of God, and the infinite opposition between God and sin. He did not dare raise his eyes to heaven, because his sin caused him shame and confusion. He struck his breast, by which he showed the contrition he had in his heart, and said to God: Have mercy on this sinner. All the signs he gave were those of a true penitent, and he had all the dispositions necessary for justification, namely the confession of his sin and contrition, shown in his asking for pardon; and by striking his breast he avenged on himself the offence he had done to God by his sin; for satisfaction is the third part of the sacrament of Penance. In the preceding instructions I spoke to you of confession and contrition, and today I have set myself to speak to you about satisfaction.

3. You know that we are all obliged to do penance, without which we shall perish, as the Lord says in his Gospel;[1] and those who have greatly offended God are all the more obliged to do it. Yet many people imagine that to do penance it is enough for them to repent of their sins, confess them to a priest, receive absolution and say a few prayers. It is true that all this is absolutely necessary; but it is not enough. To do an entire and perfect penance that appeases the wrath of God and averts the dire effects of sin, it is absolutely necessary to satisfy divine justice with fervent prayers, with fasts, alms, and with penitential works corresponding to the enormity of our faults. Indeed, whenever holy Scripture speaks of penance, it mentions the works that afflict the flesh and mortify sensuality. “Turn to me,” says the Lord through the prophet Joel, “with fasting and tears, and break your hearts with sorrow.”[2] Do you perhaps think that a man does penance who eagerly aspires to posts of honour, who gives himself up to sensual pleasures, and who denies himself no satisfaction? To do penance one must renounce the maxims of the world, cut short one’s sleep, interrupt it with groans and sighs, live as one dead to the world, and have changed one’s conduct entirely. The Christians of the first centuries of the Church were so convinced of this truth that, to avoid the vengeance of God and satisfy his justice, they submitted to public penance; and this penance subjected them to great humiliations, frequent fasts and other rigorous austerities, and this for many years, regularly seven, sometimes twelve; and the penance for adultery was fifteen years.

4. I know that these so rigorous practices are no longer in use; nevertheless, they show how the holy Bishops, who were disciples of the Apostles, who had the Spirit of God and were enlightened by him, thought of penance. From them we see that it is not as easy as we imagine to appease the wrath of God. The Church can change her practice, but not her spirit; she can have a new way of acting, but not new sentiments, because her spirit and her sentiments are none other than those of the Holy Spirit who governs her. Judge now, then, what the Church desires of you, and tell me in good faith whether you believe that the road to heaven is less narrow than in that time. Know that the Church of today has the same sentiments as that of the first centuries. Know also that the Council of Trent, which was held not long ago, tells confessors that if out of timidity, or too much indulgence and human respect, they give small penances for great crimes, they make themselves sharers in the sins of others.[3] See by this whether we are not in great danger. How many blasphemies, quarrels, drunken bouts, scandals and dissolute acts are committed publicly! And what great penances do we see done for so many crimes? For in the end, my brethren, by committing mortal sin we have deserved an eternal punishment \[*penitencia eterna*\]. It is true that through confession, contrition and absolution it has been changed into a temporal one by the mercy of God; so it is absolutely necessary that you do this temporal penance, and it must also bear some proportion to the enormity of your sins; for if the wrath of God is not entirely appeased, he will permit you to fall back into sin and into eternal punishment.

5. Nevertheless, so as not to discourage you, and condescending to your weakness, this same Church, which has just preached to you this doctrine on penance that you have just heard, teaches us through the Council of Trent that we can satisfy the justice of God not only with the penances the confessor imposes on us, not only with the prayers, fasts, alms and mortifications of the flesh that we take on of our own accord, but that, when we have not the strength to practise these bodily austerities, we can satisfy divine justice with all the misfortunes and afflictions that befall us in this world, if we accept them with patience and perfect

resignation to the will of God.[4] On this you must clearly understand that all the sufferings, all the causes of vexation, illnesses, the death of your parents, the loss of lawsuits, reversals of fortune, poverty, insults, persecutions, setbacks and other crosses that come upon you, however they happen to you, come from God; and this even those occasioned by the malice of men. It is true that God does not will the sin they commit, but he wills the suffering that comes to you from it. If a robber murders your husband, God does not will the robber's sin, but he wills the death of your husband; for everything God wills cannot but be most just. So, as I have just said, if you receive all the afflictions God sends you with resignation to his divine will, as penance for your sins, they will make great satisfaction to the justice of God. Who knows better than the Lord the nature of your spiritual illnesses, the remedies best suited to you and the penances most fitting for you? For this reason, when he deigns to impose them on you with the cross of this life, you must accept them willingly, kiss the hand that mortifies you, adore the justice that punishes you in this world so as to forgive you in the next, and say with the Prophet: "I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against him."[5] Then say: My God, grant me the favour of suffering this trial with patience for love of you and in penance for my sins. Give me grace to forgive from my heart those who afflict me, to bear with patience and for your love this loss of property, this affliction, this illness, this ailment, this pain, so that I may recover your grace and obtain the forgiveness of my sins through the merits of Jesus Christ your Son. I wish it to you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

On satisfaction.

> *Publicanus… percutiebat pectus suum (Luc. 18:13).*
>
> *The publican struck his breast.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Besides confessing your sins, you must exercise yourselves in prayers, fasts, alms and penitential works.

4. What penances were done in former times? And what is done now?

5. Accept sufferings and trials in a spirit of penance…

---

[1] Luke 13:3, 5.

[2] Joel 2:12–13.

[3] Council of Trent, Session 14, ch. 8.

[4] Council of Trent, Session 14, ch. 9.

[5] Mic. 7:9.

41. Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost: On the Sins of the Tongue

Vol. I, pp. 262–266. Reading for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Mark 7:31–37. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 7 of St. Mark, which reads as follows:

1. At that time, leaving again the borders of Tyre, Jesus went by those of Sidon towards the sea of Galilee, crossing the territory of the Decapolis. And they brought him a man who was deaf and dumb, begging him to

lay his hand on him to cure him. And Jesus, taking him aside from the bustle of the crowd, put his fingers into his ears, and with spittle touched his tongue; and raising his eyes to heaven, he sighed and said to him: *Ephphetha*, which means: Be opened. And at once his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. And he ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more he ordered them, the more eagerly they published it; and the more their wonder grew, and they said: He has done all things well: he has made the deaf hear and the dumb speak.

2. St. Mark tells us in the Gospel of this day that as Jesus was crossing the territory of the Decapolis they brought him a man who was deaf and dumb so that he might cure him. This deaf and dumb man represents those spiritually and wilfully deaf people who do not want to hear the divine word, nor what God himself says to their heart; and so these people are dumb towards God. And how many there are among you, my brethren, who are deaf and dumb of this kind, who show nothing but indifference about coming to hear the truths of salvation, and who seem to be dumb and to have their tongue tied when it is a matter of blessing God and praying to him! Know also that Jesus Christ takes this deaf and dumb man aside to cure him. This circumstance teaches us that to be cured of our spiritual deafness we must leave the gatherings of the world; for how can we make out the voice of God in the midst of pleasures and in the tumult of worldly business? When curing this man of his deafness, Jesus Christ pronounced these words, *Ephphetha*, that is, "Be opened". Do you remember that these words were said to us in Baptism, and that they teach us that from that time our ears must be open to the wisdom of God, to hear it and to conduct ourselves according to its lessons?

3. Let us make a reflection here. How many Christians are dumb nowadays when it is a matter of standing up for the interests of God, when he is offended by so many sins committed with impunity? But all these people are not dumb when it is a matter of talking about the things of the world and the means of piling up wealth, and above all when the conversation turns to their neighbour. How their tongues are loosed then, and how many sins they commit by their chatter! It is against this vice that I want to speak to you today, showing you how common and how harmful the sins of the tongue are.

4. My brethren, is it not a most deplorable misfortune that our tongue, which was consecrated to God so early, this tongue destined for such honourable uses, which can give God true worship and with which we bless him, should be employed in conversations contrary to Religion? The apostle St. Paul tells us that evil words corrupt good morals,[1] and that indecent words must be banished from our mouth. "Let there be no talk among you," he says, "of fornication or of any other impurity, as is fitting among saints."[2] And yet how many among you utter in your conversations words not only too free but indecent! I know that to excuse yourselves you say you only utter them to raise a laugh and do not intend to do harm. I do not wish to judge you; but the Son of God tells you that the mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart.[3] How is it possible to speak without thinking of what one says? And is the tongue not the interpreter of the mind? It follows that if indecent words are in your mouth, they must necessarily be in your heart. If thick black smoke were seen coming out of a chimney, could it be said that there was no fire there? You say you do not think evil; but who has told you that those who hear you do not? "See," says the apostle St. James, "how a little fire can set a great forest ablaze. The tongue too is a fire."[4] He who sets a forest on fire perhaps sets fire to only one tree; and yet he is the cause of the whole blaze, because the fire has passed from one tree to another. That young man had until now lived very chastely and in a holy ignorance of what sin against purity was: you say an impure word in his presence, and it is like a spark of fire falling on sulphur. He has a lively imagination, which represents to him what your word means; after much resistance he falls into some impure actions, teaches them to his companion, and he to another, and so it spreads as fire does, passing from branch to branch. At the judgement of God you will certainly be answerable for that long chain of sins which are the effects of your words.

5. But you say: “The words I utter are not plainly indecent; they are veiled and have a double meaning.” A vain excuse, a deceit of the devil! I tell you that they are all the more dangerous for that. When an expression is manifestly indecent, souls that have even a little love of purity look on it with horror and quickly banish it from their imagination; but when it is wrapped up and covered by an equivocation, they are not so quickly alarmed by it; they linger to consider it, they reflect on the wit it contains, and while they take pleasure in this subtlety the poison steals in and penetrates their heart.

6. Let us go on to the words that directly and deliberately offend against charity. Some are committed in the absence of one’s neighbour, others in his presence. In his absence they are detractions, or speaking ill, as when one reveals another’s sin, even a true one, to those who do not know it. The apostle St. Paul says that detractors are hateful to God: *Detractores Deo odibiles* \[detractors, hateful to God\].[5] It seems to you that speaking ill of another is nothing, that grumbling about this person and that is a mere amusement; and yet these games make you the object of the indignation of God.

7. One of the worst effects of the tongue is cursing one’s neighbour. Indeed, every time you wish your neighbour dead by cursing him, you commit so many spiritual homicides. And yet, my brethren, how many families are there in which nothing is heard but curses from the husband to the wife, from the wife to the husband, and from father and mother to the children?

8. The apostle St. James calls the tongue a world of all evils: *Universitas iniquitatis* \[a world of iniquity\].[6] Indeed, there is no bad habit in you that teaches vices so much as your evil tongue: it is like a school in which your children learn every sort of vice, and in which you give them their first lessons. They learn to swear because they hear you swear; they acquire a taste for vanity, for ambition, for avarice or the passion for riches, because they hear you speak with great esteem of the grandeurs of the world, of the goods of the earth, of bodily comforts, praise riches highly, and repeat often that with money one gets whatever one wants. Having learned the maxims of the world from you, they teach them to their children; and so sin is passed on from generation to generation.

9. To correct the disorder of your tongue it is necessary, first, whenever an oath or some bad word escapes you, to repent at once, strike your breast and impose some penance on yourselves. You must flee all the occasions of these disorders: avoid the games that are the cause of oaths and blasphemies, the taverns \[*casas públicas*\] and other places of dissipation where you let your tongue run on to impure expressions, and the gatherings where people speak ill of their neighbour. You must also force yourselves against the bad habit and fight it with the contrary habit. To strengthen yourselves in this good resolution you must renew your faith and think of these words of Scripture: “God will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.”[7] And these others: “Whoever says to his brother, You fool, will be liable to the torment of fire.”[8] And also these: “Slanderers will not possess the kingdom of God.”[9] In this way you will correct yourselves little by little; and by using your tongue from now on only to praise God, to pray to him, to bless him, and to instruct your children and servants in his love and holy fear, you will bring them with you to that happy and blessed life where you will glorify God eternally with his saints and blessed ones. I wish it to you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

On the sins of the tongue.

> *Adducunt ei surdum et mutum (Marc. 7:32).*
>
> *They bring him a man who is deaf and dumb.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Many Christians are dumb about the things of God and very talkative about the things of the world.

4. What the tongue of a Christian is… it is used for…

5. An excuse; the harm done by veiled words.

6. Words against charity; grumbling.

7. Curses.

8. The evil tongue is the teacher of all wickedness.

9. Remedies: impose some penance on oneself; flee dangers… think of the words of holy Scripture…

---

[1] 1 Cor. 15:33.

[2] Eph. 5:3.

[3] Matt. 12:34.

[4] James 3:5–6.

[5] Rom. 1:30.

[6] James 3:6.

[7] Exod. 20:7.

[8] Matt. 5:22.

[9] 1 Cor. 6:10.

42. Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost: On the Love of God

Vol. I, pp. 267–273. Reading for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Luke 10:23–37. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 10 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus, turning to his disciples, said: Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I assure you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear the things you hear, and did not hear them. Then a doctor of the law stood up and said to him, in order to test him: Master, what must I do to gain eternal life? Jesus said to him: What is written in the law? What do you read in it? He answered: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself. Jesus replied: You have answered well: do this, and you will live. But he, wishing to make it appear that he was just, asked Jesus: And who is my neighbour? Then Jesus, taking up the word, said: A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him of everything, covered him with wounds and went off, leaving him half dead. By chance a priest was going down the same road, and though he saw him, he passed by. Likewise a Levite, though he found himself near the spot and looked at him, went on. But a traveller, a Samaritan by nation, came to where he was; and seeing him, he was moved with compassion; and coming close, he bound up his wounds, bathing them with oil and wine, and putting him on his own mount, took him to the inn and took care of him in every way. The next day he took out two silver denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying: Take care of this man for me; and whatever you spend over, I will repay you on my return. Which of these three seems to you to have been neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers? The one, answered the doctor, who showed him mercy. Then go, said Jesus to him, and do likewise.

2. Today’s Gospel, my brethren, contains most beautiful instructions. Consider first these words of Jesus Christ to his disciples: Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. On this you must know that we have the same happiness as the disciples of the Saviour, for we believe in Jesus Christ as they did, and we hear from

the Church the same truths that the Lord announced, which are deposited in the holy Gospels that the Church has us read. We have the Son of God in our midst; and if we do not see him with the eyes of the body, we see him with those of faith in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist.

3. Let us now pass to the parable of the man who was wounded on a road by robbers and left half dead, without either a priest or a Levite who passed that way being willing to give him the least help. Not so a Samaritan who passed afterwards, who treated his wounds with oil and wine, and having put him on his beast, took him to an inn and took care of him. In this man is represented to us human nature wounded by the loss of its innocence, and man fallen from original justice through the sin of Adam. The robbers are the devils who have wounded his soul; and the priest and the Levite who give that man no help are the precepts of the Jewish law, which did not heal the wounds that original sin had made. The Samaritan represents Jesus Christ, who healed man by his Incarnation and by the merits of his passion and death. The wounds represent the sins man has committed; and the oil and wine show the gentleness of charity and the strength of correction that the confessor must apply to the illnesses of our soul. The inn represents the Church, which like a charitable mother is always ready to receive her children who have strayed, or to whom sin has dealt deep and mortal wounds. The innkeeper is a prudent confessor, who by the charity with which he guides sinners and by the healthful remedies he prescribes for them completes their cure.

4. But, my brethren, having explained this parable to you, I will also dwell on the words of that doctor of the law who said to Jesus Christ, as the same Gospel relates: Master, what must I do to gain eternal life? A very important question indeed, and one you should ask every day. Jesus Christ, then, said to him: What is written in the law? The doctor answered that the law says: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself. And Jesus Christ answered him: Do this and you will live. If, then, you want to gain eternal life, you must keep the commandment of the love of God; and on this subject I have decided to instruct you this day.

5. The commandment of the love of God is the first and greatest of the commandments; so said Jesus Christ our Lord himself in his Gospel.[1] It is an affirmative commandment that obliges us to formal and express acts; it obliges always and constantly to love God; that is, to make frequent acts of love of God, and always to perform actions flowing from this love. All this is expressed by the words of this commandment, if they are well examined: You shall love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength; that is, all our thoughts, all our affections and all our actions must be done with the sole end of pleasing him, loving him and serving him.

6. We have in the holy Scriptures many examples of the love God has shown to his faithful servants \[that is, of the love his faithful servants have shown to God\]. The Old Testament sets before us Abraham, whose love for God was so ardent, joined to so respectful an obedience, that he left his country, his relatives and his goods to go to a foreign land, going so far as to be ready to sacrifice to him his only son Isaac, although an Angel, by God's order, stayed his arm when it was already raised. Moses likewise showed a great love for God; for, having been adopted by the daughter of King Pharaoh, he renounced the rank of son of this princess, which gave him a right to the crown of Egypt, preferring to be afflicted with the people of God rather than enjoy temporal delights, and taking no account of all those riches in order to embrace the ignominy and reproach of Christ as a much greater treasure, according to the words of St. Paul.[2] Was there ever a prince more full of the love of God than the royal prophet David? His admirable Psalms, which the Church sings every day, are a lasting proof of it, for they breathe nothing but a tender love, and the liveliest ardours of this divine flame are felt everywhere in them: "Lord," he says, "I will love you with all my strength; I have sought you with all my heart; my soul has longed to burn continually with love of your law."[3] This holy King expresses the same sentiments in countless other passages of his Psalms.

7. The New Testament also gives us many examples of this love for God and for his Son Jesus Christ, who is one same God with the Father. When the Saviour of the world, after his resurrection, asked St. Peter three

times whether he loved him more than the others, this Prince of the Apostles answered him with modesty and humility: “Lord, you know all things: you know that I love you.”[4] The apostle St. Paul is also a great model, for only a boundless love could have sustained him in all the labours and hardships he suffered. “Who shall separate us,” he says, “from the love of Jesus Christ? Shall affliction or sorrows, persecutions, hunger, nakedness, the sword, violence? I am certain that neither death nor life nor any creature will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”[5]

8. St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, showed the fire of his love for God in a most admirable way; for, condemned by the emperor Trajan to be thrown to the beasts, he gave thanks to God for providing him with the means of going to him, having no other fear than that of being deprived of the crown of martyrdom. “I beg you,” he wrote to a Christian of Rome,[6] “not to show me your goodwill at the wrong time; allow me to become the prey of the beasts, so that I may reach the Lord, and be ground by their teeth like God’s wheat. I know what is good for me: let fire, gallows, wild beasts, the dislocation of bones, the tearing of my limbs and all torments come upon me; all is good for me, provided I come to possess Jesus Christ.”

9. Admire here, my faithful people, the wisdom of God’s providence and the gentleness of his ways, in having placed the perfection of virtue in an act so in keeping with our nature and so easy to be practised by every sort of person. To love God it is not necessary to be rich, noble or healthy, nor to have much learning or great bodily strength, but only a good will. And what man, however poor and ignorant, cannot have a good will? Let us admire the goodness of God, who commends his love to us with such solicitude: not because he has need of our love, but because he wants us to be perfect and happy, and wants our perfection and our happiness to consist in loving him with all our heart. On which St. Augustine says these beautiful words: “My God, forgive me if I make bold to speak to you. Who am I that you should command me to love you, and threaten me with great evils if I do not love you? Can there be a greater misery in the world than not to love you?”[7] If the king said to one of his courtiers: “Listen, so-and-so, I want you to love me; I wish that you and I should love each other; are you content with this?”, what happiness, what extraordinary favour would that not be! But God not only allows us to love him, he desires it and commands it.

10. If you ask me how this commandment is kept, I will tell you that it is not taught but practised; it is not exercised by talking but by doing. God alone can give you this love: all you can do is to dispose yourselves for it with his grace, renounce all that displeases him, and spend some time every day in making acts of love of God, for instance morning and evening, and now and then during the day; for this can be done interiorly, without interrupting your work and without any strain.

11. I beg you to notice that God fills us with benefits to engage us to love him. All the prosperity that comes to you, all the creatures of God that serve you, are so many attractions he presents to you to engage you to love him. And if all this seems little to you, he assures you that all the graces he gives you every day are nothing but the earnest and pledges of the great goods he is preparing for you and promises you if you love him with all your heart and in preference to all creatures. All you can desire that is great, excellent, rich and delightful is nothing in comparison with what God has prepared for you if you love him.[8]

12. Well then, my brethren, is it not right that God should have our heart, after inviting us so much to love him? And does he not deserve to be loved more than everything lovable on earth? And yet, oh misery! how much will be found, in all that concerns you, that you love more than God! Is it not true that you have less love for God than for your money, or for some vile creature? Listen to the apostle St. John: “If anyone says he loves God and does not keep his commandments, he is a liar, and the truth is not in his mouth.”[9] You do not keep these commandments, as you well know. God forbids you oaths, enmities, envy, grumbling, thefts and impurities, and you commit all these crimes. Would you nevertheless dare to say that you love God? Ah! it is all too true that you have not the least shadow of charity towards the Lord. Do you feel the misfortune of being deprived of the love of God? This is the greatest evil of all, since it is the mark of the reprobate. Must you not be very ungrateful not to love him who does you so much good; very rash not to be frightened by so

many threats; and very hardened to be insensible to all that God has done to win your hearts?

13. But in short, if you are prudent, if you truly want to be saved, since this love is so necessary and you cannot have it of yourselves, ask God for it with fervour and humility. Say with St. Augustine: “Too late have I begun to love you, beauty ever ancient, never grown old, and ever new.[10] What shall I do to give you proofs of my love? Alas! I can do nothing for you except give you some accidental glory; but I am resolved to abstain from all sin because it displeases you. I want to love you, my God; but make me love you still more; and if my love is not pure enough, purify it yourself. Be the sole object of my love in this world, and then you will also be the object of my happiness in heaven.” This is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

On the love of God.

> *Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et ex tota anima tua, et ex omnibus viribus tuis, et ex tota mente tua (Luc. 10:27).*
>
> *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Explanation of the parable of the wounded man.

4. To obtain salvation, love God and your neighbour.

5. How must we love God?…

6. Examples of lovers of God: Abraham, Moses, David…

7. St. Peter, St. Paul.

8. St. Ignatius the martyr…

9. How easy love is.

10. Exercise yourselves in loving God.

11. What has God done so that you may love him?

12. You do not love God, because you do not keep his commandments.

13. Ask God for his love.

---

[1] Matt. 22:37–38.

[2] Heb. 11:24–26.

[3] A combination of Ps. 17 (18):2 and Ps. 118 (119):10, 20.

[4] John 21:15–17.

[5] Rom. 8:35–39 (the source gives 8:36).

[6] *Letter to the Romans* 4–5.

[7] St. Augustine, *Confessions* I, 5, 5.

[8] 1 Cor. 2:9.

[9] 1 John 2:4.

[10] St. Augustine, *Confessions* X, 27, 38.

43. Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost: On Sins of Such Enormity That God Casts Us Off

Vol. I, pp. 274–279. Reading for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Luke 17:11–19. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 17 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. At that time, as Jesus was going towards Jerusalem, he was passing through the provinces of Samaria and Galilee; and as he was about to enter a village, ten lepers came out to meet him, who stood at a distance and raised their voices, saying: Jesus, our Master, have pity on us. As soon as Jesus saw them, he said to them: Go, show yourselves to the priests. And as they went, they were healed. One of them, as soon as he saw that he was clean, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice. And he threw himself face down at the feet of Jesus, giving him thanks; and this man was a Samaritan. Then Jesus said: What! were not ten healed? And where are the nine? Has no one been found to return and give glory to God except this foreigner? Then he said to him: Rise, go; your faith has saved you.

2. St. Luke tells us in the Gospel of this day that as Jesus was going through Samaria and Galilee, ten men who were lepers came out to meet him, who on seeing the Lord cried out, saying: Jesus, master, have mercy on us. And as soon as he saw them, he said: Go, show yourselves to the priests. And as they went, they were made well. One of them, who was a Samaritan, came back to thank him, throwing himself at his feet. And Jesus said: Where then are the nine? No one has been found to come back and give glory to God except this foreigner. And he said to him: Rise, go, for your faith has made you well.

The ten lepers who keep their distance from Jesus Christ and cry aloud, “Have mercy on us,” are a figure of the sinners who, pierced by the sense of their unworthiness, do not approach the altar, and ask God for mercy from the depths of their heart. I beg you to notice that Jesus Christ ordered them to go and present themselves to the priests to be healed, although he could have healed them without the priests, as in fact he did while they were on the way. This was to show us the proper means of obtaining the healing of our souls; for God does not forgive us our sins without the ministry of the priests who give us absolution; and if he sometimes does so, it is never without our desiring to submit to this obligation. Finally, the example of the leper who comes to thank Jesus Christ teaches us that we must always give thanks to God for the benefits he bestows on us. However, since these lepers are a figure of sinners, I shall take occasion from this to speak to you more particularly about mortal sin.

3. I want to make you see, my brethren, that a single mortal sin, when it is great and enormous, makes us fall into hardness of heart and eternal perdition. If you will weigh sins in the balance of God’s judgement and of pure truth, you will see that one sin can be greater and more enormous than another: first, in itself; second, with respect to the person against whom it has been committed; third, by the quality of the person who commits it; and fourth, because of the manner in which it is committed. Let us go over all this.

4. I say first that a sin is more enormous in itself when it is grave by its nature, as when it is a barbarous cruelty, a brutality in matters of impurity, a considerable offence against a father or a mother, a cruel betrayal of a person who trusts you, or the tyrannical oppression of a poor widow or an orphan. You must know that those who lived in the time of Noah were given to the sin of the flesh, and for that God punished them with the flood; but because in their dissoluteness they did not pass the bounds of nature, they were warned many times and had time to come to their senses. Many saw the flood, repented and obtained pardon, as the apostle St. Peter says.[1] But because the inhabitants of Sodom committed detestable impurities, instead of being warned they were surprised in the full heat of their brutal passions; they had no time to come to their senses; they were swallowed up in a moment and condemned to eternal fire. *Sodoma subversa est in momento, ignis*

aeterni poenam sustinentes \[Sodom was overthrown in a moment, undergoing the punishment of eternal fire\], says the apostle St. Jude.[2] Indeed, he who perverts nature makes himself unworthy of grace, and still more of glory. You degrade yourselves below the animals; and how, then, do you expect to be placed in the rank of the Angels? If you are a monster of nature, how can you be a child of grace? In your contracts with your brothers you commit frauds, betrayals and cruelties that the fiercest animals would not commit against their own kind.

5. Second, a sin is graver with respect to the person offended, such as the sins committed directly against God: horrible blasphemies, impieties, sacrilegious communions and the profanation of churches by indecent acts. So the Lord says through the prophet Isaiah: "The wicked man has committed crimes in the holy place; he has not feared my presence; he shall not see my glory": *In terra sanctorum iniqua gessit, et non videbit gloriam Domini*.[3] So, although King Sennacherib laid waste Palestine, God overlooked it and kept him in health and prosperity; but when he was so rash as to defy the God of Israel, to vomit blasphemies against him and compare him with the false gods of the Gentiles, then He made his thunder resound by the mouth of Isaiah in these terms: *Cui exprobrasti, quem blasphemasti, et super quem exaltasti vocem tuam?* \[Whom have you reproached, whom have you blasphemed, and against whom have you raised your voice?\][4] "Against whom have you made such a noise, little gnat? Against whom do you lift your head, little earthworm?" \[the preacher's own gloss on the text\]. The Angel of the Lord destroyed a hundred and eighty-five thousand soldiers of his army in a single night; and this King, having fled in disgrace, was treacherously murdered by his own sons.[5]

6. In the third place, the quality of the one who offends increases the malice of the sin, and makes it inexcusable when the one who commits it has received great favours from God and was therefore obliged to be more faithful to him than others. "If my enemy had reviled me, I would have borne it," says the royal Prophet: *Si inimicus meus maledixisset mihi, sustinuissem utique*.[6] To you, sinner who hear me, the Lord may say: "You who had such good beginnings, who had been enlightened by so many inspirations, who had received so many graces, who had so often approached the Sacraments and kept company with good people: when, forgetting all these graces, you offend me for an empty satisfaction and a momentary pleasure, you do a thing that grieves me deeply and wounds me to the quick." This, my faithful people, should make you understand that sin committed by a person greatly indebted to God is a sin of ingratitude, and that nothing dries up the fountain of his mercy so much as such a sin.

7. Finally, the manner in which the sinner offends God notably aggravates his sin, and infallibly draws down on him the vengeance of heaven, when it has not been by surprise, by ignorance, by human frailty or by the force of some violent passion, but with full deliberation, by obstinate malice and with knowledge of the evil he was doing. This is what the holy Doctors call sinning against the Holy Spirit. And the Son of God says in the Gospel that sins against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven either in this world or in the next:[7] that is, that they will be forgiven with difficulty.

8. We shall conclude, my faithful people, from all this doctrine, that if God reprobated the inhabitants of Sodom, the Ammonites and the pagan philosophers for having committed abominable impurities, why will he not also reprobate those among you who commit them? Those peoples did not know the true God and adored shameless gods; but you are Christians, you have the light of faith and you adore a God who is purity itself. God reprobated Pharaoh, Saul and Belshazzar, who were kings; why then will he not reprobate you, who are only one of the common people, if you commit enormous sins? Pharaoh put to death only other people's children, and you put your own children to death. I will explain myself: Pharaoh killed bodies, and you kill souls, by the bad examples you give them, by your oaths, your drunkenness and your licentiousness. Belshazzar profaned only lifeless vessels that had served in the temple of Solomon; and you profane a living, animate vessel, which is your body, which must serve God in the Church of Jesus Christ through Baptism and the other Sacraments.

9. Fear God, my brethren, fear his judgements: fear that he may cast you off and no longer accept your services; that he may permit you to be so taken up with temporal business that you have no time to do anything for love of him, and that your heart, attached to earthly goods, may show itself insensible to the misfortunes of your neighbour. Fear that he may permit you to spend days and nights without any fruitful prayer, exposed to falling into hardness of heart, which is the greatest of all misfortunes; and in that state it will be said of you: "God has cast them off; nothing could correct them; their heart is a hardened heart and their mind a reprobate mind: they are therefore children of perdition and victims of hell." I ask God with all my heart to preserve you from this misfortune by his infinite mercy, and that, entering into yourselves, you may detest your life and be sincerely converted to the Lord. Which is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

On sins of such enormity that God casts us off.

> *Ite, ostendite vos sacerdotibus (Luc. 17:14).*
>
> *Go, show yourselves to the priests.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. In what ways can one sin be greater than another?

4. A sin is greater than another in itself: e.g. the antediluvians, the Sodomites.

5. By reason of the one offended… such are blasphemies, sacrileges, impieties.

6. By the circumstances of the person who sins.

7. By the manner: with full deliberation and knowledge.

8. If he reprobated those… why will he not reprobate you?

9. Fear God.

---

[1] 1 Pet. 3:19–20.

[2] Jude 7, joined to Lam. 4:6 ("Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment").

[3] Isa. 26:10.

[4] Isa. 37:23 (2 Kgs 19:22).

[5] Isa. 37:36–38.

[6] Ps. 54 (55):13.

[7] Matt. 12:31–32.

44. Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost: On Trust in Providence

Vol. I, pp. 280–284. Reading for the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Matthew 6:24–33. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 6 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus said to his disciples: No one can serve two masters; for either he will dislike the one and love the other, or if he submits to the first he will look with disdain on the second. You cannot serve God and riches. Therefore I tell you: do not be anxious about finding food to sustain your life, or where you will get

clothes to cover your body. Is not life, or the soul, worth more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the sky: they do not sow or reap or have barns, and your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth incomparably more than they? And which of you by much reasoning can add one cubit to his stature? And as for clothing, why are you anxious? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow and flower. They do not labour, nor do they spin; yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed with such elegance as one of these lilies. Now if God so clothes a grass of the field which is, or flowers, today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more you, men of little faith? So do not go about saying anxiously: Where shall we find food and drink? Where shall we find something to clothe ourselves? as the pagans do, who run anxiously after all these things; for your Father knows well your need of them. In short, seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all other things will be given you besides.

2. St. Matthew shows us this day that Jesus said to his disciples: No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will put up with the one and despise the other.

I must explain to you, my faithful people, which are the two masters of whom Jesus Christ speaks and who cannot be served together. They are the love of God and the love of the world, which the heart of man cannot serve at one and the same time, because their maxims are entirely opposed. Know that Jesus Christ says this for those who want to follow God and the world at the same time, and to divide their heart between the goods of heaven and those of the earth: this union, then, is not possible. Jesus Christ also said in the same Gospel: Do not be anxious about your food or your clothing. “What! must we not take care,” you will say to me, “of the things necessary for our subsistence and that of our family?” So we must indeed; but this care for temporal affairs must be reasonable and prudent. Jesus Christ condemns only the excessive anxieties with which we wear ourselves out to acquire the necessities of life, because by them we show our little trust in his divine providence. Besides, these same anxieties are entirely useless, for it is as impossible for us to procure the necessities of life by them as to increase our stature by them in the least. And so, my brethren, let us keep to the good instruction that Jesus Christ gives us: “Seek first,” he says, “the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things will be given you besides.” That is, he wants us before all things to see to our salvation and the means of obtaining it, and wants our temporal affairs to have second place in our mind, and that we carry them out without too much attachment and without anxiety. Let us give our first cares to God and the rest to our temporal affairs. But most Christians turn this order of God upside down: they spend almost their whole life in their business and their pleasures, and spend hardly any time in thinking of God. You see also that Jesus Christ promises to take care of our temporal affairs if we work at that of our salvation; and this gives me occasion to instruct you today on the trust you should have in divine Providence.

3. I believe there is no one in this church who does not put his trust in God; but I am sure there are many who do not put it as His Majesty desires. God wants us to put it all in him from the beginning and without doubting his goodness; and not a few persons commit great faults in this. “Cursed is he who puts his trust in man,” says the prophet Jeremiah, “and leans on an arm of flesh!”[1] You women draw down this curse on yourselves who dress immodestly and with a bold air so as to catch some rich match by that bearing; for you put in your flesh the hope of your marriage. You draw down this curse on yourselves who put all your trust in that man of influence, engaging in monopolies, falsehoods or other criminal acts to please him. You expose yourself to this curse, you who, being only a man, put all your trust in yourself alone; for there are many who put it only in their wits, their learning, their beauty, their strength, their skill or their trade; and God wants you to put all your trust in him: not part in him and part in yourself, but all of it in the Lord. You complain that your plans do not succeed; it is because it is not God who moves your designs. Who, then, moves them? Your ambition, your avarice and your sensuality. You commit yourself to the state of matrimony without consulting the Lord in prayer, or considering whether that is your vocation. You undertake a lawsuit without taking the advice of some upright person; and if by chance you have a good result, at once you grow vain. You are one of those of whom Scripture says that they rely on their own strength and put all their trust in

themselves. You use unlawful ways, dodges and tricks to win that lawsuit, superstitious remedies to recover your health; you neglect your salvation, you entangle yourself in business, because you put all your trust in your own wits and activity instead of putting it all in God; or if you do have recourse to him, it is when some misfortunes come upon you or when everything abandons you. And understand that God wants to be your recourse from the beginning, and not for lack of others.

4. Let me suppose that you sometimes say in your prayers: "My God, in you I put all my trust, and I throw myself into the arms of your providence." The Lord says to you in his Scriptures: Do not swear in order to sell your goods better; do not be so eager for the goods of this world; cut down the time you spend on this, to employ it in divine service and in exercises of devotion; do not use fraud to win your lawsuit, nor cunning to obtain that office or that inheritance; pay what you owe to your poor creditors and to the craftsmen. And you do just the opposite. Is it not mockery to say that you put all your trust in God, when you put it only in your own cares and your own labour? "Woe to those unbelievers," says the Holy Spirit by the mouth of the Wise Man; "woe to those who are timid and faint of heart," who do nothing generous for the service of God, "because they do not trust in him: the Lord will not keep them under his protection."[2]

5. You say that your affairs are very tangled; that taxes, lawsuits and bankruptcies have reduced your fortune to nothing; and, what is worse, you see no sign, nor have you any hope or likelihood, of improvement. Your father or your husband who protected you has died, your creditors pursue you on every side, your friends have abandoned you and your relatives do not help you. Will you believe me? Then follow the advice the Holy Spirit gives you in these words: *Habe fiduciam in Domino*:[3] Have trust in God, and do not lean on your own prudence; commend yourself to him and keep his commandments carefully. His omnipotence is infinite, and he can by a word bring you out of all these difficulties. When you were well off, when you had all you wanted, who procured those goods for you? Who kept them for you? Perhaps your husband, your father or your friends. But you are not so bad a Christian nor so lacking in judgement as to believe that they did it by themselves and by their own power: they did it because God gave them the grace to do it, and made use of them to do you good. And has God died with them, or lost his power because the one who helped you has ceased to exist? Trust, then, in the Lord, who says to you in the holy Scriptures: "I will not desert you, I will not abandon you."[4] He can help you because he is almighty; and he will know how to make your plans succeed and to ruin those of your enemies. He is infinitely good, you must not doubt it; he has given you good proofs of it. He sometimes permits you to be tossed by the storm, to be for some time in troubles of spirit, in poverty or sickness; but if you put all your trust in him, even when all seemed desperate, by one stroke of his providence he will deliver you from your sufferings for his glory. Do not rely on your own prudence, your intelligence and your learning: *Ne innitaris prudentiae tuae* \[do not lean on your own prudence\],[5] for all this is nothing but a staff of reed and a foundation on sand. Acknowledge before God that all your lights are only darkness and that your wisdom is only folly. Ask him to govern you in all you undertake; implore his help at the beginning and end of your actions; raise your mind to him from time to time, offer him your heart, and ask him for his grace and his love. If you do so, the Lord will enlighten your mind in perplexities, strengthen your heart in temptations, hold you by the hand in dangers, give success to your actions in this world, and grant you the possession of his glory in the next. This is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

On trust in Providence.

> *Quaerite primum regnum Dei, et justitiam ejus, et haec omnia adjicientur vobis (Matth. 6:33).*\
>
> *Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things will be given you as it were besides.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Woe to those who put their trust not in God but in something else!…

4. Some say they put their trust in God, and it is not true.

5. If things go badly for you, do not be dismayed by it; put your trust in God.

---

[1] Jer. 17:5.

[2] Sir. 2:14–15 (Vulg. 2:15–16; the source gives Eccli. 2:18).

[3] Prov. 3:5.

[4] Heb. 13:5 (cf. Josh. 1:5).

[5] Prov. 3:5.

45. Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost: That Conversion Must Not Be Put Off to the Hour of Death

Vol. I, pp. 285–290. Reading for the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Luke 7:11–16. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 7 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus was on his way to the city called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd were going with him. And when he was near the gate of the city, behold, they were carrying out a dead man to be buried, the only son of his mother, who was a widow; and a large company of people of the city was with her. As soon as the Lord saw her, moved with compassion, he said to her: Do not weep. And he came up and touched the bier, and those who were carrying it stood still. Then he said: Young man, I command you, arise. And at once the dead man sat up and began to speak; and Jesus gave him to his mother. At this they were all filled with a holy fear, and they glorified God, saying: A great prophet has appeared among us; and God has visited his people.

2. St. Luke tells us in today's Gospel that Jesus was going to a city called Nain, and as he drew near the gate of the city, behold, they were carrying out a dead man, the only son of a widow; and the Lord, having seen her, said to her: Do not weep. He came up to the bier, touched it, and said: Young man, I say to you, arise. And the dead man sat up and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother.

The death of this young man represents for us the state of sin, which separates the soul from God and takes away all feeling for His Majesty, just as death takes from the body all movement and all the senses. A sad state, my brethren, and it is that of all the sinners who walk all their life in corrupt ways! The widow who has lost her son is a figure of the Church, who weeps for the spiritual death of her children, for sin every day gives death to countless souls. Jesus Christ tells this young man to arise, and at his voice the dead man obeys and recovers life. The Church, by the voice of her ministers and following the instructions of her divine Spouse, every day exhorts sinners to rise from the tomb, that is, to come out of the abyss of corruption in which they are sunk; but they are deaf to her voice, and flatter themselves that by asking for mercy when they feel themselves attacked by a mortal illness they will be converted and God will hear their prayers. Therefore I am going to show you that this is a deceitful error, and that we must take great care not to put off conversion to the hour of death.

3. In another instruction I showed you that it was a very risky thing for salvation to put off our conversion to old age. Today I want to show you that it is much riskier to defer it to the last illness or to the hour of death: because it is very probable that if the last illness catches you before you are converted, the sacrament of

Penance and the other two that you may perhaps receive will be useless and fruitless to you. The subject I treat here is the most important of all and deserves the greatest attention.

4. You know that the sacrament of Penance is made up of three parts, which are contrition of heart, confession of mouth and satisfaction by means of penitential works. I tell you, then, sinners who hear me, that you will not be able to fulfil the three parts of penance if you wait for the last illness to leave your evil life. For it is necessary to have contrition of heart, if God deigns to grant it to you, because otherwise you will never be converted. This repentance is the most precious gift God can give a sinner, and it is a perfect work of his omnipotence: indeed, for this he must disarm his justice and make his mercy triumph. And if he does not work this miracle on your heart now, what likelihood or what hope can there be that he will do it twenty or thirty years from now, when you will have provoked him more than ever and made yourselves more unworthy of his mercy by the great number of sins you will commit until then? Have you not been told more than once that God in his sacred Scripture greatly threatens the sinners who persevere in vice to the end? "I will laugh at you," he says, "at the hour of your death, because you made yourselves deaf when I called you and invited you to penance."[1]

5. I know well that there are people who, to answer what I say, bring up the example of the good Thief, whom the Son of God converted at the hour of death; but this is a very useless and empty excuse. God once gave a sinner the grace to be converted at the hour of death; but does it follow from this that he will give the same grace to those who persevere in sin until that moment? Do you not know that a particular privilege granted to someone does not imply that it must be granted to others? What is granted to someone out of pure favour must not be taken as an example. The question is not whether God will forgive you at the hour of death if you have a true repentance for your sins and a true contrition, for in that case he will do so. The question is whether he will give you the grace to have this repentance; and the Saints say that it is very probable that he will not give it to you, as he did not give it to the bad Thief; for penance that comes too late is seldom true. St. Augustine says very rightly: "He converted one sinner so that no one may despair, however great a sinner he has been; but he converted only one, so that you may not presume on his mercy": *Unus est, ne desperes; solus est, ne praesumas* \[there is one, lest you despair; only one, lest you presume\].

6. The contrition you will have then will not only be destitute of the grace of God, and so not supernatural, but it will not be very voluntary either; for whenever God speaks of conversion, he asks that it be with the whole heart. "Turn to me," he says, "with all your heart": *in toto corde vestro*.[2] But when you are in your last illness and turn to God out of a natural fear of hell, this will will not be whole, because it is not the will of a son but of a slave; it does not proceed from the love of God but from the love of yourselves; for in the end you yield only out of fear of eternal punishment, even though you say: "My God, have mercy on me, I give myself to you willingly." But since this will is not entirely sincere and does not proceed from a supernatural motive, it is rather a delusion than a true and proper contrition, such as is required.

7. The same will happen with your confession: it will not be complete, for lack of time or of memory. For perhaps you will be ill only five or six days, and part of that time you will spend in making your will, putting the affairs of your house in order and taking medicines. In so short a space and amid so many hindrances, how will you be able to think about your conscience and make a good confession? The Son of God compares himself to a king who wants to have a very strict account taken of his servants.[3] You have received from God so many graces of soul and body, but you have made very bad use of them, for you have made many unjust bargains and committed so many mortal sins of thought and deed. I leave you to consider now in what anguish you will be when you must give an account to a most severe judge who lets nothing pass, and you will have only a few hours to prepare to give it.

8. But even if you had time, what memory will you be able to have then, at the hour of death? Oppressed by illness, all the faculties of your soul will be disordered, your organs so weak that you will not be able to think attentively about anything serious, and you will be in a kind of delirium and almost deprived of judgement.

And do you think that in this state you will be able to call to mind all your sins? Then you are very much deceived.

9. The third part of penance is satisfaction; and I say that in your last illness you will not be in a state to fulfil this condition of penance. Let me suppose that you have no will to persevere in your sin, that you have often made the resolution to restore what belongs to others, to leave your bad conduct and do penance; nevertheless, if the last illness surprises you before you carry out these good plans, it is clear that you will not be able to fulfil them. You will not be able to render to Caesar what is Caesar's, nor to God what is God's;[4] that is, you will not be able to make satisfaction to men. For where will you go to find the common people whom you have cheated in buying or selling, in order to make restitution to them; the upright persons whom you have defamed by your grumbling, in order to restore their honour; the single or married women with whom you have had unlawful dealings, in order to make good the harm and injury you have done them? Nor will you be able to satisfy God by works of penance, for you will be unable to do them, and will scarcely be able to pronounce the holy name of Jesus.

10. What sort of penance, then, will yours be, which will be destitute of the grace of God, will not be sufficiently voluntary and wholehearted, will have neither true contrition nor complete confession, nor any satisfaction at all? It is true that we give you absolution; but we give it because we interpret your words in a good sense: you tell us that you repent with all your heart, and we judge by what you tell us; but we do not guarantee your salvation. *Absolutionem damus, securitatem non damus* \[we give absolution, we do not give security\], says the Father St. Augustine.[5] Believe me, then, and follow the advice that the prophet Isaiah gave King Hezekiah: "Set your house in order": *dispone domui tuae*; "for you shall die": *quia morieris tu*.[6] Yes, dear brother, you will certainly die: set your house in order, that is, your conscience and your soul. Take care to cleanse it and purify it of all sin, so as to be in a state to be received into the heavenly Jerusalem, where nothing impure will enter.[7] Set your house in order, that is, your temporal goods and your family: instruct and correct your children and your servants, for whom you must give an account. Let all of you, each one, do good works, pray and lead a truly Christian life: this is the only means of securing your salvation and of awaiting the eternal reward with confidence. Which is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

That conversion must not be put off to the hour of death.

> *Adolescens, tibi dico, surge (Luc. 7:14).*
>
> *Young man, I say to you, arise.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Proposition.

4. The difficulty of carrying out at the hour of death the three parts of which the sacrament of Penance is made up.

5. They wrongly cite, and take refuge in, what he did with the good thief.

6. Contrition at that hour will not be very voluntary, nor whole, nor sincere.

7. The confession will go as best it can…

8. You will have no memory.

9. What satisfaction?… What restitutions? Neither to God nor to men…

10. We give absolution, but we do not guarantee you…

[1] Prov. 1:24–26, freely applied to the hour of death.

[2] Joel 2:12.

[3] Matt. 18:23.

[4] Matt. 22:21.

[5] Attributed to St. Augustine (*Sermon* 393, whose authenticity is doubted).

[6] Isa. 38:1.

[7] Rev. 21:27.

46. Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost: On the Unhappy Death of Sinners

Vol. I, pp. 291–297. Reading for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Luke 14:1–11. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 14 of St. Luke, which reads as follows:

1. At that time, when Jesus had gone into the house of one of the leading Pharisees to dine on a sabbath day, they were watching him. And behold, a man with dropsy placed himself before him. And Jesus, turning to the doctors of the law and the Pharisees, asked them: Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? But they were silent. And Jesus, having touched the man with dropsy, healed him by the mere touch and sent him away. Then, addressing them, he said to them: Which of you, if his ass or his ox falls into a well or a marsh, will not pull him out at once, even if it is the sabbath day? And they did not know what to answer to this. Then, noticing how the guests were choosing the first places at table, he put this parable to them, and said: When you are invited to a wedding, do not put yourself in the first place, lest perhaps there be another guest of more distinction than you; and the one who invited you both come and say to you: Make room for this man; and then with shame you find yourself obliged to take the last place. Rather, when you are invited, go and put yourself in the last place, so that when the one who invited you comes, he may say to you: Friend, go up higher. This will bring you honour in the sight of the other guests. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

2. Today’s Gospel tells us that when Jesus had gone into the house of a certain ruler of the Pharisees on a sabbath to eat bread, they were watching him. And behold, a certain man with dropsy placed himself before him. And Jesus spoke and said to the lawyers and the Pharisees: Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath? But they were silent. Jesus, then, having touched him, healed him and sent him away.

The man with dropsy, my brethren, is a figure of those souls who, sunk in the love of the goods of the earth, are never satisfied, and, always possessed by the thirst to have, desire more and more the more they have.

The Pharisees, who allowed an ox to be pulled out of a well on the sabbath if it had fallen in, and did not allow a sick man to be healed on that day, represent those who make scruples about trifles and break the precepts of the law. A woman will make a scruple of not having said certain prayers or the Rosary, and will make none of speaking ill of her neighbour, of dressing worldly, and perhaps even immodestly. Finally, when Jesus Christ warns us in the same Gospel not to take the first places at a banquet, he makes us understand that humility must be practised in everything. For a humble person always believes himself unworthy of being preferred to others, and it often happens that this virtue makes such people worthy of the place they deserve; whereas persons full of pride, who believe they have a right to be first wherever they are, draw on themselves the censure of others, and it often happens that their vanity is brought low and confounded.

3. But I return to the man with dropsy whom Jesus Christ deigned to heal. This healing was so much the greater a miracle because, as you know, dropsy is one of those illnesses regarded as incurable. In this man with dropsy are signified those sinners who are so sunk in the abyss of corruption that their conversion is judged, if not impossible, at least very difficult; and so they come to a deplorable end. In the last instruction I showed you that conversion must not be put off to the hour of death; and today I intend to show you that the death of obstinate sinners is surely unhappy.

4. King David says in his Psalms that the death of sinners is very evil: *mors peccatorum pessima*.[1] And the prophet Daniel shows us a most terrible example of this in a tragic story he relates, from which we can draw excellent instructions. Belshazzar, king of Babylon, one day gave a great banquet for all the magnates of his court and for his concubines. In the midst of the supper, behold, a strange sight: he sees three fingers holding a pen and writing certain characters on the wall opposite him.[2] At this sight he is troubled, he turns pale, his knees tremble; he has all the soothsayers in the city called; but none can read those words or tell him what they meant. He sends for the prophet Daniel, who reads them easily and explains their meaning. They were only three words, but they contained most fatal decrees. He says to the King: "The characters you see, O prince, which are to be read thus, *Mane, Thecel, Phares*,[3] mean that God has numbered the time of your reign and that it is about to end; that you have been put in the balance and found of very little weight; and finally, that your kingdom is to be divided and given to your enemies." The event showed that the prophet Daniel spoke the truth, for everything was fulfilled at once. That same night the city of Babylon was taken and sacked by the Persians and Medes, and King Belshazzar was killed.

5. See here, my brethren, a true image and a living representation of what happens every day. You look on death only from very far off: it seems to you that it is thirty or fifty years away from you; and meanwhile you continue in your disorders, you offend God without scruple, you rely on your youth or your health; and you do not notice, like Belshazzar, that you are besieged on every side, and that the sentence of your death and your condemnation is written in heaven. This sentence contains only three words: *Mane, Thecel, Phares*. *Mane*: God has numbered the days of your reign, said the Prophet to Belshazzar; and I will say the same to you: that because of the abuse you have made of God's graces and the many sins you have committed, God has perhaps cut short the time he meant to give to your life and has shortened its days. Indeed, hear and attend to what the Holy Spirit says in the book of Ecclesiastes: "Take good care not to commit impieties and other most grievous sins, lest you die before you would have died": *Ne impie agas multum, ne moriaris in tempore non tuo* \[do not be very wicked, lest you die before your time\].[4] Belshazzar enjoyed good health, his city was very strongly fortified, a great number of troops defended it, he could sustain a very long siege; and with all this, in the midst of his prosperity, in one night he loses his crown and his life. The same will happen to you, sinners, though you may be in the flower of your age, in the vigour of your health and in the greatest prosperity. If you offend God you will not go as far as you think; if you are ungrateful to him he will withdraw his protection from you and leave you exposed to the accidents of life, which will bring about your death sooner than you think.

6. *Thecel*: you have been weighed in the balance, said the Prophet to Belshazzar, and you have been found too light. Pay attention, my faithful people, for here it is a question not of the false and unjust balance of men, but of the equitable balance of God's justice. At the hour of death you will see clearly that your sins are so much greater and heavier in the balance and in the mind of God than they are in the balance and opinion of men; and you will also see that their number infinitely exceeds that of the few good works you may have been able to do. Worldly woman, when men talk of your way of dressing, your painted face, your ornaments and your lack of modesty, they say you are a little vain, a little free; but in God's balance you are a cause of scandal and a killer of souls, because you kindle the fire of concupiscence in the hearts of countless men who look at you and desire you.[5]

7. *Phares*: your kingdom is to be divided and handed over to your enemies; so it will be with you. Your goods, which are your little empire, those goods you have gathered by means of so many sins, which you keep with such care and value so ardently, will perhaps be given to unnatural children, to dissolute nephews or to ungrateful heirs who will forget you, who will use them for their amusements, and who will spend lavishly what you have saved and refused to give to the poor for the salvation of your soul.

8. All these truths are drawn by the finger of God, not on a wall but in the holy Scriptures. At the hour of death the judgement of God will reveal to you everything that is now preached to you. Then you will be like Belshazzar: you will tremble, you will shudder with horror, and you will say within yourselves: *Circumdederunt me dolores mortis, torrentes iniquitatis conturbaverunt me*:[6] The sorrows of death have besieged me, the torrents of iniquity have terrified me. Wherever you turn your eyes you will find only causes of sadness and terror. By your bed you will have your parish priest, or a priest in his place, who in making the commendation of your soul will say to you: "Christian soul, go forth from this world"; yes, from this world, where there will be nothing more for you to do; from this world in which you have lived too long, in which you have scandalised your neighbour and afflicted the poor. "Go forth from this world in the name of God who calls you." "Alas!" you will say, "God is calling me! And in what state am I to present myself before him? God is purity itself, and I am all covered with filth and with a thousand base and indecent acts." "Go forth in the name of God the Father who created you; in the name of the Son who redeemed you; in the name of the Holy Spirit who was poured out on you in the sacrament of Baptism." "Ah!" you will say, "how ungrateful I have been after so many benefits! I have used the members of my body and the powers of my soul to offend God the Father, who had given them to me in creation; I have crucified the Son so many times by my sins; I have banished the Holy Spirit from my heart, to receive vile creatures in his place. How shall I dare to appear before this most holy and most adorable Trinity?"

9. You will see a confessor beside you, and you will say: "Ah, Father! if I had believed you, if I had gone to confession every month, if I had attended the divine offices and the instructions on feast days, if I had said my prayers and prayed more often, how well off I would be now!" If you then look downwards, you see the hell that is prepared for you, opening its jaws to receive you; you see the devils waiting for you, eager for their prey, and demanding your soul as something that belongs to them.

10. But what will overwhelm you completely will be the torrents of your sins: *Torrentes iniquitatis conturbaverunt me*. A torrent is the gathering of many little streams that come together from various directions. When the brooks run separately they have no great effect; but when they are all together they form a torrent that deafens with its noise, that ruins, destroys and sweeps away everything it meets. You commit sins one after another: yesterday an oath, today an excess, tomorrow an impurity; and so you consider them only separately: at Christmas those you have committed since Easter; at Easter those you have committed since Christmas. But at the instant of death they will be a torrent rushing down on you: all your mortal and venial sins will gather in your memory, they will be set before you with all their circumstances, all their ugliness, all their malice, and this will be an unbearable torment for you. What regret will you not have then for having been wrongly occupied in drunkenness, in dances, in gatherings of men and women where so many sins are committed, and for having lived like pagans rather than like Christians!

11. I cannot help trembling, my brethren, as I consider so terrible a passage. But there is still time to preserve yourselves from the misfortune of a bad death: you can from now on leave sin, turn to God and practise every sort of good work; in a word, do now what you would wish to have done at the hour of death. Then your departure from this world will not be a death but a change of life, a happy passing and passage from this earthly life to the immortal and glorious life of heaven. Which is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

On the unhappy death of sinners.

Homo quidam hydropicus erat ante illum (Luc. 14:2).

A certain man with dropsy was before him.

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. The man with dropsy is a figure of those almost incurable sinners.

4. What David says. Daniel's story and prophecy about Belshazzar.

5. *Mane*: God has numbered the days, etc….

6. *Thecel*: you have been weighed in the balance.

7. *Phares*: divided and handed over to your enemies.

8. What will happen to you at the hour of death? The commendation of the soul.

9. What will the sinner say at the hour of death?

10. What will overwhelm him will be the torrent of his sins together.

11. Amend, turn to God.

---

[1] Ps. 33 (34):22.

[2] Dan. 5:5.

[3] Dan. 5:25–28 (the source gives 5:26).

[4] Eccl. 7:17 (Vulg. 7:18).

[5] Matt. 5:28.

[6] Ps. 17 (18):5 (the source gives Ps. 27).

47. Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost: On Avarice, or the Disordered Love of Money

Vol. I, pp. 298–303. Reading for the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Matthew 22:34–46. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 22 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time the Pharisees gathered round Jesus; and one of them, a doctor of the law, asked him, to test him: Master, which is the chief commandment of the law? Jesus answered him: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like this one, namely: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments the whole Law and the Prophets depend. While the Pharisees were gathered here, Jesus put this question to them: What do you think of the Christ, or Messiah? Whose son is he? They said to him: David's. He replied to them: How then does David, in the spirit of prophecy, call him his lord, when he says: The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies the footstool of your feet? If, then, David calls him his lord, how can he be his son? To which no one could answer him a word; nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

2. Jesus Christ, who is the eternal truth, tells us today in the holy Gospel that the commandment to love God is the greatest of all the commandments; and therefore you must understand that no one can be saved without

fulfilling what is contained in this commandment. We must, then, love him with all our heart: that is, in all our actions we must direct our intention to God. We must love him with all our mind, submitting our understanding to his divine Majesty. We must love him with all our soul, regulating all the movements of concupiscence by his holy law. We must love him with all our strength, conforming our actions to his divine precepts, so that there is nothing in us that is not directed to his service. It is true that it is lawful and permitted to love our children, relatives and friends; but we must love them with a love that is referred to this Lord, loving them for his sake and desiring that they may belong to God; in a word, we must love God in them. It is also true that it is rather difficult for our heart not to stop at any creature; but the love of God must always so dominate our heart that the supreme Creator is preferred to all things. To make this love reign in us, then, we must avoid all the sins that exclude us from the heavenly kingdom, and make frequent acts of love of God.

3. How does it come about, my brethren, that this commandment, being the most important of all, is so little observed by most Christians? Without doubt it comes from too great an attachment to the goods of the earth, from loving nothing but money or every means that can procure it. This is what is called avarice, which is a disordered passion for money and for the goods of this world. It is against the sin of avarice, which, as you know, is one of the seven capital sins, that I am going to speak to you this day.

4. Greed, or the disordered love of money, is the root of all evils, says the apostle St. Paul.[1] This love of money is what we call avarice. Know, then, that there is no vice about which people are more deluded than this one. The avaricious man believes he is not possessed by it, while at the same time he is its miserable slave. How deplorable his state is! He has his soul so stuck to and so fond of the things of the earth that the holy Doctors compare him to the mole, which is completely surrounded by earth, feels nothing but earth, touches nothing but earth, tastes nothing but earth, and opens its eyes only at the hour of death. An expressive image of the soul of the avaricious man, who, wholly given over to the earth, thinks only of the earth, speaks only of the earth, has no affection, conversation or occupation except for the earth; and what is still more deplorable, does not see his misery, does not know his evil, and does not notice his sin.

5. When a blasphemer, a curser or some other such sinner comes to confession, the first thing he does is to confess his weakness. But of a hundred avaricious people who go to confession, scarcely two or three are found who accuse themselves of the sin of avarice. When one preaches against swearers, against the impure, against the vindictive, all who are touched by these vices say inwardly: “These reproaches are aimed at me.” But when one preaches against avarice, no one says: “It is to me that he is speaking.” This passion hides under the mask of prudence, foresight, necessity, and obligation towards one’s family and posterity. The avaricious man says: “I have great business on my hands, children to provide with food and clothing; and to be provident and look to the future is not forbidden.” And if sometimes he notices that he is attached to the goods of the earth, he does not think there is any great evil in it; he flatters himself and says inwardly: “I do not steal, I do no harm to anyone.” But he does not consider that our Saviour said that those who have money will enter the kingdom of God with difficulty.[2] He does not say those who steal, but those who have money and put all their trust in it. Such people do not consider that the Holy Spirit says there is nothing so wicked as to love money;[3] that St. Paul distinguishes avarice from theft, for he says that not only thieves but also the avaricious will never possess the kingdom of God;[4] that the same Apostle assures us that the root of all evils is the love of money,[5] because avarice feeds and keeps alive all the other vices, fostering indevotion and sloth in the service of God.

6. You avaricious, you seldom pray to God, either morning or evening; and if you do, it is always in a hurry, lightly, and with a distracted imagination. You hardly ever attend the instructions and sermons; you approach the Sacraments only once a year, and God knows how you do even that. You take no care to bring up your children in devotion, because you are always caught up in the din of your business. This vice also feeds pride and vanity; and see why St. Paul said to his disciple Timothy: “Command the rich of this world not to be

haughty."[6] When your avarice has gained you a little fortune, at once you want to set yourselves above your equals and make yourselves feared by everyone, without allowing your will to be crossed in anything. If another keeps pace with you, if someone makes as much of a fortune as you, you are filled with jealousy, envy gnaws and consumes you, you would like some misfortune to befall him; in short, no one can bear you; and hence those dissensions, that sort of rancour, and those eternal enmities among you. If your household does not match your greed, if it slackens in its work even a little, if it loses the least thing, you fly into a rage, you curse it and swear by the holy name of God. Finally, avarice feeds lust, intemperance and drunkenness, because money supplies the means to pay for what is spent in those infamous places and in those houses you frequent, which are like the caverns of your dissoluteness.

7. What means, my brethren, can be taken to tear out the root of avarice, when it is so firmly fixed in your heart? What hope of conversion will a man have who is a slave to this vice? Will it perhaps be in the mercy of God? But ah! his avarice prevents him from obtaining it, because he does not practise those works which are the most suitable, according to the advice of the prophet Daniel: "Redeem your sins with your alms."[7] What, then, can convert him? Perhaps the weakness of old age, which moderates and cools all the other passions? But ah! avarice increases precisely as one advances in age. Besides, avarice is also the cause of thefts; thefts oblige to restitution; and restitution is made only very rarely and very imperfectly. See here why St. Paul says that avarice is not only a temptation but also a snare of Satan:[8] because with this vice he catches you and holds you in his power, and puts and keeps you in a state of damnation, through the difficulty you have in restoring what was wrongly taken and in giving back what you have usurped.

8. The goods of the earth are sticky, says St. Bernard; they cling so strongly that it is not easy to despise them, and some trace of them always remains with us. Of a hundred persons who are obliged to make restitution, ninety do not make it in full. All those great and notorious thieves who have plundered the people by their violence and oppression never make good their injustices; they are so possessed by the passion of avarice, or love of money, that they are ashamed to return to their former state, to reduce the expenses of their house, and to cut down the style and luxury of their table and their dress. "Woe to him," says a prophet, "who heaps up goods by a vicious avarice, to set his nest on high!"[9] The foundations of his house are the blood of the poor; its walls and all its stones will cry out against him; and all the ill-gotten silver dollars \[*pesos duros*\] in his coffers are so many voices crying for vengeance and justice against them. And will such people believe that they can obtain the forgiveness of their sins without restoring goods so unjustly acquired?

9. But I would say to all these avaricious people: Where are the promises you have made to God to lose everything rather than offend him? Where are the protestations you have made to love him above all things, when you remain so passionately attached to money that you make it your God? For whom are you keeping that money? For children who are not yet, and perhaps never will be, in a position to use it in a holy and Christian way; or for ungrateful children or nephews, who will not thank you for it, who will very soon forget you, who will lavishly spend what you have scraped together with such eagerness and saved with such toil and diligence.

10. Think well, my brethren, think of the salvation of your soul, and say to yourselves: "These goods are perishable, my soul is immortal. These goods will stay here below, my soul will go to the other world. These goods are for my heirs, and my soul is for me alone. These goods, however many they may be, are not true goods, for they do not make better the many wicked people who possess them; however great their quantity, the heart of those who enjoy them is never satisfied. One day I must leave them, in spite of myself and without any merit; it is better that I leave them willingly and use them in good works." Do, I beg you, as Zacchaeus did, of whom St. Luke speaks to us in his Gospel,[10] who said: "Behold, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone, I restore it to him four times over, to make good the harm I may have caused him; and because I may have done injury to many persons who no longer exist, I give half

of my goods to the poor" \[the last clause is the preacher's explanation, not Luke's text\]. If you imitate the conduct of Zacchaeus, not grudgingly but with a sincere will and with joy, then what Jesus Christ said of Zacchaeus will be said of your soul and of your family: "The blessing of God has entered this house today." This is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

On avarice, or the disordered love of money.

> *Diliges Dominum Deum tuum (Matth. 22:37).*
>
> *You shall love the Lord your God.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Why is God not loved? Because of avarice. What is avarice?

4. It is the root of all evils. The avaricious man is like a mole.

5. Other vicious people recognise themselves, but the avaricious man does not.

6. The avaricious man turns away from everything good and rushes into everything evil.

7. The difficulty of converting the avaricious man. He gives no alms; old age makes him more greedy; he does not restore what he has stolen.

8. Ill-gotten goods are sticky.

9. Promises made to God. For whom will that money be?

10. Think of the salvation of your soul. Zacchaeus…

---

[1] 1 Tim. 6:10.

[2] Mark 10:23.

[3] Sir. 10:10 (Vulg.): *Avaro autem nihil est scelestius… nihil est iniquius quam amare pecuniam.*

[4] 1 Cor. 6:10.

[5] 1 Tim. 6:10.

[6] 1 Tim. 6:17.

[7] Dan. 4:24 (Vulg.; 4:27 in modern Bibles).

[8] 1 Tim. 6:9.

[9] Hab. 2:9–11.

[10] Luke 19:8.

48. Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost: On Bad Habits

Vol. I, pp. 304–308. Reading for the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Matthew 9:1–8. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 9 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus got into the boat, crossed back over the lake and came to the city where he lived, that is, to Capernaum. And behold, they brought him a paralytic lying on a bed. And seeing their faith, Jesus said to

the cripple: Take heart, my son, your sins are forgiven you. At which certain scribes said at once within themselves: This man blasphemes. But Jesus, seeing their thoughts, said: Why do you think evil in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Rise and walk? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, rise (he said at the same time to the paralytic), take up your bed and go to your house. And he rose and went to his house. When the crowds saw this they were filled with a holy fear, and gave glory to God for having given such power to men.

2. Today's Gospel relates the wonderful healing of a paralytic, who was lying on his bed; and when he had been brought before Jesus, the Lord said to him: Rise, take up your bed and go to your house. And he rose and went to his house. In this way the Lord left confounded the scribes who were grumbling about his miracles.

The palsy of that man whom Jesus Christ healed represents the spiritual palsy of our souls, of which this divine Saviour is the only physician. The lesson we must draw from this is to regard our illnesses and afflictions as consequences of our sins,[1] and to ask for their forgiveness in preference to the healing of our body. Reflect, my brethren, on the three things Jesus Christ said to the paralytic: Rise, take up your stretcher, and go to your house. This signifies what the sinner must do for the healing of his soul. First he must rise; that is, break the bonds that held him a slave to sin. The second thing he must do is to carry the bed on which he was carried; that is, make himself master of his passions, which before he did not resist. Third, he must go to his house; that is, enter into his heart, and not scatter himself outside to enjoy creatures. Let us dwell on these truths, and we shall see how sinners must imitate this paralytic, carrying off their bed, leaving their criminal habits and making themselves masters of their passions. But how few make these generous efforts! Where can this come from? From nothing else than the power their criminal and vicious habits have over them.

3. My brethren, one of the instructions most necessary for your salvation is to teach you by what means vicious habits contracted long ago can be destroyed, and by what others a sinner, represented by the paralytic of our Gospel, can rise from the criminal custom in which he has long been stagnant and sunk. Three things are chiefly necessary to him for this.

4. First, he must will it. So the Son of God did when he answered another paralytic, who had been so for thirty years: "Do you want to be healed?"[2] This was not because he doubted that the sick man wanted to be cured; it was rather to teach us that we will not be healed of our spiritual illnesses unless we want it very sincerely and from the heart. There are many among you who look for empty excuses for not giving up this or that sin, saying they cannot keep from committing it; but in reality it is because they do not want to. If they knew and understood what a true will consists in, they would see that it must be strong, effective and constant. When a merchant resolves to grow rich and make his fortune, he thinks of nothing else than procuring every means to achieve his aim. At the least opportunity of some gain that presents itself, his eyes fly there at once, his ears open attentively, and his imagination is busy with nothing else; he goes to bed with this thought, and with it he gets up. What is the first motive that drives all his actions, if not the desire to grow rich? We must, then, distinguish clearly these two sentiments of our soul: "I would like" and "I will". The one is a velleity or a barren wish; the other is a resolute and effective desire, which sets its hand to the work and seeks the means to reach the end. How is it that so many people go to confession and so few amend; that so many wish to be saved and so few succeed? It is because all would like to, but very few will it; all have the velleity, and very few the true will to be saved. Velleity alone is of no use: we must set our hand to the work, see which vice dominates in us, and by what means we can root it out. For example, the vice that dominates in you is the habit of swearing. Then strive to tear it out from this very moment, and do not lose heart. Every morning ask God from your heart to give you his grace not to fall into it; make a firm resolution not to fall, and repeat this prayer now and then during the day. At night make your particular examen on this vice; and if you find that you have not sworn, give thanks to the Lord and say: "Today I have

kept from swearing; why should I not keep from it tomorrow too? My God, grant me this favour." If unfortunately you find that you have sworn, do not lose heart: ask God's pardon, or impose some penance on yourself each time you fall, with the resolution to take more care the next day; and you will see how little by little you free yourself from this bad habit.

5. But nevertheless we must confess that we are so weak and so palsied in all the powers of our soul that we cannot of ourselves work at our salvation, nor even have the will to work at it, without the grace of God. We must recognise this, and be well convinced of it so as to confess it before God; for if you are persuaded of your misery and of the extreme need you have of the Lord's help, you will put into practice the warning that Jesus Christ gives us in the Gospel, that we must pray always and not grow weary of doing it.[3] Humility is the remedy against pride, chastity against impurity, temperance against gluttony; but prayer is the supreme remedy for all our evils.

6. If you ask me what you must do when you are caught in the habit of some mortal sin, I will tell you that you must pray: *oportet orare* \[one must pray\]. Are you deeply sunk in the filth of impurity, are you as it were in the midst of a stormy sea, and have you suffered shipwreck? Have you sometimes grasped the plank of confession, but at the least wind of temptation you let go, and are you in evident danger of damnation? Then say with David: "Out of the depths of the abyss I cry to you, my God; hear my prayer": *De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine*.[4] If you ask me what you must do when you are moved by anger or some desire for revenge, I will answer that you must pray, keep away from all occasions, and withdraw from the persons who are the cause or the object of it. If you ask me what you must do when you are tormented by some strong temptation and are in danger of yielding to it, then you must pray. Just as a child who is frightened finds no better way to be safe than to run to his mother, put himself in her arms and cling tightly to them, so we must have recourse to prayer to overcome and conquer the vehemence of temptations, and avoid the danger of falling miserably into them.

7. Lastly, my brethren, you must examine at once which vices you may be subject to, and apply yourselves to rooting them out entirely. First, by abstaining from the acts these vices produce; for habits weaken when they are prevented from acting. Second, by taking the greatest care to embrace the practice of the contrary virtues: for example, practise acts of humility to mortify pride; restrain your curiosity, your tongue and your eyes so as not to see what has dragged you into sin; and to achieve this you must watch very closely over yourselves. These remedies have great power and effect in weakening a vicious habit; so that when you have rooted out one vice in this way, you will work likewise to root out the others. By this you will show that you truly wish to rid yourselves of your vicious customs, and that the salvation of your soul is deeply impressed on your heart. Your prayers and your efforts will draw down on you the blessing of God, who will favour you and give you his grace so that you may break entirely with the enemies of your salvation, and he will make you enter the narrow way, which is the true one that leads and brings us to heaven. I wish it to you, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

On bad habits.

> *Offerebant ei paralyticum jacentem in lecto (Matth. 9:2).*
>
> *They brought him a paralytic lying on a stretcher.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Means of curing bad habits.

4. To will with a strong, effective and constant will. Not "I would like" but "I will": the one is velleity, the other is will; the one does nothing, the other everything.

5. To recognise that we can do nothing of ourselves, and everything with God; let us ask, then, let us pray.

6. Prayer is the powerful remedy for gaining the victory.

7. Abstain from vicious acts. Make contrary acts.

---

[1] John 9:2–3.

[2] John 5:5–6 (thirty-eight years).

[3] Luke 18:1.

[4] Ps. 129 (130):1.

49. Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost: On the Pains of Hell

Vol. I, pp. 309–314. Reading for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Matthew 22:1–14. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 22 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus, speaking to the chief priests and the Pharisees in parables, said to them: The kingdom of heaven is like what happened to a certain king who celebrated the wedding of his son; and he sent his servants to call the guests to the wedding, but they would not come. A second time he sent other servants with orders to say to the guests on his behalf: I have the banquet ready; I have had my calves and other fatted animals killed, and everything is prepared: come, then, to the wedding. But they took no notice; rather they went off, one to his farm and another to his ordinary business. The rest seized the servants and, after heaping insults on them, killed them. When the king heard this he flew into a rage, and sending his troops he made an end of those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants: The preparations for the wedding are made, but the guests were not worthy to attend. Go, then, to the crossroads, and invite to the wedding all you find. At once the servants went out into the roads and gathered all they found, good and bad, so that the wedding hall was filled with people, who sat down at table. When the king afterwards came in to see the guests, he noticed there a man who was not wearing a wedding garment. And he said to him: Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? But he was struck dumb. Then the king said to his officers of justice: Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the darkness, where there will be nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth. So true is it that many are called, but few are chosen.

2. The Gospel relates the parable of a king who prepared a banquet to celebrate the wedding of his son; and when he had called the guests, they would not come. A second time he sent other servants, but they took no notice of the message; rather some of them seized these servants and killed them. Then the king sent his armies, exterminated those murderers and burned their city. Afterwards he ordered other servants to go out into the roads and bring in all they found, bad and good. Then the king came in to see them seated at table; and as there was a man who had no wedding garment, he ordered his officers to bind him hand and foot and throw him into the outer darkness.

This king who has the wedding of his son prepared is a figure of God the Father; the son represents Jesus Christ; the wedding banquet signifies the teaching of the Gospel and the graces by which souls are fed. The first servants who were sent represent Moses and the Prophets; the first guests were the Jews, who would not believe in Jesus Christ. The second servants who were sent are the Apostles, who announced to the Jews that all was ready for the redemption and salvation of men through the death of Jesus Christ. But these likewise neglected to come to the wedding; and in this they are a figure of worldly people, whose hearts are so full of the business and pleasures of the earth that they do not think at all of their salvation. Those whom the second guests killed are the Apostles, who were put to death either by Jews or by Gentiles who would not receive the

preaching of the Gospel. The army that the king sent to exterminate those murderers signifies that of the Romans, who at the taking of Jerusalem made a horrible slaughter of the Jews.

3. What is said next, that the king sent into all the roads to invite to the wedding all they found, signifies that the Apostles and their successors have been sent to all parts of the world to preach the Gospel to every sort of person. The good and the bad gathered in the wedding hall are the good and bad Christians who are in the bosom of the Church. The king's entry into the banquet hall represents the visit God will make on the day of judgement to examine whether we have fulfilled the obligations of our vocation. The wedding garment that man did not have is holiness of life, necessary for admission to heaven. The darkness into which the king orders this man to be thrown represents hell, into which the souls of the damned are cast. The weeping and gnashing of teeth show us the grief and rage of the souls that are reprobate and condemned to eternal punishment. Among all these truths I am going to dwell, my brethren, on this last one, because I have resolved to speak to you today about the pains of hell: a terrible punishment which should make us tremble, and oblige sinners to be converted and do penance so as not to fall into that place of horror, in which God will exercise his vengeance on all who have despised his holy commandments.

4. It is well known from the Gospel that the reprobate will have to suffer two kinds of pain in hell, since at the general judgement God will say to them: "Depart from me, you cursed": *discedite a me*. Here is the pain called the pain of loss, which is to be separated from God for ever. "Go into the eternal fire": here is the pain of sense, for all the senses will have to suffer the torment of fire.[1] I say first that the pain of loss consists in being cast out for ever from the sight of God, from his friendship and his company. Do you grasp the greatness of this loss and this misfortune? How terrible it is! David trembled at this when he said so often: "My God, do not cast me from your sight, do not abandon me": *Ne projicias me a facie tua, ne derelinquas me*.[2] Indeed, to lose God is the loss of the greatest good that can be imagined, and this will be the greatest torment of the damned. If you are vexed when you lose a silver dollar \[*peso duro*\], and much more if you lose a hundred, and still more if you lose a thousand, what then will it be to lose the kingdom of heaven, the possession of God, who is the centre of all goods; to lose an immense or infinite treasure, and a happiness towards which all souls have so much propensity and inclination? For in truth, my faithful people, while our soul is in the body it is distracted by the pleasures of life and taken up with the business of the earth; but when it is stripped of the body it has nothing to distract or dissipate it, no one to converse with, nor does it find any object to which it can devote itself. Then it knows clearly the extreme need it has of God, and the aptitude and capacity it had to merit him. It is true that the worldly soul, sunk in the things of the earth and fearing only what displeases its senses, is not penetrated with fear of this pain of loss; and so we must set before its eyes what it will suffer in the five senses of the body.

5. First, sight will be afflicted there, for hell is a place of darkness and a shadow of death: *terra tenebrosa, et operta mortis caligine* \[a land of darkness, covered with the gloom of death\].[3] You will never see anything that can console you in the least. Second, hearing will be grievously tormented, for nothing will be heard but cries of despair, terrible roars, curses and blasphemies. Third, smell will be tormented with an unbearable stench. The prophet Isaiah says that from the bodies of those unhappy people, after the resurrection, a stinking odour will rise: *de cadaveribus eorum ascendet foetor*.[4] Fourth, taste, which causes so many people to offend God, will be punished in many ways, the most terrible being thirst. The rich glutton spoken of in the Gospel is a good witness.[5] You have been told the story, and the one who tells it is the Son of God, so you will not dare to say it is a fable. He teaches us the causes of the rich man's damnation: he was rich, dressed magnificently, feasted every day, and did not give alms as he should. Buried in hell after his death and tormented in those devouring flames, he cries out that poor Lazarus be sent to him, to dip a finger in a little water and cool his tongue; he asks this favour, and it is refused him. The fifth sense, touch, will be tormented by fire in every part of the body.

6. You cannot doubt that there is fire in hell, unless you also call into doubt the testimony of the holy Scriptures, which bear witness to this truth in various places. In the prophet Isaiah it is said: “Which of you can dwell with a devouring fire and with everlasting burnings?”[6] In the Gospel of St. Mark the Son of God assures us three times that the fire of the damned will never be put out.[7] In the Gospel of St. Matthew it is related that he will say on the day of judgement: “Go, you cursed, into the eternal fire.”[8] In the Apocalypse it is said that the lot of the reprobate will be a pool of fire and burning sulphur.[9] This word *eternal* frightens and terrifies my mind, for it expresses a fixed and permanent duration without end. Justice of God, how terrible you are! The malice of sin must be very great, when an infinitely good God imposes on his creature a punishment so terrible and so long-lasting.

7. Tell the truth, my beloved brethren: do you believe all these things? From the way you live, it would be said of most of you that you do not believe them. Yet you must believe them, for the apostle St. Paul expressly assures us that all the lustful, the avaricious, those given to wine, thieves and forgers will have no part in the kingdom of God and will never possess it.[10]

8. But what will these wretches do for so long a space of time? They will curse all the creatures that gave them occasion to be damned; they will curse drunkenness, gambling, the gatherings at the dance, the infamous places, and all that contributed to their eternal misfortune. My brethren, it is for you and for me to work with all our strength to flee sin and obtain our salvation. And to avoid such terrible evils, meditate on them seriously and live as true Christians; for this is the only means of securing your eternal happiness and of being among those to whom the Son of God will say on the day of judgement: “Come, blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.” And this is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

On the pains of hell.

> *Mittite eum in tenebras exteriores (Matth. 22:13).*
>
> *Throw him into the outer darkness.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Continuation of the explanation.

4. The pain of loss: to lose God, the sight, the friendship, the company of God.

5. The pain of sense: there sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch will be tormented.

6. In hell there will be fire, and eternal fire.

7. Do you believe there is a hell? Ah! if it were believed, people would not live as they do.

8. What will the damned do in hell? They will curse, they will blaspheme…

---

[1] Matt. 25:41.

[2] Ps. 50 (51):13 and Ps. 26 (27):9.

[3] Job 10:21.

[4] Isa. 34:3.

[5] Luke 16:19–24.

[6] Isa. 33:14.

[7] Mark 9:43–48 (Vulg.).

[8] Matt. 25:41.

[9] Rev. 21:8.

[10] 1 Cor. 6:10 (cf. Gal. 5:19–21).

50. Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost: On Faith

Vol. I, pp. 315–320. Reading for the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: John 4:46–53. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 4 of St. John, which reads as follows:

1. At that time there was in Capernaum a gentleman of the court who had a sick son. This man, having heard that Jesus was coming from Judea into Galilee, went to meet him, begging him to come down from Cana to Capernaum to heal his son, who was dying. But Jesus answered him: Unless you see miracles and wonders you do not believe. The courtier pressed him: Come, Lord, before my son dies. Jesus said to him: Go, your son is well. The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and set off. As he was going home, his servants came to meet him with the news that his son was now well. He asked them at what hour he had felt the improvement. And they answered him: Yesterday at seven in the morning the fever left him. The father reflected that this was the very hour at which Jesus had said to him: Your son is well; and so he believed, and all his household.

2. St. John tells us in the Gospel that a certain petty king of Capernaum presented himself to Jesus and begged him to go and heal his son, who was near death. Jesus said to him: Unless you see wonders and miracles you do not believe. The petty king answered him: Lord, come before my son dies. Jesus said to him: Go, your son lives. The man believed what Jesus told him, and went away. He asked his servants at what hour he had begun to improve. And they said to him: Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. The father knew, then, that it was the hour at which Jesus had told him: Your son lives; and he believed, and all his house.

The reproach, my faithful people, that Jesus Christ makes to this petty king, of not believing unless he sees miracles, represents the state of many Christians who, frightened by certain events, such as the sudden death of someone they know or some great affliction that befalls them, form plans to be converted, but very soon return to their ordinary way of life. The renewed plea this official makes to Jesus Christ, asking him to heal his son, is a lesson teaching us not to lose heart at the various obstacles that arise when we want to undertake a Christian life, and that perseverance is necessary for us to obtain what we ask. But we must also imitate his faith; for as soon as Jesus Christ said to him, “Your son lives,” he believed the Saviour’s word, and this faith and belief were rewarded with the healing of his son. To have faith and to believe firmly all the truths of our holy religion is a great gift of God. Faith is a theological virtue, like hope and charity, as the catechism tells us. A theological virtue is a supernatural gift that has God himself as its object. And so I have resolved to instruct you today on how necessary faith is for our salvation.

3. The apostle St. Paul tells us expressly that man is justified by faith;[1] but this is to be understood of faith as God asks it of us; for there is human faith and divine faith. Human faith is when you believe something on the testimony of men, because you find probity and truthfulness in them; that is, because there is an apparent and well-founded reason for believing what is said. Divine faith is when you believe all Catholic truths because God has revealed them. Human faith is the principle of all our actions, even the most important. For example, in law courts the judges believe a thing on the deposition of two or three witnesses, even though they may have been bribed; in commerce, credit is given to a note written by a private individual, as it is to a deed drawn up by a notary, although these testimonies may very well be deceitful. On this it is a matter for

wonder and amazement that human faith makes us believe so many things, while in divine faith we find so much difficulty in believing what is proposed to us. How is it possible that we do not believe the Catholic truths, which have been attested by thousands of Martyrs, who are so many witnesses who have signed their deposition, not with ink nor on paper, but with their blood and on their own body? Why shall we not give credence to the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, since they have been approved and received with respect by the consent of so many peoples and by the infallible judgement of holy Church?

4. Ordinarily in the conduct of our life, to believe that someone is an upright man we abide by common opinion; and must we not with more reason give credence to the word of God, who can neither deceive himself nor deceive us? Where then does it come from that human faith, which is so uncertain and so open to suspicion, inclines us to believe so many things, whereas divine faith, which is infinitely more certain and better founded, does not move us to believe all the articles of faith, which are in themselves so certain and so important? I find three reasons for this: that we do not know them, do not believe them, and do not meditate on them.

5. I say first that we do not know them. Indeed, if one inquires why so many bad Christians offend God with such insolence, it will be seen that it is because they do not know the greatness and power of the divine Majesty; they are ignorant of the severity of his justice, the abhorrence he has for sin, and his express will not to leave it unpunished. And unhappily they not only commit sin, but persevere in it and put off doing penance until death, without knowing that by acting thus they give God reason to abandon them, to deny them the graces necessary for conversion, and to leave them given up to their reprobate sense.[2] If they go to confession, it is almost always without contrition, and they do not ask God for it, as if they did not know that it is absolutely necessary for obtaining the forgiveness of their sins.

Do you want to know why the idleness, intemperance, arrogance, disobedience and other vices of your children grieve you so much and keep you pierced with sorrow? And why false witness, hatreds, injustices, debauchery and impurities destroy Christian life? It is because God is not known, because the mysteries of the faith and the important truths that Religion teaches are not known. If care were taken that parents kept alive in the minds and hearts of their children the obligations they contracted in Baptism, contempt for the grandeurs of the world, detachment from the goods of the earth, forgiveness of injuries, distrust of self, trust in God's providence and other such maxims of the Gospel, it is quite certain that people would live very differently from the way they live. What a shame that you take so much care to have your children learn what seems to you useful for getting through this life and increasing their fortune, and take so little care to teach them what is necessary for their salvation!

6. Second, the truths contained in Scripture are not believed as they should be; and from this come all the evils in this world. You leave property to your children because you believe it will be useful to them; perhaps with more reason you would leave it to the poor if you believed it would profit you. If you had the least belief that the alms you give here could serve you in the other world, you would give them all the more willingly, since you must have more affection for yourselves than for your heirs. Our Lord Jesus Christ assures us in the Gospel that the riches of the earth, the grandeurs of the world and curious learning have no place in paradise; that there only alms and works of charity have value. But you load yourselves with temporal goods and take no account of good works: no doubt you do not believe Our Lord, who so often discredits temporal goods and charges us so earnestly with the works of mercy.

7. Third, we do not apply ourselves to meditating on the truths of the faith, nor do we go over them in our memory. "The earth," says the prophet Jeremiah, "is all laid waste" by disorders and debauchery, "because there is no one who reflects in his heart" on the truths of Religion: *quia nullus est qui recogitet corde*.[3]

8. Let us try, then, my faithful people, never to forget this beautiful saying of Our Lord: "Have the faith of God": *Habete fidem Dei*.[4] Have divine faith. You must believe what I preach to you, not because I tell you,

but because God has said it, he himself has revealed it to his Church, and the Church teaches it to us. *Habete fidem*: exercise yourselves very often in your faith by formal acts of it, especially in temptation. Oppose to the tempting spirit, as Jesus Christ did, some maxims of sacred Scripture. In the temptation to injustice, remember these words of the divine Saviour: "Never do to another what you would not want done to you."[5] In the temptation to impurity or avarice, remember this saying of the Apostle: "No fornicator, or avaricious or unclean person has any part in the kingdom of Christ."[6] In the temptation to vanity, or to dress in a wholly worldly and immodest way to please those who see you, remember these words of Our Lord: "Woe to him by whom scandal comes!"[7] that is, woe to him or her who gives occasion to a single person to commit a mortal sin! And unhappily so many sins of thought are committed at the sight of such objects. *Habete fidem Dei*: have a firm and constant faith that does not waver; be keenly persuaded that all the Church teaches is true, and hold it more certain than you are of the sun that gives us light. Holy Scripture tells us that fornicators, the avaricious, thieves and other sinners will never possess the kingdom of God; so then, if you feel yourselves guilty of any of these sins and do not amend, believe firmly that you will not succeed in being saved.

9. *Habete fidem*: have faith, and do not be content to say, "I am a Catholic"; you must believe all the articles of faith. Learn them one by one, at least the principal ones; for all the faithful who have the use of reason are obliged to know distinctly all the mysteries that the Church solemnises during the year. To learn them you must attend the public instructions and the explanation of the catechism; you must also read some good devout book, or keep company with pious persons who can teach them to you; meditate on them alone to understand their importance, considering attentively what God is, what heaven, hell and eternity are. And to make public profession of them, you must teach them to your children and servants, speaking to them often about these things. Above all, beware of being ashamed to show yourselves good Catholics, taking no notice of those who might dare to criticise you; for Jesus Christ has said: "Whoever is ashamed of me before men, I will be ashamed of him before my Father and his Angels."[8] Finally, keep a living faith, animated by charity and fruitful in good works; for it would be vain if you were still in your disorders, as St. Paul says.[9] "Faith without works is dead in itself," says St. James.[10] Try, on the contrary, to have the fortitude of those Saints who by the admirable and beautiful deeds of their faith converted countless people, obtained the promises made to the true faithful, and gained the possession of God in eternal beatitude. Which is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

On faith.

> *Credidit ipse, et domus ejus tota (Joan. 4:53).*\
>
> *He believed, and all his house.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Human faith and divine faith.

4. Why is credence given to human faith and not to divine faith?

5. They do not know, or are ignorant of, the truths they must believe.

6. Disorders come from not believing as one should.

7. The truths of the faith are not meditated on.

8. Have the faith of God. Oppose the divine word to temptation, as Jesus Christ did.

9. Learn well what you must believe and practise…

---

[1] Gal. 2:16.

[2] Cf. Rom. 1:28.

[3] Jer. 12:11.

[4] Mark 11:22.

[5] Tob. 4:16 (Vulg.), the negative form of the Golden Rule of Matt. 7:12.

[6] Eph. 5:5 (the source gives 1 Cor. 6:10, a similar passage).

[7] Matt. 18:7.

[8] Luke 9:26; Mark 8:38.

[9] Cf. 1 Cor. 13:2.

[10] James 2:17.

51. Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost: On the Love of Neighbour

Vol. I, pp. 321–327. Reading for the Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Matthew 18:23–35. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 18 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus told his disciples this parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle them, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And as he had nothing to pay with, his lord ordered that he be sold, with his wife and children and all his property, and the debt be paid in that way. Then the servant, throwing himself at his feet, begged him, saying: Have a little patience, and I will pay you everything. Moved with compassion for that servant, the lord set him free, and even forgave him the debt. But scarcely had this servant gone out of his presence when he met one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat he choked him, saying: Pay what you owe me. His fellow servant, throwing himself at his feet, begged him, saying: Have a little patience with me, and I will pay you everything. But he would not listen to him, and went and had him put in prison until he paid him what he owed. When the other servants, his companions, saw what was happening, they were extremely grieved, and went and told their lord all that had happened. Then his lord called him and said to him: O wicked servant, I forgave you all the debt because you begged me. Was it not right, then, that you too should have had compassion on your fellow servant, as I had on you? And the lord in anger handed him over to the torturers, to be tormented until he should pay the whole debt in full. So in this way will my heavenly Father deal with you, if each one does not forgive his brother from the heart.

2. In the parable of today's Gospel we are shown a king who, settling accounts with his servants, had one brought before him who owed him ten thousand talents; but having compassion on him, he forgave him the whole debt. This king represents God, whose mercy towards sinners who have recourse to him is so great that he never fails to forgive us, provided we forgive our brothers. Following this servant's example, then, we must have recourse to the goodness of God with feelings of repentance, and sincerely confess our faults and our inability to make satisfaction by ourselves. For after all, my brethren, we are all debtors to God for the many debts contracted by all the sins we have committed. And without speaking of the graver ones, how many we commit by our indiscreet words, by our false judgements of our neighbour, by our coldness towards God, by the abuse we make of his graces and his holy Sacraments, and by our many impatiences in our afflictions and the other misfortunes of this life! So we have good reason for each of us to say what this servant said: "Grant me, my God, some delay to pay my debts and satisfy your justice": *Patientiam habe in*

me \[have patience with me\].

3. But let us now consider the inhumanity of this wicked servant, who treated with the greatest rigour a fellow servant who owed him a hundred pence, and, refusing to grant his pleas to be given time to pay his debt, had him put in prison. As soon as the master learned of so cruel an act, he rebuked him sharply and handed him over to the torturers until he should pay the whole debt. This conduct represents that of those who are so hard on their neighbours that they will not forgive them if they have received some offence from them. By the punishment that this Lord imposed on that servant whom he handed over to the executors of justice, you can know what punishment threatens you. By this hardness we oblige God to deny us the forgiveness of our faults; and it also makes us lie when in the Our Father we say: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," that is, those who have offended us.[1] This hardness, my faithful people, comes from the little love we have for our neighbour, although the love of neighbour is a part of the first and greatest commandment. On this truth I have resolved to speak to you today.

4. The Son of God himself taught us the love of neighbour by practising it throughout the whole course of his life; for the Gospel tells us that wherever he passed he did good to all.[2] But on the eve of his death he charged us more particularly with this virtue; for after the supper he said to his Apostles: "I leave you a new commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you"; adding: "By this it will be known that you are my disciples, if you have charity for one another."[3] So this is not a counsel or a wholesome piece of advice, but a precept and a work of obligation that he laid on us, on which our salvation depends.

5. The apostle St. Paul is also a perfect model of fraternal charity. He himself tells us that he made himself the servant of all in order to win all for God: "I have become weak and sick with the weak and sick to win both; I have become all things to all, to save all."[4] "Remember my labours and imprisonments, the sufferings and hardships I have endured, and how I preached the Gospel of God, working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you."[5] "I will gladly give all I have, and give myself too, for the salvation of your souls."[6] "God is my witness," he says to the Philippians, "of the tenderness with which I love you in the heart of Jesus Christ; and what I ask of him is that your charity may abound more each day and always increase."[7]

6. The apostle and evangelist St. John, who had reclined on the breast of Jesus Christ, always commended the love of neighbour to his disciples. "By the love we have for our brothers," he said, "we know that we have passed from death to life; for he who does not love his brother remains in death; and everyone who hates his brother is a murderer. God gave his life for us; we too must give ours for our brothers. My dear children, let us love one another. If anyone says he loves God, and does not on that account stop hating his brother, he is a liar. We have received this commandment from God himself, and whoever truly loves him must also love his brother."[8] What an admirable example of charity towards his brothers!

7. St. Luke says that the first Christians, though many, had but one heart and one soul, because they were all animated by one same spirit. No one regarded as his own what he possessed, but all things were common among them. They were all so united among themselves, and held all things so much in common, that they sold their lands and their goods, and these were distributed to all according to each one's need.[9]

8. But you must know that to be true, this love must have four qualities or characteristics.

First: its motive and end must be God; that is, your love must be a love of charity and a Christian love, for not all love is charity. The love there is among worldly people is a sensual, human love, full of self-interest, which we almost always refer to ourselves. St. Augustine says: "You love your wife because she is the object of your carnal pleasures; you love your friend because you live together or play together; you love your master because he feeds you well: the unbelievers and pagans do the same."[10] You must, then, love your neighbour with a love of charity, and not for natural motives but on principles of religion; for your neighbour is the image of God, a member of Jesus Christ, and has been redeemed with the blood of the Son of God as you have. You must love your fellow men, not to draw them to yourselves or your interests, but to bring them

to God, that he may grant them his love and his holy fear. You must love them, not to approve their disordered passions or be accomplices in their disorders, but to rebuke and correct them as far as possible. A fine love it would be that you had for your friend if you loved him perhaps only to ruin him with your debauchery, to take him gambling, to dangerous amusements, or perhaps to worse places! To love is to will the good of another; so you do not love your neighbour if, as far as you can, you do not procure for him the true goods, which consist in the love of God and eternal salvation; you do not love him if you do not try to free him from the true evils, which are sins and vicious inclinations. You do not love your son if you do not punish or rebuke him when he offends God in any way at all; and you must do the same with regard to your servants.

9. Second: our love of neighbour must move us to have compassion on his miseries, and to try as far as possible to relieve them graciously; whereas usually just the opposite is done. Your neighbour's affliction sometimes serves you as a reason for raising yourselves up and bringing him down. Remember, if not, the example the Samaritan gave us, as related in the Gospel.[11] The Lord tells you to do the same if you want to obtain eternal life. Be charitable, then; help your neighbour with your means, with your assistance, and if necessary even with your labour: this is not a work of counsel but of precept and obligation.

10. The third characteristic of the love of neighbour is that it must embrace all men without excluding a single one. The love of most Christians is a particular love, a fickle and capricious love. That man will be the best man in the world with strangers, in his neighbours' houses or in company; but at home he is a wild beast: he has no tenderness for his wife, nor for his children, nor for his servants.

It must not be so, my brethren. We must love all our fellow men in general and have compassion on all the wretched; but above all you must obey and fulfil the commandment that the Son of God laid on us, saying: "Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, and do good to those who slander you."[12]

11. Finally, we must love our neighbour at all times. This is the fourth characteristic of the love of neighbour; and the reason for it is that at all times he is the image of God and a child of the Church; and so we must never grow weary of doing good, as the Apostle says.[13] "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted," Jesus Christ tells us in his Gospel.[14] When you love your neighbour only because he is your relative or benefactor, or when you stop loving him because he has not returned your love or stops doing you good, this love is human and natural. But if you go on loving him despite the misfortunes that befall him or the wrongs he may have done you, this is a love of charity, constant and unchanging like God, who is its motive.

12. These are the four properties of true charity, or of the love you must have for your neighbour. Examine yourselves on them, and do not deceive yourselves. If you do not love your neighbour for the love of God, that is, to win him for God, to make him a true Christian, to help him as far as you can; if you do not love him to the end, even when he persecutes you, you do not have charity; and if you do not have it, St. Paul tells you that you are nothing,[15] that is, that your justice, your charity, your temperance and your devotion are nothing. But if you have true charity, if you keep the union you must have with God and with your neighbour, you are on the way of salvation and bear the mark of children of God. Then you will be heirs of that kingdom whose law is charity, whose state is happiness, and whose duration is eternity. Which is what I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

On the love of neighbour.

> *Nonne oportuit et te misereri conservi tui, sicut et ego tui misertus sum? (Matth. 18:33).*
>
> *Should you not have had compassion on your brother, as I had compassion on you?*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel: how we must go to ask God.

3. The cruelty of the wicked servant, and how badly it went for him.

4. Jesus Christ taught us the love of neighbour by deeds and words.

5. St. Paul, a model of this love or charity towards one's neighbour.

6. How St. John teaches this love, and with what words.

7. How did the first Christians love one another?

8. The qualities of true love. 1st: it must have God as its motive and end.

9. 2nd: it must be merciful.

10. 3rd: it must be general, that is, embrace all men, friends and enemies.

11. 4th: it must be at all times.

12. Epilogue.

---

[1] Matt. 6:12.

[2] Acts 10:38.

[3] John 13:34–35.

[4] 1 Cor. 9:19, 22.

[5] 1 Thess. 2:9 (cf. 2 Cor. 11:23–27).

[6] 2 Cor. 12:15.

[7] Phil. 1:8–9.

[8] A combination of 1 John 3:14–16 and 4:20–21.

[9] Acts 4:32–35.

[10] Cf. St. Augustine, *Tractates on the First Letter of John* 8, 5, and *Sermon* 349; not an exact quotation.

[11] Source note: "See the Plática for the Twelfth Sunday, p. 267" (no. 42, in Part 3; Luke 10:30–37).

[12] Matt. 5:44.

[13] 2 Thess. 3:13.

[14] Matt. 15:13.

[15] 1 Cor. 13:2.

52. Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost: On Purgatory

Vol. I, pp. 328–333. Reading for the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Matthew 22:15–21. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 22 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time the Pharisees withdrew to discuss among themselves how they could catch Jesus out in what he said. And for this they sent him their disciples with some Herodians, who said to him: Master, we know that you are truthful, and that you teach the way or law of God according to the pure truth, without regard for anyone, because you do not look at people's rank. This being so, tell us what you think of this: Is it lawful or not for the Jews, the people of God, to pay tribute to Caesar? To which Jesus, knowing their refined malice, answered: Why do you tempt me, hypocrites? Show me the coin with which the tribute is paid; and they showed him a denarius. And Jesus said to them: Whose is this image and this inscription? They answered

him: Caesar's. Then he replied to them: Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.

2. Today the Gospel shows us that the Pharisees, wishing to catch Jesus Christ out, sent him their disciples with some Herodians, who said to him: Master, tell us, is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, or not? Then Jesus answered them: Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.

The Pharisees who wanted to catch Jesus Christ out in his words are a figure of the wicked who join together to make good people fall into their snares. Jesus Christ's prudent answer, by which he avoided making himself hateful to the kings and to the people, teaches us to avoid clashing with worldly people and with those who hold authority in the world. This same answer, that we must give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's, shows us that subjects must render exact obedience to the kings of the earth, and that with much more reason God must be obeyed with the same exactness in what concerns his commandments. Having briefly explained to you the truths contained in today's Gospel, I pass to another instruction on account of the octave of the Dead in which we find ourselves; and since this is the time when the Church exhorts her children to pray for the souls in purgatory, I have resolved to instruct you on this truth of our Religion.

3. The holy Scriptures teach us that there is another fire besides that of hell, which is temporal and is suffered in purgatory, where venial sins, those worthy of pardon, are expiated. Jesus Christ declares in the Gospel that there are certain sins that will not be forgiven either in this world or in the next;[1] from which the holy Fathers have concluded that there are also sins that will be forgiven in the next, and likewise punishments for these same sins that will be remitted through the prayers of the living. In the book of Maccabees it is said that it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins.[2] The apostle St. Paul says that he who on the foundation of faith builds an edifice of gold, silver and precious stones, that is, of solid and perfect virtues, will receive his reward; but he who builds an edifice of wood, straw and stubble, that is, of venial sins, will be saved, but it will be by passing through fire: *Ipse salvus erit, sic tamen quasi per ignem* \[he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire\].[3] Moreover, the custom of praying for the dead is very ancient in the Church. Tertullian, who lived in the first centuries, says that this custom was an apostolic tradition, and that these prayers were meant to obtain some relief for them.[4]

4. But even if Scripture and tradition did not bear witness to this truth, common sense teaches it to a Christian. For suppose a man has committed many mortal sins, and being about to die comes to his senses, and by a favour that God does not grant to all is converted, asks his pardon with perfect contrition, and dies in his grace. Where will his soul go? Not to hell; for God never despises a contrite and humbled heart, and he has promised his mercy to anyone who is converted with a true and sincere penance (note well: with a true and sincere penance). Will it, then, go to heaven like a soul that has served God all its life and lived a holy life? There is no likelihood of that; for where would be the truth of the saying of the Apostle and of the Saviour himself, that God will give each one his reward according to his works?[5] This soul will go, do not doubt it, to purgatory, where it will expiate in suffering what its sins deserve, so as to be purified of them by fire. For do not deceive yourselves: the pains of purgatory are not light, as you might believe; they are more severe than all that men can suffer in this world; they are a very painful fire, in which the soul, by suffering, is purified of these sins. And there is this one difference: the fire of hell is for all eternity, and that of purgatory only for a time; the damned suffer in despair and without remedy, but the souls in purgatory hope to possess God, for whom they sigh. So they do not murmur against him; rather they condemn themselves to the torments, suffer them willingly, consent that the justice of God take its course, and rejoice that the injury done to the divine Majesty is avenged at their own expense, until they have paid in full, either by means of their sufferings or by the satisfactions of others.

5. For you must know, my brethren, that we can relieve these good souls by many means, and we must do so. They are the souls of our brothers; they are in the communion of spiritual goods with us, members of the same mystical body and children of the Church; and therefore our prayers can serve them as consolation and

refreshment. The most fruitful of all our prayers is the sacrifice of the Mass, which we offer to God for this end. St. John Chrysostom says: “Not in vain did the Apostles ordain that in the awesome mysteries,” that is, in the Mass, “mention should be made of the dead; for they knew well that great profit and benefit came to their souls from these sacrifices.”[6]

6. In the Old Testament we see an excellent figure of this. God had instituted a sacrifice in which a bird was killed and its blood poured into a vessel; and another, living bird was taken, dipped in the blood of the slain bird, and then let fly.[7] The soul for whom Mass is said is washed in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, comes out of purgatory, and finds itself set free. It is very good that the priest who says the Mass, and those who hear it for the repose of a soul, should say devoutly in their heart: “My God, have compassion on this soul; deliver it from the pains it suffers; bathe it, if it please you, in this precious blood, so that it may be entirely cleansed of its faults, and nothing may delay its enjoyment of its happiness in heaven.”

7. The other means of relieving these souls is almsgiving; and if you have no means to give alms, at least help them with other works of piety; for all virtuous acts done as suffrages for the dead and offered to God for them are a great relief to them. Do not be insensible, then, to what the souls in purgatory suffer: perhaps many of them are those of your own relatives or friends. Hear the laments of these good souls who implore your suffrages, saying to you the words of Job: “Have pity on me, at least you who are my friends, for the hand of God has struck me”: *Miseremini mei, saltem vos amici mei, quia manus Domini tetigit me*.[8]

8. Each of these words is a spur that should rouse us to procure them some relief. *Miseremini*: have compassion on my misery; and what greater misery than that of a poor soul on which God lays his hand, and which finds itself in such great torments? *Mei*: on me; on a soul redeemed with the blood of Jesus Christ, sealed with his character, and destined to enjoy the goods of glory. *Saltem vos*: at least you who are my friends; you who have been the cause, and perhaps given occasion, for this soul to be suffering, and have made it fall into some sin by your suggestions or your bad example. What has become of the affection you showed that father, that mother, that husband, that wife or that friend? Do you forget them so soon because they are far from you? If your fathers and mothers left you some fortune, will you be so ungrateful as to refuse them a small part of it by giving some alms to the poor? You have what you need, and they are suffering without any relief. You do not grudge the expense of the meals and treats with which you indulge yourselves; but you refuse your father or your mother a happy supper that you could send them by the hand of the poor man you help.

9. Finally, my brethren, if these reflections do not move you enough, remember at least that these good souls are in the grace of God; that on leaving purgatory they must go to heaven; that you must one day go where they are now; and if you deliver them by your prayers, your alms and your good works, they will not be ungrateful, and will pray for you in heaven. Whenever you give an alms for a soul in purgatory, you do two works of mercy: a corporal one to the poor man who needs it, and a spiritual one to the soul that is suffering. And when you leave this world they will remember you and receive you into the eternal tabernacles of God.[9] Which is what I wish you, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost

On purgatory.

Reddite ergo quae sunt Caesaris Caesari, et quae sunt Dei Deo (Matth. 22:21).

Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. Proves the existence of purgatory from what the Scriptures say.

4. From common sense. The severity of its pains.

5. We must help the dead: why? With what works?

6. A figure taken from the Old Testament.

7. Do works of piety for them. Have compassion on the dead…

8. *Miseremini mei* explained.

9. As you do, so shall you find \[*tal harás, tal hallarás*\]. The reward you will have.

---

[1] Matt. 12:32.

[2] 2 Macc. 12:46.

[3] 1 Cor. 3:12–15.

[4] Tertullian, *De corona* 3; *De monogamia* 10.

[5] Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6.

[6] St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Philippians* 3, 4.

[7] Lev. 14:4–7.

[8] Job 19:21.

[9] Cf. Luke 16:9.

53. Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost: On the Happy Death of the Just

Vol. I, pp. 334–340. Reading for the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Matthew 9:18–26. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 9 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time, while Jesus was speaking to the crowd that followed him, a leading man, or ruler of the synagogue, came up, and worshipping him said to him: Lord, a daughter of mine has just died; but come, lay your hand on her and she will live. Jesus rose and followed him with his disciples; when behold, a woman who for twelve years had suffered from a flow of blood came up behind and touched the hem of his garment. For she said to herself: If I can only touch his garment, I shall be healed. But Jesus, turning round and looking at her, said: Daughter, take heart: your faith has healed you. And indeed from that moment the woman was healed. When Jesus came to the house of that leading man, and saw the flute players, or funeral music, and the uproar of the people, he said: Go away, for the girl is not dead but asleep. And they laughed at him. But when the people had been put out, he went in, took her by the hand, and the girl rose. And the news of it spread through all that country.

2. Today St. Matthew tells us that while Jesus was speaking to the crowds, a magnate came up to him, saying: Lord, my daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her and she will live. Jesus rose and followed him. At this time a woman who for twelve years had suffered from a flow of blood came up behind and touched the edge of his garment. Jesus, turning and seeing her, said to her: Take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well; and from that moment she was healed. And when Jesus came to the magnate’s house and saw the musicians and the crowd of people in an uproar, he said: Go away, for the girl is not dead but asleep. And they laughed at him. And having put the crowd out of there, he went in and took her by the hand; and the girl rose; and the fame of this spread through all that land.

The faith and humility of the woman mentioned in this Gospel, who did not judge herself worthy to speak to Jesus Christ but only wished to touch the hem of his garment, is a good lesson for sinners who want to be converted. It teaches them that, after offending God so gravely by so many mortal sins, they must judge

themselves unworthy to approach Jesus Christ by partaking of his sacred body, and must have the same dispositions as the prodigal son, who was content to dwell in his father's house and be treated there as a day labourer or hired servant. Jesus Christ also had the crowd of people who were making a great noise withdraw before entering the room of the girl who was dead. By this he warns us that if we want our soul to be raised to life, we must cast out our disordered passions that disturb our heart, and withdraw from the bustle of the world and from worldly gatherings; for God is not found amid confusion and tumult. Jesus Christ said that the girl was not dead but asleep: no doubt to show that it was as easy for him to raise her as to wake her. By this he also gives us a beautiful lesson, namely, that the death of the just is a beginning of the blessed life, or like a sleep for the body, which rests awaiting its resurrection. Let us draw from this truth the subject of this discourse.

3. In another instruction I spoke to you of the unhappy death of sinners,[1] and today I have resolved to set before you the happiness of the death of the just. I am going to show you, then, how death is a happy passage for the just; for when they are about to die, neither the past, nor the present, nor the future gives them any cause for pain or torment.

4. Not the past. The Holy Spirit tells us that from then on they will rest and be free from labours, sorrows and dangers.[2] The Christian soul rejoices in a holy way when it dies, because it sees the end of its labours. A farmer is glad when the sun sets and night draws on, because he knows that his work is about to stop for that day and that soon he will go to rest. The Christian soul cannot fail to be content on seeing itself at the end of the miseries of this life: it knows that it is going to receive the reward of its good works and the prize of its penance. A sailor who has been a long time at sea at the mercy of storms, winds and waves, and deprived of the company of his family, is glad when he sees the port where he is to put in. This life is a voyage: the soul is in this world like a ship at sea; it is the plaything of waves and storms, always tossed by temptations, and deprived of the possession of God and the company of his Saints. Death is for it a harbour of salvation: when it sees it from afar it greets it, and rejoices to see that it is about to be free from all sorrow. "God will wipe away the tears of his Saints," says the Prophet.[3] Poverty, lawsuits, taxes, wars, hunger, thirst, sadness, weariness and illnesses will be entirely banished from the region it is about to enter. What consoles it most is that very soon it will be out of all danger of sinning; there will be nothing to distract it from thinking of God or to separate it from the love of its Lord. So much for the past.

5. The present does not afflict it either. Two things usually distress us at death: the pains of illness and the long, heavy nights; but the Christian soul finds great relief on both these points. God then pours into its heart consolations that calm the heat of the fever and blunt the stabs of its pains, softening the harshness of the illness the soul suffers in its body. The royal Prophet tells us so in these words: "The Lord will come to help him when he is on the bed of his sorrow": *Dominus opem ferat illi super lectum doloris ejus*.[4] Here, according to the interpreters, David means that God goes round and round his bed like a charitable mother tending a sick child and watching over him unceasingly. Whichever way the Christian soul turns, it always has Jesus its God before its eyes. The heaviness of the long nights does not torment it, for it has things to occupy it, having laid in a store of good thoughts, holy prayers, acts of adoration, of love of God, of contrition and of resignation to his will; and much more if it is occupied in thinking of the mysteries of the life and passion of its Saviour.

6. The future does not trouble it, and it is calmed by these words of the apostle St. Paul: "We await our Saviour Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body and make it like his glorious body."[5] What disquiets the reprobate is the fear of what will happen to his soul and his body: his soul will be presented at the tribunal of the sovereign Judge, and his body will be the prey of worms. The just man is free from both these pains: for he trusts that he will be presented to a saviour and not to a judge, or at least he is animated by the holy confidence that when God calls him to judgement he hopes to see himself crowned with glory in the presence of the Angels.

7. As for his body, the just man is in no fear or alarm. It is true that he feels it failing and that it will be reduced to dust; but he is also certain that it will not be so for ever, that Jesus Christ will refashion it and make it like his own. The Son of God wills to refashion our mortal and passible body to make it immortal and impassible, St. Paul tells us.[6] The chosen soul is content when it strips off the garment of its body, knowing that it will put it on again entirely new and adorned with the diadems of glory. So the passing of the just man is properly not a death but a short separation of the soul. If a man of rank left his wife for some years and went to court to obtain some office from the king, or to exercise it, intending to come back for her afterwards and take her to court, it would not rightly be said that he had divorced her. The soul of man is separated for a little time from the body: that dear half goes to the court of heaven to receive from God the rewards it has merited by its services, and must one day return to be reunited with its body and make it a sharer in its glory, for its absence is of short duration.

8. In this separation one can imagine a sweet and peaceful farewell between the spirit and the flesh. Imagine, then, for a moment that the body could speak. No doubt it would say to the soul: "Why are you leaving me? Who has forced you to separate from me? Have I disobeyed you in anything? Was it not God who united us? Did he not form me to serve you as a lodging? And where are you going, leaving here? What will become of me after you are gone? I will be disfigured, I will give off a foul smell, I will be the prey of worms, and I will turn to dust and ashes." "Ah!" the soul would answer, "if I leave you, it is not because I am discontented: I am going to take possession of the dwelling of the Angels, which we have both merited with the grace of Jesus Christ. You ought to come with me, for God's first intention was to unite us inseparably; but the sin of our first father Adam frustrated this intention and obliged you to pay this tribute to corruption. But after being reduced to dust you will be as it were recast anew; you will be refashioned, made young again, and you will rise from the earth immortal, resplendent and glorious; and then we will be united again for all eternity. Farewell, my faithful companion, my charitable patron \[*patrón*: probably "host" or "landlord", since the body is the soul's lodging\]: you have served me faithfully, obeyed me so patiently and carried your cross so constantly that you have helped me to merit the crown of glory. Forgive me if I have treated you harshly with the austerities of penance and deprived you of many pleasures: I did it so as not to be damned, and out of the love I had for you. God will reward you. Do not be sad if I go first: a day will come when I shall be reunited with you. Meanwhile I pray the earth to guard faithfully this sacred pledge that I give it in deposit, and to give you back to your spouse on the day of the resurrection."

9. Take comfort, then, all you who serve God well and live holy lives; take comfort and rejoice in thinking of death. When that hour comes, fatal for sinners and most happy for you, wherever you turn your eyes you will see objects of joy and gladness. If you look upwards, you will contemplate heaven, which is a region of delights, a paradise in which you are to be placed for ever, and you will say with the royal Prophet: *Laetatus sum in his quae dicta sunt mihi: in domum Domini ibimus*: "I rejoiced because they said to me: we will go to the house of the Lord."[7] If downwards, you will see the hell you have escaped through the mercy of God, the dangers in which you have found yourselves, the occasions you have been in, and the sins God has forgiven you. What thanks, what praises, what blessings will you not give to God, who has helped you with his grace! If you look to the right, you will see the most holy Virgin, whom you have honoured; to the left, the souls in purgatory whom you have delivered by your prayers, and the Saints whom you have invoked, who will rejoice to receive you into their company. If in front, you will see the Angels coming before you, joyfully awaiting the hour of your death to carry your soul to heaven, and keeping guard round your bed to prevent the evil spirits from approaching. At your side you will have your parish priest, who, saying the commendation of the soul, will say: "Lord, deliver the soul of your servant from the dangers of damnation, as you delivered David from the hand of Goliath, as you delivered Susanna from the false accusations, and as you delivered Daniel from the lions' den." All these prayers will be heard in your favour. And as, when David had defeated Goliath and carried the giant's head, the women of Israel came out to meet him singing a song of triumph for his victory,[8] so too the sinners you have converted and the poor girls you have rescued

from the danger of being lost will come to meet you, making a concert of praises for the victories you have won for them over the world, the devil and the flesh. After your death your relatives, your friends and your neighbours will sing your praises and make known your piety. And as when the prophet Daniel came out of the lions' den the king presented himself before him, congratulated him on his good fortune and praised him for his fidelity to God,[9] so when you leave this world the Son of God will present himself to you, saying to your soul: "Come, my beloved, come out of that perverse and corrupt world in which you were among the vicious and wicked; come and receive the crown I have prepared for you": *Veni, sponsa mea, veni, coronaberis* \[come, my spouse, come, you shall be crowned\].[10] This is the happiness I wish you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

On the happy death of the just.

> *Non est mortua puella, sed dormit (Matth. 9:24).*
>
> *The girl is not dead, but sleeps.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel.

3. The happy death of the just man. Neither the past, nor the present, nor the future gives him pain.

4. Not the past. He rejoices because his torments are ended: e.g. a farmer, a sailor. He leaves behind the dangers of sinning. He will always think of God and love God continually.

5. Not the present. God consoles him. He thinks of God and loves him.

6. Not the future. He trusts and hopes in his Saviour.

7. The separation of the soul. The comparison of the married man who goes to court.

8. The dialogue as the soul takes leave of the body.

9. Rejoice and take comfort, you just. Look up… down: what do you see?… To the right, to the left, in front… at your side the parish priest who… After death, what they will say of you. The comparison of Daniel.

---

[1] Source note: "See the Plática for the Sixteenth Sunday, p. 291" (no. 46, in Part 3).

[2] Rev. 14:13.

[3] Rev. 21:4.

[4] Ps. 40 (41):4.

[5] Phil. 3:20–21.

[6] 1 Cor. 15:53 (the source gives 15:33).

[7] Ps. 121 (122):1.

[8] 1 Sam. 18:6–7.

[9] Dan. 6:19–22 (Vulg. 6:19–23).

[10] Song 4:8 (Vulg.), used in the liturgy of virgins.

54. Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost: The Severity of God's Justice

Vol. I, pp. 341–346. Reading for the Twenty-fourth and last Sunday after Pentecost. Gospel: Matthew 24:15–35. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

The Gospel of this Sunday is taken from chapter 24 of St. Matthew, which reads as follows:

1. At that time Jesus said to his disciples: When you see the desolating abomination foretold by the prophet Daniel set up in the holy place[1] (let him who reads this note it well), then let those who live in Judea flee to the mountains; and let him who is on the housetop not come down or go in to take anything out of his house; and let him who is in the field not go back to fetch his tunic or clothes. But woe to those who are with child or nursing, and cannot flee quickly in those days! Pray, then, to God that your flight may not be in winter or on the sabbath, when one can travel only a little. For the tribulation then will be so terrible that there has been none like it from the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will be. And if those days were not shortened, no one would be saved; but they will be shortened for the sake of the elect. At that time, if anyone says to you: The Christ or Messiah is here, or there, do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will appear, and will make a show of great wonders and prodigies, so that even the elect, if it were possible, would fall into error. See, I have foretold it to you. So even if they say to you: Behold, the Messiah is in the desert, do not go there; or: Look, he is in the innermost part of the house, do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the East and is seen in an instant as far as the West, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. And wherever the body is, there the eagles will gather. But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers or angels of the heavens will tremble. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, at the sight of which all the peoples of the earth will break out in weeping; and they will see the Son of Man coming on the shining clouds of heaven with great power and majesty. And he will send his angels, who with the sound of a loud trumpet will gather his elect from the four quarters of the world, from one horizon of heaven to the other. Take this comparison from the fig tree: when its branches are already tender and the leaves sprout, you know that summer is near. So too, when you see all these things, know for certain that the Son of Man is about to arrive, that he is already at the door. What I assure you is that this generation will not end until all this is fulfilled. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not fail.

2. The Gospel of this last Sunday after Pentecost announces the total ruin of Jerusalem and the end of the world, which is as it were the prelude to the universal judgement. It contains, my brethren, so great a number of truths, and all so terrible, that I cannot possibly explain them one by one; and so I will speak to you only of some.

The abomination of desolation of which Jesus Christ speaks points to the ruin of Jerusalem by the Romans. The words that it will be necessary to flee to the mountains signify, in their moral sense, that we must do ourselves violence to rise above the corruption of the age. He also says that he who is safe on his roof should not come down to take anything of what is in his house, signifying to us that consideration of temporal interests must not hinder us from doing what is necessary for our salvation. Most men would like very much to be saved, but they want it to cost them nothing. He adds also that the women who are pregnant or nursing at that time will not be able to flee, showing us by this that to those who are possessed by love of earthly things these seem necessary, and yet they are obstacles to their salvation; for human interests and the passions hold us back in the world and fill us with horror of a serious, laborious and Christian life.

3. Know too that after Jesus Christ has foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, he passes suddenly to prophesying the last persecution of the Antichrist, to showing the signs that will announce the end of the world and the terrible plagues that God will send upon men, and finally the coming of the Son of God on the day of judgement. So the fulfilment of the first event is a sure proof that the second will be fulfilled. From this we must conclude that, just as in the destruction of Jerusalem a man had to risk something to save himself, and he who could not flee was to be pitied, so the same must be said of the destruction of the world, and also of our death; for each of us must regard the last day of his life as the destruction of the world for him, and he can have nothing that he must not be ready to leave in order to be saved.

4. But note, my faithful people, that the Church, both at the beginning of her ecclesiastical year, which is the First Sunday of Advent, and at its end, which is today's Sunday, sets before her children in the Gospel of these Sundays objects of fright and terror. No doubt the warnings she gives us are meant to make us guard ourselves, by a wholly holy life, against the evils in which sinners will be engulfed, and to make us conceive a wholesome fear of the severity of God's justice. On this severity I am to speak to you today.

5. For the good of your souls, my brethren, I must make you see the severity of God's justice by examples and experience. Unless we are utterly dull, let us only open our eyes, and we shall see from this world the rigorous effects of this justice. Call to mind all the centuries that have passed since the creation of the world, and especially all the time that preceded the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The peoples of every country except Palestine were given over to idolatry and abandoned to the most infamous sins, and consequently on the road to damnation: for it is an article of faith, taught by the apostle St. Paul, that neither idolaters nor the impure will ever possess the kingdom of God.[2] And now, after the Incarnation, what is the world? Go, I will not say to Turkey or Barbary, where Jesus Christ is not adored, but without leaving the Catholic Church; go, not to the gatherings for gaming and spectacles, for those places are all within the devil's domain, but to the streets, the squares and the houses of Catholic cities. Consider what is done in them, listen to what is said, and you will see that people speak of everything and think of everything except the service of God. You will see nothing but oaths, frauds, adulteries and thefts; so that in most houses you will scarcely be able to find one person who loves God; and if there were no crosses on the bell towers of the cities, a stranger arriving in them would be hard put to know whether the country was Catholic or pagan. So what the prophet Jeremiah once said can be applied to our age: "Go through all the streets of Jerusalem," he cried, "see and search in all the squares whether you can find a single man who acts justly and seeks the truth."[3] And after this, do you not understand that God must be extremely angered against us, and that the indignation with which he looks on us is an effect of his upright justice?

6. But since sinners have a wholly carnal soul, and for this reason perhaps do not understand these truths, we will exhort them to go down in spirit to hell, which is the dwelling of God's greatest justice. Imagine a soul, for example that of your neighbour or your companion, who has left this world in mortal sin and has unhappily died without confession or contrition: it is a very certain thing that it is damned. And do you know what "it is damned" means? It means, not for a hundred years from now, nor a thousand, but that for all eternity God will see it in torments without ever having pity on it. The Apostle tells us so very clearly: "They will suffer eternal damnation, confounded by the face of the Lord."[4]

7. Afterwards it will be quite usual during this time to have the anniversary of his death kept, since no one knows in what state he left this world; but then God will not heed the prayers of the Church, nor the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ offered on the altar, nor the groans and tears of this unhappy soul. For God judges without respect of persons, without passion, and always according to the truth of things; and since mortal sin deserves eternal death, he judges worthy of eternal death all who die in mortal sin.

8. On what, then, can you rely, you rash ones? What ground do you have for that great security and that insensibility in which you live? You hope, you say, in the mercy of God. Then you are mistaken, and your self-love deceives you. That disposition in which you find yourselves is a vain opinion, a presumption, and not a Christian hope nor a well-founded confidence. To hope in God is to withdraw from sin, practise good works, live devoutly, and believe that God will forgive you; but to want to persevere in your bad life and at the same time believe that you are safe as regards your salvation is not hope: it is rashness, and it makes God a liar, who has said that he will give to each according to his works.[5]

9. You say that you hope in the mercy of God, which is great. Yes, certainly it is very great, and even greater than you say; but it is not for you, nor for those who like you persevere in their sins. God has an infinite mercy, it is true; but it is also true that he has an infinite justice. His mercy is for penitent sinners, but his justice is for obstinate sinners; his favours are for the just, as his rigour and severity are for the vicious.

10. In spite of this mercy, those who are damned are still more than those who are saved; for the Son of God assures us of it, telling us that the road to perdition is wide, and that many enter it and follow it.[6] If, then, this mercy of God allows so many people who live as you do to be damned, why should it not allow you to be damned as well, since you live as they do? Or do you perhaps think that God will make new laws for you? "Do you think, O man," says the Apostle, "that you can escape God's condemning you?"[7] You flatter yourself with the thought that God is merciful, and do not see that you are already in the hands of the severity of his justice. And indeed, is it not an evident sign of his vengeance on you that he allows you to fall into sins so great and so many as those you fall into? Certainly his mercy does not prevent him from exercising his rigour by letting you add sin upon sin. In a word, my brethren, we must firmly believe what the Creed of St. Athanasius, which is sung in the Church, says: "Those who have done good will go into eternal life; but those who have not kept his holy and divine precepts, into eternal fire."[8] May God give us his grace to believe it, to fear it, and to profit by all these truths. I wish it to you, etc.

Act of contrition: My Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Outline of the Plática for the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

The severity of God's justice on earth and in hell.

> *Videbunt Filium hominis venientem in nubibus caeli cum virtute magna et majestate (Matth. 24:30).*
>
> *They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty.*

1. Narration of the Gospel.

2. Explanation of the Gospel: the destruction of the city of Jerusalem.

3. The Antichrist. Plagues… The coming of Jesus Christ.

4. The Church's purpose in beginning and ending the Sundays in this way.

5. How have people lived? How do they live?

6. Go down to hell in thought. What do you see?

7. Suffrages are of no use to one who is in hell.

8. You say that you hope in God… a vain hope for…

9. It is not for you.

10. Whoever has done good will go to eternal life, and whoever has done evil to eternal death.

---

[1] Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11.

[2] 1 Cor. 6:9–10.

[3] Jer. 5:1.

[4] 2 Thess. 1:9.

[5] Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6.

[6] Matt. 7:13.

[7] Rom. 2:3.

[8] The *Quicumque* (Athanasian Creed), closing verses.

55. Readings for the Feasts of the Mysteries of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Most Holy Virgin Mary: The Sunday before the Ember Days

Vol. I, pp. 347–348. Reading for the Sunday before each of the four Ember Days of the year. Original preacher not named.

The section of the volume that follows contains Readings for the feasts of the mysteries of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Most Holy Virgin Mary. It opens with this short Reading for the Sunday before the Ember Days.

Reading for the Sunday before Each of the Four Ember Days of the Year

On Monday, Wednesday and Friday of this week are the Ember Days, on which all of you who are twenty-one years old and have not reached sixty are obliged to fast, unless you have some legitimate impediment. There are four Ember seasons, just as there are four seasons of the year: spring, summer, autumn and winter. There are Ember Days at the beginning of spring, and of each of the seasons.

The Ember Days have two principal purposes. The first is to give thanks to God for the benefits he has granted us in the past season and to ask his blessings on the season we are about to begin. For this we make use of prayer and fasting. It is a very good thing and pleasing in God's eyes to join fasting to prayer, as the archangel St. Raphael told Tobias;[1] and its esteem and value rise still higher if what we save by fasting we give in alms to the poor.

The other purpose of the Ember Days is to ask God our Lord to send labourers into his Church, as Jesus Christ charged us to ask the heavenly Father.[2] This is the greatest grace God grants to peoples: to send good labourers, or good priests. When God wishes to favour a town or do it good in a particular way, he sends it good priests; and when he wishes to punish it in an extraordinary way, he allows priests to enter it who are not called by God as Aaron was,[3] nor are according to God's heart,[4] nor of that race of men by whom Israel is to be saved.[5] Therefore on the four Ember seasons, when the Bishops confer holy orders on clerics, we must ask God, by prayer, fasting and almsgiving, to enlighten the Prelates to distinguish the worthy from the unworthy; to give them all the firmness of character they need to open the door to the good and lay their hands on them alone; and to close it to the bad, so that they do not allow them to enter or to climb into the sheepfold.[6]

---

[1] Tob. 12:8.

[2] Matt. 9:38; Luke 10:2.

[3] Heb. 5:4.

[4] Cf. Jer. 3:15; 1 Sam. 13:14.

[5] 1 Macc. 5:62.

[6] John 10:1.

56. The Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy (8 December)

Vol. I, pp. 349–355. Exhortation for the Sunday before the feast; Reading for the feast; Outline. Original preacher not named.

Reading: Exhortation to Be Given on the Sunday before the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy

On the 8th… (Tuesday or Wednesday, etc., of this week) the Church celebrates the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy. It is a holy day of obligation, on which no work may be done. If you wish, as you should, to celebrate this feast well, keep yourselves from all sin, and purify yourselves of those you have committed up to now, which you will achieve by means of a good confession. It is to be hoped, then, that in honour of the Immaculate Conception of Mary you will prepare yourselves and receive on that day the holy sacraments of Penance and Communion. In this way you will accompany and please Mary Most Holy on so great a feast. If you were invited to a great wedding or solemn celebration, you would surely wash,

shave and comb your hair, put on your best clothes, and if you could even have a new suit made. You must do the same, then, in your soul, to attend and celebrate the feast to which the most holy Virgin invites you as her devotees. And I hope you will not fail her invitation, but will present yourselves clean through the sacrament of Confession and adorned with faith, hope, charity and devotion. Remember that if a man who came to a wedding or feast with a dirty face and stained, shabby clothes would deserve reproach, no less would a Christian who did not try to cleanse his soul and adorn it with the virtues to celebrate the feast of Mary.

Reading for the 8th of December, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy

1. The feast of the Most Pure Conception of Mary Most Holy, which our mother the Church celebrates today, should rouse in us the greatest veneration and devotion, both because it is one of the principal feasts of the Mother of God and because she is the patroness of Spain and all its dominions under this title. I am going to show you, therefore, that the Immaculate Conception is the most honourable and glorious privilege of Mary Most Holy. Listen to me for a moment.

2. To have been conceived without stain of original sin is that signal and particular privilege which the Most High granted to her alone, and which has not been granted to any other mere creature descended from Adam. We are all born infected with original sin, which is that first sin committed by our first parents Adam and Eve; for just as children born of disgraced parents share their disgrace, so we who are born of sinful parents are sinners too. But Mary Most Holy was exempted from this law by a special privilege granted her by the Creator. We are all born slaves of the devil and objects of God's wrath through the sin of our first parents; but Mary Most Holy was preserved from that sin by a particular grace, and so from her most pure Conception she was the object of God's love and filled with all the blessings God can pour out on a creature. We are born heirs of hell and victims of divine justice, and Mary Most Holy was born heir of heaven and spouse of the Holy Spirit. We are conceived in sin, and Mary Most Holy was conceived in grace, and in her whole life there was never in her any trace of sin, mortal, venial or original.

3. In her Conception Mary was exempted from that general law which included all the children of Adam; and this is what is meant by the Immaculate Conception of the most holy Virgin: that Mary had no part in the sin of the first man, and consequently never contracted the stain of original sin that infected all the other descendants of Adam. God, by a most special grace, made an exception to the rule in Mary's favour: *Non pro te, sed pro omnibus haec lex constituta est* \[this law was made not for you but for all\].[1] This was a particular privilege of Mary Most Holy, because she was destined to be Mother of the Author of purity and holiness; and it was not fitting that the Author of purity should become incarnate in a body stained with the slightest sin. That is why, when the Angel announced to her the mystery of the Incarnation, he greeted her by saying that she was full of grace; and in truth she would not have been full of grace if for a single instant she had been deprived of it. "It was most fitting," says St. Anselm (*De conceptu virginali*), "that the Virgin whom God had chosen for his Mother should be of such purity that no greater could be imagined in any creature." Since the Angels were created in the state of innocence, was the Queen of the Angels to be less? Certainly not, my brethren; not all the Angels together can equal the sovereign Queen in innocence, purity and holiness.

4. The flesh of Jesus Christ was to be a portion of the flesh of Mary Most Holy, as St. Augustine says (*Sermon on the Assumption*).[2] And could one imagine that God would form his body from stained flesh? Since he is a God of infinite purity and holiness, who has an infinite horror of the stain sin leaves, could anyone believe that he would take his flesh from a body infected with the slightest sin? "God forbid," exclaims St. Bernard (*Sermon 2*), "God forbid that such a thought should enter our minds."[3] In the Conception of Mary Most Holy, says St. Vincent Ferrer (*Sermon on the Nativity*), the forming of her body

and the creating of her soul were one, and in that same instant she was sanctified; and in that same instant, because she was found wholly pure, wholly holy and wholly beautiful in God's eyes, the Angels in heaven celebrated the feast of her Conception.[4] From this you can form some idea of how beautiful and precious grace is. When God wished to choose a Mother worthy of his divinity and greatness, he did not wish to distinguish her with the advantages of birth, nor with the splendour of worldly power, nor with an abundance of goods and riches; none of that, but with the sanctifying grace he poured into her from the moment of her Conception. He did not fill her with gold or silver, but with virtues. It was in the Lord's hands to choose for his Mother one of the greatest queens in the world, or to make her sovereign of all the kingdoms of the earth; but the Lord gives no thought to any of those advantages that are so prized in the world.

5. Those advantages and those natural goods would not have distinguished Mary from the other people of the world; and the Mother of God deserves a distinction and privilege that makes her superior to all and is granted to no other person but her alone. And what do you think this advantage, this distinction and this privilege is, which made her worthy to be Mother of God? The fullness of grace from the first instant of her Conception. Yes, my brethren: grace, purity and holiness superior to all the Angels and Saints is what distinguished Mary Most Holy from all other creatures. This gift of grace is so great and so precious that, if Mary Most Holy had been given the choice either of being Mother of God or of being conceived in sin, she would have chosen to be conceived without stain of sin rather than be Mother of God. From this you can know how ugly and horrible sin must be. Outwardly Mary Most Holy seems a woman like others, but inwardly she is far superior to all women, and therefore we say to her in the Hail Mary, "Blessed art thou among women." She was sanctified at the very moment of being conceived in her mother's womb; her birth was all holy, and in the whole course of her life she had not the slightest fault. "Other men and women," says St. Bonaventure (*On the Sentences*, III), "have been raised from their fall by the grace of the Redeemer; but Mary was held up so that she should not fall; and to prevent a fall is a far greater benefit than to raise one who has fallen."

6. Mary Most Holy was a temple prepared by the Holy Spirit as a dwelling for the incarnate Word, and consequently adorned with all graces and virtues and beautified with all the treasures and perfections that can be imagined. "As all rivers run into the sea," says St. Bonaventure, "so in the first moment of her life all the torrents of grace and blessing that flow from the bosom of God entered the heart of Mary Most Holy."[5] That is why our mother the Church, governed by the Spirit of God, instituted this particular feast under the title of the Conception of Mary Most Holy, and wishes all the faithful to join their praises on this feast to celebrate this signal favour and so glorious a privilege. If we honour and venerate the other Saints for their particular merits and virtues, with far more reason must we venerate Mary Most Holy; for St. Bernard says that she alone has all the merits and virtues of all the Saints together.

7. And what lesson must we draw for our own profit from this privilege of Mary Most Holy? Can we perhaps avoid the misfortune of having been conceived in sin? No, my brethren: we cannot prevent our being conceived in sin, but we can and must live without sinning. What we must learn from the privilege God granted the most pure Virgin is the great esteem we must have for grace, the horror God has of sin, and the horror we must equally have of it. We must learn that grace is worth more than all the riches of the world, and that is why the Lord did not fill his Mother with riches but with grace; and that to lose this grace by sin is a supreme misfortune. But the greatest of all misfortunes, and one without consolation, is to die without grace, that is, to die in mortal sin. Although to be born in sin is a misfortune, this misfortune is entirely remedied by Baptism; but to die in sin is the height of all misfortunes, because it has no remedy for all eternity.

8. But what is most admirable and most instructive for us is that, although Mary Most Holy was full of grace, she nevertheless always loved retirement, always kept away from occasions, always lived in the rigours of penance, and all her life went on growing in virtues and merits. How much more, then, must we miserable

sinners withdraw and keep away from occasions! Let us recognize our misery, then, and have recourse to the patronage of Mary Most Holy. Let us revere unceasingly the excellence and merit of this exalted Lady; let us give her a thousand congratulations for having been conceived without stain of original sin and for having been chosen as Mother of God. But let us remember that the only way to honour and please her is to imitate her virtues, and above all the purity and humility that the sovereign Queen so loved and prized. We shall obtain these graces by having a true devotion to her most pure Conception. But do you know what true devotion to it is? Do you know what it consists in? I will tell you. It consists in abstaining from all sin; in imitating her virtues; in offering her some acts of homage; in frequenting the holy Sacraments; and in performing well, gladly and perseveringly, the devotions and other things of her service. The first condition is to abstain from all sin, both because of the great horror the Virgin has of that monster, and also because by sin the Son of God is offended; and it is impossible for one who is the enemy of the Son to please the Mother. Flee, then, from all sin as from the sight of a serpent; love and practise the virtues Mary Most Holy practised; seek grace through the Sacraments; and so you will attain the glory I wish you all. Amen.

Outline of the Plática for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy

Non pro te, sed pro omnibus haec lex constituta est (Esther 15:13).

Not for you, but for all others, has this law been made.

1. It is one of the principal feasts.

2. What this privilege is. We are all born in sin…

3. Mary is the only one exempted from this universal law; and why?

4. She was to be Mother of God. The value of grace: more than…

5. Grace, purity and holiness are what distinguish Mary.

6. She is a living temple, she is a sea. Let us praise God and Mary.

7. What lesson we must draw… horror of sin, love of grace…

8. We must keep away from dangers. We must congratulate Mary and be her true devotees.

---

[1] Esther 15:13 (Vulg.; Greek Esther D:13), Ahasuerus to Esther, long applied to Mary in the liturgy and in preaching.

[2] Pseudo-Augustine, *De assumptione Beatae Mariae Virginis* 5 (“caro Christi, caro est Mariae”), a medieval work.

[3] St. Bernard in fact opposed the feast of the Conception (*Letter* 174).

[4] St. Vincent Ferrer, sermon on the Nativity of Mary.

[5] Attributed to St. Bonaventure (cf. pseudo-Bonaventure, *Speculum B.V.M.*). The image is from Eccles. 1:7.

57. The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ (25 December)

Vol. I, pp. 356–361. Reading for the Sunday before Christmas; Reading for the feast; Outline. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday before Christmas

On the 25th (Monday or Thursday, etc., of this week) the Church celebrates the feast of the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a holy day of obligation. On this day every priest celebrates three Masses, and they signify the three births of Jesus Christ: his birth as God and Son of the eternal Father; his birth as man, Son of the Virgin Mary, which took place in Bethlehem; and the birth by grace that he brings about in each of us when we receive the holy Sacraments well.[1] By God’s disposition, as the Prophets had said, Jesus was to be born in

Bethlehem;[2] and so the most holy Virgin, accompanied by St. Joseph, went from Nazareth to Bethlehem. In that town no one would take her in (what wickedness!). She had to go out of the town; there, near the gate, was a cave or stable for animals, and in it the most holy Virgin and St. Joseph took shelter. At midnight Jesus was born, and the Virgin his Mother laid him in a manger, where he was adored by the Angels, the shepherds and the kings.

Just as Jesus was born in Bethlehem as man, so now too he wishes to be born in us through Communion, in which is the same Jesus who was born in Bethlehem. There he hid only his divinity; here he hides both his divinity and his humanity. Nevertheless it is the same Jesus, Son of the eternal Father as God, and Son of the Virgin Mary as man. What shall we do, dearly beloved brethren? Shall we let him enter and be born in the house of our soul? Or, on the contrary, shall we do as the people of Bethlehem did? Shall we shut the door of our heart in his face \[*le daremos con la puerta… á los ojos*\]? Ah no, dearly beloved brethren, far from us be such great wickedness! God keep us from losing so great a good! Let us prepare ourselves, then, and try to receive in these days the holy sacraments of Penance and Communion. This is the way to give Jesus shelter. So we shall adore him like the shepherds, and like them we shall obtain the mercies of Jesus and Mary.

Reading for the 25th of December, the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

1. The feast of the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest feast there can be in heaven and on earth, and the greatest miracle that the omnipotence and wisdom of God himself could work. The Creator has become a creature; the impassible has subjected himself to suffer all the pains and punishments that all men deserve for their sins; and the Lord of all has subjected himself to the most extreme poverty. In a word, the Son of God has become man and has been born of a Virgin. It is very right, then, that I should explain to you the circumstances of this wonderful birth; but I will do it very briefly so that you may listen to me with more attention.

2. Never had the world been so much at peace as in the times when Jesus Christ was born; and the emperor Augustus, taking advantage of that general calm, wished to know the number of souls he had in his realm, and for this purpose ordered that everyone should go to be registered in the cities from which they took their origin.[1] In compliance with this order St. Joseph went up from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be enrolled with his wife Mary, who was already near her time. They reached Bethlehem after four days' journey; and as nothing but poverty showed in all their baggage, no one paid any attention to them, and they could not find even a wretched inn in the whole city. Seeing that night was already coming on, they were obliged to withdraw to a cave or stable outside the city gate, where at that time there were an ox and an ass.[2] This event did not fail to sadden Mary Most Holy and St. Joseph; but so had he arranged it who was coming to teach humility and to confound the greatness and pride of the world. Mary Most Holy knew very well that the Saviour was to be born at midnight, and until that hour came she remained with St. Joseph in sweet and loving contemplation of the mystery that was about to be fulfilled.

3. At last midnight came, and she gave birth, without pain and without injury to her virginity, to her only-begotten Son, whom she adored prostrate on the ground with the love and reverence proper to her most pure and most fervent heart. Then she took him in her hands, and wrapping him in the swaddling clothes she had brought ready, she laid him in the manger where the beasts were fed. This was the cradle Jesus Christ chose to begin to confound our pride and to teach us to despise the comforts of the earth. At once the Angels came down to adore him in the stable, and there was not one who did not hasten to go and pay him homage. Although the Son of God willed to be born in the obscurity of a stable, he did not fail to make his birth known to Jews and Gentiles. The Angels announced it to the shepherds, and a miraculous star announced it to the Magi kings. There were in that neighbourhood some shepherds who were keeping watch and guarding their flocks, and suddenly an Angel brighter than the sun appeared to them. At first they were dazzled and

filled with fear; but the Angel himself comforted them and said to them: “Do not be afraid, for I come to bring you the most joyful news that can be imagined: *Evangelizo vobis gaudium magnum*. A Saviour has just been born in Bethlehem, who is your Lord and your God, and the Messiah awaited for so many centuries. Go there, and you will find him wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the manger of a stable. These are the signs I give you to recognize him and to convince you of the truth of what I tell you.”

4. Scarcely had the Angel finished speaking when a multitude of heavenly spirits was heard, who began to sing the praises of their Lord and their God. What they sang was the Gloria that is sung every day at Mass: *Gloria in excelsis Deo*: “Glory to God in the highest heavens, and on earth peace to men of good will.”[3] The shepherds did not despise the warning the Angel gave them; on the contrary, urging one another to go and see these wonders, they set off at once. Arriving at the gates of Bethlehem a little after midnight, they found the stable straight away, and entering it filled with holy devotion, they prostrated themselves at the feet of the newborn child and adored him as their Saviour and their God. And after paying due respects to Mary Most Holy and St. Joseph, they returned to their flocks filled with unspeakable joy.

5. Oh, what a store of reflections this wonderful birth offers us! Let us examine its circumstances for our understanding and profit. Mary Most Holy and St. Joseph look for lodging in the city of Bethlehem, and are turned away everywhere with the greatest contempt, without being able to find a corner to lodge that night. O my divine Saviour, even before you are born you begin to be rejected and despised! And shall we not take heart to suffer any contempt for love of that divine Lord? Who could have imagined that the supreme Lord of heaven and earth would not find lodging among his own kinsfolk, and that he would be born in so vile and despicable a place? What an astonishing spectacle, my beloved! A Child God who has his throne above the stars is laid in a manger, with no mattress but a little straw, and exposed to the harshness of the winds; while the kings of the earth, who are his servants, are born in magnificent palaces, in abundance of everything and full of conveniences and comforts.

6. *Ubi est aula regia?* St. Bernard exclaims here: “Where is the palace of this newborn King? Where is his throne and the retinue of his court?” His palace is the stable, his throne is the manger, and Mary and Joseph make up his whole court. Is this not giving us great lessons in humility and teaching us to despise the pomp of the world? It is so, my brethren. Notice carefully that God did not have the birth of his Son announced to the learned or the rich of Bethlehem, because pride and avarice are two obstacles to going to adore a poor and humble God. The first to whom the birth of the Saviour was announced were the shepherds, poor, humble and simple men, and therefore more capable of receiving the mysteries of Religion. Jesus Christ willed to be born when the whole world was enjoying complete peace, to give us to understand that God is the enemy of discord; he willed to be born in the silence and rest of the night, to teach us that the tumult of the world and the noise of temporal business are very contrary to true piety and very harmful to the important business of salvation.

7. He willed to be born in extreme poverty, to teach us that poverty is one of the qualities God most esteems, and that to be filled with spiritual and heavenly goods our heart must be empty of attachment to the goods of the earth. And in view of this, who can complain of his lot, however unhappy it may be, seeing Jesus Christ in so wretched a state? Who can complain that, in the distribution God made of the goods of this world, he has not given him more than he gave his own Son? By this the Lord gives us to understand that the goods of the earth are not as valuable as the world thinks, since he did not give them to the three Persons he loved most \[Jesus, Mary and Joseph\]. And why do you think he willed to be born so poor and so humble? Because the first sin, and the origin of all other sins, was pride; and to destroy this sin humility, poverty and lowliness were necessary. See with what reason and wisdom the Lord chose at his birth the poorest and humblest state. And see at the same time how excessive was his love, which moved him to embrace such a means for the forgiveness of our sins and to free us from the eternal slavery of the devil.

8. And what profit must we draw from these ineffable mysteries? First, that we humble ourselves in the presence of our God, as this Lord humbled himself for us; second, that we give him continual thanks for the great benefit of the redemption; third, that even if we are not poor in reality, we must nevertheless love poverty and relieve it wherever it is found; fourth, that even if we are rich, we must not set our heart on riches, for the heart was created for other goods, higher, more precious and more lasting; and finally, that we must despise and abandon all the goods of the earth whenever it is necessary in order to obtain the eternal ones. This is the fruit and profit you must draw from the birth of our Redeemer, so as to come to see and enjoy him for all eternity in glory.

Outline of the Plática for the Day of the Lord's Nativity

Evangelizo vobis gaudium magnum… quia natus est vobis hodie Salvator (Luc. 2:10–11).

I bring you news of great joy… for today your Saviour is born.

1. This is a great feast, because of the mystery of the day…

2. Universal peace, the census, the journey, the stable…

3. The birth of Jesus, the manger, the adoration of the Angels, the shepherds' going.

4. The Angels' hymn, and the adoration of the shepherds.

5. Reflections on what happens to Mary and Joseph, and on the birth of Jesus.

6. The lessons Jesus gives us in humility and the other virtues.

7. The poverty of Jesus in the manger, and why…

8. What must we infer from this?

---

[1] Christmas remains a holy day of obligation (CIC can. 1246).

[2] Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:5–6.

[3] Luke 2:1–5.

[4] A tradition drawn from Isa. 1:3 and Hab. 3:2 (LXX).

[5] Luke 2:13–14.

58. The Circumcision of the Lord (1 January)

Vol. I, pp. 362–367. Reading for the Sunday before the Circumcision; Reading for New Year's Day; Outline. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday before the Circumcision

On … of this week the Church celebrates the feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a holy day of obligation, which you are bound to keep.[1]

This is the first day of the year we are about to begin. We know that we begin it, but we do not know whether we shall finish it: let us prepare ourselves, then, for whatever may happen. Let us so order our conduct that we can say: "New year, new life." Alas, how many began last year and have not seen it end! Who knows whether in the coming year we shall make up the list of the dead, as so many people we knew make up the list of those who have died this year? Oh, dearest brethren, if we always kept death before us, we would all be very good! Let us think of death, then, and we shall not sin. Let us always think of Jesus, follow his law and his evangelical counsels continually, and receive the holy Sacraments he instituted to save us. Let us now above all confess the faults, offences and sins we have committed in the year that is ending, and ask him for grace for the year we are about to begin… and finally glory, which I wish to all. Amen.

Reading for the First Day of the Year, the Day of the Circumcision of the Lord

1. The mystery of the Circumcision of the Lord, which our mother the Church celebrates today, can be called the great mystery of the humiliations of Jesus Christ, because he subjected himself to a law that in no way applied to him. Being innocence and holiness itself, he willed to appear a sinner, and he willed to make himself equal to sinners in order to give us this proof of his great love and to teach us by this example of humility. Circumcision had been established as a remedy to purify the flesh from original sin, as Baptism does;[1] and the flesh of Jesus Christ had no need of purification, for it was free from all stain. But since he had taken upon himself the obligation of making satisfaction for sinners, it was necessary, says St. Augustine, that he should also bear the mark of a sinner. So they took him to the temple eight days after his birth,[2] and having circumcised him, they gave him the name of Jesus. This most sweet name will be the subject of my short discourse. I shall be grateful for your attention.

2. The sacred name of Jesus that was given to the Redeemer at the ceremony of circumcision was not invented by men, but brought down from heaven by the ministry of an Angel.[3] This name of Jesus is a divine name, which only God could give to the Saviour of the world; a venerable name, before which all the greatness of the earth bows down; a powerful name, which makes hell tremble and puts the devils to flight; in short, a most sacred and incomparable name, for there is no other under heaven by which we can be saved (Acts 4).[4] That is why all the Saints had so great a devotion to the most sweet name of Jesus that they could do nothing without invoking this most holy name. The apostle St. Paul repeated it at every step in his writings. St. Ignatius the martyr had it continually on his lips. St. Bernardine of Siena had it painted on a little tablet and always wore it hanging on his breast. St. Francis de Sales began all his letters with the words “Live Jesus” \[*Vive Jésus*\], and repeated it at every step in his conversation too. St. Bernard could not speak of anything but Jesus, and Jesus was the most frequent subject of all his conversations. Blessed for ever, then, be this sacred name, which appeases the anger of God, delivers us from his wrath and strikes terror into the devils themselves. Because the Son of God humbled himself so much and suffered so much to redeem us, his eternal Father gave him this name, which is above all names: *Dedit illi nomen quod est super omne nomen* (Phil. 2). He willed that he should be called Jesus, and that at the utterance of this name every knee should bend in heaven, on earth and in the depths (ibid.).[5]

3. St. John Chrysostom says that all goods are contained in the name of Jesus; and so St. Ambrose says that in this holy name we have the universal remedy for all evils. St. Bernard says (*Sermon 15 on the Song of Songs*) that the most holy name of Jesus is a name of light in dangers, a name of consolation in troubles, and a name of salvation at the hour of death for all who invoke it from the heart.[6] Let us invoke it often, then, my brethren: let us call on Jesus in all our needs; let us invoke the most sweet name of Jesus in all our works; but it must be with great respect and great veneration. It is true that many name him frequently; but it is not out of pure devotion, but from mere habit and as a kind of refrain they have taken up, as if they were naming any profane name. That is not honouring the name of Jesus, but despising it.

4. At the mere name of Jesus the heavens tremble and hell shudders. And is it possible that men should treat it like a dishrag \[*estropajo*\], with oaths “by the life of…” \[*porvidas*\] and blasphemies? Then understand well that if Jesus came into the world to save men, he also came to condemn those who despise him. Jesus Christ is our Saviour, but he is also our Judge; and whoever will not profit by his goodness as saviour will experience his rigour as judge. Let us consider how dearly the office of redeemer and saviour cost him; let us consider how much he had to suffer for having loved us so much, and there we shall find very powerful motives for returning his love. Tears were not enough, nor scourges, nor thorns, nor even the shedding of his blood; he had to die on a cross to redeem and save us. All this is what our salvation cost. From this you can know how much our souls are worth, and how horrible sin is, since it cost our Redeemer so much. And did not his love have to be very excessive to redeem us at such a cost?

5. O my most sweet Jesus, how dearly it cost you to do us good! But let us keep well in mind, my brethren, that if Jesus Christ redeemed us only by shedding his blood, neither shall we be saved except by doing penance. And when shall we wait to do it? Have we perhaps any certainty that we can do it when we please? Oh, the astonishing blindness of mortals! How many have died in the year that ended yesterday who thought they had time, like you, and did not have it? And how many are beginning this new year who think they have time and will not have it either? Many are beginning this year in perfect health and in the flower of their age, and perhaps within a few months they will already be in the grave. All who died last year thought they would live to see the day of this new year; but God counts our days very differently from us. To let us begin this new year is a very particular grace of his infinite goodness; but if we abuse this benefit, it will be a great misfortune for us.

6. It is certain that we must enter a year from which we shall not come out. And who can assure us that it will not be this one? A year must come that will decide our lot for all eternity; and if it were this one, are we well disposed and prepared? And if we are not, on what do we base our calm? Today the Lord grants us time to appease his anger: will it be prudent to let this time pass? Not only must we make good use of this year we are beginning; we must begin from this very day, for just as we do not know whether we shall see the end of this year, neither do we know whether we shall finish this day. And what is the use of living many years if one does not live well? To heap more wood on the furnace of hell.

7. Well then, my brethren, since God grants us the grace of letting us begin this new year, let us too begin at once to amend our life and set our conduct in order. Today Jesus Christ began to shed his blood for us; let us too begin to profit by it. Let us not despise this divine blood; let us give him millions of thanks for having taken us out of the power of the devil; let us be very devout to the most sweet name of Jesus. But what we must chiefly ask of him is our repentance, our conversion and our amendment, for without this devotions are of no use at all. Jesus is the centre and the source of all sweetness and consolation; and if we do not experience these consolations, it is because we love him very lukewarmly, because we do not keep his divine law, because we do not amend, and because we invoke him only with our lips and not with our heart. Let our devotion, then, be more lively and more ardent. Let us beg our good Jesus to give us his help to pronounce his name with the fear and respect it deserves; and to move him to this, let us all say with the greatest fervour: Blessed and praised be the most sweet name of Jesus, now and always, and for ever and ever. Amen.

Outline of the Plática for the Day of the Circumcision of the Lord

Postquam consummati sunt dies octo ut circumcideretur Puer, vocatum est nomen ejus Jesus (Luc. 2:21).\

When the eight days were completed, the Child was circumcised, and was given the name Jesus.

1. The Circumcision is the mystery of the humiliations of Jesus.

2. The name of Jesus is heavenly, a most sacred name… invoked, etc.

3. What do the Saints say of it? Let us invoke it.

4. How is it treated by men?… How much this name cost him!

5. We must do penance to be saved in this new year.

6. We begin this year and do not know whether we shall finish it.

7. How are we to live this year?…

---

[1] Luke 2:21.

[2] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 70, a. 4.

[3] Luke 2:22.

[4] Luke 1:31; cf. Matt. 1:21.

[5] Acts 4:12.

[6] Phil. 2:9–10.

[7] St. Bernard, *Sermons on the Song of Songs* 15, 4–6, paraphrased.

59. The Epiphany: The Feast of the Holy Kings (6 January)

Vol. I, pp. 368–373. Reading for the Sunday before the feast of the Holy Kings; Reading for the feast; Outline. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of the Holy Kings

On … of this week is the feast of the Holy Kings \[*los santos Reyes*, the Magi\]; it is a holy day of obligation, which you are bound to keep.

The Holy Kings, on seeing the star that announced the birth of Jesus Christ, set out at once and went to adore him, and offered him gold, frankincense and myrrh. Would that we were as docile and prompt as they on seeing the star that God sends us for our good! God's star is God's holy law, which we must follow. God's star is the evangelical counsels, by which we must let ourselves be guided. God's star is the voice of our superiors, whom we must obey. God's star is the inner voice that tells us: turn away from evil and practise virtue. God's star is the feast itself, which invites us to go and adore and receive the Lord in the most holy Sacrament of the altar with the three gifts of faith, hope and charity. If, then, we are docile and prompt like the Kings of the East, we shall obtain, like them, the happiness of glory; but if we imitate Herod, we shall be damned. God keep me and you from it. Amen.

Reading for the Day of the Holy Kings

1. Today the Gospel tells us of the journey the three Magi Kings made from the East to Jerusalem to visit and adore the King of glory, who had just been born in a stable at the gate of Bethlehem.[1] It is very right, then, that I should tell you something of this magnificent mystery, commonly called the Adoration of the Holy Kings. Lend me your attention for a moment.

2. At the same time as the Angels announced the birth of the Son of God to the shepherds, a star also announced it to the Kings of the East. There appeared in those regions an extraordinary star, of a brightness far more brilliant than all the others; and although many saw that miraculous sign, only the three Kings understood what it meant. They were very wise men, for that is what the word *magi* means, and they knew from the Scriptures that a star was to appear as the sign of a King who was to be born for the salvation of the whole human race.[2] Enlightened at the same time inwardly with light from heaven, they knew that this star was the one that announced the birth of the new King and that it would serve as their guide to find him.

3. And indeed, scarcely had they set out when the star went before them, and it guided them through the whole journey, which lasted thirteen days. As soon as the Kings came near Jerusalem the star disappeared from them, and so they entered that capital asking for the new King of the Jews. Everyone was dismayed at that question; but the one most alarmed was King Herod, who feared that this newborn child would take away his crown. He questioned the Magi about the reason for their journey, and sent for the scribes and priests to ask them where the Saviour was to be born, and they all answered with one voice: in Bethlehem. As soon as he heard this answer his mind was thrown into complete turmoil, and he resolved in his wicked heart to take the life of that innocent Child. For this he called the Magi Kings aside and told them, pretending, that he was very glad of so happy a tidings, that he greatly praised their devotion, and that he too wanted to share in that good fortune. "Go, then, to Bethlehem," he said to them, "find out all the circumstances of the Child, and do me the favour of coming back this way to tell me what there is to know, so that in view of it I too may go and adore the divine Monarch": *Ut et ego veniens adorem eum*. In this way

the deceitful Herod sought to deceive the Magi Kings; but the Lord brought all his pretences and artifices to nothing, for there is no cunning that can deceive God.

4. The Kings took leave of Herod, and as soon as they set out again the star appeared to them once more and guided them until it led them straight to Bethlehem. It is not easy to express the joy they had when they saw the star again, and above all when they saw that it stopped directly over the cave where the new King was. They went in and found the child God in his Mother's arms; and although they saw no sign that distinguished him from other children, that inner light which shone in their hearts made them know the supreme majesty and greatness of that newborn child. They prostrated themselves at his feet full of faith and reverence, adored him as Lord of heaven and earth, and offered him the gifts and presents they were bringing him, which were gold, frankincense and myrrh. They offered him gold because he was a king; they offered him frankincense because he was God; and they offered him myrrh because he was a mortal man.[3] Gold signifies charity, frankincense devotion, and myrrh the bitterness of penance. When this ceremony was over, and they had paid due respects to the most holy Virgin and St. Joseph, those holy Kings intended to return by way of Jerusalem; but an Angel appeared to them in a dream and told them to return to their country by another road and on no account to go to Jerusalem; and in this way the intentions of the wicked Herod were thwarted. But enraged at having been deceived by the Magi, he had all the children of two years and under in Bethlehem and its neighbourhood slaughtered, thinking to include the child God among them.[4]

5. To this the mystery of the Adoration of the Holy Kings comes down; and the first thing that presents itself to our consideration is the great faith and devotion of those three wise men. Indeed, my brethren, a very lively faith was needed to believe what the Magi believed. Kings are born in magnificent palaces amid pomp and splendour; they are laid in cradles of gold, and all the courtiers seem too few to honour and celebrate the birth of the new king. This is what happens at the birth of the kings of the earth; but at the birth of the King of heaven everything is just the opposite. The Magi arrive at Bethlehem and find a stable for a palace, a manger for a cradle, and no court or retinue but Mary Most Holy and St. Joseph, and an ox and an ass. How could they believe that this child was the King they were seeking? And yet they believed it. Despite seeing him in so poor and humble a state, they did not doubt that he was the true Messiah. With the eyes of the body they saw a child like all others; but with the eyes of faith that enlightened them inwardly, they saw the King of glory and the Lord of the universe. Is our faith as lively and as generous as that of the Magi? For the same Jesus Christ whom they saw in the manger we have really present on our altars.

6. Those fortunate Kings, filled with reverence and veneration, knelt at his feet with the deepest humility and offered him their gifts with the most fervent devotion. Certainly those gifts were very precious; but in God's eyes their faith, their devotion, their piety and their love were far more precious. So we must never present ourselves before God empty-handed; that is, we must offer him our love, detachment from the goods of the earth, mortification, and above all a pure and humble heart; for God does not value our offerings and prayers unless the heart is offered to him first. The contrite and humbled heart pierces the heavens and is always well received.[5]

7. The second thing that presents itself to our consideration in this great mystery is the promptness with which the Magi obeyed the voice of divine grace, figured by the star. The devil would put many great obstacles before them to hinder their journey: the long and bad road, the harsh and raw season, their advanced age, the great expense that would follow, and other difficulties that would arise; but none of this held them back. They broke with everything, for when God calls he wants to be obeyed promptly. This is what we must do, my brethren: when God calls us with the inspirations of his grace, we must obey with all exactness, for any delay can be the ruin of our souls; because if we do not answer when God calls, perhaps he will not choose to call again. When it is a question of being converted, of fulfilling our obligations and of being happy or unhappy for eternity, we must not pay attention to the season, or to age, or to human respect. None of these things holds us back when it is a question of some interest, a profit, a lawsuit or the

preservation of our life; much less, then, should they hinder us from securing eternal life. When it is a question of the soul, one must lose everything to gain everything, that is, lose everything temporal to secure what is eternal.

8. Let us always keep in mind the resolution and generosity of the Holy Kings. They left their homes, their conveniences and their comforts to become Christians. They took no account of the length of the journey, nor of the cold they would have to endure, nor of how much they would have to spend; in short, they closed their eyes to everything in the world in order to obtain eternal happiness. What a frightful difference between these fortunate Kings and King Herod! The Magi Kings, for having obeyed the calls of grace at once, will be eternally happy in heaven; and the unhappy Herod, for having refused to heed the warning the Lord sent him through those same Kings, will be eternally wretched in hell. This event should serve as a great lesson to us all. Let us take warning from the person of Herod not to despise God's warnings, which are the remorse of conscience, the knockings at the heart \[*aldabadas*\], the divine word and the good thoughts that come to us; and let us learn from the Holy Kings to follow promptly the impulses of grace, which alone can bring us to the eternal happiness of glory.

Outline of the Plática for the Day of the Holy Kings

Cum natus esset Jesus in Bethlehem Juda… ecce Magi venerunt… adorare eum (Matth. 2:1–2).

When Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judah, behold, the Magi came to adore him.

1. The story of the day.

2. Who were the Magi?

3. The journey, the arrival in Jerusalem, Herod's alarm and words.

4. They reach Bethlehem, adore Jesus, present gifts…

5. The faith of the Holy Kings.

6. The gifts, and with what affection and devotion they presented them.

7. The promptness with which the Magi answered the call.

8. Let us imitate the resolution and other virtues of the Holy Kings.

---

[1] Matt. 2:1–12.

[2] Cf. Num. 24:17 (Balaam's prophecy of the star).

[3] St. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* III, 9, 2, and St. Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospels* 10, 6.

[4] Matt. 2:16.

[5] Ps. 50 (51):19; Sir. 35:17 (Vulg. 35:21).

60. The Purification of the Virgin Mary (2 February)

Vol. I, pp. 374–379. Reading for the Sunday before the feast; Reading for the feast; Outline. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary, 2 February

On … of this week the Church celebrates the feast of the Purification of Mary Most Holy; it is a holy day of obligation, which you are bound to keep.

On this day Mary Most Holy teaches us what we must practise. Although she was most pure and the law did not apply to her, she wished to present herself at the temple to be purified, in order to teach us and encourage us by her example to purify our souls by receiving the sacrament of Penance worthily, both because the precept obliges us to it and also because we need it. Imitate Mary, all of you: come to the temple, purify your souls well by means of a good confession, and so you will obtain grace and afterwards glory, which I wish to you all. Amen.

Reading for the Feast of the Purification of Mary Most Holy, 2 February

1. The feast that our mother the Church celebrates today is the Purification of Our Lady, commonly called Candlemas \[*la Candelaria*\]. This feast includes two great mysteries: one is the Purification of Mary Most Holy, and the other the Presentation of her Son in the temple. But within these two mysteries many others are contained, which I am going to indicate to you very briefly, if you will favour me with your attention.

2. The Church begins this feast with the blessing of candles, in reparation for the offences the pagans gave God by their impious and sacrilegious feasts. On the 13th of this month the pagans celebrated a feast they called the Lustrations, carrying lighted torches round their temples and performing many other profanations and impious ceremonies.[1] And the Church established the blessing of candles and the procession of this day to blot out from the memory of Christians those abominations of the pagans. The lighted candles signify that Jesus Christ, as the true light, came to enlighten the whole world and to bring it out of the darkness of ignorance in which it was wrapped by sin.[2] The flame of the candles also signifies the divine fire of charity that must burn in our hearts; and so you must attend this holy ceremony with the greatest devotion. And finally, the procession outside the church signifies that we are outside our homeland, which is heaven. Here you have the mystery of the candles explained. Let us now pass to the other mysteries.

3. In the old law it was commanded that women who had given birth should be held impure for a certain number of days and could not enter the temple until they were purified of the uncleanness of sin (Lev. 12).[3] This law of purification did not oblige or include Mary Most Holy in any way; but she willed to submit to it to give us this example of her most profound humility. Mary Most Holy did not conceive by the work of man, but by the work of the Holy Spirit; and consequently the law did not speak to her, for being a mother without ceasing to be a virgin, she had no need of purification. The miraculous birth of Jesus Christ, far from harming the virginity and purity of his Mother, made her far purer and more spotless. “For where could impurity have come to her from?” says St. Augustine. “And how could there be room for stain in the womb in which the divine Word took flesh?” He would never have become incarnate in it if there had been the slightest trace of uncleanness.

4. And yet, though Mary Most Holy was the purest and most chaste of all virgins, she voluntarily submitted to a law that spoke only to other women. She so prized humility that she preferred to renounce the privilege the law granted her rather than fail to practise that act of humility. It was at the same time an act of religion, and that was enough for Mary Most Holy to carry it out with the greatest exactness. She presented herself in the temple with her divine Son on the day the law commanded, and at the same time as she offered her Son to his eternal Father, she also offered the priest the offering the law prescribed.[4] There was there a venerable old man named Simeon, a just and God-fearing man, who had long desired the coming of the Saviour.

5. When Mary Most Holy was arriving at the temple with her Son in her arms, the Holy Spirit revealed to that holy old man that this woman was the Mother of God and that the Child was the Messiah he was awaiting. Carried away then with joy and love, he took the Child in his arms and exclaimed in these terms: “Lord, now you may take my life and bring me to eternal rest; my eyes have had the happiness of seeing the Saviour of the world; I have nothing more to see or desire.” And giving the Child back to his Mother, he said to her: “O Lady, you are the most fortunate of all women! But one day your soul will be pierced with a sword of sorrow. This Child has come into the world to save all men, and consequently he must die shamefully on a

cross; his own people will be his greatest enemy, and this bloody sacrifice will be consummated before your very eyes. Today he comes to save all without exception; but another day he will come to destroy and condemn those who will not profit by his death."[5]

6. The Jews had been awaiting the Messiah for many years, and after he came to them they never ceased to persecute him. Since the Jews were carnal and earthly souls, they expected a worldly glory from the Messiah; and since they saw that he was born so poorly and led a humble and lowly life, they grew weary of him and treated him with the greatest contempt. But we, do we treat him better than the Jews did? Do we expect from his divine Majesty a glory greater than all the glories of the world? Let us reflect for a moment on the two comings of the Son of God, at his birth and at the last judgement. Let us consider in the first coming the infinite goodness of a Saviour God, and in the second the rigour of a severe Judge. Those who will not profit by the mercies of a loving God will experience the judgement and the rigours of a God of justice. And who can think of these two so different comings without being filled with alarm? In the first coming Jesus Christ was like a fire that purifies metal without consuming it; but in the second coming he will burn without purifying. His very wrath will fan that dreadful fire which is to burn souls eternally without ever making an end of them. Let us profit, then, by the first coming of the Saviour, my brethren, so as not to have to fear him at the coming of the judgement.

7. See how many mysteries are contained in the feast of this day. Mary Most Holy was Mother of God, and she submitted to the law of purification as if she were the mother of a mere man; she was the purest of all virgins, and she presented herself as if she were any other woman; she loved her Son tenderly, and yet she offered him to death for us; she heard from the priest the most sorrowful news a mother could hear, and she accepted it with the greatest resignation. All this preaches to us God's love for men, the tenderness of his Mother towards sinners, the worship of Religion, obedience to the laws, the merit of humility and the importance of salvation. Let us keep the law of God, then, as Mary Most Holy did on this day, and we shall have nothing to fear on the day of reckoning. Let us offer the Lord our heart and our soul with the same humility as that sovereign Lady, and let us be quite sure that God will accept our sacrifice.

8. In imitation of the presentation Mary Most Holy made of her Son in the temple today, mothers too are accustomed to go to church after giving birth to give thanks to God and to present to him the son or daughter he has deigned to grant them. This is a very Christian and very religious practice. But will it not be a kind of impiety, after so pious an offering, to let your children follow the vanities of the world and not bring them up with religion and the fear of God? Take care, fathers and mothers: the Lord does not give you children for you to abandon them to the disposal of the world and the devil, but for you to direct them to heaven. Follow the example of Mary Most Holy: offer and commend your children to God with all the affection of your heart, that he may hold them by his hand, free them from all sin, and dispose of them as his own, which they are, when he wills and as seems best to him. Bring them to church when they have the use of reason, and teach them to be there with due fear and reverence. Teach them also what they must do in church to adore the Lord and hear Mass devoutly; and finally teach them to serve and love God, which is the end for which he created them. Commend them also to Mary Most Holy, so that by the intercession of this sovereign Queen we may all go to keep her company for all eternity in glory, which I wish to you all. Amen.

Outline of the Plática for the Feast of the Purification of the Most Holy Virgin

Postquam impleti sunt dies purgationis Mariae… tulerunt Jesum in Jerusalem (Luc. 2:22).

After the days were completed… they brought Jesus to Jerusalem.

1. The two mysteries, the Purification and the Presentation.

2. Why the feast of candles?

3. Mary was not subject to purification.

4. She submitted out of humility and religion. How did she present herself?

5. Simeon: how did he receive Jesus? What did he say?

6. How did the Jews receive Jesus? How do Christians receive him?

7. A summary of the virtues Mary practised on this occasion.

8. How must you mothers imitate Mary?

---

[1] *februa*.

[2] Luke 2:32; John 1:9; 8:12.

[3] Lev. 12:2–8.

[4] Luke 2:22–24; cf. Exod. 13:2 and Lev. 12:8.

[5] A free amplification of Luke 2:25–35.

61. The Annunciation of Mary Most Holy (25 March)

Vol. I, pp. 380–385. Reading for the Sunday before the feast; Reading for the feast; Outline. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of the Annunciation of Mary Most Holy, 25 March

On … of this week the Church celebrates the feast of the Annunciation of Mary Most Holy; it is a holy day of obligation, which you are bound to keep.

On this day the Church reminds us of the great work of charity God our Lord wrought for us in joining the two natures, divine and human, in one single person, who is Christ. The whole of human nature was exalted by this holy union. God becomes man to suffer and endure for man, to redeem and save man! Oh, prodigy of love! Oh, excess of charity! He does still more. On this same day, 25 March, thirty-four years after becoming incarnate and living among us and loving us greatly, at the end he loved us still more and gave us the proofs of the greatest love by instituting the most holy Sacrament of the altar, remaining with us until the end of the ages for many purposes, but especially to unite himself with each of us through holy Communion; and not once only, but as many times as we wish, even every day, as the fervent early Christians used to do. Nowadays, if people receive Communion, it is only now and then; but the loss is not on the part of Jesus in the Sacrament, who is always ready and prepared and desires it; the loss is on our part, because we have little faith and less charity and love of God. Come, Christians, let us wake from this lethargy; let us prepare to receive Communion, especially on this feast, on which we can have such great happiness and in some way imitate Mary Most Holy. For just as Mary, through the Incarnation, had Jesus in her womb, so we can have this very same Jesus in our heart through Communion.

Reading for the Feast of the Annunciation of Mary Most Holy, 25 March

1. Today our mother the Church celebrates the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God in the most pure womb of Mary Most Holy. This mystery is the foundation of our Religion and the origin of our happiness, for if that divine Lord had not become incarnate, we could never have entered heaven. It is also called the mystery of the Annunciation, because of the embassy the archangel St. Gabriel brought to Mary Most Holy announcing this mystery to her. On this basis, I am going to give you a sketch of the way this mystery was accomplished, and afterwards I will show you that the greatest devotion one can have to Mary Most Holy is the Angel’s salutation, which is what we call the Hail Mary. Listen to me for a moment.

2. When the term decreed by God for the reconciliation of the human race had been fulfilled, the Lord commanded the archangel St. Gabriel to go down and tell Mary Most Holy that he had chosen her to be the Mother of his Son. This Lady was a tender maiden of fifteen, descended from royal and priestly blood,[1] who lived in the city of Nazareth; and it was here that St. Gabriel appeared to her while she was withdrawn in her room in the most fervent prayer and contemplation of her God. Standing in her presence with the greatest respect and veneration, the Angel greeted her thus: "Hail, full of grace: the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." The sudden sight of the Angel in the form of a man caused her some alarm, and her face was covered with a modest blush. And the Angel, noticing her disturbance, encouraged her, saying: "Do not be afraid, Mary; know that you have found grace in the eyes of God. This Lord wills that you be the Mother of a Son, but without losing anything of your virginal purity. You will give him the name Jesus: he will be great in every way, and the wonders he will work will make him known as Son of the Most High."[2]

3. While the Angel was telling her these things, Mary felt herself enlightened with a heavenly light, by which she knew all the wonders of that mystery; and abasing herself before God, she said, prostrate on the ground: *Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum* (Luke 1): "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word." As she said this the Angel disappeared, and at that very moment the Holy Spirit formed a body from the blood of that most pure maiden, and at the same time creating the most perfect soul ever created, he united this soul and body to the divine Word, who is the second person of the most holy Trinity; and in this way the mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished: *Et Verbum caro factum est*: "And the Word was made flesh."[3] In that instant the body of Mary Most Holy became a temple, and in that same instant all the Angels came down to adore the God-Man and to sing a thousand praises to that Lady, acknowledging her as their Queen and Sovereign. Among all the praises that can be given to Mary Most Holy, and among all the prayers that can be said to her, none is so pleasing to her or more profitable to us than the Angel's salutation. This short prayer is the most glorious for Mary Most Holy, because it is the very embassy the eternal Father sent her, and because it reminds her of the title of greatest honour and favour that God could grant to any creature. That is why the Hail Mary has always been the prayer most esteemed by all the Saints, and the Church begins and ends the divine office with it. St. Athanasius says that all the Angels of heaven repeat this angelic Salutation unceasingly, and that is why St. Ephrem calls it the canticle of the Angels. St. Francis says (in his *Opuscula*) that whenever the Hail Mary is said, the Saints in heaven rejoice, the just on earth are glad, the devils tremble and all hell shudders.

4. Well then, my brethren, let the Hail Mary be your principal and most frequent devotion. Say it not only every day but also every hour when you hear the clock strike. Besides being the most profitable prayer, it is also the most convenient because of its brevity, and it can be said on any occasion and in any occupation. So it is that fervent persons devoted to Mary Most Holy are accustomed to begin all their works with the Hail Mary after the sign of the cross: on waking in the morning, on leaving the house, on returning to it, on going to bed at night, and whenever they set to work. St. Bernard says that to begin all one's actions with the Hail Mary is a devotion that draws a thousand blessings from heaven upon us. Teach this devotion also to your children, servants and household, for after the prayers of precept this is the most necessary. God our Lord willed to give us his divine Son through Mary Most Holy; so too he wills that we ask all graces through this Lady. But you must take great care always to pray with understanding, calmly and with due respect; for it regularly happens that prayers often repeated are said without fruit, because they are said more out of habit than out of devotion. All the prayers said with the tongue must be accompanied by attention and consideration; and so when the Hail Mary and the Salve Regina are said, one must think of Mary Most Holy, and when the Our Father, the Creed and the other prayers are said, one must think of God.

5. Since the mystery of the Incarnation is the beginning of our salvation, our mother the Church wishes us to keep it always in mind; and for this purpose she has ordered the Ave Marias \[the Angelus bell\] to be rung three times a day, at dawn, at midday and at nightfall, so that the faithful may give thanks to the Father of

mercies for the incarnation of his Son for our redemption. When this prayer bell rings three Hail Marys are said, in reverence of the three Persons of the most holy Trinity, since all three concurred in this great mystery; and the prayers are addressed to Mary Most Holy because the mystery was accomplished in her most pure womb. At the first Hail Mary these words of the Church are said: *Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae*, which means, "The Angel of the Lord announced to Mary that she was to be the Mother of God"; and the answer is: *Et concepit de Spiritu Sancto*, "And she conceived by the Holy Spirit." And see the whole mystery of the Incarnation contained in these words. At the second Hail Mary is said: *Ecce ancilla Domini*, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord"; and the answer is: *Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*, "Be it done to me according to your word," which are the very words Mary Most Holy said to give her consent. At the third Hail Mary is said: *Et Verbum caro factum est*, "And the Word was made flesh"; and the answer is: *Et habitavit in nobis*, "And dwelt among us," which are the words the Gospel uses to show that the mystery of the Incarnation has now been accomplished.

6. This is a very pious practice and devotion; and those who will not say the Hail Marys when they hear the bell ring show plainly how little religion they have and how little they value the benefit of the redemption. Do not do so, my brethren. Even when the prayer bell is not rung, or you do not hear it, do not fail to say the three Hail Marys in the morning after the offering of your good works, at midday at the beginning or end of your meal, and in the evening after sunset.

7. This ringing for prayer was formerly called the pardon bell \[*toque del perdón*\], because of the many indulgences granted for it. I will not stop to list those that various Supreme Pontiffs have granted, and will only say, for your instruction and profit, that each time the prayers or Hail Marys are said, an indulgence of a hundred days is gained; but on condition that they are said kneeling, otherwise it is not gained, except on Saturday evenings, Sundays, and from Holy Saturday until Trinity Sunday, when they are said standing; and all the rest of the year kneeling.[4] How many hundreds of days of indulgence can be gained in the course of a year, then, with so short a prayer and so little effort? And how many are not gained for lack of religion or through sloth? But it does not stop there: the Supreme Pontiff Clement X granted a plenary indulgence at the hour of death to those who have been accustomed to say them during life. And are these not very powerful motives for practising this devotion with the greatest care? Remember that at the hour of death everything will seem too little: make use, then, during life of all the good works you can. Do not fail to practise this devotion every day, and much less give it up out of shame or human respect, for a Christian must never be ashamed of appearing a Christian, since this is the greatest honour he can have. And lastly I charge you again always to pray without haste, slowly and devoutly, so that the most holy Mother of God may deign to accept our prayers and receive us under her protection until we come to the possession of eternal glory. Amen.

Outline of the Plática for the Feast of the Annunciation of Mary Most Holy

Ingressus Angelus ad eam dixit: Ave, gratia plena (Luc. 1:28).\

The Angel, having come into her room, said to her: Hail, full of grace.

1. The mystery of the day is called the Incarnation, the Annunciation; and why?

2. The Angel's presence, and the words he said to Mary.

3. Mary's answer. The Incarnation, the angelic Prayer.

4. Say this angelic Prayer and teach it.

5. The prayers of morning, midday and night.

6. Say these prayers; do not be ungrateful.

7. The indulgences gained by saying these prayers.

[1] Luke 1:5, 36.

[2] Luke 1:26–33, paraphrased.

[3] Luke 1:38; John 1:14.

[4] The Angelus (or the *Regina caeli* in Eastertide) carries a partial indulgence (*Enchiridion Indulgentiarum*, 4th ed., 1999, grant 17).

62. The Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Vol. I, pp. 386–391. Reading for the Sunday before the feast; Reading for the feast; Outline. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday before the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ

On Thursday of this week the Church celebrates the feast of the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ; it is a holy day of obligation, which you are bound to keep.

On this day we must try to be quite detached from all earthly affections, and present our hearts clean to God so that he may take them with him to heaven. Jesus is and must be our only treasure; in him, then, we must have all our hearts.[1] Let us think continually of that throne of glory which Jesus has gone to prepare for us in heaven, which we must all try to reach, and which we shall all reach if we wish. For Jesus Christ has prepared everything in abundance: he has taught us by words and examples the road we must follow and the virtues we must practise, he has instituted the Sacraments we must receive, and he has marked out the good works in which we must exercise ourselves; so that nothing is lacking but that we should truly will our salvation, with an effective will, in order to obtain it. Let us take more and more courage, and not stop until we see ourselves one day with Jesus in heaven. Amen.

Reading for the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ

1. The Ascension of the Lord into heaven, which our mother the Church celebrates today, is the most glorious mystery of our holy Religion, because it is the consummation of the great work of the redemption of the world. I am going to give you, then, a brief account of this wonderful mystery, but with my usual brevity, so that you may listen to me with more pleasure.

2. After Jesus Christ our Lord had risen from death to life, never to die again, he did not wish to go up at once to the throne of his glory, but chose to remain in this world for forty days to give greater proofs and clear signs of his resurrection.[1] In these forty days he appeared many times to his disciples, ate with them several times, spoke to them repeatedly of the kingdom of heaven and the mysteries of Religion; and he did all this so that they should not doubt his true resurrection. In these forty days he instructed his Apostles in all they needed to know for the founding and governing of the Church, and taught them many things that are not contained in sacred Scripture and have come down to us by tradition.

3. As the day of his Ascension drew near, he had the Apostles come from Galilee to Judea; and on the very day he was to go up to heaven he appeared to them while they were all at table, and sat down to eat with them, not because that glorious body had any need of food, but to give them this further proof that he was truly alive. When the meal was over he gave them a long discourse, in which he announced to them what was to happen to them, and promised them that within a few days the Holy Spirit would come down to give them a more perfect understanding of those truths they had not yet fully grasped. He told them that they were to go through the whole world preaching the Gospel; that they were to teach all nations, and when they had been instructed, baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all the things he had commanded them. “He who believes and is baptized,” he added, “will be saved, and he who does not believe will be condemned.”[2]

4. When this discourse was over, Jesus Christ went with his Apostles and disciples, who numbered a hundred and twenty in all, to the Mount of Olives; and when they were all on the summit of the mountain, the Lord raised his eyes and hands to heaven, and lowering them again towards his beloved disciples, who stood round his divine Majesty, he gave them his blessing and began to rise little by little towards heaven in the sight of all. Oh, what a sad and painful moment for those poor disciples! All were shedding tears of grief, and could not take their eyes off their Master until a very bright cloud hid him. Although they no longer saw him, they kept following the cloud with their eyes, and they would have remained a long time in that rapture if two Angels dressed in white had not come down and said to them: "Men of Galilee, what are you doing here with your eyes fixed on heaven? Jesus your Master has gone to take possession of his kingdom and to sit on the throne of his glory; but do not think that he is leaving you on that account. He will always be with you, as he has promised you; and although you do not see him as you have until now, he will not on that account cease to assist you with the same power."[3]

5. Consoled by these words of the Angels, the disciples withdrew to Jerusalem, and gathered in the Upper Room in the company of Mary Most Holy, they spent those days in retirement and prayer until the Holy Spirit came down upon them.[4] Jesus Christ did not vanish in an instant or hide himself suddenly from the eyes of his disciples, but went up little by little so that all those hundred and twenty persons should be witnesses of that wonder, and it could never be doubted that the Lord had gone up to heaven in body and soul by his own power and might. To make the Ascension of the Lord more glorious, and to show more clearly the triumph he had won over hell and death, he took with him all the souls he had brought out of the bosom of Abraham; and joining with all the heavenly court that had come out to receive their King, they added to the pomp, the greatness and the glory of the most august of all triumphs.

6. Well then, my brethren, if we wish to celebrate the glorious Ascension of the Lord worthily and with fitting devotion, "let us ascend with him," says St. Augustine (*Sermon 2 on the Ascension*); "let us follow him with our heart, so that when the day of his promises comes we may follow him with our body."[5] "You who are members of Jesus Christ," says the same St. Augustine, "hope firmly that what has been fulfilled in the head will be fulfilled in you too," if you are willing to profit by his plentiful redemption. The Son of God became man and was born to redeem men; he died to pay with the price of his blood the ransom of men; he rose again to show them that it was God who had died for them; and finally he went up to heaven to enjoy the glory he had merited, and to prepare for those who serve him the glory they merit by their works. Yes, beloved brethren, Jesus Christ goes up to heaven to be our mediator with his eternal Father;[6] he goes up as our guide to show us the way; and he goes up to prepare the seats for those who love and serve him.[7]

7. What, then, can we find on earth that deserves to occupy our heart? Since Jesus Christ has gone up to heaven, all our desires must go up after this divine Lord. The Apostles were left sad and afflicted, not only because of the absence of their beloved Master, but even more because they were left in this region of miseries and labours. With their eyes fixed on heaven they forget the earth entirely, and two Angels had to be sent to tell them to take their eyes off heaven. But nowadays other Angels would need to come down to tell Christians not to live so blinded by the interests of the earth, and to raise their eyes now and then to the heavenly homeland. Created for heaven, we should now sigh only for that place of rest and happiness. That is why St. Paul said that to die was gain for him, and that he counted everything in this world as dung.[8] And indeed, everything on earth is rubbish to anyone who knows the happiness of the next life. The earth is properly a place of weeping: few days pass without anxieties, alarms and bitterness. It has nothing good about it except its short duration. We are scarcely on the road when we already see its end. Such is the sad situation of mortals.

8. And in spite of all this, there are people so passionately attached to the earth that they look on heaven with indifference. There are people who care very little whether they see God or not. But will they care whether they see the devils and are with them in the place of dread and horror? Will they care at all about dwelling

eternally in the midst of devouring fire? And is it possible that there should be rational beings so brutish? How is it that, being all so keen on your interests, you do not seek your true interest? If one man offered you twenty doubloons \[*doblones*, gold coins\] and another twenty thousand, which would you follow? Then do not close the eyes of reason, my brethren. True interests are those that can never come to an end: what the world gives is here today and gone tomorrow; but what Jesus Christ has prepared will last eternally. All the world can give you is nothing; but Jesus Christ can give you everything.

9. Let us follow this divine Lord, then; let us walk by the road he has marked out for us. The road is the keeping of his most holy law and the mortification of our passions and appetites. Jesus Christ entered his kingdom by the road of pains and sorrows;[9] let us not think that for us there is to be another road strewn with roses and flowers. The members are not to be better off than the head. Jesus Christ is our captain and our guide; he marches first and commands us to follow him. If we take another road, we are lost beyond remedy. Let us resolve, then, to follow him at all costs, so as to come to take our seat in those he has prepared in the kingdom of glory, which I wish to you all. Amen.

Outline of the Plática for the Day of the Lord's Ascension

Dominus Jesus postquam locutus est eis, assumptus est in caelum, et sedet a dextris Dei (Marc. 16:19).

The Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, went up to heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father.

1. The Ascension of the Lord is the consummation of the work of Redemption.

2. An account of what happened between the Resurrection and the Ascension.

3. An explanation of what Jesus said on the very day of the Ascension.

4. The Ascension of the Lord and the appearance of the Angels.

5. Jesus willed that there should be those witnesses of his Ascension.

6. Why did Jesus die, rise again, and go up to heaven?…

7. How were the Apostles left? What must we do?

8. Either heaven or hell. What does the world offer? What does Jesus offer?

9. Let us follow Jesus: let us keep his law; let us follow him with the cross.

---

[1] Cf. Matt. 6:21; Col. 3:1–2.

[2] Acts 1:3.

[3] Acts 1:4–8; Matt. 28:19–20; Mark 16:14–16.

[4] Acts 1:9–11, freely amplified with Matt. 28:20.

[5] Acts 1:12–14.

[6] Cf. St. Augustine, *Sermon* 263, 3 and *Sermon* 263A (Mai 98).

[7] Heb. 7:25; 1 Tim. 2:5.

[8] John 14:2–3.

[9] Phil. 1:21; 3:8.

[10] Luke 24:26.

63. The Feast of Corpus Christi

Vol. I, pp. 392–397. Reading for the Sunday before the feast; Reading for the feast; Outline. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of Corpus Christi

On Thursday of this week the Church celebrates the feast of Corpus Christi; it is a holy day of obligation, which you are bound to keep.

On this day the Church reminds us of the night of the supper on which Jesus instituted this most holy Sacrament and gave Communion to all the Apostles and disciples;[1] but first he himself chose to wash their feet, to teach us that before receiving Communion we must wash and purify ourselves well of all our faults and sins by means of a good confession. I hope that in these days of the octave of Corpus Christi you will all come with fervour and devotion to Communion, to gain the many graces and indulgences that have been granted. Happy those who come with fervour, promptness and good dispositions: oh, what great graces they will obtain! But unhappy those who say with excuses that they cannot come! For God will tell them that they shall never taste of his table.[2]

Reading for the Feast of Corpus Christi

1. The feast of the most holy Sacrament of the altar, which we commonly call the day of Corpus Christi, is one of the feasts that call for all our acknowledgement and gratitude; for Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament at the last supper he had with his disciples on the eve of his passion, at the very time when he was about to suffer death for us, to give us a firm testimony of his love and so that we should always keep his last farewell in our memory. Yes, dearly beloved brethren: his immense love moved him to institute this divine Sacrament, and this is what I am going to show you in this short discourse, if you will favour me with your attention for a moment.

2. Not content with leaving us redeemed and free from the power of the devil, our loving Redeemer wished besides to remain in our company to show us his love still more; and for this end he instituted the Sacrament of his adorable body, instituting the sacrifice of the Mass; and that is why there is no feast without the sacrifice. Great feasts are marked by illuminations, by songs, by vestments and by the decoration of the churches; but what makes the solemnity and the rejoicing is the divine sacrifice of the altar. To offer this divine sacrifice is to keep the feast of the Lord, for it is to do in his memory what he himself did at the last supper on the last night of his life.[1] It is true that on Holy Thursday the Church celebrates this divine mystery, since it is the day on which Jesus Christ instituted it; but on that day the Church is so occupied in mourning the death of her divine Spouse, and in so many other sacred ceremonies, that she cannot give enough particular attention to the solemnity of the mystery; and that is why she established this particular feast,[2] to make us better understand the great happiness we have in possessing the living body of our Redeemer, and also so that in this feast and its octave all the faithful may try to make amends, by their devotion and worship, for the ingratitude and lack of respect shown to this august Sacrament. The procession held with such pomp and solemnity is one of the principal parts of this great feast. The Lord is carried in triumph through the streets to give him public satisfaction for the contempt and insults he received in the streets of Jerusalem, and for the injuries done to him every day in the churches. Indeed, my brethren, this is the feast on which the piety and faith of Christians must shine forth more than ever: it is the triumph of Jesus Christ, the triumph of Religion and of the Church. The most holy Sacrament of the altar is the end of all the other Sacraments and mysteries; it is the surest and most effective means of reaching perfection; it is a fruitful spring of the gifts of heaven; it is a pledge of beatitude in advance; it is the most illustrious testimony of the love of Jesus Christ, the compendium of the whole of Religion and the treasure of the whole Church.

3. Yes, dearly beloved brethren: the divine sacrament of the Eucharist is the greatest testimony of the love Jesus Christ has for us. Having given us all he had, and having nothing more to give us, he gave us his very person. Can there be a more extreme love? Jesus Christ empties himself, undoes himself, annihilates himself and abases himself, so to speak, in order to be among us. Being infinite, he reduces himself to an almost

indivisible space; he strips himself of his dignity and greatness to be shut up day and night in a ciborium under the species of bread and wine to serve as our food; and he does all this solely in order to be continually in our company. But for this, how many prodigies and miracles he has to work! The body of Jesus Christ is made present at one and the same time in thousands of different places, and always whole and entire; a God subject to the voice of a priest; the Creator obeys the creature, the Lord the servant, and the Holy One the sinner; the body of Jesus Christ really present on the altars and ready to be distributed to all the faithful without distinction.

4. This is what Jesus Christ does to show us his love. The mind is confounded and lost in this infinity of wonders. What! Was it not enough that God had become man to redeem men? Was it not enough that he had given his blood and his life for the salvation of men? This was much more than we would have dared to ask; but that this divine Saviour, after redeeming us by his death, after our ransom had cost him so dearly, should wish besides to feed us with his own flesh, is something that cannot be comprehended: it stuns and fills the very Angels with amazement. Jesus Christ becomes our food so that, just as man had brought death on himself by eating the forbidden fruit, so he might obtain eternal life by eating the bread come down from heaven.[3] One could hardly believe that a God would love us to this extreme; but after all, it is a God who loves us, and he loves us as God.

5. What is much more bewildering, however, is that we should have so little attachment to this most holy Sacrament; that we should approach it so seldom, and even look on it with distaste and contempt. The Lord invites us to his table, and we slight him by not accepting the invitation; the Lord calls us and seeks us, and we turn our backs on him. Can there be a greater excess of ingratitude and wickedness? And after this, will you be surprised that the wrath of God lays so many scourges on us? That heretics should insult and despise Jesus Christ in the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist is something that should make us groan and weep; but that faithful Christians should do so is the most horrible abomination that can be imagined. The circumstance of the time and occasion at which he instituted the banquet of his body and blood is also a very striking proof of his love. On the very night on which he was to be handed over to the greatest cruelties, when he saw that men were going to unload on his person the whole weight of their hatred and fury, then he wishes to give them the greatest proof of his affection. When he saw that they were going to drag, scourge and crucify his body, precisely then he turns it into food to nourish and refresh his very enemies. Can there be any affection to equal this?

6. But there is no need to renew here the sad memory of the ignominies Jesus Christ suffered in his passion, for we have more than enough reason for sorrow in the insults and contempt he has to suffer in the most holy Sacrament. Yes, dearly beloved brethren: leaving aside those who have the horrible audacity to receive Communion in mortal sin,[4] how many profanations we see in the churches: what scandals, what conversations, what indecencies, what postures, and with how little respect people stand before Jesus Christ! If this divine Lord appeared on the altars with the majesty and splendour proper to his person, it is certain that he would be more respected and more feared; but his love does not accord with a fear that terrifies, and he wishes to remove from himself everything that might frighten us. The divine Saviour has his delights in being with men,[5] and that is why he wishes to hide his greatness so that it does not fill us with fear, and he disguises himself under the species and appearances of bread.

7. The princes of the earth bestow their graces and favours only on certain occasions and on certain persons; but Jesus Christ in the most holy Sacrament gives everything, at all times and to all without distinction. “Come to me,” he tells us, “come, all you who are burdened, and I will give you relief.”[6] Could he give us a reason for greater confidence? It is enough to be poor or afflicted to come to this fountain of all good and take all one needs. Misery and troubles are for us a new reason for confidence; and provided we put no obstacle on our part, we can be quite sure of being well received. Let us come, then, to this most holy Sacrament with a living faith, an ardent love and a clean conscience, and we shall find all goods together in

this sovereign food. Let us venerate our Master \[*nuestro Amo*\] on this feast with a pure heart full of devotion; let us thank him for having left us this Sacrament of his love; let us try during this octave to make amends to him for the injuries done to him and the little respect with which he is treated, for it was to this end that the Church established this solemn feast. Let us try, in short, to sanctify ourselves in this life with this divine Sacrament, so as to adore and bless him afterwards for all eternity in glory. Amen.

Outline of the Plática for the Feast of Corpus Christi

Caro mea vere est cibus, et sanguis meus vere est potus (Joan. 6:56).

My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

1. Jesus instituted this Sacrament as a testimony of his love.

2. Why is this feast now kept? The procession.

3. Jesus is with us.

4. Jesus becomes our food.

5. Jesus behaves with such love, and we with distaste and contempt.

6. What profanations, irreverences and sacrileges!

7. He dispenses graces to all on every occasion.

---

[1] The Gospels speak of the Twelve (Matt. 26:20; Luke 22:14).

[2] Luke 14:24.

[3] Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24–25.

[4] Extended to the universal Church by Urban IV in the bull *Transiturus* (1264).

[5] John 6:51.

[6] 1 Cor. 11:27–29.

[7] Prov. 8:31.

[8] Matt. 11:28.

64. The Assumption of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady (15 August)

Vol. I, pp. 398–403. Reading for the Sunday before the feast; Reading for the feast; Outline. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of the Assumption of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady

On … of this week the Church celebrates the feast of the Assumption of Mary Most Holy, our Mother and Lady; it is a holy day of obligation, which you are bound to keep.

On this feast we are reminded of the death, resurrection and assumption of Mary Most Holy, body and soul, into heaven. This holy remembrance should rouse our attention, so that we do not set our hearts on the things of the earth, but solely on heaven, where we have our Father, as we confess when we say the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father, who art in heaven." We have our Mother there too, as we are recalling today. Let us live, then, as the pilgrims on earth that we are, and make our way to our heavenly homeland. Let us purify ourselves more and more of our faults and sins, since we know that nothing defiled can enter heaven;[1] let us strive more and more to do good works, since these are the only things admitted and rewarded in the glory of heaven. And so I hope that on this holy feast and its octave you will all receive the holy sacraments of Penance and Communion, begging the most holy Virgin, whom we contemplate crowned Queen of heaven

and earth and advocate of sinners, to obtain for us the grace to live well and holily, to pray for us now and at the hour of our death, and that we may all attain the glory of heaven. Amen.

Reading for the Feast of the Assumption of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady, 15 August

1. There is nothing more terrible or more frightening than dying. That is why King Saul, though a brave and valiant monarch, no sooner heard from the mouth of the prophet Samuel "Tomorrow you will die" than he fell fainting to the ground (1 Kings 28).[1] That sinners should tremble at death is no wonder, for they know it is the hour when God will take vengeance for offences; but that the just should fear to die is a convincing proof of the terror and violence of death. I do not doubt that many just people rejoice at dying, considering that death is the end of our misfortunes and the beginning of our happiness; but nevertheless, says St. John Chrysostom (*Homily 10 on 2 Corinthians*, on chapter 5), they do not fail to feel some sorrow out of fear of the divine judgement and the uncertainty of their eternal destiny.[2] But oh, the privilege of Mary Most Holy! This sovereign Lady was the only one who did not taste the bitterness and anguish of death. Far from causing her the slightest pain, you will see her full of joy and gladness, as I am going to show you in a very short time if you lend me your attention.

2. From the time Our Lord Jesus Christ returned in triumph to heaven on the day of his glorious Ascension, Mary Most Holy took it upon herself to make up for the absence of her divine Son. And although she was gladly occupied in ordering the newborn Church and defending the new Christians, she could not contain the lively desires she had to go and be united with her beloved Son in heaven; and these desires so burned in her last years that she sighed continually for that happy moment, and every day, says St. Vincent Ferrer (*Sermon 2 on the Assumption*), she begged him with tears to take her into his most lovable company. At last the longed-for hour came in which the Lord deigned to yield to the pleas and sighs of his dear Mother; and so that she might have this consolation in advance, he sent her the archangel St. Gabriel to give her the news of her departure. The Angel, standing in the presence of the sovereign Queen, said to her with the greatest reverence: "Lady, your Son greets you, and commands me to tell you that three days from now you will depart from this mortal life to the eternal one; and for this the whole heavenly court is preparing to receive you with the triumph and magnificence befitting your greatness."

3. Oh, what transports of joy and gladness that Lady's heart must have felt! But what mourning and what sorrow for the children of the Church, seeing that they were going to be deprived of her most lovable company! That tender Mother tried, however, to console them in the meantime; and it was for that very reason, says St. Vincent Ferrer (ibid.), that the Most High granted her the term of three days, for if her death had been sudden the grief and desolation of those faithful would have been much greater. At that time the Apostles were absent, scattered through the whole world preaching the Gospel; and by an inspiration from God, or brought by the ministry of Angels according to others, they all gathered in the room of Mary Most Holy to receive her blessing at her last farewell. This was a further increase of joy for the sovereign Lady, seeing herself surrounded by the most worthy labourers of her Son. She let them know that the last hour of her life was pressing upon her, since her Son had told her so through the archangel St. Gabriel, and that her departure from this world was now very near.

4. Then came the sorrow and grief of the Apostles and disciples of the Lord: they all wept inconsolably at seeing that they were going to be deprived of that most loving Mother, who was their refuge, their protection and their consolation. But the most holy Virgin, clothed with strength, tried to console them with these sweet words (Simeon Metaphrastes, *Oration on the Dormition of the Mother of God*): "Do not grieve, my children, at my departure, for it is not a cause of sadness but of joy; for as ministers of the truth, you know very well that we pass from labour to rest and from affliction to consolation. If this Mother goes away from you, it is not to forget you but to be your protector in heaven." Here, says St. John Damascene (*Second Oration on the*

Dormition), one could see the pious contest that arose between the citizens of heaven and those of the earth: those of heaven hastened to take their sovereign Queen with them to the heavenly homeland; and those of the earth urged her, begged and implored her to remain with them, or at least to take them out of this exile and bring them with her in her company.[3]

5. But there was no help for it. Death was drawing nearer every moment, and at the same time the ardent desires of the most pure Virgin to go and be united with her beloved grew more and more; and being no longer able to bear this delay, she prayed, asked and begged, and never ceased to sigh for that happy moment, until at last she obliged her most holy Son to come down in person, says St. Jerome (*Letter to Paula on the Assumption*), accompanied by countless Angels and blessed, to the very room of Mary. And seeing him in her presence, this Lady spoke to him thus: "My Son, into your hands I commend my spirit: receive the soul you created in your image and preserved without sin. To you also, and not to the earth, I give up my body, because you honoured it so much by what you took from it: keep it not as my body but as your pledge. Take me to yourself, who are the fruit of my womb, that I may rest in your company. I also commend to you my dearest children who remain in the world: console them in my absence, and by virtue of the laying on of my hands grant them an abundance of new blessings."

6. Having said this, and giving her blessing to all who were present with lighted candles in their hands and sad tears in their eyes, she took loving leave of them; and with her body placed in the modest posture in which it was to be buried, she heard from her divine Son these loving words, which St. Vincent Ferrer reports (*loc. cit.*, simile 5): "Come, my chosen one, and we will enter the tabernacle of glory, for the King of heaven has loved your pilgrim beauty."[4] So lively was the flame of love that these sweet words kindled in Mary's heart that, unable to resist any longer, she gave up her soul into the hands of her most loving Son, ending this temporal life and passing as in a sweet sleep to the eternal one; for she did not die of any illness, says St. Albert the Great (*Moralia*), but by the force of her love of God.[5] This was the happy and blessed death of Mary Most Holy that our mother the Church celebrates today. This was the death of the most pure Virgin Mary, all full of joy and gladness, without pain, without fear and without the slightest sorrow.

7. Who would not want to obtain so happy a death? I do not doubt that all desire a happy death; but this is granted only to those who deserve it; that is, he who lives well dies well, and he who lives badly dies badly. To live a lax life and hope to be converted at the hour of death is rashness: it is not known that anyone has achieved it but one alone in the whole world.[6] And in view of this, can anyone rely on it? No, my brethren: let no one trust in anything but true amendment. There are many who trust in certain devotions; but devotions without amendment are nothing but illusions. Devotion to Mary Most Holy is the most powerful of all; but if the sinner does not hate his sins and will not leave his bad habits, let him not expect Mary Most Holy to take an interest in him; for to set the Mother to work for you \[*poner por empeño*, use her as an intercessor\] while at the same time despising her Son is the greatest disrespect that can be shown her. But if sinners truly repent and try to amend, then they may well trust in her protection.

8. Come, then, to her sacred feet with a contrite and sorrowful heart, and be sure that her help will not fail you. Let the blindest and most obstinate sinner seek her with repentance for his errors, for she is light and will enlighten him. Let the one who is filthy and stained with his impurities seek her with the deepest sorrow, for she is a crystal fountain and will wash him. Let the afflicted seek her with a humbled heart, for she is consolation itself and will relieve him. Let the poor man seek her with lively faith, for she is rich and will help him. In short, let us all seek her in all our needs, for she is the universal remedy and medicine. Let us seek her at all times and on all occasions, but especially on this most sacred day on which the Church celebrates her most happy death. Let us honour her on this blessed day, not with worldly, impure and sinful amusements, but with works of virtue and religion; for in this way we shall move her to obtain for us from her divine Son the help we need to die the death of the just. Amen.

Outline of the Plática for the Feast of the Assumption of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady

Assumpta est Maria in caelum (the Church, in the office of this day).

Mary has been taken up into heaven.

1. All fear death. Mary does not.

2. The desires Mary Most Holy had to die and go to heaven.

3. Mary's joy on learning that the hour had come.

4. The Apostles' sorrow. How Mary consoled them.

5. What does Mary say at the sight of Jesus?

6. The words of Jesus; the death of Mary.

7. Live well and you will have a good death.

8. Seek Mary, and you will find in her what you need.

---

[1] Rev. 21:27.

[2] 1 Sam. 28:19–20 (Vulg. 1 Kings).

[3] St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 2 Corinthians* 10, paraphrased.

[4] St. John Damascene, *Homilies on the Dormition* II; Simeon Metaphrastes, *Oratio de Dormitione*.

[5] Cf. Ps. 44 (45):12 (Vulg.) and the antiphons of the feast ("Veni, electa mea…").

[6] St. Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God* VII, 13–14.

[7] The good thief (Luke 23:40–43).

65. The Nativity of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady (8 September)

Vol. I, pp. 404–409. Reading for the Sunday before the feast; Reading for the feast; Outline. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of the Nativity of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady

On … of this week the Church celebrates the feast of the birth of Mary Most Holy, our Mother and Lady; it is a holy day of obligation, which you are bound to keep.

You must celebrate this day with solemnity and joy. If the birthday of a king or queen of the earth is celebrated with finery, pomp and rejoicing, much more should it be so at the birth of Mary, who is Queen of heaven and earth; but this pomp, finery and rejoicing must be more spiritual than bodily. I do not condemn your getting finer clothes and choicer meals on this day and on the other days when the feasts of Mary are celebrated; but it must not all be bodily: there must be its spiritual part. You must try to adorn the soul with the garments and ornaments of the virtues, of humility, purity, obedience, patience and charity; and give your soul its refreshment, or food, too, which is holy Communion. Since soul and body live together, it would be very ugly for the body to dress well and eat better while the soul went about in rags and died of hunger. And it would be worse still if on these days you stripped the soul of the virtues it had before and took its life with sins, as not a few Christians do, who on such days give themselves up to gambling, drink, dances, flirtations and other disorders in the towns and at lonely shrines. Woe to those who profane the feasts of Mary in this way! Do not you do so; on the contrary, strive to do good works in honour of Mary. Receive the holy Sacraments, say the Rosary and your other devotions, and you will obtain all the graces of Mary, and

afterwards glory. Amen.

Reading for the Feast of the Nativity of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady, 8 September

1. Today is the birthday of the most holy Virgin Mary, on which we must give infinite thanks to God because the Mother of our Redeemer and Deliverer has now been born. When the dawn has broken, it is a sign that the sun will soon rise. For more than four thousand years the world had lain buried and wrapped in the darkness of sin, and the birth of this sovereign Child was the first light that began to scatter the darkness and to illumine the whole world. Our mother Eve filled the whole world with mourning, and this newborn Child turned into joy for us the sadness our first mother caused us. As the dawn is the end of night, so this birth was the end of our evils and the beginning of our goods. And this is what I am going to show you in this short discourse, namely, that the birth of Mary Most Holy was the origin of our happiness and our consolation. Listen to me for a moment.

2. This illustrious Child was born of aged and barren parents, and so her birth was a miraculous one. Her parents, St. Joachim and St. Anne, were of royal blood and of the priestly family, and consequently Mary Most Holy descended from the greatest nobility and splendour known in the world, namely, from kings and priests. And so it was fitting, since she was to be raised to the greatest of all dignities and greatness, which is to be Mother of God. But what makes this Lady truly great and noble is not the brilliance of her blood but her holiness and virtue. She was not born, like other living beings, stained with original sin, but all pure, all clean, all holy and beautified with the splendours of grace. Nor could she who was destined to be Mother of God himself be born in any other way. It is true that Mary Most Holy was not born surrounded by pomp and splendour like the great ones of the world; but her birth far surpasses the birth of all the great and of all the kings of the earth. Kings are conceived in sin and born out of God's favour, like all other mortals; but Mary Most Holy, by a special privilege, is born adorned with grace and enriched with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is true greatness, and this is how God honours those he wishes to honour.

3. The soul of Mary Most Holy was the most beautiful God ever created, apart from that of Jesus Christ; but he made it far more beautiful still by sanctifying it at the same moment as he united it to her body; and with grace she received at the same time the perfect use of reason, and from then on her understanding was enlightened with all the lights of wisdom above all the Angels and Saints. Are the great ones of the world and the most powerful monarchs born like this? No, dearly beloved brethren. We have already said that they are born enemies of God through original sin, without the use of reason and for a long time without the capacity to do any good. It is true that at their birth kings are paid the greatest honours and homage; but at that time they are incapable of doing their courtiers any favour or benefit. Not so Mary Most Holy: at the very instant of her birth she was already endowed with reason, discretion and the capacity to grant any benefit. So great is her power with God from the very instant of her birth that she alone can do us more and greater benefits than all the Saints together. That is why St. Epiphanius says that Mary Most Holy is our only hope after Jesus Christ; "the remedy of all evils," says St. Bonaventure; and "our good Mother," says St. Ephrem.[1]

4. All the holy Fathers say with one voice that Mary Most Holy is the treasurer of God's treasures, the distributor of the Lord's graces and benefits, and the dispenser of the Redeemer's mercies. She turns away from the heads of her dear children the evil temptations stirred up by the enemy of salvation; she frees them from the snares the devil has spread everywhere, and she brings us out of all the dangers to which we are so exposed in this vale of miseries. If we consider Mary Most Holy in herself, we shall find that from her birth everything about her is an object of wonder to the Angels themselves: her graces, her virtues, her holiness, her merits, her glory and her privileges; but above all, the privilege of having been chosen among all women to be Mother of God. All this compels the veneration and respect of the Angels. If we consider her in her relations with us, she is our Queen, our Mother, our advocate and our defender. What, then, must be our

reverence for her who is in a certain way all-powerful, as St. Bernard calls her?

5. If the Angels pay her homage from the instant she appeared on earth and acknowledged her as their Queen, what must we do? But besides being our Queen, she is also our Protectress and the channel through which all graces are to come to us; for God wills that all the favours he is to do us should pass through the hands of Mary Most Holy, as St. Bernard says (*Sermon on the Nativity*). From this you can know how much it matters to us to obtain the protection and good offices of the most holy Virgin. We can obtain no grace without her mediation; and on the contrary, with her favour we can obtain everything. Even if she had not been chosen to be Mother of God, and even if her Son had not placed all his treasures in her hands, nevertheless, by the merits of her life alone, her intercession would be almost all-powerful, and a single word from her lips would avail far more with God than all the prayers of all the Saints together.

6. How much greater, then, must her power be, since she is Mother of God and the general treasurer of all his graces! And indeed, Mary Most Holy is always at the side of her dear Son, asking grace and pardon for sinners. And can there be anyone who does not have the greatest devotion to Mary Most Holy? Can there be anyone who fails to fast on the vigils of her feasts? "He who hears the Virgin named, let him not ask whether he must fast," the true devotees of Mary are accustomed to say. Make it your custom to fast on the vigil of all the feasts of the Virgin, and young women particularly; and not only on the vigils but also on every Saturday, since these are days dedicated to the most holy Virgin; for this is a devotion very pleasing to that sovereign Lady and a very effective means of obtaining her protection. If anyone finds himself without devotion to Mary Most Holy, he may well give himself up for lost, for one of the principal signs of damnation is to have no devotion to the most holy Virgin. "Everyone who serves Mary Most Holy worthily," says St. Bonaventure, "will be justified and saved; but he who takes no care to serve her will die in his sins and be damned." "No one will be saved except through Mary," says St. Germanus. There is no saint in heaven who was not very devoted to the most holy Virgin. But do not think that devotion to Mary Most Holy consists simply in fasting and saying some prayers to her while at the same time living in sin day after day. Do not believe any such thing, my brethren: those are false and deceptive devotions.

7. For although it is certain that Mary Most Holy is the refuge, the protection, the consolation and the all of sinners, this is to be understood of sinners who acknowledge their state, who hate their sins and wish to be converted, and not of those obstinate ones who go on sinning and sinning more. Do you want to leave your sins? Do you want to amend? Then trust in Mary Most Holy, for she will obtain for you sorrow, purpose of amendment, repentance and all the helps you need for a good confession. This Mother of mercy hates sin just as her divine Son does; but she tenderly loves repentant sinners. Hate, then, O sinner, whoever you are, hate your sins from your heart and commend yourself truly to Mary Most Holy, for it is then her business to obtain your pardon. If on your part you are willing to be converted and amend, this good Mother will not abandon you until she brings you to the eternal tabernacles of glory. Amen.

Outline of the Plática for the Feast of the Nativity of Mary Most Holy, Our Mother and Lady, 8 September

Nativitas tua, Dei Genitrix Virgo, gaudium annuntiavit universo mundo (the Church in her office).

Your birth, O Virgin Mother of God, has announced joy to the whole world.

1. Let us thank God for having sent us this dawn.

2. Descended from kings and priests. She is born without stain, and adorned with…

3. She has the use of reason even before she is born.

4. She is the treasurer of graces, the one who helps and…

5. The Angels pay her homage… what shall we do?

6. Honour Mary with fasting and other privations.

7. Mary is the mother of sinners who wish to amend.

---

[1] Cf. St. Alphonsus Liguori, *The Glories of Mary*.

66. The Feast of the Most Holy Rosary

Vol. I, pp. 410–415. Reading for the Sunday before the feast; Reading for the feast; Outline. Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of the Most Holy Rosary

Next Sunday the feast of the Most Holy Rosary is celebrated.

Prepare yourselves, dearly beloved brethren in Jesus Christ, for this great feast in honour of Mary. Get ready your beads or rosaries, which will be blessed for you, and so you will gain the many graces and indulgences that have been granted. Prepare your hearts too to receive the holy sacraments of Penance and Communion, since the most holy Virgin herself invites you with those tender words of holy Scripture: *Come, children, eat this bread…*[1]

Let us also practise the virtues she teaches us: charity, patience, meekness and prayer. By means of the virtues and of prayer we shall become very dear children of Mary Most Holy; by prayer we shall obtain from Jesus and Mary everything we need for soul and body, and to gain and reach the glory I wish you all. Amen.

Reading for the Feast of the Most Holy Rosary

1. In every age there have been proud and sacrilegious men who have tried to darken and stain the glories of our holy Religion, calling some mysteries into dispute and denying others. But if God has permitted these monsters of impiety, it has been to make those very mysteries they denied shine and glow all the more. If those offspring of hell let loose their infamous tongues in horrible blasphemies against the truths of the faith, the Lord God has also raised up virtuous and zealous men who defended his divine honour and confounded the perfidy of those wicked heretics. One of the outstanding men who most distinguished himself in this glorious defence was St. Dominic de Guzmán, by instituting and founding the holy Rosary as a safeguard against heresies and sins: *Velut singulare praesidium adversus haereses ac vitia*. This will be the subject of my short discourse and the object of your attention.

2. At the beginning of the twelfth century the southern provinces of France were flooded with a multitude of sects and errors, all of them offspring of the heresy of the Manichaeans, which in the eighth century had made its way from the East into our Europe, but under different names which they took either from their principal teachers or from the place where they most often lived. Under the name of the Albigensian heresy there was a monstrous mixture of almost all heresies. They took the name Albigensians from the city of Albi, one of the cities of the county of Toulouse in France, the cradle of that abominable sect. Among the multitude of errors those heretics spread in those unhappy provinces, one of the most horrible was to banish and blot out the worship and honours that Christians give to Mary Most Holy as Mother of God. They invented the most horrible calumnies to destroy the Church’s mind on the virginal purity of this sovereign Lady; they declared themselves with the greatest fury against the motherhood of this most pure Virgin. Their hellish errors spread so quickly that in a very short time they infected almost the whole of France and part of Spain, Italy and England, to such a degree that there was no age, sex or condition that did not little by little drink the deadly poison of that heresy.

3. St. Dominic de Guzmán, seeing with the greatest sorrow of heart the countless souls that were going to hell, resolved to stand up to and oppose with all his zeal the furious havoc the heresy was causing. And considering that its chief shots were aimed at staining the purity and dignity of the most sacred Virgin Mary, he had recourse to that sovereign Princess, imploring her grace, her help and her aid, and asking her to inspire him with the means he should use to destroy and wipe out those heresies. His petition was not without effect. Mary Most Holy, who never fails to hear her true devotees, appeared to the Saint and told him that, as the Angel's salutation had been as it were the beginning of the redemption of mankind, she wished it also to be the beginning of the conversion of the heretics. She commanded him to preach the holy Rosary and to make known the practice and form of this prayer, and she assured him that with this devotion alone he would see miraculous results in his labours and tasks, and an unbroken series of victories against the heresy.

4. The moment St. Dominic received this order from the Queen of heaven, he hastens to put it into effect. Going through the provinces and towns with untiring zeal, he preaches to them the greatness and excellence of the Mother of God, teaches them the method of saying the holy Rosary, and recommends this devotion to them as the most powerful for destroying heresies. And so abundant was the fruit he gathered from his labours that in a short time he saw the conversion of more than a hundred thousand heretics and the change of life of countless sinners, who, abandoning vice and taking the side of virtue, proclaimed everywhere the goodness and patronage of Mary Most Holy, thanking her for having freed them from so many evils through the practice of the holy Rosary.

5. Through this holy exercise Christendom was reformed, faith was quickened, hope was reborn, charity was rekindled; the faithful took fresh heart, errors disappeared everywhere, and the heresies vanished like smoke. Nor is this all: through the holy Rosary many signal victories have been won against the infidels, a handful of Christians defeating a multitude of Turks. But there is nothing to wonder at in this, my brethren, for the Rosary is the most precious prayer we can offer to God and to his most holy Mother, both because it is made up of the two principal prayers of the Church, which are the Our Father and the Hail Mary, and because the principal mysteries of our holy Religion are set among and mingled with them. Yes, beloved brethren: the Rosary is the most excellent devotion any Christian can practise, and the most effective antidote to errors, to heresies and to the satanic maxims of the impious and scandalous. *Velut singulare praesidium adversus haereses ac vitia*.

6. But when have safeguards and antidotes been more necessary than now? When have times as calamitous as these been seen? In former times heresies infested one province or another, one kingdom or another; but nowadays they have spread throughout the whole world. Everywhere errors are drunk like water, some from malice and others from ignorance. The impious and heretics have filled the whole earth with pestilent and poisoned books, full of perverse doctrines against Religion; and those who are not well instructed in Christian doctrine and well grounded in the truths of our holy faith will swallow the poison without recognising it. Unhappy and unfortunate is anyone who reads those hellish books, for they are written so slyly and in so deceptive a style that they will unsettle the best Christian.

7. So, my brethren, as times grow worse, we must redouble our supplications and prayers. Let us take the holy Rosary as our shield to defend ourselves from the many errors and heresies that surround us. Let us all be true devotees of the Mother of God, for she will defend us and bring us out of all our conflicts. The Rosary of Mary is a very powerful and very easy devotion, and at the same time very well suited to every kind of person: it can be said at home, on the hillside, on the road, and everywhere. But are there many good parents and good masters who say it every day with their children and servants? I do not doubt there will be many who practise this excellent work; but they will not practise it with the calm that is required for it to be pleasing to God and his most holy Mother. They say it in a rush and at a gallop, without attention, without recollection and without considering what they are saying. Well, my brethren, it is not enough to say the Rosary any old way: it must be said with reverence, remembering that one is speaking with Jesus and Mary;

slowly, to leave room for reflection and devout feelings; and with the heart accompanying the words. True devotion is not in the tongue but in the heart. Devotion that goes no further than the lips is a vain devotion: God does not hear it; on the contrary, he is usually offended by it and rejects it. He shows this very clearly in his holy Gospel when he says: "These honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Matt. 15:8). So let us not be of that kind, my brethren. Let us say the Rosary more with the heart than with the tongue, and so Mary Most Holy will hear us and will obtain from her divine Son all that is good for us to reach the eternal happiness of glory. Amen.

Outline of the Plática for the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary

Rosarium est… singulare praesidium adversus haereses ac vitia (the Church in the office of this day).

The Rosary is… a powerful and singular remedy against heresies and vices.

1. Virtues and truths that were attacked have shone all the more.

2. The Albigensians against Mary.

3. What St. Dominic did. What did the Virgin tell him?

4. What St. Dominic carried out, preaching the Rosary.

5. The effects of the Rosary… What is the Rosary?

6. The need we have of the Rosary today.

7. An exhortation to say the Rosary, and to say it well.

---

[1] Cf. Prov. 9:5 ("Come, eat my bread"), which the liturgy applied to Wisdom and to Mary.

67. All Saints and All Souls (1 and 2 November)

Vol. I, pp. 416–421. Reading for the Sunday before the feast; Reading for the feast; Outline. Translation reused from the separate All Saints edition (2026-10-30). Original preacher not named.

Reading for the Sunday before the Feast of All Saints

This … \[*El.*…: a blank for the weekday\] of the present week the Church celebrates the feast of All Saints. It is a feast of precept, which you are obliged to keep.

We should do two things to prepare for this holy solemnity. The first is to be grateful for how much the Saints have concerned themselves on our behalf. The second is to imitate their virtues and follow the good example they have given us, so that we may obtain the glory they have won.

On the day after All Saints the Church celebrates the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed. "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray to God for the souls in purgatory."[1]

So all of you, try to have the holy sacrifice of the Mass offered for their relief \[*en su sufragio*\]. Receive the holy Sacraments and offer your holy Communion for them. Pray the holy Rosary, give some alms, and do other good works. Think how glad you would be, if you were there, to have every possible good done for you. Then do it for them now, and afterwards the faithful will pray for you: as you do, so shall you find \[*tal harás, tal hallarás*: "you will reap what you sow"\].

Reading for the Day of All Saints, 1 November

1. Our mother the Church is grateful for the favours the Saints obtain for us in heaven. She also sees that there are not enough days in the year to give each Saint individually the veneration and homage that his

heroic virtues deserve. So she has set one day to celebrate solemnly the festival of All Saints together. Her purpose is that, out of regard for so many and such powerful intercessors, God may pour out the treasures of his mercy on us more abundantly and help us to imitate those most blessed souls. After this festival the Church has also established another solemnity, to pray for those souls who have left this life in the grace of God. Because they still owe certain debts to divine justice, they have not yet reached the heavenly homeland, and they are paying those debts in the terrible fire of purgatory. My aim, then, is to tell you something about the souls who rejoice in heaven and about those who suffer in purgatory. Listen to me for a moment.

2. The Saints who reign with Jesus Christ in heaven were once just what we are now, and we can come to be what they are now in heaven. Like us, they groaned in this valley of tears. They were subject to the same weaknesses, they had the same temptations, and they met the same difficulties and hindrances as we do. So just as they overcame every difficulty and temptation, we can overcome them too. The Saints had the same enemies as we have, and even more of them. They ran the same race as we do, and we have the same helps and the same weapons for victory that they had. The crown they won is the same one offered to us. The master we serve is the same, and the reward he promises us is also the same. Therefore, if we want to obtain it, we must follow in their footsteps and their example.

3. Perhaps you will say that the Saints did what they did because they were Saints, and that you cannot do it because you are not. No, my brethren, that is a poor way to reason. The Saints were not Saints in order to do what they did. Rather, by doing what they did, they became Saints. And we must do what they did if we want to be saved. Do not think that the Saints were some sort of extraordinary men and women. Certainly not. They had the same nature as we do, our same condition, our same state of life and our same occupation. In that blessed multitude of the blessed there are people of every class, every age, every nation and every trade: kings, popes, bishops, priests, religious, soldiers, married people, single people, widows and widowers, the young and the old, the rich and the poor. In short, there is no state of life or trade that has not had its Saints. Today we pay our homage \[*rendimos nuestras adoraciones*\][1] to the poor tradesman, the humble shepherd, the simple farmer, the sorrowful widow, the lowest servant and the most despised of the poor. In the midst of their labours and occupations, these knew how to become Saints by leading an innocent, devout and Christian life.

4. Today we venerate our relatives, our countrymen, our friends and acquaintances. They followed the same way of life \[*instituto*\] as we do and kept the very same rules that we have, with no more means or help than we have, and they knew how to save their souls. So what is stopping us from doing the same as they did? Do you know what? Our laziness, our lack of religion and our lack of the fear of God. In other words, we do not do what they did because we do not want to. Do not believe that the Saints became Saints by working miracles or by busying themselves with great and showy deeds \[*obras grandes y ruidosas*: literally “noisy”\]. No, my brethren. They could be Saints without that. St. John the Baptist is the greatest of all the Saints, and he is not known to have worked a single miracle. On the other hand, there are many in hell who did glorious deeds in the world and earned people’s applause. The Saints were Saints precisely because they fulfilled the duties of their state of life, kept the commandments of God and of the Church, set their conduct in order, and brought their passions and evil inclinations under control. That is all that is commanded of us.

5. The Saints had no other Religion and no other Gospel than ours. We have the same law as they had. It follows, then, that we must take the same road as they did if we want to reach the heavenly homeland. What, do you perhaps think that there is one road for the Saints and another for us? By no means. The road to heaven is the same for everyone. So if we do not go by the road the Saints took, we will necessarily go by the road of the damned. When the examples of the Saints are set before us for imitation, we are not asked to imitate them in the extraordinary things and astonishing penances they did. We are asked to fulfil our duties as they fulfilled theirs and to curb our bad habits, as I have already said. You are not commanded to work miracles like the Saints or to do the marvels they did, but to be humble. You are not commanded to give up

everything you have, as many Saints did, but for each of you to be content with what is his and not to touch anything that belongs to anyone else. You are not commanded to withdraw into a desert, as many Saints did, but to be at peace with everyone, to speak ill of no one, and to give no scandal with your tongue. You are not commanded to fast continually like the anchorites, but to fast when the Church commands it and never to eat or drink to excess. Are these things impossible, by any chance? Are they not quite easy to keep? Well, this is what is commanded of you, and if you keep it, you will certainly be saints. For you must not think that the only Saints are those who are canonized and whom we venerate on the altars. You should know that all who are saved are Saints.[2] And because not all of them are known, the Church has established this feast to honour them all together. That was the first point of my discourse. Now I will say a few words \[*cuatro palabras*: literally "four words"\] about the souls detained in purgatory.

6. God our Lord is most holy, most just and most pure, and he cannot admit anything stained into the kingdom of his glory. That is why, as soon as the rebel angels stained themselves with sin, they were at once cast out of heaven. By the same justice, those souls who leave this life without being wholly cleansed of the stains of their faults are sent to purgatory. But how severely they must pay in purgatory for not having made satisfaction in this life! Here, one can make satisfaction by penances, by indulgences and by a thousand other good works. But in purgatory there is no other satisfaction than the rigorous fire. It is a fire so devouring and so terrible that all the fire of this world, says St. Augustine, is no more than painted fire in comparison with it. However much I might try to say to make you understand a little of the very great deal the souls in purgatory suffer, it would be no more than a shadow of the reality. So I will be content to tell you that the torments of purgatory are the same as those of hell and differ in nothing except their duration. So the doctors and the holy Fathers of the Church assure us.

7. And who are the ones suffering those most dreadful torments? Your fathers and mothers, your children, your husbands, your wives, your relatives, and those friends you loved so much in the world. They are shut up in that prison of God's justice, and they have no other recourse \[*arbitrio*\] than to beg for your help. They are like people imprisoned for debts that they have no means of paying, who turn to their relatives and friends to pay for them. *Miseremini mei, saltem vos amici mei*: "Have pity on me, at least you my friends" (Job 19:21). "Remember us," those disconsolate souls cry out. "Have pity on us, at least you, our friends!" Oh, what an affront and what a shame for their relatives! Those most afflicted souls must turn to their friends, because they find no charity in their relatives. Can this happen among Christians? Is it possible that they should hope for more help from strangers than from their children, husbands and relatives? Whose heart would not break to see such inhumanity?

8. When a beast falls into a well, everyone runs to pull it out. And no one takes a single step to pull the souls out of the pit of purgatory! Well, my brethren, "with the same measure that you measure, you shall be measured," says the Holy Spirit (Luke 6:38). If you do not help the souls in purgatory, no one will help you when you are there. Handed over to the full rigour of divine justice, you will suffer those horrible pains for a very great number of years. But if your suffrages and prayers have the good fortune to free one soul from those dungeons, you can be quite sure that you will have a powerful mediator in heaven. Its prayers will obtain from the Lord that he spare you such fearful pains, or at least release you from them as quickly as possible. So let us not be cruel to the souls in purgatory, because all the good we do for them is done for ourselves as well. Let us commend ourselves fervently to all the Saints of the heavenly court, so that they may intercede for us. And let us pray without ceasing for the souls in purgatory, so that we may all be gathered together in that most happy dwelling of blessedness. Amen.

Outline of the Homily for 1 and 2 November, the Days of All Saints and of All Souls

Beati pauperes spiritu … quoniam ipsorum est regnum cælorum (Matth. v, 3).

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

1. The Church celebrates the feast of All Saints on one day. Why?

2. The Saints in heaven were what we are. Let us be what we ought to be.

3. They became holy by doing what they did.

4. Laziness and slackness keep us from doing what the Saints did.

5. They had the same Religion and Gospel as we have.

6. Nothing stained can enter heaven. Hell or purgatory.

7. Who are the souls in purgatory?

8. Let us help the souls …

---

[1] Vulgate: *sancta ergo et salubris est cogitatio pro defunctis exorare*.

[2] *latria*. *dulia*.

[3] Revelation 7:9.

68. Appendix: Two Instructions

Vol. I, pp. 422–430. Two instructions printed at the end of the volume, without a Reading/Outline frame: "On the Existence of Hell" and "Are the Wicked Happy and the Good Unfortunate?" Original preacher not named.

On the Existence of Hell

We have come to days so unhappy that people no longer think twice about uttering the greatest heresies. Our forefathers were horrified if by chance they heard some expression against the faith; and the bad Christians of today boast and make a show of speaking against Religion. They have the audacity to deny and contradict the clearest truths of our holy faith, and one of them is to say that there is no hell. It is a very shameful thing to have to prove with reasons truths revealed by God, as though his word were not enough; but we live in very lax times, and it is necessary to give bad Christians convincing reasons to undeceive them and bring them out of their error. I am going, then, to prove to you to the point of evidence that there is a hell, and to show you plainly the falsehood and lies of those who deny it.

In the first place, who are those who say there is no hell? The lax, bad Christians, heretics and the most abandoned people. And just because they say so, will there cease to be one? Does that breed of people deserve any credit? And what reasons do they give to prove what they say? That nobody has seen it. But that reason is very foolish. Have you seen Paris, Rome, and so on? Most likely not; and yet you believe those cities exist, because you have heard so and because everyone says so. Well, you have also always heard that there is a hell; and when everyone agrees on a point, it is a most certain thing, because it is the voice of nature, and for everyone to be deceived is impossible. But let us look at reasons.

First reason. We believe many things we have not seen, for no other reason than that men say so and that we find them written in the histories. Well then, will men speak more truth than God? Will human histories speak more truth than holy Scripture? Will those lying chatterers speak more truth than the wisest and holiest men ever born into the world? So if you believe the one, why should you not believe the other? That is to show oneself a fool, lacking in reason, with a blind and obstinate heart.

Second reason. Others say that nobody has come back from there to tell us there is a hell. But has anyone come to say there is not? Let us suppose for a moment that the matter remains in doubt: what must every prudent man do in a matter of such importance? What do reason and prudence dictate? That we follow the

safest course, the one that carries no risk. Is that not so? And what is the safest? Clearly, to follow what everyone has followed and to believe what has always been believed. In this there is no risk: in believing that there is a hell nothing is lost, and in not believing it, much will be lost. If one believes, and lives according to what one believes, one will gain an eternity of goods and happiness; and if one does not believe, one will lose that eternity of goods and gain an eternity of evils, sorrows and pains.[1] You will understand it better by an example. If one of you were coming back from a fair with a great sum of money, and you were told that on such a road everyone was being robbed, but that on another there was not a single thief and one could travel in complete safety, which would you choose? Is it not certain you would go by the safest road? Then let reason prevail, my brethren: if human prudence behaves like this in temporal interests, is it not just and right that it should behave the same way in eternal ones? Anyone can see it.

Third reason. Other heretics say, "the dog dead, the rabies dead" \[*muerto el perro, muerta la rabia*: once the dog is dead, the trouble is over\], that is, that our soul dies with the body. Well, in that case we shall be just the same as the beasts. But do we not differ from the beasts? Are we not nobler creatures than they? We improve what we do; what we have done on one occasion we undo on another in order to change and improve it. But the beasts always do what they do in the same way: bees always make honeycombs in one fashion, and birds always build their nests in the same way. Animals have never been seen to change or improve their works; this is a sign that they do not have reason as we do, for reason is in the soul. I do not want to go on longer about this proof, for it would be an insult to those who have the use of reason, and because anyone knows there is a great difference between us and the beasts, and that in us there are many properties and perfections not found in the beasts.

Fourth reason. If there is no hell, there is no God either. And if there is no God, who created the heavens, the stars, the sun, the moon, the world, the seas and all the rest? Someone must have created them. And he who created all that, that is God. So if there is a God, there must of necessity be a hell, for God cannot fail to reward the good and punish the wicked. But let us explain this great proof a little further, and that will be the

Fifth reason. God is infinitely good, holy and just, and must of necessity love what is good and hate what is evil. If there were no hell, God would not be just, for he would neither reward the good nor punish the wicked. And the wicked, who spend their whole life only in stealing, lusting, cursing and talking filth, were they to be left like that? And the good, who all their life are insulted, persecuted and despised, and see nothing but miseries and toils, were they too to be left like that? Were they to have no reward for their sufferings? Do not believe such nonsense. Even men, wicked as they are, are accustomed to pay and reward the services done for them; and was God, being so good, to be less than men? Can this fit with God's goodness? No, my brethren: God is most just, and he will give each one what he deserves. Now we see that he does not carry this out in this life, for the wicked commonly triumph and the good are despised; so it is clear that there must be another life, in which the good will triumph and the wicked will be punished; so it is clear that God keeps reward and punishment for the other life. What goes on and happens in the world, which seems disorder to us, God permits in order to give us a clear proof that there is another life after this one, that our soul will never die, that there is a hell and a heaven; and in this way all things will be set in their order. For there is no doubt that the good must be rewarded and the wicked tormented, and there is no other reward than heaven and no other punishment than hell.

Sixth reason. If there is no hell, why do we have such horror of death? No other proofs or reasons are needed. This fear we all have of death, this dread we feel within our hearts, is the voice of reason; it is nature itself telling us that after death something else awaits us.

Do not think that those who say there is no hell have stopped believing in it, for what has always been believed and what everyone has believed cannot be uprooted from the heart. They do not say what is true, but what they wish: that is, they would like there to be no hell so that they could live as they please, sin with complete freedom and have nothing to fear. But the worm of conscience always warns and gnaws; and this

very way of talking comes from the fact that the thought of hell troubles them, and they want to console themselves and find some relief by saying there is no hell. But what a sad consolation and what a wretched resource! How different is what the heart says!

The governments of the earth have their prisons to punish those who will not obey the laws; and was the supreme Governor of heaven and earth not to have his dungeon for those who will not keep his law? Only a madman or a fool will say so. But although the reasons and proofs given are so convincing that they leave not the slightest doubt, faith is nevertheless much more evident; and without faith it is impossible to please God, says holy Scripture (Heb. 11:6). Even if someone is convinced by reasons, if he does not believe the truths because God has revealed them, he will have no merit before the Lord and will not obtain salvation. What then? Having infused into us a virtue as noble and excellent as faith, was God to want us to keep it idle? Certainly not, my brethren. The proof of submission and docility we give God by our faith, that is, by believing what is not seen, is a very great merit and very pleasing to his divine Majesty. And finally, hold to the saying of the ancients about hell: "better to believe it than to go and see it."

Are the Wicked Happy and the Good Unfortunate?

Recordare quia recepisti bona in vita tua (Luke 16:25).[1]\

Remember that you received good things during your life.

Seeing that bad Christians usually seem happy in this world and the good unfortunate causes such astonishment in some that they almost come to waver in the faith and to doubt God's providence. This is how they put it: "Those who will not hear Mass, or keep any feast day, or go to confession, or receive Communion, we see rich; their fields are not hailed on, they have no misfortunes with their cattle or their mules, and everything turns out just as they like. And those who are good Christians and keep God's law, everything turns out badly for them, and it is all misfortunes and toils. What is the reason for this?" So speak those who do not go deeply into God's designs; but I am going to show you why it happens so. And to proceed clearly, we will take it part by part.

In the first place, who are these good Christians who keep God's law? They are so few that there will hardly be one in a hundred. It is true that there are many who do not dare to leave God's law altogether; but they keep it only by halves. They have their heart divided between God and the world; they take more care over their interests than over keeping God's law; they think nothing of breaking feast days and other precepts to attend to their interests. In short, they would like to serve God, but they serve the world and self-interest more. And because people see that these go to Mass and do other works of religion, they take them for Christians and for good ones. Well, know that these are Christians hateful to God, abominable in his divine eyes, and they cause him such disgust that he vomits them out of his mouth. So God himself says in the most express words: *Utinam frigidus esses aut calidus; sed quia tepidus es, incipiam te evomere ex ore meo* (Apoc. 3:15–16). Would that you were cold or hot, says the Lord; that is to say, would that you were either a good Christian through and through, or nothing at all; but because you are lukewarm, that is, neither wholly good nor wholly bad, I will cast you out of my mouth like vomit. For God does not want half a heart but the whole of it, since it is all his. See how disgusting to God is that kind of Christian who is neither properly one thing nor properly the other.

But since those Christians have not altogether abandoned religion and the law of God, the Lord still seems to look on them with some mercy and wishes them to be converted; and so he sends them scourges, toils, misfortunes and blows so that they may wake up, open their eyes and amend, just as a good father who loves his children punishes them so that they may not be lost. Those who are wholly wicked and want no Masses, feasts, vigils or religion, he no longer looks on, so to speak, as children; he has already abandoned them. And as he has them destined to be firebrands of hell, he gives them their fill in this life, because they are to suffer

a raging hunger for all eternity; he gives them riches here, because they are to be eternally poor; he will not punish them here, because these punishments are too small for them, and he wants to punish them with punishments and torments that will never end.[2] And are the good fortunes of the wicked to be envied? On the other hand, God is most just to infinity, and never fails to reward the smallest good work, even if the wickedest man in the world does it. An act of charity, a favour they do, an alms or any good thing they practise, God never leaves without reward; but he rewards it with the goods of this world; he pays it with things that are to last a short time, with things which, although the self-seeking and covetous think them great, are in reality smoke, rubbish and nothing.

The prosperity of the wicked is a punishment very much to be feared, for riches and plenty in those who do not keep religion blind them and lull them to sleep in such a way that they do not recognise their bad state or the danger that threatens them: *Excaeca cor populi hujus* ("Blind the heart of this people," Isa. 6:10).

Continual good fortune is usually a sign of reprobation. The riches of the wicked are "the biscuits of the hanged" \[*bizcochos de ahorcados*: the last indulgences given to the condemned\]. For just as those who are to be executed are granted whatever they ask during the days they are in the condemned chapel \[*en capilla*\], because their life is then to be taken from them, so the Lord grants the wicked whatever they desire in this life, because he is to torment them eternally in the other. St. Gregory compares the fortunate of this world to oxen left to fatten for slaughter, which are given the best treatment and led to the best pastures because they are destined for the slaughterhouse.[3] If we had any faith and religion, we should recognise that the prosperity and riches of this world are no great thing, or rather that they must be a great evil, since God grants them to those he most hates, who are the wicked.

Finally, let us consider those words of the Gospel: *Recepisti bona in vita tua*: remember that you had many good things while you lived. That unhappy rich miser, seeing himself so cheated at the hour of his death, so poor and so wretched, cried out from hell and begged Abraham at least to send him a drop of water to cool his tongue; and Abraham answered him: "Remember that if you burn now, you were full of riches during your life." But the wretch said to him: "My riches came to an end with death, and now they serve me only for greater torments: I am the poorest and most wretched there could be." "True," Abraham answered him, "but for you there will be nothing else. You have already received what was your due, you are already paid; you have nothing more to hope for." Who will envy that unhappy rich man? Who will envy the prosperity and good fortune of the wicked?

Let us now say a couple of words about the good. Those who are wholly good and perfectly Christian are not surprised at being afflicted; they make nothing of these things, for they know that they are effects and punishments of sin, and that all are dispositions of the Most High to test and purify them in this world. It is true that human nature smarts under evils and toils; but those who have a living faith conform themselves to God's will, bear them with patience, and console themselves with knowing that those toils and misfortunes are not sins, but rather the steps for climbing to heaven. Glory here and glory there cannot be: to rejoice in paradise, one must suffer in this exile. Those who are predestined to heaven must be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29); this divine Lord was poor, full of toils and despised, and so his disciples must be too. If God afflicts them, it is not to ruin and destroy them, but to make them happier.

If there were no other life than the present one, perhaps those good fortunes so much craved in the world might still be desired; but if we seriously consider that all this must come to an end, and that another, longer life awaits us, it seems to me that anyone will try to secure what is worth more and what is to last for ever, and will rather suffer little than much. If not, tell me: what would you prefer, to be poor for ten years and afterwards very rich for eighty, or, on the contrary, rich for ten years and poor for eighty? Which would you more gladly choose, to be imprisoned in a dungeon ten years or eighty? Is it not true you would choose the lesser evil? Would you not bear ten years of poverty and prison better than eighty? Would you not gladly give up a hundred duros to obtain a thousand? Then apply this to what happens with regard to this life and

the life to come: what is here is very short, and what is there is very long; what is here is very little, and what is there is a very great deal. Plenty and riches in those who do not keep God's law are signs of damnation. But men are so dull that they are blinded by the present and take no account of the future; they listen to bad advice more readily than to good; they envy the gains and advancement of the wicked, and despise the virtues of the good. But what a disappointment they will have at the hour of truth!

So, my brethren, if you want to be eternally happy, respect and revere the dispositions of God. Do not envy those bad Christians you see prospering, but pity them and have compassion on them, for they are already receiving all their pay in this life, and afterwards an eternity of sorrows awaits them; and the toils and misfortunes of the just are to purge them in this world and to make them enjoy an eternity of delights afterwards. Everything that happens in the world, and that seems to us disorder and injustice, is an evident sign and a continual proof the Lord gives us that our soul is immortal. For what is beyond doubt is that the wicked must be punished and the good rewarded; heaven and earth will pass away before this fails to happen. Now we see that in this life this is not fulfilled; rather, the very opposite usually happens. So it is a clear and evident sign that the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the good are reserved for after death.

We have a very clear example in the rich miser and poor Lazarus, of whom the Gospel tells us: poor Lazarus died, and the Angels carried him to the glory of heaven; the rich man died, and the devils snatched him away to the torments of hell. Let us, then, now address to him those other words of the Gospel: *Quid prodest homini, si mundum universum lucretur, animae vero suae detrimentum patiatur?* (Matt. 16:26). What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? What does it profit that rich man now to have feasted himself in this world, to have lived in pomp and plenty, if now he has nothing to eat or to wear, nor even a drop of water to cool his tongue? What use are all his riches to him now? The rich man himself already gave the answer to the patriarch Abraham: for greater sorrows and torments. This is where the happiness, the fortunes and the plenty of those who do not keep God's law faithfully come to an end.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

---

[4] This is a form of the "wager" argument (cf. Pascal, *Pensées*).

[1] The verse is Luke 16:25, *Recordare quia recepisti bona in vita tua*.

[2] 1 Tim. 2:4.

[3] The image is traditional (cf. St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*).

69. Index of the Readings and Outlines Contained in This First Volume

Vol. I, pp. 431–434. The volume's own index, translated; the page numbers are those of the printed Spanish volume. Original preacher not named.

- Prologue to the venerable Parish Priests, Curates and other Priests — p. 5

- For announcing the feasts — p. 9

- Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity — p. 9

- Calendar for announcing the feasts of each week — p. 11

- Reading for the First Sunday of Advent — p. 27

- Outline: On the final judgment — p. 34

- Reading for the Second Sunday of Advent — p. 35

- Outline: On the virtues of the early Christians — p. 41

- Reading for the Third Sunday of Advent — p. 43

- Outline: On pride — p. 47
- Reading for the Fourth Sunday of Advent — p. 48
- Outline: On penance — p. 53
- Reading for the Sunday within the octave of Christmas — p. 54
- Outline: That the Gospel must be the rule of our faith — p. 60
- Reading for the Sunday between the Circumcision and Epiphany — p. 61
- Outline: On the obligation of fathers and mothers towards their children — p. 66
- Reading for the Sunday within the octave of Epiphany — p. 67
- Outline: On the obligation of children towards their parents — p. 71
- Reading for the Second Sunday after Epiphany — p. 73
- Outline: On marriage — p. 81
- Reading for the Third Sunday after Epiphany — p. 82
- Outline: On sin and the evils it brings with it — p. 86
- Reading for the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany — p. 88
- Outline: On temptations — p. 92
- Reading for the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany — p. 93
- Outline: On presumption on the goodness and mercy of God — p. 97
- Reading for the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany — p. 98
- Outline: On the word of God — p. 101
- Reading for the Septuagesima Sunday — p. 102
- Outline: On the importance of salvation — p. 106
- Reading for the Sexagesima Sunday — p. 107
- Outline: On hardness of heart — p. 112
- Reading for the Quinquagesima Sunday — p. 113
- Outline: On intemperance, or excess in eating and drinking — p. 117
- Reading for the First Sunday of Lent — p. 118
- Outline: On abstinence and fasting — p. 123
- Reading for the Second Sunday of Lent — p. 124
- Outline: On the commandments of God — p. 128
- Reading for the Third Sunday of Lent — p. 129
- Outline: On the sin of impurity — p. 135
- Reading for the Fourth Sunday of Lent — p. 136
- Outline: On confession — p. 141
- Reading for the Passion Sunday — p. 142

- Outline: On contrition — p. 146
- Reading for the Palm Sunday — p. 147
- Outline: On the dispositions for Communion, and on bad communions — p. 152
- Reading for the Good Friday — p. 153
- Reading for the Easter Sunday — p. 156
- Outline: On the Resurrection of Jesus Christ — p. 159
- Reading for the Low Sunday — p. 160
- Outline: On relapse into sin — p. 163
- Reading for the Second Sunday after Easter — p. 166
- Outline: On the causes of sin, and the remedy against it — p. 170
- Reading for the Third Sunday after Easter — p. 171
- Outline: On trials — p. 177
- Reading for the Fourth Sunday after Easter — p. 178
- Outline: On the injury sin does to God, and the evils it causes man — p. 182
- Reading for the Fifth Sunday after Easter — p. 184
- Outline: On prayer — p. 188
- Reading for the Sunday within the octave of the Ascension — p. 189
- Outline: On the Sacraments in general — p. 194
- Reading for the Pentecost Sunday — p. 195
- Outline: On the restoration of the faith — p. 202
- Reading for the Most Holy Trinity Sunday — p. 203
- Outline: On Baptism — p. 211
- Reading for the Sunday within the octave of Corpus Christi — p. 213
- Outline: On holy Mass — p. 218
- Reading for the Third Sunday after Pentecost — p. 219
- Outline: On hope in the mercy of God — p. 224
- Reading for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 225
- Outline: On the importance of salvation — p. 229
- Reading for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 230
- Outline: On the spirit of Christianity — p. 234
- Reading for the Sixth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 235
- Outline: On almsgiving — p. 241
- Reading for the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost — p. 242
- Outline: On conversion, which some put off to old age — p. 246

- Reading for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 247
- Outline: On confession — p. 251
- Reading for the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 252
- Outline: On respect for churches — p. 256
- Reading for the Tenth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 257
- Outline: On satisfaction — p. 261
- Reading for the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost — p. 262
- Outline: On the sin of the tongue — p. 266
- Reading for the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 267
- Outline: On the love of God — p. 273
- Reading for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 274
- Outline: On sins of such enormity that God casts us off — p. 279
- Reading for the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 280
- Outline: On trust in Providence — p. 284
- Reading for the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 285
- Outline: That conversion must not be put off to the hour of death — p. 290
- Reading for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 291
- Outline: On the unhappy death of sinners — p. 297
- Reading for the Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 298
- Outline: On avarice, or the disordered love of money — p. 303
- Reading for the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 304
- Outline: On bad habits — p. 308
- Reading for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 309
- Outline: On the pains of hell — p. 314
- Reading for the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 315
- Outline: On faith — p. 320
- Reading for the Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost — p. 321
- Outline: On love of neighbour — p. 327
- Reading for the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost — p. 328
- Outline: On purgatory — p. 333
- Reading for the Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost — p. 334
- Outline: On the happy death of the just — p. 340
- Reading for the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost — p. 341
- Outline: The severity of God’s justice on earth and in hell — p. 346

- Readings for the feasts of the mysteries of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of the most holy Virgin Mary. Reading for the Sunday before each of the four Ember Days of the year — p. 347

- Reading. Exhortation to be given on the Sunday before the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy — p. 349

- Reading for 8 December, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Most Holy — p. 350

- Outline — p. 355

- Reading for the Sunday before Christmas — p. 356

- Reading for 25 December, the feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ — p. 357

- Outline — p. 361

- Reading for the Sunday before the Circumcision — p. 362

- Reading for the first day of the year, the day of the Circumcision of the Lord — p. 363

- Outline — p. 367

- Reading for the Sunday before the feast of the Holy Kings — p. 368

- Reading for the day of the Holy Kings — p. 369

- Outline — p. 373

- Reading for the Sunday before the feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary, 2 February — p. 374

- Reading for the feast of the Purification of Mary Most Holy, 2 February — p. 375

- Outline — p. 379

- Reading for the Sunday before the feast of the Annunciation of Mary Most Holy, 25 March — p. 380

- Reading for the feast of the Annunciation of Mary Most Holy, 25 March — p. 381

- Outline — p. 385

- Reading for the Sunday before the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ — p. 386

- Reading for the feast of the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ — p. 387

- Outline — p. 391

- Reading for the Sunday before the feast of Corpus Christi — p. 392

- Reading for the feast of Corpus Christi — p. 393

- Outline — p. 397

- Reading for the Sunday before the feast of the Assumption of Mary Most Holy, our Mother and Lady — p. 398

- Reading for the feast of the Assumption of Mary Most Holy, our Mother and Lady, 15 August — p. 399

- Outline — p. 403

- Reading for the Sunday before the feast of the Nativity of Mary Most Holy, our Mother and Lady — p. 404

- Reading for the feast of the Nativity of Mary Most Holy, our Mother and Lady, 8 September — p. 405

- Outline — p. 409

- Reading for the Sunday before the feast of the Most Holy Rosary — p. 410

- Reading for the feast of the Most Holy Rosary — p. 411

- Outline — p. 415

- Reading for the Sunday before the feast of All Saints — p. 416

- Reading for the day of All Saints, 1 November — p. 417

- Outline — p. 421

- On the existence of hell — p. 422

- Are the wicked happy and the good unfortunate? — p. 426

END OF THE INDEX OF THE FIRST VOLUME.