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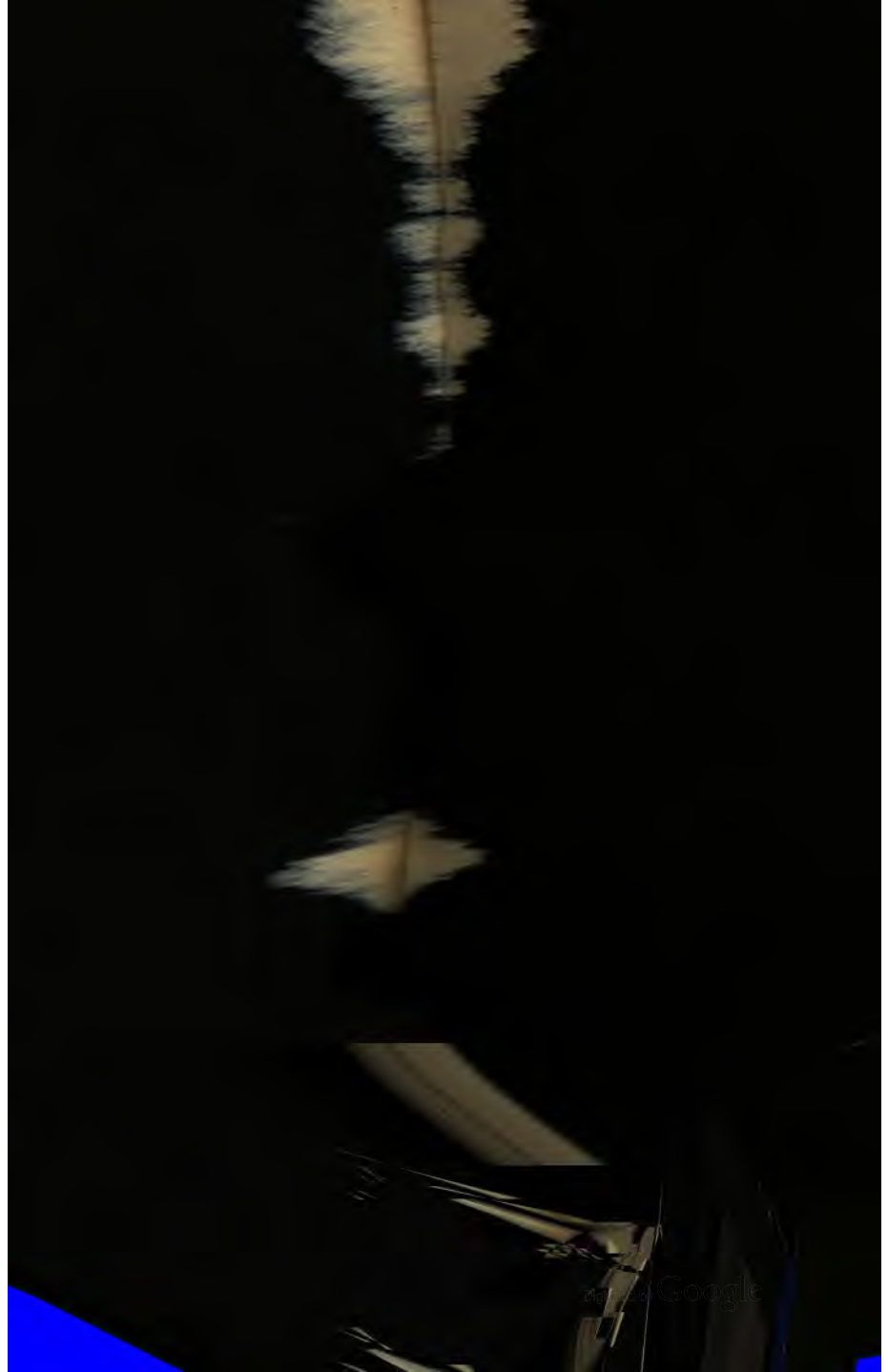
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MANNA OF THE SOUL.

Meditations for every Day of the Year.

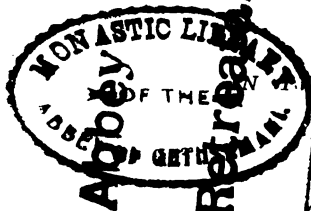
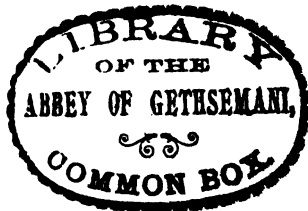


FATHER PAUL SEGNERI.

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Second Edition.



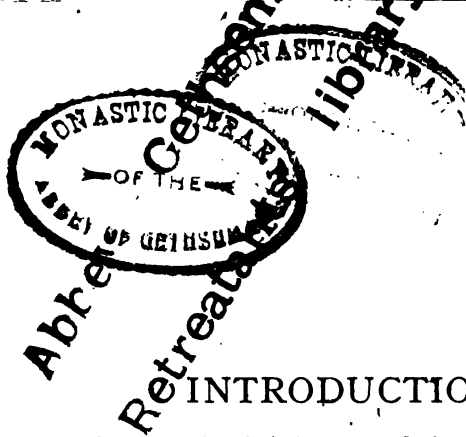
TWO VOLUMES.



NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO:
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Printers to the Holy Apostolic See.

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INTRODUCTION.

Prefixed to the Original Work by Father Segneri.

YOU, who take up this little book, ought not to lay it aside without just making yourselves acquainted with the object it is intended to subserve, otherwise you run the chance of being like the Hebrews, who, under the impulse of a strong curiosity, went forth to examine for the first time the promised manna, and before they had yet tasted it, treated it disdainfully, asking, "What is this?"—*Quid est hoc?* "for they knew not what it was"—*ignorabant enim quid esset*.¹

I take it for granted that you are one of "number of those who, on the one hand, are fully alive to the necessity of assiduous prayer, that food without which the soul quickly languishes and dies, but who, on the other hand, either from the pressure of business, or some defect of head or hardness of heart, never rise to the heights of contemplation, and have never even set foot in that delicious land whereof the Lord spoke when He said, "I swore in My wrath they shall not enter into My rest"—*Juravi in ira mea si introibunt in requiem meam*,² nor ordinarily, except at rarest intervals, catch a glimpse even of mere meditation, the agent which sends forward the scouts to spy out the riches of

¹ Exodus xvi. 15.

² Psalm xciv. 11.

that famous land. In this book, then, you will find a condiment suited to your state, which can serve you for food during your sojourn in the wilderness.

When you offer up every morning, as you ought to do, the first-fruits of the day just given you by God, you should select some text from Scripture, which, like food of a choicer sort, shall contain much nutriment in a small bulk, and then placing yourself—on your knees, if you can, and if you cannot, in some respectful attitude—before the throne of God, you should proceed mentally to ruminate it, bit by bit, until it is wholly disintegrated, and thus be able all the better to make proof of its flavour and extract its juices. Depend upon it that before long you will succeed in realizing for yourself a manna; for to manna was given the name, at one time of “the Word of the Lord,”¹ at another, of “the word that goeth forth from the mouth of God,”² and at another, of “every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God”³—*Sermo Domini, Verbum quod egreditur de ore Dei, Verbum quod procedit de ore Dei*; and though in bulk extremely small, “as a coriander seed”⁴—*quasi semen coriandri*, it was not swallowed whole by the generality of the people, but before being eaten was brayed in a mill or mortar, and as far as possible “ground to atoms”⁵—*tereatur*. You should apply yourself, then, to analysing this text, part by part, in order to arrive at the depths of its truth, being well assured that nothing superfluous ever issued from the mouth of God, that no single part was out of proportion with the rest, and that no word was inappropriate. Next, what you have reverently accepted as of faith, you should, if you possibly can, convince yourself of by proofs, derived either from examples taken from the

¹ Wisdom xvi. 26.

² Deut. viii. 3.

³ St. Matt. iv. 4.

⁴ Numbers xi. 7.

⁵ Numbers xi. 8.

same pages that furnished the text, or from its consonance with reason, or its intrinsic conformity with right. You should then consider what rules can be extracted from it for the guidance of your life. And finally, you should give vent to those feelings of confusion, compunction, fear, gratitude, joy, praise, admiration, love, or gratitude which the argument supplies ; but above all, if care for your salvation has any weight with you, omit not to conclude with the humble prayer, which is that which shall make your thoughts rich indeed.

Having completed this exercise in the time, more or less ample, allotted for it, you should not dismiss the text altogether from your thoughts, but keep it imaged in your mind, the remains, as it were, of the manna stored away to keep, so that you may be able, from time to time during the day, if not to ruminate, at all events to repeat and recall to memory, in like manner as was done with the surplus manna, which was stored up for all time in the tabernacle, not for the purposes of food, but as a perpetual memorial.

In order, then, that I may be able to apply to your soul this life-giving restorative, I came to the determination to put together, as soon as it pleased God to permit me, such a supply as would be sufficient to feed you for the entire year. But since my failing strength will not allow of more, I beg of you to accept it in four instalments of three months each, of which I now tender the first for your perusal. For every day you can without trouble find its own appropriate text for digestion, clean, succulent, and wholesome, and consequently not appealing wholly to the intellect. Moreover, you will find it confined not to one class alone more than another, but ranging over all manner of persons and conditions, so as to adapt itself, as far as possible,

to all palates, all conditions, all temperaments, and all stomachs, provided only that they are able to digest such solid food as the Scriptures, which are here quoted word by word from the Latin version. And as throughout the year certain festivals occur which have special attractions for the devotion of the heart, you will find a repast prepared and adapted to such occasions, but one which shall also, like all the rest, keep the practical end in view.

It is true I probably have been I know not whether to say too full or too prolix in the particular explanations of the texts in question. But however this be, you will not lay it to my charge, for you are well aware that those who are most anxious to attain to conciseness in their writings are frequently accused of using a wretched and beggarly pen ; although, to tell the truth, I was not actuated by this motive. If in preparing this repast I have been at times too lavish of ingredients, I have been so rather in the interests of those persons who, like nurses, nourish themselves in order to nourish others. It is well known that such persons, if not abundantly supplied with suitable refection, are not able to impart it to others. As it depends on yourself to take no more than suits you, so, on the other hand, when you find yourself satisfied and replenished, do not set yourself greedily to hunt up any of the next succeeding texts, but rest satisfied with employing your thoughts on the text appropriated for the day, for otherwise, instead of deriving nutriment, you will be overloaded. You may remember that such was the ordinance laid down by God for His chosen people in the wilderness ; for though He provided them with not only a liberal but superabundant supply of manna, He forbade any one taking more than the measure allotted for each day's sustenance. " Let them collect what is

sufficient for every day"¹—*Colligat quæ sufficiunt per singulos dies.*

And if in any month there should happen to be a supernumerary text, either because some day did not correspond with a given festival, as in the case of the occurrence of a moveable feast, or because you omitted from day to day to avail yourself at the proper time of the appointed one, either owing to sickness, negligence, or weariness, let it pass, like the manna, which, if not used on a given day, melted away before the next. And if you be guilty, acknowledge when next you return to the Divine presence, your culpable negligence; be repentant and confounded, and betake yourself once more to the exercise laid down for you with regard to the text of the day, without in any way departing from the prescribed order.

I earnestly pray you not to fall, if you can possibly avoid doing so, into any omissions of the kind just mentioned. Nothing is now asked of you but what has been found, by the experience of others, to be easy of accomplishment. It is at least quite certain that the benefit to be derived is far greater than the labour to be undergone. Should you at any time be tempted to discontinue these exercises on the ground that you find no pleasure in them, look to yourself! for your doing so can be the result only of a diseased palate. You are aware that the manna accommodated itself to the particular will of each: "It was turned to what every man liked"²—*Ad quod quisque volebat convertebatur.* To charge the manna with being insipid or bitter, is equivalent to charging oneself with being in a bad state of health.

¹ Exodus xvi. 4.

² Wisdom xvi. 21.

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JANUARY.

FIRST DAY.

THE NAME OF OUR LORD.

Blessed is the man whose hope is in the name of the Lord, and who hath not had regard to vanities and lying follies (Psalm xxxix. 5).

I. Consider first, which of the Lord's names is the one that must be the foundation of thy hope. Without any doubt it is that name which is above all names, the name of Jesus; the name which He has this day purchased for Himself by His Blood. The simple knowledge that He bears such a name ought to inspire complete confidence: "Let them trust in Thee who know Thy name."¹ For the Lord is not, like men, given to empty boasting. He cannot be called thy Saviour, and not be so. It needs only that thou let Him work in His own character: "Know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded."²

II. Consider secondly, how justly is he called blessed who puts his hope in the Lord, for he puts it in Him Who is Supreme Power, Supreme Knowledge, and Supreme Goodness, and therefore in One Who is not only able to do us every great good, and not only knows how to do it, but Who is also supremely anxious to do it. Not so shall he be blessed who puts his trust in men. Nay, rather, how unfortunate is he! Very seldom indeed are men desirous to do us much good. When they are desirous to do so, they fail in the necessary knowledge, and when they possess the knowledge they lack the power: "Our eyes failed, expecting help for us in vain, when we looked attentively towards a nation that was not able to save us."³ And wouldst thou, then, have such as these to be thy saviours?

¹ Psalm ix. 11.

² Eccles. ii. 17.

³ Lament. iv. 17.

III. Consider thirdly, it is not so easy, as at the first sight it seems, to have this hope in the Lord. Therefore he, whose truly happy lot it is to have attained thereto, is styled not a human being, *homo*, but "a man"—*vir*, "a blessed man"—*beatus vir*, inasmuch as more than ordinary courage is required for attaining this result, courage in order to begin to hope, courage in order not to cease hoping. Many do not make a beginning because, appalled by their own wretchedness, they do not believe that they can ever be fit to receive great graces. Many make a small beginning, but do not follow it up, as though their hopes had been found vain, either because God requires His graces to be longed for, or because He bestows them unobserved. Not so thou, not so! but be always "a man," that is to say, ever have the courage to hope without faltering. There is, however, another reason for calling him, who sincerely hopes in the Lord, "a man," and that is, because his hope itself makes him such. For what is it, after all, which constitutes the strength of man's soul? It is hope. "I will keep my strength to Thee, for God is my protector."¹ So spoke David to God. But dost thou not see what he meant by saying "my strength"? He clearly meant, "my hope."

IV. Consider fourthly, what is the natural fruit of such a hope. Contempt for the goods of this world, styled, some of them, "vanities," and others, again, "follies." Some of these goods may be lawfully enjoyed, and these deserve at least to be called vanities, for they possess not a particle of substance or solidity; they do not satisfy the human heart: "Surely our fathers have possessed lies, a vanity which hath not profited them."² Others, again, may not be enjoyed without sin, and these deserve not only to be called vanities, but follies; for what greater folly can be committed by men here on earth, than to place their delight in goods which shall have to be changed into so great an evil? Of a truth, such men "are mad when they are merry."³

V. Consider fifthly, what little store thou must set by such goods as these. Thou must not deign even to cast a look at them; as we are told: "He hath not had regard;" and this the more because they are able to seduce thee very easily. Insanity in the natural order can be recognized at once, but it is not so with the insanity of worldlings, which may be called insanity in the moral order. This with multitudes passes for wisdom, and therefore to distinguish it from the former it is

¹ Psalm lviii. 10.

Jerem. xvi. 19.

³ Wisdom xiv. 28.

said to be false, that is to say, fallacious, as it is said of more serious delusions that they are false: *deceptiones falsæ, incantationes falsæ, illusiones falsæ*, not because they do not contain real fraud, but because they keep it hidden. Beware, then, how thou look upon such follies as these, lest they seduce thee also. It is enough for thee to know that they are follies, as those who now take them for wisdom shall one day know to their cost. "For," said the Prophet, with reference to idols, "seeing they are but of wood, and laid over with gold and with silver, it shall be known hereafter that they are false things."¹ This, too, ought to be thy language with respect to these follies. For the present they are veiled, laid over as it were with gold and with silver; but what then? Will not the time come when their deceitfulness will be but too clearly shown? Hark! how all their followers cry out from the abyss of Hell: "Therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us;"² if it be not, that in their folly, they wish to impute the guilt of their own blunder to the sun.

SECOND DAY.

I am the Lord thy God, that teach thee profitable things (Isaias xlvi. 17).

I. Consider first, the singular honour God has conferred upon thee in choosing to become thy teacher in the art of prayer. Therein He keeps thee, so to say, at school, and with especial care attends to thee, directs thee, instructs thee, and may with very truth say, "I am the Lord thy God, that teach thee profitable things." When He speaks to thee from the pulpit, doubtless the lesson then imparted comes from Him, but from Him teaching as it were in a public capacity, and ministering to the many; but when He teaches thee in prayer He becomes thy own private tutor, such as great men usually have in their houses; and therefore how much more signal is the honour which He then confers on thee! Art thou not confounded by the reflection that a God of so much majesty should deign to stoop so low? And yet how dost thou relish His school; with how much regularity frequent it? Dost thou listen diligently to His lessons?

¹ Baruch vi. 50.

² Wisdom v. 6.

II. Consider secondly, the nature of the lessons which the Lord loves to give thee. They are neither curious, nor subtle, nor sublime; they are simply profitable: "I am the Lord thy God, that teach thee profitable things;" lessons directed to the mortification of thy disorderly appetites, the uprooting of vices, the practice of virtues, and that more intimate union with thy Lord which thou oughtest to attain to. Here, then, is the token whereby thou shalt ascertain if thy prayer be efficacious; not lights, nor tears, nor sweet repose, but the fruit which results from it, as shown in thy actions. If after the frequent practice of prayer thou findest thyself more mortified, more firm of purpose, more fervent, and in closer union with God, then assuredly it is the Lord Who teaches thee, although He may not always keep to the same path. But when thou derivest no profit from thy prayers for the better ordering of thy life, look on them with grave suspicion; for the school of prayer is one wherein theory should always conduce to practice.

III. Consider thirdly, how the Lord, in order to become a still more profitable master to thee, determined to teach thee not only by precept but by example, and for this purpose deigned to clothe Himself in human flesh: "I Myself that spoke, behold I am here."¹ There is therefore no longer any need for wearying thyself in search after the true rule of action, as the philosophers of old did; it is enough to observe how Christ demeaned Himself under any given circumstances, when doubt arises in thy mind. Thou hast Him before thee: "Lo! He is here." All other rules are either of themselves, or by thee, less easily grasped. This is, of all, the speediest. Fix thy eyes on thy teacher's actions: "Thy eyes shall see thy teacher."² No case can possibly occur for which, if thou practise thyself in attentively meditating on the life of Christ, thou shalt not find therein a fitting precedent. Hence it is said that He was "tried through all temptations," for the very reason that thou mightest know how to guide thyself through all the trials the Lord may send to thee, by the way of prosperity, or persecution, or at the hands of the wicked spirits who molest thee.

IV. Consider fourthly, that this teacher possesses a prerogative which He shares with none other that ever was, and it is, that He not only places before thee the lesson to be learned, but gives thee the mental power to understand it: "I will give thee understanding, and I will instruct thee."³

¹ Isaiah lii. 6.

² Isaiah xxx. 20.

³ Psalm xxxi. 8.

Other teachers, it is true, "instruct," but "they do not give understanding;" this teacher gives thee instruction, and with instruction gives thee at the same time understanding. See, then, with what alacrity thou oughtest to frequent so good a school as that of prayer is; for every one, no matter how dull, or slow, or wanting in sense he may be, can derive from it the greatest benefit. It is not humility which so often keeps thee away from it, it is sloth. Besides, seest thou not how simple maidens, by the purity of their lives, have arrived in prayer at the knowledge of things altogether unknown to learned men?

If still thou shouldst hesitate to frequent this school, because thou hast misgivings as to thy being able afterwards to put in practice the lessons thou mayest have learned, know that this same teacher is so richly endowed that He will give thee not only, as has been pointed out, capacity to understand, but also strength to execute His teaching: "By his knowledge shall this My just servant justify many."¹ Now where hast thou ever met with another teacher, who by his lessons has made thee virtuous? Others can show thee how to become good, if thou choose; but they cannot make thee so. Jesus alone can, with the knowledge He imparts, accomplish at the same time thy justification; for at the very time of prayer, when He imparts His lessons, He instils into thy heart so great a love for those virtues which He then unfolds to view, such compunction, such charity, and so strong a resolution to embrace them all, that He thereby makes thee just. And wilt thou not set store by a teacher thus without rival? Philip deemed himself fortunate, because Alexander was born at a time when he could give him Aristotle for a master. How great is the ingratitude of Christians who refuse to know the happiness which has fallen to their lot!

THIRD DAY.

Woe to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep (St. Luke vi. 25).

I. Consider first, how justly the Lord rebukes in these strong words such as now laugh without moderation, surrendering themselves an easy prey to idle conversations, singing, dancing, carousing, and impurity, and endeavouring to make life one

¹ Isaias liii. 11.

round of pleasure. It will be enough to note where they laugh, when they laugh, and why they laugh. If thou observe the place where, thou shalt see that they laugh "in the valley of tears," where there is nothing but misfortune and wickedness, which with good reason call for our tears instead, if only out of compassion for our neighbour; and hence it is, that this wretched earth has been justly called "the place of weepers."¹ If thou observest the time when, thou shalt at once see that they laugh at the wrong time. For God assigned the life to come, and not the present life, for laughter; He said: "A time to weep, and a time to laugh."² Weeping must precede laughter, and laughter comes after; but they would invert this fair order, and would as it were turn night into day. Lastly, if thou examine the cause of their laughter, thou shalt find that they laugh precisely at the very things which should move them from their inmost soul to tears: "They are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice in the most wicked things."³ The more evil grows apace, the more ought sorrow to grow; and yet with them the case is reversed: they rejoice at what is bad, they are jubilant when wickedness is at its worst. Now thou seest that the laughter of the wicked is ever thus; its place is the abode of misery, its time the crisis of sorrow, and its subject-matter unmixed sinfulness. And can it be that thou enviest such laughter?

II. Consider secondly, the terrible retribution here announced by Christ to these wretches: "Woe to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep." The mourning is of the soul, the weeping of the body, both suffering grievously from the punishments conjointly inflicted on them in the depths of Hell; one suffering the pain of loss, the other the pains of sense. Observe then first the mourning which afflicts the soul through its pain of loss; ah, mourning beyond compare! No one can understand this before he has learned what God really is. Multitudes in this world are not to be comforted when they have sustained the loss of their birthright, of an estate, of an honourable place at Court. What then must it be with those who have sustained the loss of an infinite good for eternity? The thought of this will for ever torture the imagination with the vivid picture of the good which is possessed in Heaven, exceeding even the greatness of the misery endured in Hell. How all the passions are let loose together—anger, envy, anguish, desolation, terror, despair,

¹ Judges ii. 1.² Eccles. iii. 4.³ Prov. ii. 14.

rage. How the memory is present to torment, with its vivid recollection of that time when so great a good might have been won so easily, and instead was thrust aside; how the understanding, now darkened, troubled, and tempestuous, clings pertinaciously to the thought that God is supremely unjust; how the will, now fixed in evil, adds its consent and approval of all sins committed, malevolently wishing that they had been still more numerous, holds in abhorrence God, and all who love Him and adore Him, or call upon His name, except in blasphemy. Oh, picture to thyself what must be the state of the heart wherein such mourning dwells.

III. Consider thirdly, the weeping which affects the body by reason of the pains of sense. What tears are wrung from the eyes of an unhappy wretch by the horrible pangs which rack his vitals, and make him writhe and twist like a snake upon that bed of anguish! Who has ever felt within him what is felt by each one of the damned—a raging fire: “In the belly of the unwise there shall burn a fire.”¹ Passing now to the exterior of the body, observe how all possible evils, even the most opposed, gather with one accord around this wretched criminal: pains that torment the head in all its parts, the eyes, ears, teeth; pains insupportable in every nerve and limb, and loathsome sores. And then to all these ills, as if they by themselves were not much, are added the tortures which the devils inflict without intermission. What floods of tears the damned will shed, when they feel their limbs dislocated or crushed as upon the rack, their flesh lacerated, their bones wrenched from the sockets, their bodies all rent and bruised in divers ways, which may be faintly sketched, but are beyond the power of language to express. Then indeed it is that they will pay dearly for their former laughter; all the more that the laughter was of short duration, like flowers that bloom before their time, whereas the weeping shall endure for ever.

FOURTH DAY.

If the tree fall to the south or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall there shall it be (Eccles. xi. 3).

I. Consider first, that thou art this tree of the parable here spoken of. If when cut down thou fallest to the south, thou

¹ Eccles. xl. 32.

shalt keep to the south ; if to the north, to the north thou shalt keep. Thou shalt have no hope of ever changing thy position. Either for ever a king upon a throne, or for ever a slave in a dungeon ; either for ever in joy, or for ever in sorrow ; either for ever glorious, or for ever infamous. Let this thought take firm hold of thee.

II. Consider secondly, if thou art at all anxious to know on which side thou shalt fall, thou canst easily ascertain. See to which side thou art now leaning. When its trunk is sawed through, on which side does a tree fall ? On the side to which it leans already. If it leans to the south, it falls to the south ; if it leans to the north, it falls to the north. Thou art ever leaning to the north, and notwithstanding thou dost hope that, when they come to cut thee down, thou wilt be able to fall to the south ; grievously thou shalt find thyself mistaken.

III. Consider thirdly, that if thou dost desire it, thou art still in good time to bend thyself to the better side, at least by doing some violence to thyself. But do not delay, because thou art likened to a tree, and who is not aware that, the older a tree becomes, the more unyielding it is ? Thou canst never sufficiently appreciate the enormous power which the force of habit, be it good or bad, exerts at the hour of death.

FIFTH DAY.

God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble (St. James iv. 6).

I. Consider first, who the persons are to whom we are wont to offer resistance. They are those who wish to take away what belongs to us. When a man tries to rob us of our life, or our reputation, or our goods, we resist him with all our power. Now from this thou mayest understand why it is said the Lord "resisteth the proud," it is because they would take away what belongs to Him. Thou art a wicked robber, when by reason of the riches in thy possession, or for thy knowledge, or wisdom, or eloquence, or even for the performance of some act of virtue, thou takest pride in thyself with contempt of others, asserting thy own superiority, and showing in a thousand ways thy self-complacency ! Is not all which thou seest in thyself the gift of

God? "What hast thou that thou hast not received?"¹ And if it be a gift from Him, why art thou puffed up, as if it were some merit of thine own? "And if thou hast received, why then dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received?"² It is true, that thou art a party to the various acts of virtue, by force of thy free-will. But this very concurrence thou owest to God, Who causes thee to concur, without, however, doing violence to thy natural freedom: "It is God Who worketh in you to will."³ Does not the body concur in all its own operations, of seeing, dancing, speaking, and the like? And yet it could not without folly attribute to itself, instead of the soul which is its guiding power, any one of these operations. Here then is a good illustration of thy free-will stripped of the grace of God; it is a body without a soul: it can do nothing: or if it can do anything, it can only commit sin, and run headlong to ruin and perdition. Happy thou, if thou are able to fathom this truth to its profoundest depths. Oh, how shouldst thou blush at so many robberies committed by thee every day to the injury of thy God!

II. Consider secondly, why it is said that the Lord gives to the humble His grace, which is a jewel of great price. Because He knows how to entrust it to safe hands. The humble are faithful trustees, for they neither rob, nor defraud, nor do they use what is given except for the good service of that Lord Whose gift it is. Hence the Lord gladly showers down all His riches on the humble. "And He causeth the fountain to spring up in the valley." For He knows that in the end the waters shall return to Him, and that the rivers will not lose themselves in the valleys, but will find their way to the great sea. It is but just that the Lord should be jealous of His own glory! Every one is bound to respect the truth. If the Lord should attribute to thee one particle of that glory which wholly belongs to Him, He would be guilty of a lie. Whereas, thou art so pleasing in the sight of God in the act of humbling thyself, simply because thou art then speaking the truth.

III. Consider thirdly, that whenever therefore thou hast to undertake any difficult enterprise which may redound to the glory of God, before entering thereupon thou shouldst ponder well on this: that "God resisteth the proud, but giveth His grace to the humble." Thou shouldst retire for a time into thyself, and recognize thy own nothingness, thy weakness,

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 7.

² 1 Cor. iv. 7.

³ Philipp. ii. 13.

ignorance, unskilfulness, and manifold demerits, and earnestly accuse thyself in God's presence. Then thou mayest be sure that by doing so God will be better pleased to work along with thee, because thereby it will be the more apparent that He alone it is Who works in all. Is not He the One Who "showeth the riches of His glory unto vessels of mercy," that is to say, those instruments which are the most pitiful and poor, and for that very reason chosen by Him out of sheer pity? Thus, with this lively confidence awakened within thee, go forward generously and confront the difficulties which seek to scare thee away; being fully assured that of thyself thou art not able to conquer them, but that nevertheless thou shalt overcome, because thou hast on thy side the God of all power: "The Almighty shall be against thy enemies."¹

SIXTH DAY.

THE FESTIVAL OF THE EPIPHANY.

The same is Lord over all; rich unto all that call upon Him
(Romans x. 12).

I. Consider first, what consolation thou oughtest to derive from these words—the Lord "is the same Lord over all." He calls all, welcomes all, embraces all, shows Himself alike loving to all. Accordingly thou mayest observe that even at His birth He chooses to show Himself at once in this character of Lord of all; that He is "God, the King of all the earth,"² by receiving at His feet men from near and men from afar, Jews and Gentiles, shepherds and kings, the rude and the intelligent, the unlearned and the wise, and by accepting equally the poor tribute of milk and the rich tribute of gold. What, then, hast thou to fear? If this Lord "is the same Lord over all," He is consequently Lord also over thee; He will think of thee also, will provide for thee also; will not fail to show Himself a good Master to thee also, provided only thou dost not despise Him. But here lies the danger, that thou mayest come perhaps even to be ashamed of His service, when thou seest thy King lying in a manger. At such a time, more than ever, prostrate thyself devoutly at His feet with the

¹ Job xxii. 25.

² Psalm xlvi. 8.

holy Magi-Kings, and there cast down thy pride ; for if He has laid aside His majesty, He has done this for thy sake, that thou mayest with more ease address Him, commune with Him, prevail with Him, and give thyself into His keeping, into the hands of that good Master, Who is even ready to become a servant for thy sake. Is it not cause of shame that He Who is "the same Lord over all" should make Himself the same servant under all : and yet that all should not with one accord agree to serve Him ?

II. Consider secondly, that this Lord is "rich," a quality much sought for by servants in a master. But what other master could ever be called rich with truth ? He is rich who is in want of nothing. But of how much do even the richest men stand in need ? They part with their wealth accordingly to engage the services of those who can satisfy their wants, paying wages to a host of farm labourers, artisans, and menials. It is God alone Who has need of nothing, because He contains all good in Himself. Moreover, it is true that there are many rich monarchs, but they are rich at the expense of others. It is their subjects who give their own substance to support them. Take these supplies away, and monarchs become as poor as other men. It is God alone that is rich in His own right : not only does He receive from no one, but He gives to all—"rich unto all."

III. Consider thirdly, that it generally happens that men who are rich become avaricious as well. The Lord alone neither is nor can be avaricious. Thou mayest observe, therefore, that it is not here said that He is "bountiful unto all that call upon Him," but that He is "rich ;" for in Him these two things are one and the same. To be rich is with Him to be liberal ; for His riches are so inexhaustible, that however much others may share in them He loses nothing. Hence it comes to pass that He is "rich" not alone "unto some," but "unto all." Come who may to be enriched, there is enough for all. His riches are not those of a treasury, like the wealth of men ; they come from a mine, and a mine that is inexhaustible.

IV. Consider fourthly, that the Lord is most munificent, but always under one condition : He wishes to be importuned—"rich unto all that call upon Him ;" for though He wishes to distribute His alms abundantly, still He desires to be asked, and with eagerness and importunity : "Pray ye always." That which cannot in Him have its source in avarice, since He loses nothing by giving all, can have its source in love alone. He

has so great a longing that thou shouldst be with Him, that He keeps thee sighing for His graces, in order that thou mayest keep asking for them. Observe what thou dost thyself when on a pilgrimage to Loreto. If thou chance upon a child full of life and spirit, who comes up and asks thee for an alms, thou givest it to him indeed; but first thou takest a pleasure in making him run after thee. God acts in like manner; He wishes to derive some pleasure from thee: "My delights are to be with the children of men."¹ But how is it that thou art not covered with confusion at the thought? One would suppose that He ought rather to treat thee as thou perhaps dost treat unsavoury little beggars on the road, throwing them hastily an alms in order to prevent their near approach.

V. Consider fifthly, whence happens it that, the Lord being, as we have said, "rich unto all that call upon Him," so many nevertheless ask without receiving? The reason is very clear, it is because they do not "call upon Him." They ask for health, for offspring, for prosperity, they ask for other goods apart from Him, and so they "call for something from Him;" but they do not "call upon Him." "Thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob."² What is it to call upon the Lord, if it be not to pray that He would vouchsafe to visit thee? Who-soever prays in this wise is infallibly heard. "He called on Me and I shall hear him." Not "on the things that are Mine," but "on Me." Dost thou not think that thou offerest a grievous affront to thy Lord in asking for anything except Himself? Oh, with what fervour notwithstanding dost thou at times implore Him for those goods which are nothing worth, and then comest down to freezing-point when thou askest for His grace, His assistance, and His love! "There is none that calleth upon justice."³ Ask Him for nothing outside Himself, unless on the express condition that it shall in no way interfere with thy possession of Himself.

VI. Consider sixthly, moreover, when thou askest from thy heart the Lord to grant thee the good things which really deserve the name, His spiritual treasures, though He always hears thee, He does not always make it apparent that He hears thee; and therefore it is no wonder if it seem that thou hast not been heard. The Lord is the most magnificent of alms-givers—"rich unto all that call on Him;" but He is also one that does His alms in secret. He wishes to adopt in His own

¹ Prov. viii. 31.² Isaias xliii. 22.³ Isaias lix. 4.

practice what He enjoined upon men when He said, "Sound not a trumpet before thee."¹ Thus, then, however plentiful may be His alms which are publicly known, yet those which were never heard of are still more plentiful. Thou needest not, then, ever lose courage; for thou mayest already have had thy petition granted, although the Lord may choose to keep thee in ignorance thereof, in order that thou mayest continue still to ask. Thou art able to bestow an alms upon a poor person without any one else coming to know of it; but thou canst not so contrive it that the poor man himself is not aware. God can do this; it is even His usual practice to do so. And this is the perfection of secrecy.

VII. Consider seventhly, it follows from what has been said that when thou comest into the presence of God, thou shouldst appear as a mendicant applying for an alms to one Who is known to be most open-handed—"rich unto all that call upon Him." Thy misery, therefore, affords thee not the slightest ground for apprehension. For there is no need that the poor should have any other recommendation to secure relief except this his confidence in the rich man. Suffice it that he is poor—nay, more, the poorer he is the greater is his claim to relief. Hence, as I have said, so far is it from being the case that thy misery should cause thee any alarm, that it should rather encourage thee. "To whom," said the Lord, speaking through the mouth of Isaias, "to whom shall I have respect but to him that is poor and little?"²

SEVENTH DAY.

Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long; because thou shalt have hope in the latter end (Prov. xxiii. 17, 18).

I. Consider first, the grand fruit which the holy fear of the Lord brings with it, namely, confidence at the hour of death: "In the latter end." This is a universal rule, as proved by experience. Those who during life are very confident, saying that if they fall into sin, the Divine mercy will help them out again, do not dare at the hour of death even to call on Him. They are in despair, or at least in deep discouragement. Those whose consciences were more easily alarmed have more

¹ St. Matt. vi. 2.

² Isaias lxvi. 2.

courage in that hour. Think with thyself awhile to which class thou belongest.

II. Consider secondly, that in order to attain to this confidence at the hour of death, it is not enough to entertain at the present an ordinary fear of the Lord, it must be an overmastering fear. Therefore the command is not, "Be the fear of the Lord in thee all the day long," but, "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long;" for the fear of the Lord must be like an ocean surrounding thee on all sides in such sort that when once thou art plunged into its waters thou canst not again emerge. And how long is it to continue?—from morning until evening: the command is not "for every day," but "all the day long." Thou art told to be in it, not frequently, but always.

III. Consider thirdly, that the final promise made to him who entertains this great fear of the Lord, is, that he shall have confidence at the hour of death: "Thou shalt have hope in the latter end." The promise is not, "Thou shalt have assurance," but, "Thou shalt have hope;" for even the very fear, here mentioned, can never render thee secure. Now this being the case, what shall become of those who feel no sort of fear? Can the wicked feel secure, where the saints have only hope?

EIGHTH DAY.

Cursed is the deceitful man that hath in his flock a male, and making a vow, offereth in sacrifice that which is feeble to the Lord; for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts (Mal. i. 14).

I. Consider first, who is the deceitful man that is here said to be accursed. It is he who omitting to perform the manly acts of virtue enjoined on him by the Constitutions of his Order, the duties of his office, or the injunctions of his director, offers for these some feeble substitute prompted by his own caprice. And yet how many there are who act in this manner. They have a routine of little devotions and sundry disciplines and fasts and prayers, vocal for the most part, and in these matters they display wonderful diligence; but in what their rule prescribes they show equal carelessness. Dost thou not see that such as these have not the blessing, but the curse of God? Leave them alone, for they shall never

come to good. Do thou turn all thy attention to the fulfilment of what thou hast promised.

II. Consider secondly, that such a one as we have described is called "a deceiver," because he endeavours to deceive the Lord by playing the part of an ascetic and a saint, not being such in truth ; and he does in fact deceive the mass of men, who often admire more certain little pious practices, provided they be singular or unusual, than the whole tenour of a well-ordered life. Beware that thou never fall into such deception. True virtue consists in first of all observing the rule to which each has subjected himself : "If you love Me, keep My commandments."¹

III. Consider thirdly, it follows that what is above laid down is especially applicable to one who has "bound himself by vow," that is to say, to a religious ; for seculars have more liberty of doing good according to their fancy, although for this very reason their good acts are less meritorious. Hence it is that in the case of voluntary offerings the Lord permitted victims even in some respect defective, with ears or tail cut off (as appears in Leviticus xxii. 23), to be offered in sacrifice ; but He did not permit this in votive offerings ; for he that is free may offer a victim without ears, in other words may do a good work which is not under obedience ; and he may offer a victim without a tail, in other words may undertake a good work, which after a good beginning is laid aside ; but a religious may not do so. He must do everything in the way prescribed, and must complete his work. His are, however, the most acceptable victims.

IV. Consider fourthly, that persons in the world also not seldom incur a like malediction ; because they too in things of obligation offer to God a blemished victim. Thus, for instance, they willingly sacrifice to God a daughter who feels a vocation for the convent, "they offer in sacrifice that which is feeble to the Lord." But they refuse to surrender a son, unless indeed he labours under some defect, is lame, or wanting in sense, or otherwise unfitted to advance the interests of the family. When he gives good promise, he must at all costs be kept for home service. Oh, what disgraceful terms are these to offer to so great a Lord ! "I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts."

¹ St. John xiv. 15.

NINTH DAY.

What is your life? It is a vapour which appeareth for a little while and afterwards shall vanish away (St. James iv. 15).

I. Consider first, that nothing is so unsubstantial, light and volatile, as a vapour, which is the sport of every breath of air. And such is human life: "It is a vapour." How many accidents may break it down when thou art least prepared? A drop of water on the brain, a fit of coughing, a pause in the action of the heart, the bite of some venomous little creature. How then dost thou look upon thyself as endowed with perpetual life? Thou hast said: "I shall be a lady for ever; neither hast thou remembered thy latter end."¹

II. Consider secondly, that sometimes vapour, borne aloft by the sun's heat, forms a fair vision in the sky. But how long does it last? "For a little while." It cannot of itself endure; it passes at once, fading away, and melting into nothingness. Do not then forget what thou really art, if thou happen for the moment to be highly placed: "They are lifted up for a little while, and shall not stand."² To-day the observed of all observers, courted by all, loved and worshipped by all: to-morrow thou shalt be the food of worms in the tomb. Oh, think of the utter extinction that awaits thee! Like unto the vapour. How many great captains has the world seen? How many mighty monarchs and potentates of whom not a memory remains? What shall survive of thee?

III. Consider thirdly, how great then is thy folly in making so much account of a life so disappointing. Imagine that there are two classes of persons on the earth. One, consisting of men who after a few years shall die as we do, the other of men who shall never die. Oh, how would the latter laugh at the folly of the former, in laying out estates and building houses, carrying on commerce, and accumulating treasures! Leave, they will say, such matters to us who are immortal on the earth. Do you rest satisfied with what is needed for the support of a brief existence, and turn all your thoughts to making yourselves ready for death? Verily we, at present, deserve not less to be laughed at. Although, since we are all of us mortal, we may all alike feel pity for our universal folly.

¹ Isaiah xlvi. 7.

² Job xxiv. 24.

TENTH DAY.

They said to God, Depart from us ; and looked upon the Almighty as if He could do nothing. Whereas He had filled their houses with good things (Job xxii. 17, 18).

I. Consider first, the grievous insult which so many daily offer to God. When is it that they no longer care to know aught of Him : that they despise Him and spurn Him from them, even venturing to say to Him, "Depart from us?" It is when He has already imparted to them every good : "When He had filled their houses with good things." Those who, beyond others, possess power, wealth, beauty, and strength, are most assiduous in offending God. Behold then how far man's ingratitude can go. To render to God evil for good. Deplore such disorder and detest it, for human wickedness cannot go farther.

II. Consider secondly, the goodness of the Lord Who still follows after those who cast Him off. Thus they are found to call out, "Depart from us ;" for they see Him ever at their side. Hast thou ever said this? If not in words thou hast often said it by thy deeds, when thou wouldst not suffer Him to commune with thee in prayer, when thou didst put away His inspiration and refuse His invitations, and show thyself unwilling to receive Him within thy breast in the Most Holy Sacrament! For if at any time He has abandoned thee, taking His grace from thee entirely, be well assured that He had been again and again driven from thee with insult. He is never the first to part company. No doubt He had heard thee saying, "Depart."

III. Consider thirdly, the cause of the repulse which God meets with, is that men, when they are prosperous, are persuaded that they have no need of Him. "They looked upon the Almighty as if He could do nothing." But what infatuation! If it be the Lord that has filled their house with all good things, cannot the same Lord empty it again? He is Almighty. He can therefore do this with the greatest ease. But this is the form of insanity which is peculiar to the prosperous : "They looked upon the Almighty as if He could do nothing." And yet He it is Who has bestowed upon them all they possess. "Whereas He had filled their houses with good things."

IV. Consider fourthly, how little then thou shouldst care for human prosperity, since it manifestly brings in its train contemptuous disregard for God Himself. Oh! it is better far to have thy house altogether empty, than overflowing with wealth. These wicked men did not display their insolence to the Lord "so long as He was filling their houses with good things," but only after He had filled them. So long as much remains to be received, love is tendered to the Lord, and prayers are offered up, and promises made, and some show at least of homage is conceded. But all this comes to an end as soon as ever the house is full.

ELEVENTH DAY.

For if one be perfect among the children of men, yet if Thy wisdom be not with him, he shall be nothing regarded (Wisdom ix. 6).

I. Consider first, how idle are the efforts of multitudes of men who labour to procure all other endowments, except that only one which is worth having. How many schools of music are opened nowadays for teaching singing, riding, and the like, and all well attended! Who cares to pay a visit to the one wherein is taught only the holy fear of God? And yet this alone is true wisdom; for true wisdom consists in knowing how to order the whole conduct of our life to the attainment of our last end. He who has not this wisdom, be he ever so "perfect among the children of men," shall be nothing regarded.

II. Consider secondly, it is not absolutely said that he who shall have acquired the aforesaid accomplishments "shall be nothing regarded," but he who possesses them without the accompanying fear of the Lord: "If the wisdom of the Lord shall not be with him." For such accomplishments may be meritoriously acquired. Here then is the rule for determining what are the particular employments, duties, aims, to which thy studies ought to be directed. They should be those which thou canst, without difficulty in thy state of life, combine with this Divine wisdom. Those with which this wisdom can with difficulty coalesce should be discarded.

III. Consider thirdly, that of him who is without this Divine wisdom it is said absolutely, "that he should be

regarded as nothing," whereby thou mayest understand the kind of money which passes current in Heaven. Of what account is the valour of Alexander there, the refinement of Cæsar, the eloquence of Cicero, or the statecraft of Tiberius? "It should be regarded as nothing." A beggar like Lazarus, uncouth, emaciated, squalid, and covered with hideous sores, is held in higher esteem there than all these great men gathered together. Dost thou believe this truth? If thou dost, why then dost thou not put it in practice? To have picked a little straw from the ground, to have washed a plate, to have accepted a rebuff, the smallest act of mortification, humility, obedience, or charity, done for the love of God, will raise thee to a far higher place in Heaven's regard than all the learning of Plato.

TWELFTH DAY.

Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter and shall not be able (St. Luke xiii. 24).

I. Consider first, that it is not so easy to enter into Paradise as some fancy. Strength and industry must be brought to bear upon the task. Christ says to us, "Strive." What, then, is the nature of the conflict thou hast to sustain? That which is waged between the senses and the spirit. The senses would by no means consent to pass through the narrow gate of mortification, humility, obedience, and penance. The spirit sees that this is needful, since Christ passed through the same; thus these two wage incessant strife, and reduce man to supreme distress, to a struggle as it were of life and death; hence it is that where the Latin text has the phrase, "Strive," the Greek says with more emphasis, "Wrestle." It imports thee to expand thy heart; for great interests are at stake. Blessed art thou if thou enter, miserable if thou enter not. Thou must either enter there or be lost. "Strive to enter!"

II. Consider secondly, that many even of those who seek to enter into Paradise by manfully fighting in this wise, still fail to enter, because they do not keep up the fight, without intermission, until the end. How, then, shall it be with those who do not seek to enter at all, and who, scared by the first contradiction, or discouraged at the first attempt, yield up

the victory forthwith to sensuality? Dost thou think that such as these shall enter in?

III. Consider thirdly, that those who pursue this course not only shall not enter, but even though they are anxious to enter, shall not be able. "They shall seek to enter and shall not be able." The reason of this is, that they cannot fight. They have habitually yielded up the victory to sense, and therefore when death comes, and they wish to give the victory to the spirit by renouncing a woman's love, or parting with money or reputation, they find themselves so enfeebled that they are morally incapable of making the sacrifice: "They shall not be able." If, then, thou wishest to be saved on that great closing day with less difficulty, accustom thy spirit now, not only to maintain the conflict with rebellious sense, but to remain master of the field.

THIRTEENTH DAY.

A man making void the law of Moses, dieth without any mercy under two or three witnesses. How much more do you think he deserveth worse punishments who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath esteemed the Blood of the testament unclean, by which he was sanctified, and hath offered an affront to the Spirit of Grace? (Hebrews x. 28, 29).

I. Consider first, how much more honourable is the New Law than the Old. And yet whosoever was discovered to have transgressed any ordinance of the Old Law was surely doomed to die, by being stoned, or burned, or hanged on a gibbet. "He shall die, thou shalt not pity him." How much more, then, ought he who transgresses any commandment of the New Law to be condemned to undergo the extremity of punishment? And does the penance which thy confessor imposes seem sometimes too hard to thee?

II. Consider secondly, that the Christian, in sinning, disobeys no common lawgiver, but the Son of God Himself. It is true that he may sin in two ways, either from malice or by surprise. Whoever sins by surprise, that is, through want of thought, or from the impulse of the moment, does not sin in the most heinous way, and therefore he is not the kind of sinner here spoken of. The sinner alluded to is the one who sins from malice, and of whom, therefore, it is said that "he hath trodden under foot the Son of God." Woe be to thee,

if, seeing the sin thou hast committed, thou deem it of no account, a trifle, or a pastime. This is indeed to tread under foot the Son of God.

III. Consider thirdly, that the Son of God claims our allegiance for three especial reasons; because He became Man for us, because He died for us, and because He sent to us His Holy Spirit as soon as He ascended to Heaven. The Christian who sins shows himself ungrateful for all these three transcendent favours, ungrateful for the Incarnation, and therefore it is said of him, "who hath trodden under foot the Son of God;" ungrateful for the Passion, and therefore it is said of him, "who hath esteemed the Blood of the testament to be unclean" in which he was sanctified; ungrateful for the sending of the Holy Ghost, and therefore he is said to be one "who hath offered an affront to the Spirit of Grace," that is to say, "to the spirit gratuitously given." Behold, then, what so much aggravates the Christian's guilt—ingratitude!

FOURTEENTH DAY.

He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall
(1 Cor. x. 12).

I. Consider first, that he "who stands" is not told to take heed lest he fall; but "he that thinketh himself to stand;" for who is there that can with truth be said to stand without wavering? Dost thou think, perchance, that thou art safe in thy standing? Thou art much deceived. Call to mind Lucifer, who fell from the very height of Heaven; call to mind Samson, Solomon, and David; and do not imagine that only beginners in the way of the Lord ever come to fall: even the most advanced may fall. Therefore Ecclesiasticus said: "Keep the fear of God, and grow old therein."¹ For not only should this holy fear be possessed in youth, but it should remain to old age, even with those who have never fallen in their youth. All alike have cause to fear: the penitent because they have fallen; the innocent because they may fall; since the Apostle addresses himself alike to all: "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall."

¹ Ecclus. ii. 6.

II. Consider secondly, that the Apostle says, let every one "take heed;" and therefore it behoves thee to keep an eye upon thyself, and to pause in order to examine well wherein consists thy greatest danger. There are eight causes which equally contribute to a fall, four interior and four exterior. All must be known in order to be avoided. The four interior causes are: (1) Short-sightedness, like that which affects the blind, who cannot rightly discern the road: "If the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit."¹ Of this nature is the neglect of many to ascertain correctly the work there is for them to do. (2) Weakness, of the kind proper to women, old men, and children: "They have themselves been weakened and have fallen." Of this nature is tepidity in well-doing. (3) Heaviness, which of itself always drags downward, as in those who carry too much flesh: "He that maketh his house high, seeketh a downfall."² Of this nature is the pampering of the body. (4) An overweening sense of security, like the confidence of men who in their headlong course are overthrown even upon the smoothest road: "He who trusteth in his riches shall fall."³ Of this nature is the presumptuous reliance on our own strength.

The four exterior causes are: (1) The slippery nature of the road, as when incautious men lose their footing in the mire: "Their way shall be as a slippery way."⁴ Of this nature is the insufficient guard over the senses. (2) The variety of difficulties, obstacles, and snares to be met with everywhere, as when birds are caught in nets: "They are bound and have fallen."⁵ Of this nature are all dangerous occasions. (3) The multitude who press against thee, as when men are borne down by a crowd: "They shall be driven on, and fall therein."⁶ To this class belong all promptings of evil spirits, all wicked advice and bad example. (4) The load which presses heavily upon the back; and this produces a fall from which it is difficult to rise, as we see in the case of heavily laden beasts of burthen: "The iniquity thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall and not rise again."⁷ Of this nature is the sin which is not rejected with loathing; and by its weight drags thee down to another sin, and makes recovery more and more difficult. Observe how numerous are these dangers of falling, in the midst of which thou hast to live, and be appalled.

¹ St. Matt. xv. 14.² Prov. xvii. 16.³ Prov. xi. 28.⁴ Jerem. xxiii. 12.⁵ Psalm xix. 9.⁶ Jerem. xxiii. 12.⁷ Isaias xxiv. 20.

III. Consider thirdly, that, if thou wish not to fall in future, thou must take heed of all those matters here set down, in such sort, that if thou canst not altogether do away with them, as thou canst not put an end to sin, thou mayest at least diminish their force: "Forsake thy sin and offend less."¹ But even so, wilt thou ever succeed in assuring thy safety by thyself alone? Do not dream of this. If, therefore, thou wouldst act wisely, provide thyself with two things, a guide and a support. For a guide, choose a good spiritual director who may thus address thee: "This is the way, walk ye in it, and go not aside neither to the right hand, nor to the left."² For so shalt thou more easily see how to choose the safe road. Thy support thou shalt find in the Divine assistance, which thou must never cease to ask for in prayer; for thus thou shalt also see how to avoid those perils which ever attend thee on thy way. Without these two things, thou canst not advance a single step in the way of the Lord, without running the greatest risks.

FIFTEENTH DAY

*If thou give to thy soul her desires, she will make thee
(Ecclus. xviii. 31).*

I. Consider first, that thy enemies, the devils, are never more delighted than when they see thee readily gratifying "thy soul," that is to say, thy will. Well they know that this is an ungovernable horse, which by little and little will bear thee away to the precipice, and therefore they are triumphant when they perceive the facility with which thou throwest the reins loose upon his neck. It much imports thee to accustom thyself to deny thy will even in things lawful, otherwise thou wilt very soon pass over to things unlawful.

II. Consider secondly, that this abnegation of self-will is imposed on thee as a duty at all times. There is a time appointed for fasting, a time for taking the discipline, a time for giving thyself to contemplation; but all times alike belong to the denial of the will. When is it that a horse, and a vicious one, does not require the bit?

III. Consider thirdly, that thou needst not be alarmed at this, as if it were a matter of extraordinary difficulty. Every

¹ Ecclus. xvii. 21, 22.

² Isaias xxx. 21.

day the task will grow more easy. Take again the horse for example. We have to fight hard for the mastery before we can control and direct him, after he has been allowed for any length of time to roam about at liberty: "A horse not broken becometh stubborn."¹ When he has been long accustomed to the bridle, he gives no longer any trouble. So shalt thou find it with thy own will. For this will, when it perceives that it cannot get what it asks for, will no longer ask for anything but what it knows it can obtain.

SIXTEENTH DAY.

They that are faithful in love shall rest in Him (Wisdom iii. 9).

I. Consider first, that the true mark of the faithful love of God is conformity with the Divine will. It is easy to love Him when His will falls in with our own inclination, when "He rests in us;" when He keeps us in good health, gives us glory, gives us grandeur, or even imparts to us many spiritual consolations. The merit is in loving Him when we have to follow in the path He chooses, when we have "to rest in Him;" to suffer sickness, disgrace, losses, and even continual desolation of spirit. And yet this is His will, that we cease not from suffering; and to speak plainly, we ask for nothing else when we repeat, "Thy will be done;" for it is His will that we should be saints: "This is the will of God, your sanctification;"² and there is no other way to sanctity but that of suffering: "All that have pleased God, passed through many tribulations remaining faithful."³

II. Consider secondly, that this conformity with the Divine will must be very perfect. Hence it is called repose. Not that the inferior part of our soul need necessarily be always at rest; but that the superior part must be at rest. The will must acquiesce, and the understanding must acquiesce. In many the will readily acquiesces, but not so the understanding; for it seems to them strange at times that God should so treat them, nor can they bring themselves to believe that what has happened to them is the very best thing for them. If such be the condition of thy mind, thou art not at rest, at least not perfectly, and there is therefore no cause for

¹ Eccclus. xxx. 8.

² Thess. iv. 3.

³ Judith viii. 23.

self-congratulation; thou art not faithful: "Those that are faithful in love shall rest in Him."

III. Consider thirdly, that this complete conformity to the Divine will is what beyond everything else brings rest to the soul. On this account also conformity is called repose. So long as thou art anxious to bend to thy will the will of God, or his who guides thee in God's name, so long shalt thou fail to find repose; then alone shalt thou be at peace when the Lord, or he who guides thee in His name, draws thy will to His; therefore, place thyself in His hands entirely once for all. I say to thee with Job: "Submit thyself then to Him, and be at peace."¹

SEVENTEENTH DAY.

ST. ANTHONY, ABBOT.

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him (St. James i. 12).

I. Consider first, that the reason for which the Lord permits the devil to be let loose against thee, and labours and tribulations to come upon thee, is to find out whether thou lovest Him. Thou tellest God readily that thou lovest Him, as long as everything goes thy own way; but come to the proof: some rebellion of sense, an attack of sickness, an insult received, a fit of desolation, and lo! all is changed. Knowest thou not that the devil scoffed at the virtue of Job himself, until he was put to the proof? What dependence then canst thou place on thine? Wait until the Lord tries it; what wilt thou do then? Now is the time of trial: "The life of man upon earth is a warfare,"² or, according to the Septuagint version, "a temptation." This, perhaps, is the reason why it is not here said, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptations," but "temptation;" for he is in truth blessed whose life is one continual trial, like the life of St. Antony, one who even among the saints deserves to be called "a man."

II. Consider secondly, that if under this trial thou prove firm, thou shalt be blessed, for thou shalt receive the crown: "Thou shalt receive the crown of life." What glory shall

¹ Job xxii. 21.

² Job vii. 1.

then be thine, when the Lord in full assembly shall place the crown upon thy head? Great was the strife to win a crown of laurel or parsley or pine, so soon to fade; and wilt thou not fight to win the "unfading crown of glory"?¹ It is called the crown of life, to distinguish it from crowns bestowed by men, which wither and die.

III. Consider thirdly, that this grand crown is assured to thee; it cannot fail, for it has been promised thee by God, not once, but a thousand and a thousand times, *repromisit Deus*. All Scripture is full of it. Dost thou trust the word of a monarch, when he promises thee a prize for running well, though the prize has not been shown to thee, and wilt thou not trust God? If the Lord gave thee but one glimpse of the crown which He has prepared for thee, how great would be thy courage, thy alacrity, thy joy! But He, for thy own greater profit, does not choose to show it; He wishes thee to trust in Him. Indeed, how canst thou ask to see it, when it has not yet been made? It is for thyself to make it. According to the measure of thy sufferings, shall be thy crown; for which reason it is not said that "the Lord promised it," but that "He promised it in return;" for this crown is not a gift, it is a recompense.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

You cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and the table of devils
(1 Cor. x. 21).

I. Consider first, that the difference of these tables consists in the different characters of the delights offered by God and offered by the devils. Those which God gives, come to us from a Lord Who from His inmost being loves us as His creatures. Those which the devils give, come to us from our enemies. Now from this infer the difference. The devils wish to take thy life by poison, and give thee food which may sometimes be pleasant to the taste, but makes thee sick to death. God desires to cure thy maladies, and He gives thee food, now sweet, now bitter, as thy state requires, but always good and wholesome.

II. Consider secondly, that thou needs must make thy choice. Whoever wishes to sit at the table of God, let him

¹ St. Peter v. 4.

not try to partake of the table of devils. Whoever wishes to sit at the table of devils, let him not hope to partake of the table of God. Some would like to be guests at both tables; but that is impossible. They cannot even have any share in them both: "You cannot be partakers."

III. Consider thirdly, the blindness of men, who forsaking the table of God, flock in crowds to the table of devils, eager only to pamper their pride, their self-interest, their anger, their envy, or other disorderly affection. So that if some do not sit down at the table of one devil, they find place at that of another. If they do not feed their ambition, they feed their lust. If they do not feed their lust, they feed their ambition. It is necessary to make a generous resolution to renounce every one of them all; and, therefore, we are warned not against the table "of the devil," but "of devils."

IV. Consider fourthly, at which table art thou a guest, the table of God or the table of devils? If for a long time thou takest no pleasure in spiritual things, in thinking on God, in speaking of God, in working for God, but rather dost feel a strong disinclination thereto, then beware; some devil is feeding thee.

NINETEENTH DAY.

Think diligently on Him that endured such opposition for sinners against Himself; that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds. For you have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin (Hebrews xii. 3, 4).

I. Consider first, that thou shouldst never weary of thinking upon Christ crucified, for this will comfort thee under every trial. Therefore it is not said "think," but "think again and again;" for this ought to be the ever-present subject of thy contemplation. In meditating on the Passion, thou shouldst particularly ponder these things: Who suffers? at whose hands does He suffer? what does He suffer? (1) Who suffers? The King of glory; He, Who from the very beginning of the world has suffered in His friends, in Abel, Joseph, Jeremias, Isaias, now suffers not only in His friends, but in His own Person. (2) At whose hands does He suffer? "At the hands of sinners," for whose salvation He is hanging on the Cross. (3) What does He suffer? "Such opposition," persecution in every shape; "such," that is to say, so painful,

so disgraceful, and so unjust. In thy secret soul, with all thy power, examine deeply every circumstance.

II. Consider secondly, that the chief benefit thou shalt derive from often thinking upon the Passion, is to nerve thyself afresh for suffering, "that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds." Nothing would so animate a soldier, as to see his king weary and sorrowful, and shedding his blood in the foremost ranks. Hast thou no need thus to restore thy vigour? See how at every trifle thou dost lose courage, shrink back, grow languid, and relinquish the service of the Lord.

III. Consider thirdly, what ought to be thy confusion at sight of this thy baseness, when thou weighest it at the foot of the crucifix. Thy sin in nowise causes harm to Christ, and yet thou seest how much He upon His Cross has laboured to deliver thee. To thyself it does infinite harm, and yet what hast thou ever done to keep it far from thee? Hast thou, in view of this, so much as shed a single drop of blood? Ah, how truly speaks the Apostle when he exclaimed: "You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Thou art unwilling, not only to shed thy blood, but even to suffer on occasion the slightest injury to reputation, property, or health, or even the deprivation of a single empty pleasure. Do not pursue this path. Thou must stand thy ground and fight to the very end of the war, "unto blood," for the interests at stake are too tremendous: there is question of refusing entrance to sin, and it was to destroy sin that Christ was willing to shed the last drop of His Blood, "and to endure such opposition from sinners against Himself."

TWENTIETH DAY.

Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation (St. Luke vi. 24).

I. Consider first, what words of terror! He does not say, Woe, because you are robbers, extortioners, murderers, because you commit innumerable acts of injustice, but solely because you have your consolation. What, then, is the consolation which the rich possess? It is the power which they, more than others, have of doing their own will, by reason of the slavish subservience which the world pays to money: "All

things obey money.”¹ How great an evil, if we rightly judge, it is to follow our own will!

II. Consider secondly, that to have our consolation here below is a very bad sign; for it is a sign that we are not destined to have our consolation in Heaven, according to what was said to the glutton: “Son, thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime.”² How much better, then, is it to encounter much sorrow and bitterness here below, than to have everything as we wish! It is an inviolable law that joy is not to be had both here and hereafter. Therefore this “Woe to you!” in this passage not only denotes some dreadful evil, and deplores and threatens it, but it foretells it also; in other words, it contains all the four meanings which are attached in Scripture to this formidable word “woe.”

III. Consider thirdly, that as Christ when He called the poor blessed did not mean to speak of all the poor, but only of such as are so willingly, “the poor in spirit,” He is similarly minded when He calls the rich accursed. For if a man happens to possess riches, but does not fix his heart upon them, and consequently does not use them for purposes which are at variance with the permission or command of God, he need not be filled with apprehension; for he has not his consolation in them. But, “who is he, and we will praise him?”³ For thyself, choose rather not to have riches at all, than to have riches and to keep thy heart disengaged from them. The first is easy of attainment, the second is a miracle.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

I live in the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and delivered Himself for me (Galat. ii. 20).

I. Consider first, what is the meaning of the words “to live in the faith.” They mean that thou dost put thy trust in Jesus Christ, feeling perfectly assured that as long as thou dost allow thyself to be governed by Him, all shall go well with thee, though He should send thee desolation, sickness, disgrace, and beggary. Canst thou not throw thy whole self into the arms of that Lord Who has loved thee with so deep a love?

¹ Eccles. x. 19.

² St. Luke xvi. 25.

³ Ecclus. xxxi. 9.

Rest perfectly assured that in the end all shall turn to thy advantage: "Live in the faith of the Son of God."

II. Consider secondly, to what a height His love of thee has gone, since He "delivered Himself up for thee;" not "another," but "Himself," not an angel, or archangel, or any other spirit higher yet, but Himself in His own Person. He chose to be Himself the great Victim offered up for thy salvation. He was delivered up by Judas only because He delivered Himself up by going forward to meet him.

III. Consider thirdly, that all this, moreover, has been done for thee individually. Therefore thou must not say, "He loved us and delivered Himself for us," but "He loved me and delivered Himself up for me." The Lord died as much for thee separately as for all. In the very act of dying He thought of thee in particular, prayed for thee, offered up to His Father the Sacrifice on the Cross for thee. So, also, as He came down from Heaven to die for all, He would, had it been necessary, have come down for thy sake alone. Judge, then, if He loves Thee!

IV. Consider fourthly, how great is the wrong thou offerest Him, when after He has given Himself wholly for thee, thou refusest to give Thyself wholly to Him. But to give thyself wholly to Him is this: to relinquish thyself entirely to His will, the victim of obedience, and to suffer Him to dispose of thee in everything, according to His pleasure, never thinking of thy own interests, but desiring only to live in faith—"to live in the faith of the Son of God." This is to live like a child in its mother's arms.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

Fear ye Him, Who after He hath killed hath power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him (St. Luke xii. 5).

I. Consider first, how strange it is that God, with all His great power, inspires thee with so little fear! If a man were to hold thee by the hair of thy head over the ledge of some lofty tower, in such sort that if he loosed his hold thou wouldst be precipitated into a pit, full of scorpions, serpents, horrible dragons, who with open mouths awaited thee, wouldst thou be proud enough at such a time to dare to point a dagger at his

throat? And yet how often dost thou rebel against thy God! Dost thou not see, unhappy man, whither thy fall must be, if He withdraw His hand? Into the dungeon of Hell; and yet thou dost not fear Him, and thou art of the number of those who despise and defy Him, who "provoke God boldly."¹

II. Consider secondly, what is the meaning of the word *Gehenna*. Gehenna is a pit of fire, of immense extent, far down in the deep recesses of the earth, whereto, as to their centre, all pains converge, and where they accordingly possess greater keenness and activity. It is a place of horror, where all that is loathsome on the earth meets in one foul receptacle, fetid and dark and hideous, where no breath of air can come; a pit of vast extent indeed, but all too narrow for the great number of the damned who shall fall into it on the Day of Judgment, as countless as the drops of rain, and therefore all shall be crowded together, lying one upon another, forming a great hecatomb to send up everlastingly the smoke of its fires in sacrifice to the wrath of God. Add to this, that each of the damned shall weigh more heavily than lead; what then shall it be to lie through all eternity under a dreadful load, "a weight of lead,"² of hundreds and thousands and millions of bodies, without ever finding one moment's release? All have to lie there motionless as lead; and covered as they are with sores and ulcers, they shall feel themselves under that burden which grows heavier day by day, crushed out of human form. Think with thyself what kind of pain is this. A man suffering from the gout, when he sees any one approach shrinks from his touch, and cries out to him to keep away. Imagine what it must be to feel thyself crushed down by the weight of countless multitudes, and all the while tormented by cruel pains. And yet this punishment comes solely from the nature of the place, in that it is a pit, *puteus abyssi*; the pit which Christ by another name called Gehenna, for Gehenna was a valley of Judæa, deep and closed all round, where at one time the fires of sacrifice were lighted to the idol Baal.

III. Consider thirdly, once more, that God holds thee by the hair of the head hanging over this pit, and how is it possible that thou shouldst not fear Him? Say what wouldst thou do if, as has been said, some one held thee suspended from a lofty tower over a pit full of fierce dragons? Wouldst thou not throw thyself on his mercy, with tears and groans and cries, and all the signs of woe that could come from a heart

¹ Job xii. 6.

² Zach. v. 8.

trembling with fear? So shouldst thou behave at all times in the presence of thy God, Who "hath power," if but for an instant He withdraw His hand, to hurl thee down into a far more terrible abyss, "to cast into Hell." The dragons of that imaginary pit, when they had devoured thy body, "could have done nothing more;" they could not do the slightest injury to the soul, which remains untouched, no matter how fiercely they are hissing round. But in Hell the torments of the body, which thou canst better comprehend, are of minor moment; far greater are the torments of the soul, of which thou canst not now form an idea. How is it, then, that thou dost not every day beseech the Lord to have pity upon thee?

IV. Consider fourthly, what is the reason that the Lord has so often and in so many ways enjoined this fear of Himself; so that having said already, "Fear ye Him, Who after He hath killed the body hath power to cast thee into Hell," He returns to the same subject and repeats His words, "Yea, I say unto you, fear Him." The reason is, because on the one hand He saw the great need the world had of this fear, and on the other hand He knew that some would even venture to inveigh against it, in order some day to free themselves altogether from its control, as a wild horse shakes off bit and bridle. Know, then, that the fear of the Lord which makes thee return to the Lord, or when thou hast returned will not suffer thee to depart, is worthy of all praise. Therefore it is that He so ardently desires it, when He says, "Who will give them to have such a mind, to fear Me?"¹ Observe, however, that in two ways this fear may be thine. Thou mayest fear sin because it leads to punishment, or thou mayest fear punishment because it presupposes sin. If thou fearest sin on account of the punishment that God may inflict on thee, more especially in Hell, thou dost well; but this is a servile fear, and therefore of inferior kind; for it is that kind of "fear of the Lord" which merely "driveth out sin."² What, then, shouldst thou do? Thou shouldst fear all the same the pains of Hell, but they should be feared on account of the sin which they presuppose. This is filial fear, a fear not only good, but holy: "The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and for ever;"³ and therefore this fear will grow within thee, in proportion to the growth of the love which unites thee to God.

¹ Deut. v. 29.

² Eccles. i. 27.

³ Psalm xviii. 10.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

A patient man shall bear for a time, and afterwards joy shall be restored to him (Ecclus. i. 29).

I. Consider first, that however great thy sufferings may be, thou must not be disheartened, for they shall last but "for a time." Temptations, troubles, adversity, humiliation, shall all come to an end, and then shall follow eternal happiness: "A patient man shall bear for a time, and afterwards joy shall be restored to him."

II. Consider secondly, that thou oughtest not to be anxious to rejoice now, seeing that it is not yet thy time; rest assured that it shall come. See the condition of a tree in winter time, shorn of its foliage, gaunt, covered with snow, a pitiful object, no one cares to look at it. But wait a little, and thou shalt see what pomp of leaves and wealth of flowers and store of tempting fruit! So shall it be with thee. Wait "for a time;" now is thy winter: "Bear with patience."

III. Consider thirdly, that it would be foolishness in such a tree to wish impatiently to put forth buds and be gay before its time. It would shortly come to fade, and when all the rest stood forth in early spring joyous and richly clad, it would be left neglected and alone. So shall it be with thee likewise, if thou wouldst now forestall the happy state which belongs to the blessed in Heaven alone. We are here to suffer, not to rejoice. Understand this well: "In the world you shall have distress."¹

IV. Consider fourthly, that the joy which follows shall bear proportion to the suffering which has gone before, and therefore observe the use of the word "restored." The Lord will restore to thee joy in proportion to the joy which thou hast renounced at His bidding heretofore: "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul."² Perchance thou dost not trust Him. Doubt Him not; He pays all debts most faithfully. Nay, much more will He restore to thee than thou hast ever given. Suffice for thee to know that He will give thee Himself: "I am thy reward exceeding great."³

¹ St. John xvi. 33.

² Psalm xciii. 19.

³ Genesis xv. 1.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

Keep mercy and judgment, and hope in thy God always (Osee xii. 6).

I. Consider first, that when in the Divine Scriptures these two names "mercy and judgment" occur in combination they commonly refer to some virtuous action. By "judgment" is meant some act of virtue which is of obligation, a duty of religion or of gratitude, or of charity, or of any other virtue. By "mercy" is meant some virtuous act of supererogation. And in this sense spoke David of old when he said that "the Lord loveth mercy and judgment."¹ This then is the subject proposed for thy consideration here: that thou shouldst be exact in the performance of all the works committed to thy care, whether they be of supererogation or strict duty. It is not said, "Exercise mercy and judgment," but "Keep mercy and judgment;" for it is not enough to be a negligent observer of the law, but thou must be jealously alive to its observance, according to the words, "Give me understanding and I will search Thy law; and I will keep it with my whole heart."²

II. Consider secondly, that it appears reasonable that the order of the words should be "judgment and mercy," and not "mercy and judgment." For those acts which are of obligation ought, it would seem, to precede those which are of supererogation, and so also ought to be the first required of us. Nevertheless when these two words occur together, the opposite order is observed, "Mercy and judgment I will sing to Thee, O Lord;"³ "God loveth mercy and truth;"⁴ "His mercy and truth who shall search?"⁵ This is to teach thee that unless thou pave the way so to speak, by some works of supererogation to acts of duty, thou wilt never perfectly accomplish these. Wouldst thou as in duty bound root out some hatred from thy heart? Practise some acts of love which are not of obligation, as for instance, to pray for him who has offended thee, to speak well of him, to treat him kindly, even to do him some little service unobserved. Wouldst thou be scrupulously honest in rendering every man his due? Overcome that love for money which possesses thee, and even when thou mayest lawfully retain it for thyself, bestow it in alms. Wouldst thou

¹ Psalm xxxii. 5.

² Psalm cxviii. 34.

³ Psalm c. 1.

⁴ Psalm lxxxiii. 12.

⁵ Psalm lx. 8.

keep far away from thy heart those acts of impurity which bring such degradation? Keep a greater guard over thy feelings than thou art strictly bound to do, shun dancing even though not injurious in thy case, avoid late revels, visiting, merry-making; mortify thy flesh, and to that end use some practical austerity. This is the way to train a weak sapling. If you desire to make it grow straight when it leans to the left, you must bend it further to the right than is absolutely necessary.

III. Consider thirdly, that when with all this thou shalt have succeeded in keeping "mercy and judgment," thou must not place any confidence in any of thy good works, whether of strict duty or supererogation, but thou must place all thy confidence in God. Therefore after the words, "Keep mercy and judgment," is immediately added, "and hope in thy God always." Thou must not place thy hope in "mercy" or in "judgment." Thou must place all thy hope "in thy God" alone. Oh, if thou didst only understand the importance of that great lesson. Many a time thou dost good works and then art satisfied with them as if they by themselves could save thee. This they cannot do. Thou must understand this truth without delay, that all these thy good works will be of no avail if the Lord aid thee not by His peculiar grace; and thou must pray for this grace just as if thou hadst done no good works at all. Herein lay the great difference between Ezechias and Sedecias. Both fortified the city of Jerusalem against all the assaults of the enemy marvellously well; both furnished it with munitions of war, both supplied it with troops alike. But Sedecias did nothing more; whereas Ezechias, when he had done thus much, clothed himself in sackcloth, sprinkled ashes upon his head, and going to the Temple, without loss of time, addressed himself to God in fervent prayer; and thus it was, that whereas the preparations of Ezechias were crowned with success, those of Sedecias were all thrown away. "For because thou hast trusted in thy bulwarks thou also shalt be taken."¹ Be this then thy rule of conduct. Use thy utmost diligence, as if thou hadst nothing to hope for from God; and then hope everything from God, as if thou hadst used no diligence at all.

IV. Consider fourthly, a further quality of that confidence which thou requirest in God, here called "thy God," in order to encourage thee the more to place thy trust in Him. It

¹ Jerem. xlviii. 7.

must be continual, therefore it is not said simply, "Hope in thy God," but the word "always" is added. Thou dost easily begin to hope, but dost not persevere, as though God refused to hear or to accept thy prayers. This is a grievous error! Wouldst thou in dealing with the Lord set limits and make conditions like the men of Bethulia who agreed to surrender to Holofernes if God did not rescue them within five days? Hold with unwavering faith that what thou askest for the good of thy soul, if only thou dost continue to ask, shall never be refused. Leave the rest to God. Remember what the Psalmist says, "In Thee have our fathers hoped, they have hoped, and Thou hast delivered them."¹ It is not enough for obtaining release to hope once, thou must hope still again.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

A faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation; that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief. But for this cause have I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ Jesus might show forth all patience (1 Timothy i. 15, 16).

I. Consider first, what great consolation thou oughtest to derive from these words, which are matter of faith and incontrovertible: "Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners." If the Lord came to save sinners, then He came on purpose to save thee. The expression used is that He came into this world, not that He was born, in order to show that before He was born He existed elsewhere: He was in the bosom of the Father. Now ask thyself if He wills thy salvation, seeing that to effect it He has come from the abode of so much happiness to one of so much misery—"into this world." Could it be that He did not know the vile treatment He would meet with there? It is certain that He knew: "Knowing all things that should come upon Him."

II. Consider secondly, the great humility with which the Apostle spoke of himself when he called himself the first among these sinners, that is to say, the greatest sinner of them all; an assertion he could make without falsehood, since he

¹ Psalm xxi, 5.

sincerely thought himself such. His thoughts ever brooded on his great sin, he was conscious of its heinousness, he regarded not the sins of others, and thus by degrees he came to act like a man who under the pain of some excruciating malady thinks there is no suffering equal to his own; for he has experimental knowledge of his own sufferings, but only an indistinct and theoretical acquaintance with those of others. If thou wert always thinking of those circumstances which aggravate thy own sins and extenuate those of others, thou wouldst speak as St. Paul does. But thou art ever thinking, on the contrary, of the circumstances which aggravate the sins of others and extenuate thy own. Dost thou wish in good earnest to esteem thyself the worst of all? Adopt this course. Conceive a thorough hatred for thyself. What dost thou naturally do when thou feelest a strong hatred towards one who has outraged thee? Thou sayest there is no such villain to be met, and thou dost not mean it for exaggeration, but in thy fury thou dost really judge him so. Thou wilt so speak of thyself if thou hatest thyself after the example of the saints.

III. Consider thirdly, that although the Apostle had been long before converted, he did not say, "Of whom I was the chief," but, "Of whom I am the chief;" for he considered himself as he was by his own nature, and so considering himself he knew that there was no sin to which he might not easily have yielded his consent. If he did not so transgress, it was due to grace alone. Here then is ample room for self-abasement. Often think of the evil propensities that hold sway within thee, and imagine what would become of thee if the Lord withdrew His saving hand for a single instant.

IV. Consider fourthly, how the Apostle became his own accuser in order to encourage every one, no matter whom, to hope in Christ. He said that God had vouchsafed to show mercy to him, to manifest in him, the chief of sinners, the wonders of His patience, "that in me first Christ Jesus might show forth all patience." And in good truth has many a man been rescued from despair by the example of St. Paul, changed that day by Christ from a furious persecutor into a zealous preacher! Nor need we be surprised. When a physician on first arriving in the town, by happy exercise of skill effects the cure of some great man pronounced before incurable, all the other sick persons of the place desire a visit from him. But here again see how the Apostle seeks to humble himself. He says that the Lord had showed forth in him "all patience."

As if that power of endurance which the Lord did not much need in the case of other men was all required for him alone. How much more true would it be for thee to say that the Lord "shows forth all His patience in thee," since at thy hands He suffers furthermore so much ingratitude? The Apostle, finally, when once he had repented, remained faithful to Christ until death; he laboured hard, and did not spare himself; he strained every nerve to correspond with His grace: "He laboured more than all."¹

V. Consider fifthly, that although it is chiefly to show forth His patience that the Lord so patiently endures thy malice, thou art not on that account under less obligation to Him, for He might have chosen to display His patience to others without number, and He has not done so. How greatly then does He favour thee, when He singles thee out in order to show forth His patience in thee? This alone should be enough to cover thee with confusion; so that from thy heart thou mayest exclaim: "As for me I will praise Him in the land of my captivity, because He hath shown His majesty to a sinful nation."²

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

The way of the wicked is darksome, they know not whither they fall
(Proverbs iv. 19).

I. Consider first, that by the way of the wicked is to be understood the course of life which they pursue. It is shrouded in darkness—"darksome," because imprudence, ignorance, fatal errors, or in other words, perverse maxims everywhere prevail. The wicked maintain that all men ought on all occasions to be ambitious, strive to make money, to stand upon their rights, and devote themselves to the pursuit of pleasure, and the like. Is thy mind darkened by any maxim of this kind? If it is, have at once recourse to the Lord that He may enlighten thee; say with all earnestness, "My God, enlighten my darkness;" thou art a lost man otherwise.

II. Consider secondly, that the most dangerous falls are those which happen in the dark. Therefore, here it is not said of sinners simply, "That they know not where they fall"

¹ Cor. xv. 10.

² Tobias xiii. 7.

(*cadant*), but, "They know not where they fall headlong" (*corruant*); for theirs is no ordinary fall, but sheer destruction. Oh, into what a yawning gulf they plunge! Not only into the depth of sin, as they suppose; but into the depths of damnation, too, and this is the more horrible, because it is unperceived. For those who fall into one mortal sin, know not how far it may take them in the end. "They know not whither they fall headlong." They fancy they will stop at this one sin; but it is far otherwise; they sink down from sin to sin, until they perish utterly. This is what happens to a man who falls into a deep ditch in the dark; he cannot extricate himself.

III. Consider thirdly, that these wretched men have not a faint idea of what damnation means. When, therefore, they hear any one declare that if they do such things they will go down to Hell infallibly; what answer do they make? If I do go down to Hell, well and good, I shall not go alone. Oh, fools! oh, madmen! Are they not in darkness! They have not the courage to shut themselves up in a monastery of Cistercians or Capuchins, although there they would not be alone, but would have angels for their companions; and yet they are not afraid to bury themselves in a deep pit of raging fire with scorpions and serpents. If they have many companions, the greater is their misery. Delusion all! They comfort themselves with the thought that they will have with them so many more savage beasts and furious tormentors to increase their woe. It is very clear that they do not understand: "They know not whither they fall headlong."

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM.

Glory not and be not liars against the truth. For this is not wisdom descending from above; but earthly, sensual, and devilish (St. James iii. 14, 15).

I. Consider first, the nature of that doctrine in which worldlings glory, when they place their happiness in riches, honours, and pleasures. It is a doctrine wholly opposed to the truth, in other words, a lie. Has not Christ already said with His own lips: "Blessed are the poor, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are they that suffer persecution?" One

of two things is true: either Christ is deceived, or the world errs. But Christ cannot err, if He be the Truth. It therefore follows that the world must be deceived. Fix deeply in thy mind this principle, and be convinced that what Christ here sets down is just as true as is the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, or any other truth which He has been pleased to reveal to us; for every word uttered by the Eternal Truth is true in the same degree. One cannot be more true than another.

II. Consider secondly, that this doctrine of the world, if it must go by the name of wisdom, is "earthly, sensual, devilish wisdom." The wisdom that places all happiness in riches is earthly; for it makes earthly goods its object. The wisdom which places happiness in pleasure is sensual; for it makes the gratification of the body its object. The wisdom which places happiness in honour is devilish; for it has the same object which Lucifer had; he of whom it is written in the Book of Job: "He is a king over all the children of pride."¹ It is impossible, therefore, that any one of these kinds of wisdom can be true wisdom. For true wisdom is that which takes for its object the final end of all created things (no other assuredly than God, the immense and infinite good), and orders all things for the attainment of this end, according to the rules laid down by God Himself.

III. Consider thirdly, that each of these three kinds of wisdom is "lying." The earthly wisdom is "lying," because it promises to make men happy by riches, which are intended only for the ruling of our necessities, and are not good as being in themselves the end, but only as means to an end; and even as means not always to be relied on, seeing that sometimes "riches are turned to the hurt of the owner."² The wisdom that is sensual is "lying," because it promises to make men happy by pleasures, which gratify the body only, and do no service to the soul, the better part of man; thus acting like a man who tries to please the servant instead of the master. The wisdom that is devilish is "lying," because it promises to make men happy by honour, grandeur, glory, which do not constitute the excellence of a man, but serve to manifest it, and are therefore only signs of the real good that is in him; and as such too often deceptive, unreasonable and unfair: they are not like the signs sent by the hand of God, Who never confers honour where it is not due.

¹ Job xli. 25.

² Eccles. v. 12.

IV. Consider fourthly, on the other hand, that the wisdom of Christ is true wisdom, because it leads men to the attainment of their final end, which is true happiness. And the more it withdraws men from riches, pleasures, and honours, the more does it withdraw them from all that impedes their easy progress to this final end; and therefore the more does it advance them towards that final end, both by the way of merit in the present life, and of reward in the life to come. Yea, even in this life it often brings the reward with it, or at least the beginning of reward. Such is the happiness which even here the saints enjoy, whom we may compare to trees of happy growth, showing not only leaves and flowers in rich abundance, but also the young fruit already forming for their future glory.

V. Consider fifthly, that the wisdom of the world described before "is not descending from above," because it can be fully acquired by human study, if indeed there be any need of acquiring that which each man from his birth possesses as a propensity of fallen nature. On the contrary, the wisdom of Christ "is descending from above," because it can only come from Heaven, although we may help ourselves by human study to acquire it; and it is not founded in corrupted nature, but in the restoration of that nature, after it had been turned away from its final end. Therefore this wisdom is sublime, spiritual, free from error; it was worthy to be brought to earth by Christ in Person: "The only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared it."¹ He Who before had made eloquent the tongues of others, whom He sent to be His messengers, now spoke in His own Person: "And opening His mouth, He began to say: Blessed are the poor, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are they that suffer persecution." See then the high resolve which it is for thee to form! generously to renounce all the wisdom of the world, so poor compared with the wisdom of thy Lord. And if thou wish to meet with one who has with marvellous success reproved this worldly wisdom, entertain a great affection for St. John Chrysostom. Of all the saints, he is the one who has best refuted it in all three modes of disputation, with his pen, and with his words, and with his actions.

¹ St. John i. 18.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

Man shall go into the house of his eternity (Eccles. xii. 5).

I. Consider first, that the house wherein thou dwellest now is in no sense, to say the truth, thy home. Rather it is a wayside inn wherein thou lodgest for a time, and only a short time. Before long those dearest to thee will be the first to remove thee from it, lest thou shouldst spread infection around. What will be thy house in truth? The tomb, thy last resting-place, as it is often called; it is no wonder if it be also called "the house of thy eternity." Never more to the end of time shalt thou come forth therefrom to visit any one upon this earth, thy fellow-countrymen, thy relatives, or any of those dear friends without whom it seems to thee impossible to live. As long as this house shall last, so long shalt thou be its inmate: "Their sepulchres shall be their houses for ever."¹ Then only shalt thou come forth from it when, amid the complete destruction of the entire world, it shall share the general ruin; although it may be that thou hast built it of more costly marble than that wherein repose the bones of many a saint.

II. Consider secondly, that though all that has been here alleged is true, nevertheless this house of thine, the tomb, is only called a house in a less strict sense. It is not thy real house of eternity. For thy true self shall never enter there, only thy dead body shall be in the tomb, and even it shall not go, for it shall be carried. Whereas the saying is: "Man shall go into the house of his eternity." Therefore thy true house of eternity shall be Heaven or Hell. There is none other. But oh, how different are these two houses! Canst thou tell which of the two shall be thine? God grant that thou have not too much reason to answer, "Hell is my house."²

III. Consider thirdly, that up to the present, at all events, it rests with thyself to choose which thou pleasest; therefore is it said: "Man shall go;" for every one goes whither he pleases to go; God employs no force. "Behold I set before you the way of life and the way of death."³ Wilt thou be so foolish as to choose to go to Hell rather than to Heaven? Let it not be so. Thou dost toil and strive, thou dost endure much suffering to effect thy damnation. One half the heavy

¹ Psalm xlvi. 12.

² Job xvii. 13.

³ Jerem. xxi. 8.

toil thou goest through for gaining Hell, would suffice to win thee Heaven. Is it not the case that many a time thou seest Hell opening before thy eyes, and yet to gratify thy rage, ambition, avarice, or lust, thou dost pursue thy quarry within its very jaws? "God made not death," says the sublime writer of Wisdom, "but the wicked with works and words have called it."¹ Is it not frantic folly to go in pursuit of thy own damnation? It is not enough merely to await its coming; thou must needs beckon it on. Thou dost call it to thee by works and by words. Observe the process. Naturally, when one man provokes another, he does so, first by words, and then by actions. But the wicked, on the contrary, in order to provoke their own damnation, employ actions first and then afterwards words: "With works and words," not "With words and works." For first they do works which deserve damnation, and then they begin to be merry about their misdeeds, to laugh at them and make light of them; and sometimes they are not afraid to answer thee in this wise: "If I am to be damned, God's will be done." God's will be done! If God damn thee, He will do what is thy own will: *Ibit homo.*

IV. Consider fourthly, that if thou enter once this house of woe, thou shalt never more depart therefrom, and for this reason it is called "the house of eternity." But hast thou ever seriously set thyself to think upon the meaning of an eternity of punishment? There are many ways of doing this; I will suggest only one. Imagine thyself burning in the terrible fire of Hell, and the Lord calling to thee suddenly and saying: "Courage, rejoice, for in the end I mean to withdraw thee from this place. But when, O Lord? A century hence? Too short a time. In ten centuries? Too short a time. In twenty centuries? Too short a time. In a hundred centuries. Too short a time. Shall it not be at least in a million of centuries? Even this is too short a time. I shall not withdraw thee hence until as many centuries have passed as there were drops of water in the deluge which covered all the earth. O God! what would be thy feelings at this announcement? Would not the exultation thou didst feel at first quickly die away? And yet be assured this would be the most delightful announcement to a lost soul. When ages of ages, countless as those separate drops of water, shall have passed away, nothing at all as yet has passed away. All

¹ Wisdom i. 13, 16.

that vast number of ages shall pass away, not once only, but a thousand, and yet a thousand, and again a thousand times, and after that anew without ceasing other thousand times. And after that the course is just beginning. Oh, terrible eternity! who can compass thee? And does it seem to thee a trifling evil to place it in jeopardy? Horror seizes thee when thou thinkest on the fire which rained down on guilty Sodom. And yet that city was in a moment utterly consumed, "overthrown in a moment."¹ What shall it be then, when no longer a shower, but a deluge of more dreadful fire shall overwhelm thee for endless ages, without ever departing from thee, or ever destroying thee, or ever allowing thee in all that lapse of time so much as one short moment of repose? yet it shall be even so. Nevermore, throughout everlasting ages, shall peace come to the damned: war, ceaseless war! "And He shall rain down His war upon him."²

V. Consider fifthly, on the other hand, the same eternity in Paradise. How great is the difference! There war shall not be rained down upon the blessed: perpetual peace, perpetual mirth, perpetual joy, perpetual festivity: "Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads,"³ so that they shall go on for ever, slowly, slowly sinking in sweet abandonment down into unfathomed depths of an ocean of unmixed delight. But it may possibly appear to thee, that after so many millions upon millions of ages, happiness itself must begin to pall. No, it is not so; that happiness shall seem ever new. St. John, when he had seen it, said that there all the blessed "sung as it were a new canticle."⁴ Not really new, for it was the same praise of God; but "as it were new," for it was as gay and sweet and thrilling with delight, as though it had but then burst forth. Oh, what surprising happiness is this which feeds thy soul with ever new delight, and never grows wearisome. A song, however sweet, if it be continued for three hours, a banquet lasting all day long, or a play taking the whole night, would be unendurable. And yet so dear to us will be the blessedness of Heaven, that it would cease to be blessedness, if a suspicion could arise that it might even for one moment cease or suffer change.

VI. Consider sixthly, how great then is thy folly, when there is question of two houses of eternity so different as Heaven and Hell, if thou dost not exert thyself to procure at any price the one which is incomparably better. What trouble thou dost take to secure here upon earth a suitable dwelling-

¹ Lament. iv. 6. ² Job xx. 23. ³ Isaias xxxv. 10. ⁴ Apoc. xiv. 3.

house, pleasantly placed, with good climate, and fine scenery, although thou canst never do more than lodge there for a time. And wilt thou take no pains to procure at least such a suitable dwelling there, where thou wilt have to dwell for all eternity? "Man shall go into the house of his eternity." At the same time remark that the word eternity is not applied to the house, but to thyself; for this reason it is not said: "Man shall go into his house of eternity," but "Into the house of his eternity;" in order that, therefrom, thou mayest understand in all its fulness the immortality of the human soul. If the eternity were ascribed to the house, it would not follow thence that thou art thyself eternal; but the eternity belongs to thee: "Of his eternity;" and hence it is abundantly manifest that thou art immortal. It is true that this shall be not only the house of thy eternity, but also thy house throughout thy eternity; for these words are susceptible of both meanings; and thereby is meant that thou art eternal, that the house is eternal, and that thou shalt dwell therein eternally.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

To love one's neighbour as oneself is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices (St. Mark xii. 33).

I. Consider first, that not every act thou dost for the benefit of thy neighbour, in clothing, feeding, cheering, or consoling him, is an act of supernatural charity, such as is spoken of in this passage; but only such acts of kindness as are done to him for the love of God, Who has commended to thy care this thy neighbour as if He gave Himself in person to thy keeping. Considering this, there can be no doubt that "to love one's neighbour is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices," for acts of supernatural charity are greater than acts of religion. If, indeed, I should not rather say, that these same acts of supernatural charity are themselves acts of religion, because they are directed to the greater honour of God; and, on the other hand, they possess the additional advantage of being performed in aid of our neighbour. Therefore, when it is laid down that "to love one's neighbour is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices," the things of which we treat belong to the same order, and consequently we are

speaking of sacrifices which are preferred to other sacrifices. Such is St. Augustine's opinion.¹

II. Consider secondly, how important it is, if this be so, that whenever thou dost any act of charity to thy neighbour, thou shouldst raise thy heart to God, and not act merely from natural compassion, which makes thee wish to help one whom thou seest lying before thee hungry, thirsty, naked, fever-stricken. This natural impulse is of no great value. Know, then, that there are many to be met, who are called "the noble sons of Sion," but who, for all that, are only "clothed in the best gold," having of supernatural charity, which is the true gold, nothing but the outward show. They may be as noble as they desire in the eyes of men, but they are of small esteem in truth. "How are they esteemed as earthen vessels, the work of the potter's hand?"² They perform only natural acts, in all respects like the works of the humble potter, who pays very little regard to the vessel which he fashions. A sculptor or engraver puts all his mind into his work, but the potter does not keep his mind working with his hands, but lets his wheel go round and round, and what he makes is of little value. If thou wouldst make much profit by thy acts of charity, accustom thyself always to lift thy mind to God, and to avoid doing what may be called the potter's work.

III. Consider thirdly, that, apart from what has been said so far, "to love one's neighbour is a greater thing than all the holocausts and sacrifices," because the Lord readily allows acts of charity, even when not performed from a supernatural motive, to take precedence over acts of the virtue of religion. It is, for example, lawful on a festival to omit attendance at Mass, in order to assist a patient, even though he pay thee liberally. Who can fail to admire herein the supreme goodness of the Lord, in thus consenting to make more account of our advantage than of His own honour. Thou dost not act with the like generosity when thou dost so often prefer thy own convenience to the honour of thy God. Learn at least from this to set the highest store by acts of charity, which are so pleasing to God.

IV. Consider fourthly, that the personal sacrifices which thou dost make to God by corporal austerities ought also to yield place to acts of charity; for the Lord requires thee sometimes to forego fasting and disciplines, if these would detract from the good thou couldst otherwise procure for thy

¹ *De Civ. Dei*, lib. iv. c. v.

² *Lament.* iv. 2.

neighbour. This truth seems often to elude thy grasp. It may be that thou art addicted to much practice of penance, and, at the same time, extremely reluctant to put thyself to a little inconvenience in order to comply with some request; thou art unwilling to pardon thy neighbour an uncivil word, and must needs return a haughty answer, mortifying and abusing him, nor canst thou ever, in conversation, abstain from hostile criticism of the actions of one, who, being absent, cannot justify himself. Unhappy man! canst thou not understand that "to love one's neighbour is a greater thing than all the holocausts and sacrifices"? The Lord cannot accept thy lesser sacrifices whilst thou dost still neglect the greatest of all, which is charity.

V. Consider fifthly, how far thy love for thy neighbour ought to be carried. Thou art to love him "as thyself." The command is not *as much as*, but *as thyself*; for the Lord never commanded anything to which thou canst not accommodate thy conduct in perfect accordance with all the laws of well-regulated self-love. Therefore, in all things which concern thy true welfare, as, for instance, the grace of God, humility, obedience, and all interior virtues, thou must not yield a single point to thy neighbour—nay, thou must even look upon him with a holy envy. The Apostle, after having said, "Follow after charity," immediately adds, "Be zealous of spiritual gifts,"¹ in order to show us that rivalry in spiritual gifts is not opposed to charity, as rivalry in temporal matters is; for spiritual goods can be possessed at the same time by many, without loss to any one. But, on the other hand, in things which do not touch the welfare of thy soul, give place to the utmost to thy neighbour, for in so doing thou art really advancing thy own best interests likewise. Oftentimes thou wilt concede to others some good of little value—money, or glory, or precedence, or convenience, and thou wilt thereby purchase for thyself an eternal good. It is true that in everything thou art bound to love thy neighbour "as thyself," so that thou must desire for him the same good thou dost desire for thyself, that is to say, true and solid good, and with the same kind of desire, that is to say, with well-ordered desire, and with the same kind of zeal, that is to say, with practical zeal. That charity which "seeks not the things that are its own," because by so doing it may do positive injury to another, is good, but it is not perfect charity. Perfect charity

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 1.

not only shrinks from doing positive injury to the interests of others, but it cannot even consent to disregard them : it treats their interests as its own.

VI. Consider sixthly, that the sacrifices commanded by God in the Old Law reduced themselves to three. One was "the sacrifice for sin ;" and this was required as of necessity to be offered up in order to obtain forgiveness of sin, and it represented the state of penitents who make confession. Hence, one half of the victim was burned in sacrifice to the honour of God, and the other half remained for the priest, in order to show that the forgiveness of sin in the Sacrament of Penance is effectuated by God, working through His ministers. The second was "the peace-offering ;" and this was offered up, either to obtain some benefit, such as peace, or prosperity, or health, or in order to return thanks for some benefit received, and it represented the state of those already advanced in virtue, who strictly adhere to the Divine commands. In this case, therefore, the victim was divided into three parts : one was burned in honour of God, another was reserved for the priest, and another for the person offering the victim, in order to signify that the salvation of men is effected by three, acting concurrently : by God through His grace, by the priest through his guidance, and by the applicant himself, who must achieve salvation by his own exertions. The third was the "holocaust," in which all the victim was burned in the Divine honour. It represented the sublime state of the perfect, who, by observing in full the counsels as well as the commandments of God, consecrate their whole being to His service, without keeping anything back.

Now to return to the meaning of the text. "To love one's neighbour as oneself is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices," because the charity here mentioned is also itself, as I said before, the greatest of all sacrifices, inasmuch as, on the one hand, it belongs to the class of holocausts, since "it seeks not its own ;" and, on the other hand, of all holocausts it is the most worthy, for it is altogether consecrated to the honour of God, not only in His own Person, but likewise in the persons of those whom He has recommended to us as Himself. So that, rightly understood, it fulfils all the law to perfection. "All the law is fulfilled in one word : Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ;"¹ and such was the perfect holocaust continually offered to God by the Saint of this day, St. Francis de Sales.

¹ Galat. v. 14.

THIRTIETH DAY.

In your patience you shall possess your souls (St. Luke xxi. 19).

I. Consider first, that the impatient man is subject to this formidable evil. He is not master of himself, for he is master neither of his understanding, nor of his will. He is not master of his understanding, for he will not wait for the promptings of reason, but forestalls them by his impetuosity, and thus it happens that whereas the patient man, with only moderate ability, can always do much—"He that is patient is governed with much wisdom"¹—the impatient man, on the contrary, with even great powers of mind, can only do little, for he is wont to act with precipitancy, in other words, like a fool. "But he that is impatient exalteth his folly."² He even displays more folly than naturally belongs to him, for this is the meaning of exalting his folly. He is not master of his own will, for he cannot govern his feelings; they govern him instead. He cannot endure a contemptuous word, and so he is governed by anger; he cannot endure poverty, and so he is governed by avarice; he cannot endure a rival, and so he is governed by envy; he cannot endure the frequent stings of his rebellious flesh, and so he is governed by lust. So that the wretched man, turning to God, may well exclaim with truth, "Other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us."³ Oh, how many—I will not say masters, but tyrants—have dominion over him! Greediness, weariness, sadness, timidity, and all the rest. Was it not with good reason that Christ said: "In your patience you shall possess your souls"? Patience alone can give thee undisturbed control over thyself, and "possession" means undisturbed control.

II. Consider secondly, that this still worse consequence befalls the impatient man—not only he is not master of himself, but every one else is his master. "They that hated him have dominion over him."⁴ Men are his masters, the devils are his masters. Men are his masters, for if thou art impatient, every man can move thee at his pleasure—he can enrage, disturb, sadden, or annoy thee; so that every man (and this really is a dreadful thing) has thy peace of mind at his disposal. Thou art not like the brave ship, that can do battle with the winds

¹ Prov. xiv. 29.

² Prov. xiv. 29.

³ Isaias xxvi. 13.

⁴ Psalm cv. 41.

and force them to its service, but like a poor little boat, which is at their mercy.

The devils are his masters, for what they most desire is that thou shouldst not be patient. "They that trouble me will rejoice when I am moved."¹ They are like the experienced general, who rides round and round a fortress in order to reconnoitre it, and take note of the weak points, that he may turn his batteries upon them. If thy weak point be greediness, they tempt thee by greediness; if it be ambition, they tempt thee by ambition; if it be sloth, they tempt thee by sloth. But if thou art impatient, thou art open to attack on all sides, and they will make a furious assault on every point and force thee to surrender. Was it not with good reason that Christ said: "In your patience you shall possess your souls?" Patience can lift thee above the assaults of men and devils, and make thee master of thyself.

III. Consider thirdly, that this further consequence, the worst of all, attends the impatient man—he is infirm of purpose, and therefore he does not possess that hopeful sign of predestination, persistence in the good once undertaken; rather, he bears the mark of reprobation. Of one of the elect it is said: "He shall be like the tree which is planted near the running waters."² Of the reprobate we are told: "Not so the wicked, not so; but like the dust which the wind driveth from the face of the earth."³ Whoever hopes to obtain with ease from the Lord the grace of final perseverance, which is an altogether gratuitous gift, should help himself by the practice of ordinary perseverance, which can be maintained by his own strength. But an impatient man scarcely can have ordinary perseverance. At one time he is seized with a zeal for prayer; then after a little time he begins to grow weary of it, and gives up the practice; or he begins to frequent the sacraments, and soon again neglects them; or he adopts a penitential spirit, but soon austerities become distasteful; or he takes a liking to poverty, but soon of course grows tired; or he devotes himself to reading spiritual books, but he discards these before long, and returns to the old pernicious pasturage; and thus, adhering steadily in neither this nor that good resolution, he is like the bird which spends all the day flitting from nest to nest, and finds itself at last, in an evil hour, left out in the cold. "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that leaveth his place."⁴ Was it not with

¹ Psalm xii. 5.

² Psalm i. 3.

³ Psalm i. 4.

⁴ Prov. xxvii. 8.

good reason that Christ said: "In your patience you shall possess your souls"? Patience, which in great part constitutes ordinary perseverance, is the thing which above all others fits thee for final perseverance, wherein consists the salvation of the soul. Hence where one version has, "He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved,"¹ other versions give, "He that shall endure to the end, he shall be saved." What then dost thou think Christ meant to convey when He said: "In your patience you shall possess your souls"? His words contain not only an assertion, but also a command. They are like an order delivered to soldiers, as thus: "When the enemy appear stand to your ground; keep firm, let them not force you back, for your only chance of victory lies in invincible patience." "In your patience you shall possess your souls."

IV. Consider fourthly, that some would like to be saved by means of patience, but on condition that it be practised by some one else. This is the case with those scrupulous people who, not being able to bear the burthen of their troublesome fancies, daily tax the patience of their confessor by their endless, useless, tiresome narratives, for which they have been often but in vain reproved; their object is not really to submit themselves to obedience, but to satisfy themselves. This is also the case with those who, in religious life, would like to be saved by means of the patience which their Superior, according to them, does not sufficiently possess, for he never seems to treat them with discretion. It is the same with a husband who would like to gain salvation through the patience of his wife, in whom he would be glad to find a much larger stock of that virtue; and the same also with those wives who wish to be saved by the patience of their husbands, which again is not sufficiently abundant to meet their demands. And so it is with thousands, who are quite alive to the great beauty of patience in others, but fail to recognize its charms for themselves. This is not to be commended. "In your patience"—not in the patience of another—"you shall possess your souls." All that patience which thy neighbours practise in bearing with thy troublesome defects will yield more profit to them than to thee; thine own alone can be of any use to thee. Desire therefore for thyself rather to endure than to be endured, for Heaven has been promised by Christ, not to him who is endured, but to him who endures. Often pray to God with

¹ St. Matt. x. 22.

great fervour for this very necessary virtue, and in order to fit thyself for obtaining it, fail not in the meantime to do thy part. Accustom thyself to forecast occasions which may present themselves to thee—insults, or injuries, or sickness, or orders difficult of execution, and hold thyself in readiness, for the greatest risk a fortress runs is that of being surprised. Banish from thy heart all inordinate self-love. Reflect often within thyself that these little accidents of life are but as arrows that flit by; that no one need hope to escape them; that as long as thou art upon earth, so long must thou also of necessity be on the battlefield; that peace shall come hereafter, the reward shall come hereafter; that sin deserves every kind of misfortune; and that, as trifling annoyances are of frequent occurrence, so it is really surprising that some lofty tower does not fall down upon thee, as upon those less guilty sinners who dwelt by Siloe. And when again the occasion arises, and thou feelest the first promptings of anger, enter at once into thyself, like one who detects the first symptoms of fever in his house. Wait not until thy intellect is clouded, because then thou art far gone in misfortune, but call promptly to thy mind the words, so often here repeated, and think that Christ Himself in Person with His own lips addresses thee: "In your patience you shall possess your souls." Thou shalt find them a most powerful antidote.

THIRTY-FIRST DAY.

In this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another (St. John xiii. 35).

I. Consider first, what is the special mark by which the Lord has chosen that His followers, that is to say Christians, should be distinguished from all the rest of the human race. It was not the gift of miracles, it was not knowledge, or wisdom, or any other of the high attributes which they possess; it was their mutual love: "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." See what a place of honour has been assigned among all the virtues to ever-blessed charity, to be the very mark by which Christians can be known! Is not this alone enough to make thee in love with charity?

II. Consider secondly, as this love was chosen to be the distinctive mark of a Christian, it must infallibly follow that it

can be no common love ; it must be an exceeding love, that is to say, greater than any that prevails among Mahommedans, Gentiles, Jews, and all who are not followers of Christ ; for otherwise it would not be sufficient to distinguish them, since, as Ecclesiasticus said, "Every animal loveth its like."¹ And yet Christ not only wished it to be sufficient to distinguish them unerringly, but to distinguish them at once among whatever people they are placed. At once, and therefore He said "in this," and not "from this," unerringly, and therefore He said "shall know," and not "shall guess," among all people, and therefore He said "all," and not "many." Consider then what sort of love is here demanded. It needs must be a love exalted, sublime, superhumam, one that cannot be really imitated by opposite vices, like so many other virtues peculiar to Christians, humility, patience, poverty, remarkable austerity of life, and the like, which like gold too often tempt men to produce a counterfeit resemblance. Is thy charity genuine ?

III. Consider thirdly, that in point of fact Christ has obtained His wish that this love should be the mark by which His followers would be distinguished from all other men. Many a time have the astonished idolaters cried out to their companions, speaking of the Christians, "See how they love one another !" And thus it is clearly shown that the saying of Christ, "In this shall all men know it," contained not only a command, but a prophecy. "They shall know," for never have false worshippers displayed that superabounding charity which in so many instances Christians have practised, not only among themselves, but also towards their most implacable persecutors, ministering to them in the time of plague, redeeming them from slavery, feeding them when hungry, healing them when sick, and even making them their heirs, in the very act of receiving death at their hands. Yes, search through all the false religions of the world, and thou shalt find no one that can boast of acts comparable with those of Christian charity.

IV. Consider fourthly, how well the Lord has provided for His Church by this command, since He has willed that all within its fold "should have love one for another," and therefore that all should be joined in perfect union ; that each should love all, and that all should love each ; so that the cord wherewith He bound them from the beginning should never be snapt asunder. But what was this cord ? Know it is a

¹ Ecclus. xiii. 19.

triple cord, which is of all the strongest: "A three-fold cord is with difficulty broken."¹ And such was the cord which bound His first followers "to one another;" composed of the mind and the will and the way of life. Of the mind, so it is said, "they had but one heart,"² by reason of their unity of faith; of the will, so it is said, "they had but one soul,"³ by reason of their conformity of purpose; and of the way of life, so it is said, "that they had all things in common,"⁴ by reason of their perfect agreement of conduct. If Christians were always bound together in this way and would be content to wage no other strife but one of mutual love, what power could ever equal theirs? It is incredible how such close union is hateful to the devil. No wonder then that he exerts himself to the utmost to rend it asunder. Certain it is, that where all ought to be careful to preserve "the unity of spirit in the bond of peace," as the Apostle said,⁵ rebellion, dissension, party strife are growing fiercer every day. Unhappy Christians who know not how supreme is the good which they thus forfeit by disunion! But how dare they call themselves Christians? They alone are such who bear the device of the followers of Christ: "Who have love for one another."

V. Consider fifthly, how it comes to pass that Christians lose that mutual love which Christ so urgently commended to them. The reason is that they do not love Christ. Notice the construction of a circle. The more the lines converge upon the centre, the more nearly they approach each other; the further they depart from the centre, the more widely they part company without limit to their divergence. Now this is an exact image of our case. If we were all united in Jesus, thinking of Him, speaking of Him, seeking His glory in all things, can we doubt that we should be closely united among ourselves? But our love for Him is poor and weak: and it is no wonder if there be but little interchange of love among ourselves. Do thou then as I bid thee. Devote thyself in the first place to acquiring the most ardent love of thy Lord. Thou wilt then long for some way of proving it. But as thou knowest that thou canst do no real service to One Who is so rich in all things, what remains for thee? Forthwith employ all thy energies in doing good to those in whose persons He is willing to be served. And these are thy neighbours.

¹ Eccles. iv. 12.² Acts iv. 32.³ Acts iv. 32.⁴ Acts iv. 32.⁵ Ephes. iv. 3.

FEBRUARY.

FIRST DAY.

ST. IGNATIUS THE MARTYR.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world (Galat. vi. 14.)

I. Consider first, how resolutely the Apostle cries out that he will glory in nothing but the Cross of his Lord. "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Might he not have justly gloried also in the wisdom of his Lord, in which he had so largely shared, or in His tenderness of charity, or in His vast influence, or in His superhuman power of working miracles? Doubtless he might; and yet he desired to glory alone in the Cross of Christ, which was then the opprobrium of the world. Happy art thou, if one day thou too shalt learn to appreciate so true a glory! But thou, what dost thou? At best, thou art content to derive glory from the Cross of Christ, not to glory in His Cross. Thou derivest glory from the Cross, because thou gloriest in being a Christian, and as a follower of the Crucified One, thou dost display His Cross upon thy standards, thou dost worship it, greeting it with loud acclamations of honour as thou raisest it on high. But, nevertheless, thou dost not desire to glory in the Cross, for thou carest not to remain upon it, as thou seest Christ remain. Strive to be able in thy own name henceforth to say with truth, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Thou wilt find, on attentive consideration, that this Cross consists in three things: extreme poverty, extreme suffering, extreme ignominy. And when thou placest thy glory in these things, thou placest it in the Cross. The world finds its glory in greatness of wealth, in

pleasures, in honours. Thine should be placed in far different things.

II. Consider secondly, that this text declares that the world should be crucified to thee, and thou to the world. The meaning is that there should be a direct opposition of sentiment; that thou shouldst contradict the world and the world thee. If two men are nailed to the same cross, one turns his back to the other. So it happens in the present instance. The world turns its back upon thee, thou must turn thy back upon the world. The world laughs at thee, because thou despisest the goods which it prizes so dearly; laugh thou, in thy turn, at the world. The world loves thee not; love not thou the world. The world esteems thee not; esteem not thou the world. This is to be truly crucified.

III. Consider thirdly, that if thou wishest to die to the world by being crucified, the world must first be dead to thee. For this reason the Apostle says not, "I am crucified to the world, and the world to me," but, "The world is crucified to me, and I to the world." The world dies to thee when thou actually renoucest all worldly goods; for the world has then no longer any allurements to offer thee, and is, as it were, dead to thee. Thou diest to the world when thou renoucest them in affection, because then thou on thy part canst not be allured, and becomest, as it were, dead to all these attractions. Dost thou wish then in affection to renounce with facility earthly goods, riches, pleasures, honours, as so many saintly religious do, who are therefore said to be dead to the world? Renounce them, if possible, in fact, by flying to the cloister, and, as I have already said, cause the world to be dead to thee. It is a miracle not to fix our affections on earthly goods whilst we actually possess them. "Happy the rich man who follows not after gold."¹ Thus says the Holy Scripture. It says not, "Happy the man," but, "Happy the rich man," for such a man would, indeed, be the greatest of prodigies.

IV. Consider fourthly, that we can have no part in this blessed Crucifixion except by the aid of Jesus Crucified. Hence the expression, "through Whom." The love thou bearest to Him Who has suffered so much for thee must be such that it will cause the world to die to thee, and thee to the world. What will not the love of Christ effect if thou givest it a lodging? Look into the heart of the great martyr, St. Ignatius, and there thou shalt see.

¹ Ecclus. xxxi. 8.

SECOND DAY.

THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION.

It shall appear at the end, and shall not lie ; if it make any delay, wait for it, for it shall surely come, and it shall not be slack (Habac. ii. 2).

I. Consider first, that the greatest difficulty encountered by a servant of God seems to be finally reduced to this, never for a moment to lose confidence in Him, in trouble, in dryness, in those periods of deep darkness of mind, which lead us to think that He has entirely abandoned us. Whilst the presence of God thrills us with joy, easy is our task ; but most difficult when, so to say, He is behind the veil. Be therefore assured, shouldst thou ever find thyself in this condition, that the Lord is then putting thy constancy to the proof.

II. Consider secondly, what is in this case required from thee. That thou shouldst wait for Him. It is not commanded that thou shouldst go forth to meet Him, that thou shouldst exert thyself, that thou shouldst grope about, going, as it were, in search of Him, as this cannot be well done in the dark. The spouse herself toils after Him in vain during the night. It is only commanded that thou shouldst at least wait patiently His coming. "Wait for Him." What is meant by "waiting"? It means that thou shouldst not stir one step from thy post, that thou shouldst continue as before thy routine of daily occupations, the same prayers, the same confessions, the same Communion, the same perusal of spiritual books, the same penances, public and private, although thou no longer derive any nourishment from them. Great is the merit of this firmness! This, indeed, is to serve God for God's sake.

III. Consider thirdly, that this firmness should be joined to much long-suffering ; for it is easy to be firm for a short time. Therefore, should it happen that "He make delay, wait for Him." It seems to us that, on these occasions, God delays turning to us, although we seem to ourselves to do our utmost, desiring, supplicating, abjuring Him, and using every precaution that by no fault of ours we may cause Him to withdraw from us. He, nevertheless, lifts not the veil, nor restores to us the light of His presence. Doubt not that He will at last restore it, for so He has promised. "It shall appear at the end, and shall not lie."

IV. Consider fourthly, that the Lord, at times, really manifests Himself in the midst of this darkness, by penetrating it at intervals with rays of light. But, nevertheless, He shows Himself only imperfectly. Yet, never lose heart; for rest assured that, at last, not only shall He appear, but "coming He shall come," and shall give Himself to thee as a possession, as on this day He gave Himself to the holy old man Simeon, who held Him in his arms, handled Him, caressed Him, pressed Him to his bosom, and was even permitted to kiss Him tenderly. Behold, then, the great reward of him who, with lively faith, waits long for the coming of our Lord. It is to enjoy Him in the end with fuller and more rapturous delight. It is at such a moment that thy heart shall cry out: "We have rejoiced for the days in which thou humbledst us; for the years during which we saw evils." How fares it then with the soul? It seems to her as if she had not really felt those sufferings in the past, but only looked upon them.

V. Consider fifthly, that though thou mayest have waited all thy life-long for the Lord in this state of desolation, sorrow, and utter weariness—a case that rarely happens—for all that, "He shall not be slack;" for if thou findest Him not before, thou shalt assuredly do so, face to face, at the approach of death. "He shall appear at the end." Oh, how will He at that moment unveil to thee His countenance, how will He aid thee and sustain thee, and show thee plainly that He loved thee always, far more than thou couldst conceive? Such is the usual reward of one who has faithfully served the Lord throughout the long periods of desolation: to die in sweet tranquillity, "in the kiss of the Lord," and to lay aside in that moment all scruples, sorrows, anxious cares, and gloom. Imagine, then, that the Lord is now upon His way, as He is so often said, in Holy Scripture, to be *coming*. Death may be already at thy door, already overtaking thee, already in the act of striking thee. The accident which, perhaps, is destined to cause thy death is prepared. What, then, will be thy fate if, during this short space of time, thy constancy give way?

THIRD DAY

I attended and hearkened. There is none that doth penance for his sin, saying: What have I done? (Jerem. viii. 6).

I. Consider first, that whether thou attendest to the works of men, or hearkenest to their discourses, thou shalt find amongst them but few penitents. Many there are who *wish to do penance*, but few there are who *do it*; for there are few who can bring themselves to action. They wait until death, and then they suddenly behold their designs dissipated in thin air. Say, what avails a wish to be ever so good, which issues not in action? Their lot is perdition who have desired to do penance and have not done it.

II. Consider secondly, that at times there want not some who, during life even, give themselves up to doing penance. But when? When all their capricious fancies have evaporated, and they are, so to say, sated with sin. And think you such as these "do penance for their sin"? No, certainly, though they do so indeed for sins. Scarcely wilt thou find one who, after one sin, goes with prompt sorrow to confession, on the spot hates and deplores the act, crying out at once, "What have I done?" To which class dost thou belong?

III. Consider thirdly, that the reason why no one does penance comes from this, that no one says, "What have I done?" Thou couldst not keep from shedding bitter tears if thou didst realize what thou hast done by sinning. To offend so good a God, Who has created, Who has preserved, Who has redeemed thee? Art thou willing, for a paltry pleasure, to bring on thyself evils so terrible? to deprive thyself of the grace of God? to forfeit His glory? to doom thyself to be eternally the slave of Satan? Well mayest thou cry out, "What have I done? Wretched me! What have I done? What have I done?"

FOURTH DAY.

They became abominable, as the things which they loved (Osee ix. 10).

I. Consider first, the wonderful difference which exists between the intellect and the will. If any detestable thought intrude against thy will, of blasphemy, or fraud, or anger, or

impurity, thou dost not on that account thyself become an object of detestation. Then alone dost thou become "abominable," when thou lovest the thought. For the intellect by its acts does not go out to the object, but receives in itself the impressions passed on to it in such a manner that it cannot help receiving them. It is termed a *necessary* power. On the other hand, the will of its own motion goes forward to possess the object of its love, and even to be transformed into it. See, then, how vile a transformation takes place in thee when the object of thy love is devilish, sensual, earthly. Then shalt thou become thyself earthly, sensual, devilish.

II. Consider secondly, that by this transformation is produced that dreadful deformity which, after sin, remains impressed upon the soul. How wouldst thou shudder couldst thou see thyself in this condition! Then wouldst thou understand with what good reason sinners are compared in Scripture to serpents, beasts of burthen, and unclean animals; because in loving the delights which are natural to such animals, the sinner makes himself like unto them. Wilt thou not strive at once to restore thy human form by the medium of penance? How wouldst thou grieve indeed if, in thy outward shape, thou wert really transformed into some hideous brute! And wilt thou not lament to find thyself degraded thus, not in thy body, but thy soul?

III. Consider thirdly, that as the man who loves an "abominable thing" becomes "abominable" as the thing he loves, so a man becomes beautiful, noble, godlike, when he deeply loves an object of transcendent worth, for he also is transformed into the object of his love—yea, he becomes God. "Every one is such as his love makes him," says St. Augustine.¹ "Dost thou love the earth? Thou art earth. Dost thou love God? What shall I say? Thou shalt be God." And with so glorious a transformation within thy reach, art thou indifferent? Observe, however, that for this a love of "simple complacency" is not enough, for even bad men feel this love of virtue on occasion, when they approve it in others, sound its praises, and commend its practice, leaving it, however, to others to adopt at their discretion. It ought to be an efficacious, living, energetic love, like that which thou dost feel within thy heart when thou art conscious that thou truly lovest.

¹ Tract ii. in Ephes. iii. 10.

FIFTH DAY.

Laying aside every weight and sin which surrounds us, let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us : looking on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, Who, having joy set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame (Hebrews xii. 1, 2).

I. Consider first, what this fight which is here proposed to thee is. It is the fight in which thou shouldst engage against those three notorious enemies who would rob thee of eternal goods : the inordinate love of wealth, of pleasures, of honours. This is that fight common to all alike on earth. Even the devils, when they tempt thee, can only rouse one of these enemies to assail thee. We must then animate ourselves for this great fight, not merely going forth, but running to it : this we do when we not only accept poverty, suffering, and contempt, our three-fold daily tribulation, but go forth to meet them "by patience," that is, by an invincible spirit of suffering. "Let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us."

II. Consider secondly, that in order to accomplish this it is necessary to put aside all impediments. Of these there are two, "weight, and sin which surrounds us." Weight is sin already committed, which weighs thee down and draws thee on to further sin. "The sin which surrounds" is the occasion leading to new sins, and perhaps close round thee. It is necessary, therefore, to lay down the weight if we would run to the fight ; since to run, that is, to encounter suffering, requires great virtue. But how can we hope for this whilst all the forces of our soul are weighed down by sin ? It is necessary to cast aside also the occasions of sin if we would fight valiantly. For when thou hast merely put thy sin away, how canst thou hope to be able to refrain with ease from yielding to impurity, to practise austerity and self-denial, to look with contempt upon unlawful gains, to be indifferent to greatness and to glory, whilst thou remainest all the time surrounded by the fascinations which allure thee. This is, without question, simple folly. Consider, then, thy present state, and whether thou art prepared for running to the fight.

III. Consider thirdly, that when thou hast cast aside all impediments, the next thing is to animate thy valour by the example of Christ, Who willed to suffer so much for thy sake. By this means thou shalt attain that patience, that invincible spirit of suffering, of which mention has been made. Who,

then, is this Lord Who has suffered so much for thee? Jesus Himself, a Lord so free from blame, so sensitive to suffering. At the very sight of Him does not thy courage revive? If thou canst not meditate on His Passion in a more exalted manner, take in thy hand thy crucifix, and there, "looking on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith," contemplate that face for thee so pale, those failing eyes, those fleshless bones, those limbs so cruelly racked and torn, and wet with fresh-flowing Blood, and hesitate no longer: one such glance, one only, should be quite enough to move thee to compunction and to give thee strength. Here thou beholdest the brazen serpent, which, if thou fix thy gaze upon it, has power to cure thy weakness. Observe that the words are not, "Looking at the Author," but, "Looking into the Author," *in auctorem*; hence thou must not look only at His mangled frame to see how much He suffered for thy sake, but through those wide-open wounds thou must penetrate to the interior man, and consider Who has undergone such suffering—God made Man.

IV. Consider fourthly, that for thy greater encouragement this is the same Jesus Who is called the Author and the Finisher of faith, inasmuch as He Who on earth is now the Author of thy faith, by teaching it to the mind, stamping it on the will, confirming it by so many wonders, will hereafter be its Finisher in Heaven, by rewarding it with the clear vision of God, into which faith will melt and be dissolved, and giving place to intuitive knowledge, shall in reality be *finished*. Jesus, then, both as Author and as Finisher of faith, gives thee encouragement: as Author, by what He promises thee now; as Finisher, by what He will give thee hereafter.

V. Consider fifthly, that in proposing to thee this great fight, He proposes what He knows by His own experience. Jesus was not obliged to suffer, as thou art, to whom the corruption of thy nature makes it necessary. Joy of every kind was set before Him to take, if He would; and yet, in order to set thee an example, "joy being proposed to Him," He refused to have it; instead of the riches which He could have had in such abundance, He chose poverty; in place of pleasure He chose pain; in place of honour He chose contempt: thus it was He "bore the Cross." Represent to thy mind that the whole life of thy Redeemer was one continued cross, to which He was bound by these three cruel executioners—poverty, pain, contempt. These three He had with Him at the instant of His Birth; they were with Him through

life; they were with Him in death. And wilt thou, on the contrary, shrink proudly from them? It is for thee to do as Christ did, and to go forth with high courage to encounter them, when it is in thy power to keep away from them—it is for thee “to run to the fight.”

VI. Consider sixthly, that it is not said that Christ overcame shame; it is said that He contemned it, because it is most easily overcome by contempt. It is thy inordinate regard for the opinions of men which makes thee dread the slightest shame. What matters it to thee what people say of thee? Thy true reputation is that which thou enjoyest in Paradise, among the angels and archangels, before the awful throne of the Three Divine Persons. That is the reputation of which thou shouldst take thought. The esteem of men is empty, changeable, unjust, deceitful, fleeting. Let it pass, be it what it may. In short, the one thing needed to conquer shame is to despise it, to contemn contempt.

SIXTH DAY.

For behold short years pass away, and I am walking in a path by which I shall not return (Job xvi. 23).

I. Consider first, that the years pass quickly by. To convince thyself that so it is, look back, and see the years that are already gone. Oh, how short they seem! So also shall be those that still remain to thee. What excuse, then, canst thou give for being so careless in laying up treasure for Heaven? “Short years pass away,” and dost thou give up so much time to sleep? “Short years pass away,” and dost thou yield so much of them to vanity? “Short years pass away,” and dost thou spend so much of them even in sin? It is unutterable folly. “In the morning sow thy seed.”¹ Rise early from thy couch to pray, to sing hymns of praise, to study, to do good service to thy neighbour. For thou shalt gather good fruit in eternity, according as thou hast sown good fruit in thy lifetime here.

II. Consider secondly, that time not only passes quickly, but passes never to return, so that the time thou lovest now is lost for ever; it comes back no more, it can never be regained, it is like the water which flows once only over the river-bed

¹ Eccles. xi. 6.

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 and never again returns. And dost thou value it so lightly? At the hour of death thou shalt find deep cause of grief in having allowed it to go by unprofitably. At that hour how shalt thou groan, not only over wasted years, but over wasted hours and minutes, aye, and the smallest points of time, which now thou art ashamed to value, lamenting that thou didst not treasure them with avaricious soul. What says the Lord, speaking of this? "Let not one particle of a good gift escape thee."¹ How precious a thing is time! Thou dost let it run to waste like water, and He would have thee value it like gold; He would have thee set store by each little shred of it. But wonder not at this. Every little point of time well spent can bring thee a richer revenue than the greatest kingdom in all the universe.

III. Consider thirdly, what would not one of the damned be willing to do, if by Divine favour he were allowed to return to life and go over his course anew. Think you he would be careless in employing the time given him by God? Oh, how he would toil! Oh, how he would strain each nerve! Oh, with what anxious care he would devote each precious moment to the welfare of his soul! But this has not been granted. What will be thy fate if only then thou dost set store by time, when time for thee shall be no more? Say therefore ever to thyself, in the words of holy Job, "I am walking in a path by which I shall not return." Human life is a road which is trodden but once. Happy the man who knows how to turn to account the present opportunities of making profit and amassing wealth. Whoso neglects to do this now, cannot through all eternity come back to set his error right.

SEVENTH DAY.

ST. ROMUALD.

If we live in the Spirit, let us walk also in the Spirit. Let us not be made desirous of vainglory; provoking one another, envying one another (Galat. v. 25, 26).

I. Consider first, that as thy body in all its operations is moved by the soul, so also ought thy soul in turn to be moved by the Holy Spirit in all its operations, since, as the soul is

¹ Ecclus. xiv. 14.

the life of the body, so the Holy Spirit is the life of the soul. But if this be so, how is it that thy soul in its operations is under the guidance of quite another spirit, thy own self? It belongs to the Spirit of the Lord alone to regulate thy mind, since thy own self, or say rather thy own caprice, is a spirit changeful, inconstant, restless, insecure. "The heart fancieth as a woman in travail, except it be a vision sent forth from the Most High."¹ To the Spirit of the Lord it belongs likewise to set thy will in motion, not to thy own self, not to the natural affection which thou feelest for all thy own works, of whatever kind they be. Left to thyself, thou shalt be one of those of whom it is written, "They walk in the vanity of their mind."² Although thy natural affection may not be evil, it is at least vain and unprofitable, without foundation, and devoid of merit. Dost thou wish to advance in such a manner that all thy works, which are the footsteps of thy soul, may lead direct to Heaven? Give thyself up to the sole guidance and sole impulse of the Holy Spirit. "Thy good Spirit shall lead me into the right land."³ The soul consists of intellect and will, the intellect and the will accordingly must advance by virtue of that which is their soul—the Spirit of God. "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk also in the Spirit."

II. Consider secondly, that if thou art thus to be guided by the Holy Spirit alone, much more art thou bound to refrain from taking for thy guide some spirit directly opposite to the Spirit of God. And what spirits are these? They are these three vices, which more than all others are purely spiritual: vainglory, anger, envy. Hence, immediately after the Apostle has admonished us, "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit," he adds, "Let us not be made desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another." These are the three spirits that govern the greater part of mankind. Even persons accounted spiritual, not unfrequently are destitute of all spirituality except that contained in these three vices, which domineer over them. Seest thou not that some of them give alms, some of them apply to study, or work hard, or preach till the perspiration runs down their face, and it is all mere desire of applause. "They loved the glory of men more than the glory of God."⁴ Thou seest them undergo the severest penance, but afterwards thou discoverest that they cannot endure the slightest disrespect; that they are quarrelsome, quick-tempered, determined to have their own way.

¹ Ecclus. xxxiv. 6. ² Ephes. iv. 17. ³ Psalm cxlii. 10. ⁴ St. John xii. 43.

Thou seest them zealous in promoting the worship of God, in the administration of the sacraments, and in other very meritorious works of teaching and piety. But afterwards thou findest them a prey to envy, so that they cannot endure that any one should be put on a level with them. Oh, how easily might one of these wicked spirits lurk concealed in the recesses of thy soul, and so at times not only direct and move it, but even lead it. This would indeed be a melancholy symptom; for if those "who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God," what must he be who is led by spirits so different? One is said to be led when he who wishes to desire one thing is, as it were, compelled by some superior power to desire another. Thus it happens with some spiritual persons. They would wish to be humble, mortified, modest, and charitable, because they know that to be so is in conformity with their profession, but they are unable to be as they wish, "they are led." It is of the utmost importance that these three accursed spirits should be deprived of their surpassing power.

III. Consider thirdly, how evil is the spirit of vainglory, properly called spirit, because it inflates the soul. It fills thee with vanity, because it makes thee yearn for those good things which have no substance, or truth, or profit. Therefore it is vain. First, it has no substance; for the glory which comes from men will quickly pass away, like the flower of the field.¹ Secondly, it has no truth, because true glory consists in the good which is within thee, and which leads thee to perfection: "Our glory is this, the testimony of a good conscience."² It does not consist in the good opinion that men entertain of thee, though all should agree to give thee the first place. Such glory is a phantom, a foolish fancy, "an idol:" "But my people have changed their glory into an idol."³ Thirdly, it has no profit, because it avails thee nothing towards the attainment of thy last end, which is the glory of Heaven. On the contrary, it lessens thy chance: "Thou hast received thy reward." The words, however, are not, "Let us not have vainglory," but, "Let us not be made desirous of vainglory;" for glory pursues him that flies from it. If, then, it be forced upon thee, it is enough for thee to set no value on it, to refuse to love it, or take pride in the thought that thou art all the more worthy of glory when it comes to thee unsought; for to entertain such a thought would be to begin to have the desire of glory. Say rather that not for its sake wilt thou either do or

¹ *Isaias xl. 6.*

² *2 Cor. i. 12.*

³ *Jerem. ii. 11.*

desist from doing one particle of good. To act in this way is to commit to God the care of thy glory: "But I seek not my own glory: there is One Who seeketh and judgeth."¹ It belongs to the Lord to judge when it is fitting for thee, and when not, to meet with approbation.

IV. Consider fourthly, how evil is the spirit of anger, properly called spirit, because it is by nature impetuous: "A spirit that is easily angered, who can bear?"² It makes thee prone to quarrel, and is the cause that thou art continually offending and offended: "Thou destroyest thy soul in thy fury,"³ for it robs thee at one blow of three supreme blessings—peace of heart, peace with thy neighbour, peace with God. First, it robs thee of peace of heart, for thou art like the sea, which cannot threaten the ship with destruction until it is lashed into fury itself. For thus it has been written: "Therefore let no anger overcome thee to oppress any man."⁴ Thou canst not conquer another unless anger first triumph over thyself. But is not peace of heart worth more than all thy empty triumphs, to gain which it has been forfeited? "Better is a dry morsel with joy, than a house full of victims with strife."⁵ Secondly, anger robs thee of peace with thy neighbour, because thy wrath provokes others to wrath, and a state of warfare is the consequence: "He that provoketh wrath, bringeth forth strife."⁶ It may even, for the sake of peace, be advisable to abstain from certain practices, however laudable they may be in themselves, putting aside, if needs be, fasting and discipline, and other meritorious works, which, without doubt, are all inferior to charity, since the Lord has willed that charity should even be preferred to the worship of Himself: "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice."⁷ Thirdly, anger robs thee of peace with God, for whilst thou art thus anxious to defend thyself, it is clear that thou dost not repose thy confidence in God: "Give place unto wrath."⁸ The anger of God is the justice of God, which, beyond doubt, will protect thy rightful claims. But thou must give it time; for His anger is not like thine, precipitate, but ever calm: "Thou judgest with tranquillity."⁹ When, therefore, thou dost violently forestall the wrath of God, all thou canst do is to provoke His wrath against thyself. Thus we see that the spirit of anger is a spirit that works much harm.

¹ St. John vii. 50.² Prov. xviii. 14.³ Job xviii. 4.⁴ Job xxxvi. 18.⁵ Prov. xvii. 1.⁶ Prov. xxx. 33.⁷ Osee vi. 6.⁸ Romans xii. 19.⁹ Wisdom xii. 18.

V. Consider fifthly, how evil is the spirit of envy, likewise properly called a spirit, because it parches, it dries up thy bones: "A sorrowful spirit drieth up the bones."¹ When thou hast come to the pitiful state of grieving at another's success, as if it were a discredit to thyself, thou destroyest on the spot every virtue thou hast, for it is written: "Envy is the rottenness of bones."² Hast thou ever remarked a peculiarity of putrefaction? It is an evil born of good which is not its own. The flesh which is most delicate and dainty produces it most readily. For this reason envy receives the name of putrefaction, because it springs from the good of others; a putrefaction sad to see, not working ruin, not only causing pain, but hideous and loathsome. And is it not a shameful thing to grieve for that which ought to cause thee joy? If there be many who render glory to God, is it not so much the better? "Oh, that all the people might prophesy."³ So answered Moses when it was told to him that his spirit had been transfused into many others. And thus also oughtest thou to say, reflecting that if anger rules at will the man who has lost his senses, envy makes a slave of him who has not yet attained the use of them. "Anger indeed killeth the foolish, and envy slayeth the little one."⁴ Lose, then, no time. Putrefaction is an evil that grows unceasingly and rapidly. So it is necessary to apply a speedy remedy, and to apply it without flinching. This is no case for sparing the knife or the caustic. When thou art conscious of having yielded to some vile suggestion of envy, feeling it may be bitterness of soul at the praises bestowed on another, trying to turn them aside, or to deprive them of their force, inflict on thyself at once some signal chastisement, and thus destroy the putrefaction before it destroys thee, piercing even to thy bones.

VI. Consider sixthly, that anger and envy are two poisonous plants which spring from thy deep-rooted love of human glory; for if thou didst despise it, thou wouldst not feel so deeply aggrieved that thou hast to stand in a lower place than others, which is the cause of those sudden outbursts of fury, or that others are placed above thee, which is the cause of thy pining away with envy. Therefore the Apostle, after having said, "Let us not be made desirous of vainglory," immediately adds, as if to explain his words, "provoking one another, envying one another." It behoves thee, therefore, to apply with all speed a remedy to the root of these evils. Trample

¹ Prov. xvii. 22.² Prov. xiv. 30.³ Numb. xi. 29.⁴ Job v. 2.

under foot all human glory, not only with a feeling of aversion, but of positive horror, considering how destructive to all virtue is the love of it; and to this end place before thy eyes the image of thy crucified Lord: behold how, on that tree, He trampled on all human glory, how He made Himself the laughing-stock of His enemies, and allowed anger and envy to level all their darts against Him, in order that thou mayest conceive the greatest possible hatred of these two vices, since it was they who put the good Jesus to death—the anger of the priests, provoked by His preaching, and the envy of the Scribes, astonished by His miracles.

EIGHTH DAY.

A wise man will fear in everything, and in the days of sin will beware of sloth (Ecclus. xviii. 27).

I. Consider first, how natural it is for a wise man to fear, for the wiser a man is, the more clearly he sees the dangers which beset the way of the Lord, from which no one is safe until death, that is, until he has reached the end of that way. But it is not said, "He shall be afraid of everything," but, "He shall fear in everything." Since as to thy past life, when thou hast used due diligence, without excessive anxiety, in confessing candidly all thy sins, and hast tried to excite thyself to true contrition and a real resolution of amendment, though thou mayest have some reason to fear, thou hast much more reason to hope. It is said therefore: "Be not devoid of fear for sin propitiated." The words are not, "Be fearful," but a milder phrase is used, "Be not devoid of fear." Some fear should be ever present to thee, but not very great fear. Very great fear thou shouldst have regarding the works thou hast now to do to ensure thy doing them well. Yet it ought not to be a servile fear, like that of the slaves who bend to the oar from fear of the lash. It should be a generous fear, such as a son feels who dreads separation from his father as the greatest evil that can befall him.

II. Consider secondly, what is the effect which should be produced in thee by this fear, "the holy fear of the Lord." The effect should be "to keep thee from sloth," especially "in the days of sin." This fear ought not to make thee scrupulous,

in other words, to raise alarms without cause ; but to make thee cautious, circumspect, watchful over thyself, abstaining not only from sin, but likewise from sloth. This is most important. Thou art on thy guard against sin, but not against idleness, tepidity, weariness, sloth, which make thee so feeble in doing good. If thou cease to do good, rest assured that thou wilt soon go on to do evil. This is the worst tendency of our fallen nature. If great violence be not employed to rein it in, it dashes like a wild horse over the precipice.

III. Consider thirdly, that this watchfulness is more especially called for "in the days of sin," because thou art then more easily carried along by the current. But what are these "days of sin," if they are not precisely those which are now upon us, the days of the Carnival? during which it appears to be lawful to think only of self-indulgence, idle conversation, much eating, frantic dancing, love-making, shameless effrontery, and the revival in Christendom of the follies of the heathen world. Now, therefore, is the time to "guard against sloth," against slackness in good deeds, neglect of pious practices, examinations of conscience, general and particular, and the reading of devout books, since it is very easy for thee to run with the rest to the precipice. "A wise man will fear in all things, and in the days of sin," that is in "days," according to another reading, "dedicated to sin"—an exact description of these days of Carnival—"will keep himself from sloth."

IV. Consider fourthly, furthermore, that "days of sin" are days when reigning princes either favour vice, or do not punish it: "the days of sin" are days in which schism, rebellion, violence, civil war, oppress the people: "the days of sin" are days in which relaxation of discipline has crept into the community to which thou dost belong, and Superiors have not power to reinstate a fervent life. But above all, know well that in thy case "the days of sin" are days in which all thy affairs go prosperously, in the enjoyment of good health, riches, popularity, applause, or any other accidental gift which affords matter for complacency. Then shalt thou most readily forget the Lord, since thou hast then apparently less need of Him; then, therefore, it behoves thee ever to "beware of sloth," and to give thyself to good works, both for fear of exciting the anger of God by thy ingratitude, and because thou art then in unusual peril: for on the voyage of this mortal life it is not as in other kinds of navigation. In any other voyage the ship goes safely with the wind astern; but in the voyage of life,

when the wind blows fair the ship is in the greatest danger, and at such a time thou must more than ever "fear in everything," commending thyself incessantly to God as men do if shipwreck is imminent.

NINTH DAY.

To God the wicked and his wickedness are odious alike (Wisdom xiv. 9).

I. Consider first, how great is the hatred which God ever bears to sin. It is as great as the love He has for Himself, immense, infinite, essential, but nevertheless most reasonable. There is one thing which He is forced to hate, one thing He has punished with all the miseries which are in the world: and it is sin. Picture to thy mind the Deluge drowning all mankind; pestilence, hurricanes, earthquakes, torrents of fiery hail. All these are sent to punish sin. That is saying too little; for all these taken together are powerless to punish sin. The terrible hatred God bears to sin, nothing less than Hell can satisfy. Nor is even this enough. For the hatred God bears to sin must ever be greater than the punishment He inflicts. After millions of ages it begins all over again. And it cannot even then be said that atonement at least by condign penalty has been made for the smallest sin.

II. Consider secondly, that the love that God bears to all the united good works done by all His holiest servants since the world began, by patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, would, if placed in the balance, not outweigh His hatred for a single sin. Thus, if God were capable of sorrow, any one sin would afflict Him more than all the most exalted works of virtue gathered together could ever bring Him joy. And so, not even to procure the accomplishment of these good works, can God desire the commission of the smallest sin, though He may indeed permit it, or be willing that any man should so desire it. If by telling a lie thou couldst procure the conversion of all nations to the faith, that lie may not be told, so great is the hatred God bears to sin.

III. Consider thirdly, how God proved His hatred of sin, when He went so far as to desire the punishment of sin even in the Person of Christ Himself. If some great personage, on learning that in his jasper vase of great price poison had been

put, at once before thy eyes were to cast it on the ground and break and crush it, thou wouldst surely say: How must he hate this poison! But if thou shouldst see him so destroy another vase pure from all poisonous taint for the sole reason that it resembled the former vase, how much greater would be thy astonishment? Christ had nothing of sin in Him, for He was "holy, innocent, immaculate, and separated from sinners."¹ He bore only the likeness of sinful flesh.² And now see how God treated Him: "He spared not His own Son."³ He allowed every one to trample Him under foot "as a broken vase."⁴ He allowed Him to be bruised and crushed and torn, for no other reason than to show forth this hatred which He bears to sin, "in order to display His justice."⁵ Oh, how great must that hatred ever be!

IV. Consider fourthly, that in the same degree in which God hates sin He hates thee too, if thou art a sinner, since "to God the wicked and his wickedness are odious alike." There is but one difference, that whereas sin is always hateful to God, there is no need for thee to be the object of His hatred; for, if thou wilt, thou canst cease to be a sinner. But so long as thou remainest a sinner there is no remedy; thou art journeying in bad company. How miserable is thy state! Far better to be some poor animal which God does not hate, nay, really loves—"Thou hatest none of those Thou hast created"⁶—whilst thou are hateful in His eyes. So when the holy King David invited all creatures to praise the Lord, he excepted not even the most ill-favoured or despised: "Praise the Lord, ye dragons."⁷ Which of His creatures is excluded? The sinner alone. And thus He said, "Praise the Lord, ye dragons;" but never, "Praise the Lord, ye sinners," so great is the hatred God bears them. Does this seem a little thing? Reflect awhile, how unhappy it would make thee to be the object of universal hatred to thy fellow-citizens, or to the members of thy community. Yet, to be an object of hatred to all the world would be no evil, if only God wished thee well. But what avails it to be the delight of all mankind, if thou are hateful to thy God?

V. Consider fifthly, that if thou sincerely desire that God should begin to love thee, thou must pursue this course: conceive a hatred of thyself, deplore the evil thou hast done; detest, abhor it, as God does, beyond all other things. Is it

¹ Hebrews vii. 26. ² Romans viii. 3. ³ Romans v. 32. ⁴ Psalm xxx. 13.

⁵ Romans iii. 25. ⁶ Wisdom xi. 25. ⁷ Psalm cxlviii. 7.

possible that thou canst love thyself amid thy sins? "Let Samaria perish because she hath stirred up God to bitterness."¹ Oh, how indignant shouldst thou be with thy rebellious flesh, treating it with severity, subjecting it to mortification, not so much by way of atonement for sins committed as in sheer hatred. How shouldst thou wonder, even that all created things do not rise in indignation against thee! that the sun, instead of directing his bright rays to thy service, does not level his darts against thee! that the stars themselves do not fight against thee! that the air does not stifle thee—that the waters do not drown thee—that the earth does not yawn beneath thy feet, to rid the world of thy presence! If thou didst understand what it is to be in a state of mortal sin, thou wouldst seem to thyself to hear at every moment angels from the clouds crying out, "Prepare yourselves against Babylon round about, all you that bend the bow; fight against her, spare not arrows; because she hath sinned against the Lord."²

TENTH DAY.

Let us walk honestly as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences (Romans xiii. 13, 14).

I. Consider first, the favour God has done thee in placing thee where daylight is, and not in the midst of the darkness of the Gentile world, or of Jews and heathens, but in a Catholic country, and even, it may be, in a religious order, where the light of day shines clearer still. What, then, oughtest thou to do to correspond with so great a favour? Thou must walk as men do in the daytime, "honestly." In the daytime a man must comport himself with dignity, with composure and politeness: it is usual to walk in the daylight, because there is danger of stumbling in the dark. This, then, is thy duty, "to walk honestly." The word "honestly" here means in the fair robe of virtue; "to walk" is to make progress; because thou must never stand still in thy course, but ever go forward from good to better, "from virtue to virtue." Dost thou fully comply with this duty?

¹ Osee xiv. 1.

² Jerem. I. 14.

II. Consider secondly, that the works of the night, which are the works of those who know not Christ, are not fit for thee who art in the daylight. These works of the night are of two kinds. Some spring from concupiscence, and are excess in eating and drinking and sleeping, from which will follow the degradation of impurity. Others spring from the irascibility of our nature, and consist of interminable fighting for the acquisition of wealth, for self-aggrandisement, or the attainment of high office, always joined with eager rivalry, which here is the same thing as envy of our neighbour's good. Examine if there be not found in thee some of these works of darkness, and be ashamed. Since all these works, "rioting, drunkenness, chambering, impurities, contention, and envy," are works which, if done in the sight of good men, cause shame, and therefore are more readily done in the night-time, being "works of darkness."

III. Consider thirdly, that in place of the works just mentioned, thy business is to clothe thyself with Jesus Christ, that is, with a spirit entirely opposed to them, as a single glance is enough to show. But what means this clothing thyself with Jesus Christ? It means the imitation of Him in such sort, that whoever sees thee may recognize in thee Jesus Christ, His way of speaking, His way of acting, His laborious life, exactly as we say of an actor on the stage, that he puts on the king to perfection, when his imitation is excellent. This is that perfect imitation, to which, if thou canst not attain, thou shouldst at least aspire. Since "putting on," in the sense of the Hebrew word, does not refer to some slight covering, but to an abundance of clothing. "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon."¹ "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Zacharias."² "Let thy priests be clothed with justice."³ Thou must therefore take care to imitate Jesus Christ in such fashion as to "put Him on;" that is, to imitate Him perfectly.

IV. Consider fourthly, that there is no greater obstacle to this imitation than the strong affection we bear to our own flesh; for the life of Christ was altogether spiritual, altogether opposed to the flesh. Hence it is added: "And make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences." We are not absolutely told, "And make not provision for the flesh;" but we are told not to do so in its "concupiscences;" because thou hast to rule thy flesh, not in conformity with its desires, but with the dictates of reason. If thou gratify the flesh at

¹ Judges vi. 34.

² 2 Paral. xxiv. 20.

³ Psalm cxxxi. 9.

its own request, thou wilt never do any good. Examine first, if the gratification sought be reasonable; and then indeed thou wilt not "make provision for the flesh in its concupiscences," but "according to reason."

ELEVENTH DAY.

Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is
(St. Mark xiii. 33).

I. Consider first, that in these three admonitions is comprised all that need be done to keep thyself always prepared for death. Take heed, watch, pray. The first thing then required of thee is, that thou shouldst take heed, that thou shouldst not permit thyself to be blinded by mortal sin, like so many wretched men, of whom it has been written, "Their own malice blinded them."¹ Such blindness is deplorable indeed! (1) Because the blindness of the body may be the cause of much good to thy soul, by shutting out from sight so many dangerous objects, which might easily lead thee into sin, the beauty of women, the glitter of gold, the splendour of purple, the irritating presence of an enemy; but the blindness of the intellect brings infinite evils on soul and body. "Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see." What follows? "And make their back crooked." When the devil has once blinded thee, he rules thee at his pleasure. (2) Because he who is afflicted with corporal blindness seeks for aid and support, as in the case of Elymas, who, when struck blind by St. Paul, immediately "going about sought some one to lead him by the hand."² But he who is intellectually blind scorns assistance; he desires no guide, no director; he deems himself of clearer vision than all others; and thus all the more surely does he rush to destruction. "Woe to you that are wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own conceits."³ (3) Because, at the worst, corporal blindness may cause thee to fall into some deep ditch, from which there will often be no great difficulty in extricating thyself; but the blindness of the intellect plunges thee into Hell, whence there is no redemption, for "a just man shall fall seven times, and rise again, but the wicked shall fall down into evil."⁴ With all the energy at thy command, preserve thyself from falling into this most

¹ Wisdom ii. 21. ² Acts xiii. 11. ³ Isaiah v. 21. ⁴ Prov. xxiv. 16.

dreadful blindness. But if unfortunately thou hast allowed this blindness to come upon thee, be assured the best remedy is that which Christ employed to cure the man born blind. Put clay upon thy eyes: "Anoint thy eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."¹ Reflect that thou art but dust and clay, and mayest die at any moment; go then, without delay, to the bath of sacramental confession. "Go to the Pool of Siloe," and there weeping bitterly, wash thyself, that so thou mayest recover in the end thy lost sight. "Take heed, for ye know not when the time is."

II. Consider secondly, that the second admonition is to "watch," and this means to be careful not to fall asleep in the matter of venial sins. "Awake, ye just, and sin not."² This is the sleep of which the Apostle also speaks in this place. But although the just are subject to this sleep, do not on that account make light of it, for probably it is much more hurtful than thou dost think. First, because though it is true that venial sin does not pervert thy intellect in the same way as mortal sin, which is complete blindness, still it clouds it, dazzles it, disconcerts it, so that thou art not ready to take part in profitable conversation as the watchful man would be. Instead of that, it makes thee lose thyself in dreams, that is to say, in vanity. Who are the "sleepers"? what manner of men are they? Isaias answers the question: "They are those who love dreams."³ Secondly, because venial sin reduces thee to abject poverty. "Love not sleep, lest poverty oppress thee."⁴ Where in fact are thy gains to come from, if thou dost not guard thyself against venial sins, vainglory, impatience, little jealousies, and those continual oversights which occur in thy spiritual life? Watchfulness alone can make thee rich. "Open thy eyes and be filled with bread."⁵ Thirdly, because during sleep thou lovest all control over thyself, and art thus exposed to the insolent attack of thy enemies, as was the case with Samson, Sisera, Holofernes, and very many others. Therefore Isaias exclaims: "Arise, ye princes, take up the shield."⁶ Dost thou not see how easily the devils overreach thee when they induce thee to make light of venial sins? By little and little they lead thee into great sins; and whilst thou sleepest deal thee the death-blow, when thou least expectest it. "They came to Lais to a people that was quiet and secure, and smote them with the edge of the sword."⁷ What then hast thou to

¹ Apoc. iii. 18. ² Cor. xv. 34. ³ Isaias lvi. 10. ⁴ Prov. xx. 13.

⁵ Prov. xx. 13. ⁶ Isaias xxi. 5. ⁷ Judges xviii. 27.

do? Watch, lending an attentive ear to the voice of the Lord, Who has so long been calling thee to a perfect life. Then, that thou mayest not fall back into thy slumber, think moreover of the last day, which is approaching. Rise, rise! Seest thou not there is no time to lose? In this world it would be well to be ever awake, so short is life. I mean to say that it would be well never to commit a venial sin; but this cannot be. Thou must, therefore, imitate the saints, who, to restrict their slumbers to the narrowest limit, used much industry, fasted and studied, and sang psalms. Follow their example. Above all things, guard thyself ever against idleness, which perhaps seems a light matter, and yet is the very thing which brings on thy heavy slumbers. "Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep."¹ Life is short, therefore keep thyself very busy; so shalt thou imitate the saints, who yielded not to sleep until they were worn out by fatigue. "Watch, for you know not when the time is."

III. Consider thirdly, that the third admonition is to "pray," and this means that thou shouldst never cease to commend thyself to the Lord: "Pray without ceasing."² But how is this command to be reduced to practice? By prayer is manifestly meant the act of laying open before God the desire of thy heart for His aid to win humility, obedience, and all other good gifts for thy soul, of which alone we are speaking here. The Lord knows thy desire full well, nevertheless He wills that thou shouldst represent it to Him before He will completely satisfy it. This being the case, if thou dost wish to pray without ceasing, it will be right to set apart certain stated times for disclosing to the Lord each day the desires of thy heart. If these appointed times be short, at all events let them be frequent, since they are then more precious, for the "continual prayer of a just man availeth much."³ When thou art obliged to desist from representing thy desires to the Lord, either through fatigue, or the necessity of study, or by reason of thy other duties, thou shouldst at least hold Him fast in thy heart, and so in some sort "pray always." If thou canst not pray in act, thou canst still pray in intention. When the desire to pray is gone, thou art much to be pitied. Then indeed affairs go badly with thee. Whilst the desire remained, even if from time to time thou didst fall through carelessness into some fault, thou hadst no difficulty in rising from it, because thou wert, in a manner, always crying out to the Lord for help

¹ Prov. xix. 15.² 1 Thess. v. 17.³ St. James v. 16.

in thy danger. And although it be true that He will hear thee much more readily when thou callest for His aid in actual prayer, yet will He often hear also a virtual petition: "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor."¹ It is proper, then, to gather all the forces of thy soul for prayer, not only by virtual intention, but as far as possible by actual prayer; for upon this kind of prayer the Lord especially insists when He says, "Take heed, watch and pray." Wouldst thou do this with good effect? often think on death. Reflect that it is in readiness, that it is close at hand, that it is perhaps even now threatening thee. Think that it is so indeed. Oh, how fervently wilt thou commend thyself to God! Not a moment of the day will pass by in which God is not present to thy mind, because great fear, of its own nature, more strongly urges us to prayer than desire does. "Josaphat, being seized with fear," knowest thou what he did? "He betook himself wholly to pray to the Lord."² Thou shouldst follow his example. But thou always fanciest that death is far away, and therefore thou dost not commend thyself to God. "Pray, for thou knowest not when the time is."

IV. Consider fourthly, how true it is that "thou knowest not when thy hour shall come"—*Nescis quando tempus sit*. Thou hast no reason to promise thyself one moment of life; while, on the other hand, any little cause may at any moment take thy life away. Death meets thee at every turn; it may openly assault thee, or set an ambush for thee. May it not be that death has reached thee even now unperceived? The poor fish which is encompassed by the net while still beneath the waters, knows not that it is caught: it darts merrily about, just like its companions whom no evil has befallen, and all the time it is being hurried to its doom. So may it easily be with thee. Perhaps already the net is cast, and all that is wanting is to draw it swiftly to the shore, and thou dost not give heed. How pitiful is thy case! "I have caused thee to fall into a snare, and thou art taken, O Babylon! and thou wast not aware of it."³ Examine, then, without delay the state of thy affairs. Hold thyself in readiness. Be on the alert. As soon as possible make thy confession, exactly as thou wouldst wish to make it if death were at thy door, since truly thou knowest not "when the time is." Thou mayest hope, but thou *knowest* not: thou mayest suspect, but thou *knowest* not; thou mayest seek to read thy destiny, making conjecture to thy heart's

¹ Psalm x. 17.² 2 Paral. xx. 3.³ Jerem. i. 24.

content, but knowledge thou canst not gain. Can it be that thou dost entertain the thought of proving Christ to be a false prophet? He says to thee that thou *knowest* not, let that suffice thee: no longer trust the flatteries of any one. Trust not thy bloom of youth, thy strength, thy rosy health, thy vigorous constitution, or thy energy of soul, since, when Christ said, "Take heed, watch and pray, for thou knowest not when the time is," He meant not to speak to His Apostles only. Those words were addressed to all. For thus He concludes: "But what I say to you, I say to all." Live on in thy folly then, and withdraw thyself, if thou canst, from the number of those to whom Christ spoke. Thou, whoever thou mayest be, in full health or on the bed of sickness, young or old, great or lowly, rich or poor, still thou must come back to that same point: "Thou knowest not when the time is." I say not when the time *shall be*, but *is*; because there is no state of things in which the present moment may not be thy last.

TWELFTH DAY.

That which is high to men, is an abomination before God (St. Luke xvi. 15).

I. Consider first, the infatuation of worldly men who run after honours with so great eagerness. That which among men is called high rank, greatness, glory, in the sight of God is "an abomination." "That which is high to men, is an abomination before God." If thou didst retain deeply engraven in thy mind this sentence, uttered not by the lips of angel or archangel, but by Christ, the Eternal Wisdom, how differently wouldst thou begin to speak of earthly things; wouldst thou then dare to boast that thou hadst trampled on thy enemy, that thou hadst triumphed over some poor creatures, that thou hadst gained some cause, that thou hadst forced thy way into some place of trust, that thou hadst kept back thy rival even by foul means? Think of all that goes to make up the proud man, magnificence in dress, dissipation, extravagance, imperious bearing, that all that is high in the esteem of men is without exception "an abomination before God."

II. Consider secondly, before whom thy exaltation is paraded; before *men*, and not even before *all men*. No, before very few, before men who in a few days shall be the

food of worms, men who are often deceivers or deceived ; men who are changeable as the wave, now casting down into the depths those whom a little while ago they lifted to the skies ; men who judge from passion ; men who are unjust ; men who are in reality the refuse of mankind, since they approach most nearly to the brute. Dost thou not see that even amongst men those that are spiritual, that is to say, those who alone are truly men, the most sincere and sensible, all agree in the opinion expressed by Christ ?

III. Consider thirdly, on the other hand, before Whom that is an abomination which before men is called exaltation : "Before God." And wouldst thou compare poor worms with Him Who is the Lord of majesty, "exceeding our knowledge, great in counsel, and incomprehensible in thought?"¹ Wouldst thou not value more the good opinion of thy Prince than that of all thy fellow-citizens together? And how canst thou offer so great an insult to God as to esteem His favour less than that of men? When thou art an abomination before God, understand that this means moreover that thou art abominable before assembled millions of glorious spirits, principalities, powers, dominations, who are more numerous than all men, not only past and present, but also yet to come: before millions of saints, men and women, before the whole court of Heaven. What, I pray thee, in comparison with this is all the pomp of men? A heap of dirt. And thou art well satisfied to choose that which is "an abomination before God," provided only it exalt thee before men.

IV. Consider fourthly, that that which before men is exalted is not said to be hateful before God, as all sin certainly is, but it is called an abomination ; to teach thee that if with other sins the Lord is angry, He holds in horror arrogance, ambition, pride, and turns against them all the fury of His dreadful vengeance. It was for this that He came down from Heaven to earth to give an example of humility which can never be surpassed. Thus here below He led an ordinary life in food and raiment that all might imitate Him, and He did not adopt the austerity of the Baptist ; His self-abasement was more than a miracle : He was "the last of men ;" for, although He was of royal race, He so ordered events that He came to be born in a stable ; scarcely was He born, when He began to show fear of the man Herod ; although He might have withdrawn Himself from his hatred, and protected Himself

¹ Jerem. xxxii. 19.

from his persecutions by other means, He chose the most ignominious of all: He fled by night. Of the three-and-thirty years during which He lived, He passed thirty in a lowly workshop, as an humble assistant to an artisan; and He deliberately preferred this self-abasement, so dear to Him, to all the good which He might have effected in going about from place to place, preaching and teaching, as He did in the closing years of His life. Of all deaths He chose the most disgraceful, to die crucified between two thieves; and He willed, moreover, that His Death should be preceded by an indescribable mass of outrages of every kind, in order that He might die "saturated with disgrace." It is nowhere said that He was "saturated" with sufferings, with labours, hardships, and excruciating torments, but rather that He died thirsting for them, crying out, "I thirst," even when He was actually sinking in a sea of blood. It is only said that He was "saturated with disgrace," for He desired to have it without measure. Now, why all this, but to show thee, that if He hates luxuries, frivolities, and pleasures, in the pursuit of which men lose themselves, He holds pride in horror? "That which is high to men, is an abomination before God."

THIRTEENTH DAY.

He that nourisheth his servant delicately from his childhood, afterwards shall find him stubborn (Prov. xxix. 21).

I. Consider first, that the servant here spoken of is thy body. Thou hast here, therefore, the rule laid down by which thou must govern it. Thou must treat it like a servant, that is to say, thou must nourish it, but not delicately. If thou dost not nourish it, it will grow faint; but if thou nourish it delicately, it will grow insolent. In truth, the only reason of thy giving it nourishment is to enable it to serve thee, to watch, to go to different places, to bear fatigue, and in various ways to work for the profit of thy soul. Yet how often hast thou nourished it simply for the sake of nourishing it? This is not what a master would do. Show thyself the master, and therefore upon occasion, remind thy body that it is but a servant; if it suffer cold and hunger, let it be patient. Do not these things belong to its lowly condition?

II. Consider secondly, the great injury that will accrue to thee if thou dost rear this servant too delicately. Thou shalt find it to be contumacious, or, in other words, unwilling, stubborn, and disobedient. How art thou ashamed if a servant, on receiving an order from thee, dares to tell thee in public that he will not obey thee? A like shame will be thine from this servant. Thy body will not prove contumacious whilst thou art engaged in caressing it; then, indeed, it will promise thee great things. It will say that if thou dost treat it kindly it will be the better able to toil for thee, that it will be able to furnish thee with more of the spirit of prayer, that it will watch, that it will go here and there, that it will do whatsoever thou desirest. But believe it not, for it will prove contumacious; not, indeed, whilst thou art thus caressing it, but afterwards. Shouldst thou afterwards wish to make it work hard, it will vehemently resist. Therefore let no allurement of any kind induce thee to caress it: such is the teaching of the saints.

III. Consider thirdly, that this caressing of the body is especially injurious in the flower of youth; since if in old age, when thy body has already had enough of toil, thou bestowest on it more kindly treatment, thou needest not fear such evil consequences. Thus a wise master comports himself towards a servant who has been long one of his household. He has greater consideration for him. There is this difference, however, between the body and all other servants, that there is no ill-regulated love to take their part, as self-love pleads for the body; and therefore when doubt arises virtue requires that towards all other servants thou shouldst be kind rather than severe, but towards the body thou shouldst be severe rather than kind.

FOURTEENTH DAY.

I have sinned, and indeed I have offended, and I have not received what I have deserved (Job xxxiii. 27).

I. Consider first, what good reason thou hast to have ever in thy mouth the words above quoted. Thou very often complainest of God, because He sends thee afflictions and tribulations, and He seems, as it were, to lay too heavy a hand on thee. Oh, how misapplied is such language! Change it

at once, and say, that by those persecutions with which God visits thee, those infirmities and humiliations which He sends thee, thou dost not pay even a small portion of the debt thou owest Him. "I have sinned," by sins of commission, "and indeed I have offended," by sins of omission, "and I have not received what I deserved."

II. Consider secondly, that in order to say those words from thy heart thou must be convinced of their truth, and thou canst not believe them unless thou bringest thyself thoroughly to understand how wicked thy conduct has been towards the Lord. Thou art continually repeating, "I have sinned;" but this is mere matter of form. Be intimately persuaded that the fact is so. Say, "Indeed I have offended;" say that thou hast been ungrateful to the Lord, unfaithful, unjust, and then thou wilt, in all sincerity, add, "And I have not received what I have deserved." What are those troubles sent to thee by God in comparison with the pains that would be thy lot in Hell?

III. Consider thirdly, that in Hell itself every one of the damned could with truth repeat those same words, although they do not do so, for truth finds no place there, where fury reigns supreme. This is certain, that great as are the torments inflicted by God on the damned, they are less than they deserve. Let Him add fuel as He may to this fire, increase the number of tormentors, multiply the terrible tortures, all is less than has been deserved. Judge now whether this painted flame of present tribulation is beneath thy deserts, when even that real fire, from which He has spared thee, is less than thou hast deserved.

FIFTEENTH DAY.

Laughter shall be mingled with sorrow, and mourning taketh hold of the end of joy (Prov. xiv. 13).

I. Consider first, that in this world there is no pure joy except that which God communicates to devout souls. The joy of the wicked not only is not pure, but is dark and troubled. Oh, what grief goes with it! It is enough to turn thy thoughts to the three goods which are the idols of the world, pleasures, riches, and honours, and thou wilt see at once what kind of joy that is which they produce. When does it ever happen

that it is not embittered by anxiety, ill-health, apprehension, quarrelling, jealousy, weariness, grief, vexation, or violent anger? But if anything else were wanting, is it not enough to disturb the laughter of the wicked, to feel that bitterness of remorse which conscience casts upon them after they have sinned? It is true the words are not, "Laughter is mingled with sorrow," but, "Shall be mingled;" for although it may happen that this fierce remorse sometimes does not accompany the act of sin, yet it always at least follows it. Therefore Job said, "His bread in his belly shall be turned into the gall of asps within him."¹ Behold sin is swallowed by the sinner most readily, like bread. This bread, while it is in the mouth, is savoury. It is willingly eaten. But when it is "in the belly," it is turned into the gall of asps, which is of the bitterest; but all this bitterness is "within him," for oftentimes the sinner conceals from the world those wells of bitterness which lie deep in his breast.

II. Consider secondly, that as in life the joy of the wicked is mingled with sorrow, so in death it is no longer mingled, but it is entirely possessed by sorrow. Therefore it is added, "And mourning taketh hold of the end of joy." The end of joy is in truth the close of life. Oh, who can tell how mournful those last moments will be to him who spends his days in laughter? There are three gloomy thoughts which constitute this grief in death—the thought of the past, the thought of the present, and the thought of the future. As to the past, how mournful it will be to remember all the evil that has been done, and all the good that has been left undone. As to the present, how deep will be the mourning at the sight of all that now must be quitted for ever; and there is no escape. The time is come to part with all those worldly goods which were so eagerly enjoyed, to part with friends the nearest and the dearest, to part even with the body itself, which must become the prey of worms. As to the future, how great will be the mourning caused by the dreadful expectation of the judgment of God, and this, by reason of the great interests depending on the trial, nothing less than an eternity of reward or punishment, by reason of the inexorable severity of the Judge, Who will have to pronounce forthwith the irrevocable sentence, and by reason of the insecure condition of the accused, certain of sin committed, most uncertain of pardon. Carefully ponder these three causes of mourning, and make them familiar to thy

¹ Job xx. 14.

thoughts ; for though they be bitter like some healing draught, they will prove thy salvation.

III. Consider thirdly, that if, in the case of the impious, "laughter shall be mingled with sorrow, and mourning taketh hold of the end of joy," in the case of the just, exactly the contrary happens ; for with them "sorrow shall be mingled with laughter, and joy taketh hold of the end of mourning." It cannot be denied that the just, in serving God with fidelity, are also subject to sorrow, either in consequence of the persecutions they suffer, or the acts of penance they perform, or, still more, by occasion of certain interior trials with which God afflicts them when He secretly withdraws. But how great is the laughter that shall afterwards be mingled with this sorrow ! "Happy the people that are acquainted with joy." He who is acquainted with it is happy, since it is only by experience that he becomes acquainted ; and this general rule holds good with that peace of mind which accompanies a good conscience. In death, all this sorrow of the just will be absorbed in joy, since with regard to the past they find consolation in the memory of having avoided the direct offence of God, and of having at least desired to serve Him faithfully. As to the present, they find consolation in the now complete detachment of their hearts from all creatures, and even from themselves, which is, as it were, to die before death. In regard to the future, they find consolation in the mercy of the great Judge, to Whom they have so often commended their cause whilst He was their Advocate. Now is thy time to choose which kind of laughter shall be thine.

SIXTEENTH DAY.

Unless thou hold thyself diligently in the fear of the Lord, thy house shall quickly be overthrown (Ecclus. xxvii. 4).

I. Consider first, what a toilsome undertaking it is to build upon earth a lofty spiritual edifice. How many acts of self-denial are required for it, how many acts of obedience, of humiliation, even of severe penance, and yet this edifice, raised in a long course of years by so many pains and sufferings, may crumble in a moment. One mortal sin, even in thought, is enough. And if in that moment God send death to thee, thy

doom is sealed. Equally certain would be thy doom if God, allowing thee to live, did not aid thee with His abounding grace, that so thou mightest not fall headlong from sin to sin, and perish finally. Oh, what noble structures, far surpassing thine, have thus been overthrown! Thou mayest call to mind the fall of a Didymus, an Origen, a Hosius, a Tertullian, and others like them. "The Lord hath cast down headlong, and hath not spared, all that was beautiful in Jacob."¹ And thou, who hast not done one little part of the good they did, hast thou not just cause to fear for thyself?

II. Consider secondly, upon what foundation this great danger rests? Upon this, that whatever good thou mayest have done, in offering hymns of praise, in fasting, in taking the discipline, in preaching, thou hast not been able to place God under any obligation of not withholding that fresh grace, distinct from all preceding graces, which, from moment to moment, is necessary for thy perseverance. Because all that thou hast of merit is His gift. It is God Who has given thee not only thy natural powers, but the good-will also which moved thee to sing those hymns of praise, to fast, to practise austerities, to do all those other things which are said indeed to belong to His service, but which are really done in thy own behoof. "What doth it profit God if thou be just?"² And thus without inflicting on thee the slightest injustice, God may remove from thee His holy hand; that is to say, may refuse thee that new special grace which thou requirest to prevent thee from falling. Since perseverance is a gratuitous gift, not only with regard to the end of our life, but during every single instant of its continuance, and God may refuse it to whomsoever He pleases, without being ungrateful or unjust: not unjust, because we are all by our very nature the servants of God; not ungrateful, because He has never received any benefit from us, though He has conferred innumerable benefits upon us.

III. Consider thirdly, that a constant holy fear will alone give thee some security in this terrible danger. In a word, "Unless thou hold thyself diligently in the fear of the Lord, thy house shall quickly be overthrown." Thou must ever cling closely to the fear of the Lord, as a man whose brain soon begins to reel when he has to walk on a narrow plank across a roaring cataract. Oh! how tightly then he clings to the hand of his guide! Thus thou too must hold fast by the fear of God; and all the more strongly by reason of the greater im-

¹ Lament. ii. 2.

² Job xxii. 3.

portance of the venture. It behoves thee to cling to it "earnestly," having regard both to time and to manner, by always keeping most vividly before thy eyes the need which thou hast of God's assistance, and by consequence the need of always fervently praying for that assistance; yes, always, because although perseverance is a purely gratuitous gift, yet he who seeks for it in the right way will infallibly obtain it, because God has promised: "Whatever you shall ask in My Name I shall do."¹ "Whatever you shall ask the Father in My Name He will give to you."²

IV. Consider fourthly, that to know how God is ever ready to assist ought not to make thee less fearful; since, though the Lord has promised to grant thy prayer, He has not promised it to thee within any period of time known to thyself. From some He requires more prayer, from others less, according to His good pleasure. And, therefore, however thou mayest have prayed hitherto, thou art not secure: for, though it may be that the Lord may have decreed to give thee from this time forward such gracious assistance as shall keep thee from mortal sin, and may thus have confirmed thee in grace, yet thou canst not be sure of it without express revelation. Moreover, if it be that He has made such a decree, it can only be on the supposition of thy praying both now and afterwards, since thy continuous prayer is the condition attached by Him to thy attainment of salvation, according to what is said: "Thou must always pray and never slacken."³ If thou desist from asking with great fervour, it is a bad sign, and a sign that thou art not on the road to salvation.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.

All whatsoever you do in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him (Coloss. iii. 17).

I. Consider first, that when the word "all" is used, nothing is excluded. Everything thou dost, not only works of piety, but even indifferent actions, all ought to be offered up to the honour of Christ; either *habitually*, since Christ is the end of all thy works, and this we are commanded to do; or *actually*, and this we are counselled to do. But this *actual* oblation is

¹ St. John xiv. 23.

² St. John xvi. 23.

³ St. Luke xviii. 1.

of great importance. This it is which will enrich thee with merit, because by it thou canst change dull clay into the finest gold ; so that it may be said of thee, as it is written in Job : "And the clods of it are gold."¹ What labour thou art willing to undergo in pursuit of other objects, and all to no purpose, since thou dost direct it solely to thy temporal advantage ! Offer up all thy actions to Christ, eating with due moderation, speaking, sleeping, taking suitable recreation, but doing all in order to maintain a servant for Christ. "I will keep my strength for Thee."² Oh ! if thou didst know how great is thy misery whilst thou art labouring to please thyself ! Thou art wont to foster self-love, which is the most savage of wild beasts, devouring all thy good works. All thy actions are of value only so far as thou offerest them up to the honour of God. So that, if thou wouldst act wisely, thou shouldst not seek even for the salvation of thy soul for the sake of the love, however holy, which thou bearest to it, but for the reason that God has commanded thee to work it out. Thou art not thine own, but belonging entirely to God Himself. Thou art not a plant to His liking if thou give not all thy fruits to Him : "All the fruit, new and old, I have kept, my loved one, for thee." The "old fruits" are the works of nature, the "new" ones those of grace. Whichever they are, let them all be equally kept for Christ, as for thy beloved Lord.

II. Consider secondly, that though it may be enough to offer up once for all at the commencement of the day all your actions, it is nevertheless much better to continue to offer them up from time to time during the day. That first intention of thine may come to be set aside, it may even be destroyed by a contrary act. It is like the smoke of fragrant incense rising to the sky as it mounts yielding to every breath of wind. Therefore, renew the offering during the day as often as thou canst, for habit will soon make this an easy matter. Thus shalt thou obey the precept of the Apostle, and do "all things" in general and each thing in particular in honour of Christ, "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Not only to "His Name," as one who acts by force of habit ; but also "in His Name," as one who acts with full advertence.

III. Consider thirdly, that as it is thy duty to offer everything to the Lord, so also it is thy duty to be grateful to Him for everything ; because whatever thou hast to offer Him is His own gift. Be thy gratitude that of the full-flowing river which

¹ Job xxviii. 6: ² Psalm lviii. 10.

restores to the sea what the sea had first given to it. See then how the Church, instructed by this passage of the Apostle Paul, has instituted two solemn forms of prayer: one to be said at the commencement of every important action, by which it may be offered up to the Lord; the other at its conclusion, in order to return Him thanks. This return of thanks is most properly due to God, Who is the source of all the good which comes to us. It is due in a particular manner to God the Father, as it is said, "And to the Father," that is to say, and especially to the Father; for as He gave everything through Jesus Christ; so it affords Him infinite delight if we also return Him thanks for everything through Jesus Christ. I know not how it is, but the greater part of men are like dumb animals, standing all day under the branches of the oak, feeding greedily upon the acorns which are showered upon them in abundance, yet never once lifting up their eyes to see who is the giver, so far are they from ever returning thanks.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to Hell
(Job xxi. 13).

I. Consider first, how true it is that we ought never to entertain the slightest envy when we see the prosperity of the wicked. See for thy satisfaction what is the sum of their good fortune. "They spend their days in wealth." It is not said that they spend "years"—no, but "days." They live pleasantly, but only for a few days, for not one of them all can boast of having enjoyed a single year of happiness! Scarcely has any one of them enjoyed in any one year one happy day. It is one thing "to spend their days in good things," to spend them in feasting, dancing, revelling, and various entertainments, according to the fashion of the time; it is another thing to "spend good days," that is fortunate days, happy days. Oh! what perpetual bitterness falls to the lot of those who are bent on gratifying every inclination! If there were nothing else, the torture of their own conscience by itself would amply ensure their misery.

II. Consider secondly, that even if they could pass their lives in true enjoyment, there is still no reason to envy them;

for if at the present moment they "spend their days in good things, afterwards they go down into Hell," that is to say, they go down into that place where in sleepless agony they have to expiate that brief holiday which against all reason they chose to take before its proper time. Therefore, weigh carefully what it is that makes up the merriment of those who here below "spend their days in good things." It is the unrestrained indulgence of their appetites—pride, avarice, luxury, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth. How terrible must be the retribution of all these excesses! To punish their pride they shall be imprisoned in the deep abyss of Hell, there to remain eternally the slaves of Satan; in gyves and fetters, under the load of such intolerable shame, that we cannot here even conceive its bitterness. To punish their avarice, they shall find themselves miserably poor, deprived of every good thing, of all that could relieve or assist them; and quite unable to obtain, in the midst of the flames, one drop of water. To punish their lusts, their bodies shall lie among scorpions and serpents, tormented for ever, without being destroyed; and, as if the fire of Hell were not sufficient for its punishment, it shall be rent and torn and tortured, so that even opposite extremes of pain shall be present at once. To punish their anger, they shall find themselves at the mercy of as many merciless enemies as there are demons there, changed from seducers to executioners, and without power to make the least retort, for the devils will be charged with the chastisement of the damned, but the damned can never take their revenge. To punish their gluttony, they shall be wasted away by hunger, which shall have no other food for its relief than burning sulphur and molten lead, no other drink than fiery poison. To punish their envy, they shall be forced to behold, much against their will, raised to the highest Heaven those whom in life they looked upon as fools and treated as slaves, whom now in their frantic folly they desire to drag down from the starry sphere into the abyss of fire. And last of all, and most of all, to punish their sloth, in being so careless about the gaining of Heaven, they shall be buried in deep despair, motionless, and in anguish of heart, exiled eternally from God, with the thought ever present to their minds that the iron shall be driven yet more and more deeply into their souls for all eternity. Consider, then, whether it be to their advantage to "spend their days in good things," if afterwards they have as the consequence "to go down to Hell."

III. Consider thirdly, that for the further increase of their misery, it is said of these unhappy wretches, not only that "they go down to Hell," but also that "they go down in a moment." Who can describe what it is to pass so swiftly from one extreme to another? If these torments would be absolutely unendurable to galley-slaves, who had passed their days in working at the oar, coarsely fed, always under the lash, with half naked bodies, how will they be borne by those who have always lived delicately in the midst of delights, and who have to pass at once from a throne to a dungeon, from wealth to poverty, from laughter to tears, from vicious pleasure to cruel stripes? Therefore it is said, not that "they shall go down to Hell," but that they do go down to Hell; for very often, in the midst of their merry-making, they are visited by a sudden death, which carries them off. Not one moment intervenes.

IV. Consider fourthly, what is the cause that these poor creatures sink down so rapidly? The heavy weight of their sins drags them down. Therefore they go down in an instant; for this weight, ever drawing down, does not permit them to gain time for repentance before death, and thus they die unprepared in the midst of their sins, and are cast headlong into Hell, before they are even aware of their fall. Therefore it is not said, "They are sent to Hell," but, "They go down to Hell," since the weight of their guilt by its own nature drags them down. Everything tends to its own centre without the application of any external force, and thus guilt of its own accord rushes to its punishment. We do not indeed mean to say that these wretches cannot help going "down to Hell," because we know that no one goes thither except by his own choice. What course, then, wilt thou take? Can it be that thou wilt not at last resolve to place thyself in safety?

NINETEENTH DAY.

Yea, I have loved thee in an everlasting love; therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity (Jerem. xxxi. 3).

I. Consider first, the remarkable difference between our love and God's love. We love our fellow-man because he is good. God loves man not because he is good, but because He wishes to make him good. God is the source of every good, and

therefore He cannot presuppose the presence of good in any one before He Himself bestows it. A carver in wood, when he sees, as he passes through the forest, a rude block of timber, is pleased with it, not for what it is in itself, for it is knotted and gnarled and shapeless, but because he means with his skilful work to bring it into shape. So God deals with us. Nay, more: it is He Who gives to the block of wood its fitness for being wrought; and this no carver in wood can give. This, then, is the reason why God tells thee, "I have loved thee in an everlasting love." He wants to show you upon what foundation His love ultimately rests—on love itself. Thou lovest thy neighbour with love, but thou dost not love him in love, since the love which thou bearest him has many supports not contained within itself. It finds support in the beauty of another, in his learning, his riches, his goodness. God's love needs no such support. It has its source of being within itself, in love, and therefore He alone can truly say, "I have loved thee in an everlasting love."

II. Consider secondly, God's love has been everlasting, that is, it is as ancient as God Himself. Since that He is God He has ever loved thee, not as if He saw thee indistinctly in the distance, but as thou art, in all the clearness of reality. "I have loved thee" in thy own separate self. And from all eternity He has been thinking of thee. How then can it be possible for thee to remain unmoved? Thou feelest thyself strongly drawn to love one who has loved thee at a time thou hadst no knowledge of him; and who even then was ever pleading thy cause with the King, although thou wert unconscious of it, and who was ever advancing thy interests and proclaiming thy merits. What then should be thy conduct towards thy God, Who loved thee before thou camest into the world; yea, loved thee before the world was created? And can it be that He in His goodness has loved thee from eternity, and that thou canst not make the poor resolve to love Him after such length of time? Go, now, and forsake a friend such as this thy friend of long ago for new acquaintances. Thy folly will cost thee dear. "Forsake not an old friend, for the new will not be like to him."¹

III. Consider thirdly, that as God, through pure love, has chosen thee from all eternity, He has also from all eternity, through pure love, been ever working out the fulfilment of His choice, and devising one by one the various contrivances by

¹ *Ecclus. ix. 14.*

which, as thou mayest perceive, He has up to the present hour been drawing thee unceasingly to Himself. "I have loved thee in an everlasting love; therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity." But what words can tell all these innumerable contrivances? Consider them attentively. Reflect awhile how God has on His part disposed the course of thy life up to this present day. What facilities He has afforded thee of doing good, what holy inspirations and virtuous impulses, what various means He has employed to make thee His own; sometimes acting with severity, sometimes with tenderness; how many unspeakable benefits He has conferred upon thee. With truth indeed may He say, "I have drawn thee;" not indeed on account of any force which He has used to draw thee onward, for He draws only "in the chains of love," but on account of the force with which thou hast resisted Him. Beseech Him, therefore, from thy heart that He may be pleased in future still to employ this force, paying no heed to thy rebellious will, but constraining it to submit.

IV. Consider fourthly, the infinite mercy that God has shown in drawing thee to Himself by the means I have already mentioned; since, seeing the resistance which thou hast from the first ever shown to His sweet thralldom, His "bonds of love," He might well have abandoned thee at once, even permitting thee to rush to thy destruction. Yet He has not done so, but has continued, in a thousand different ways, to uphold, to arouse, to comfort thee, thus carrying out His saying: "I have drawn thee, taking pity on thee." See how He does not confine His mercies within the limits of certain special needs, but extends them to all alike: pitying thy ignorance, pitying thy frailty, pitying thy malice, thy perversity, thy presumption, and all the other miseries by which he sees thee overwhelmed. Are not these great mercies more powerful to compel thy love than any violence could be? Ah, some day thou must needs give way, crying out to God, "Draw me, we will run;" not "I will run," but "We will run," for it would not be just that thou, who hast received so many benefits, shouldst run all alone after Him; it is right that thou shouldst bring others along with thee. Perhaps this is the very reason why He has not said, "Taking pity on thee," but simply, "Taking pity:" that thou mayest understand that whilst He has drawn thee by the greatness of His love, He meant not only to save thee, but to work out also at the same time the salvation of many others whom thou mightest be able to draw along with thee. And think not on

this account that He loves thee less, for how could He better show His love for thee, than by making thee not only thyself secure, but the blessed instrument of salvation to others? This is indeed an exalted mercy.

TWENTIETH DAY.

We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come
(Hebrews xiii. 14).

I. Consider first, that this wretched earth is not thy lasting city. Thy city is Heaven. Very different are those two cities of the present and the future! To compare them would be like comparing some little village or hamlet to Imperial Rome. Earth in respect of Heaven is a poor man's hovel. How lovely, then, must be that city of the other world, "the city of perfect beauty," if this earthly city delights thee so much!

II. Consider secondly, what ought in consequence to be thy course of conduct on this earth. It should be such as thou wouldst pursue in a city where thou hast no fixed abode, but art only a sojourner for a few days. Thou dost not interest thyself in its affairs; thou art not attached to it by feelings of affection; thou dost fix thy gaze upon it certainly, but always as an object which concerns thee not. Such must thy conduct be throughout thy life on earth, since it is not thy city. "We have not here a lasting city." Thou art a sojourner. And dost thou seek with eagerness to fix thy dwelling here?

III. Consider thirdly, that thou art not only a sojourner on earth, but a pilgrim, and therefore it is added, "But we seek one that is to come." What dost thou do when thou dost pass in pilgrimage from place to place? Thou art not anxious to provide thyself with anything beyond the mere necessities of life. Thou travellest lightly equipped and unencumbered, and thou dost assiduously seek the shortest way to thy native land. Thus thou must act in the case proposed. Here have thy body, there thy mind; like the pilgrim, who in the body traverses some city on his journey, but in spirit has already reached the city for which he sighs. But alas! how different is thy conduct! Scarcely ever are thy thoughts in Heaven. This is a bad sign. Surely it cannot be thy own true country.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

God hath given him place for penance, and he abuseth it unto pride
(Job xxiv. 23).

I. Consider first, a wonderful thing—God, the Lord of Majesty, offended and injured by a man, a wretched worm of the earth, one of His own subjects, one of His poor slaves, gives to him, without being at all bound to do so, from mere condescension of love—gives to him, as a free gift, facilities for repentance, “place for penance,” opportunity, encouragement, assistance. And what does man do? “And he abuseth it unto pride,” by sinning all the more insolently with extravagant and astonishing folly. Who could believe a thing so extraordinary if it were not of constant occurrence? Admire the great goodness of God, and deplore the coarse ingratitude with which He is requited.

II. Consider secondly, the first reason for which it is said that the sinner “abuseth unto pride” the time that God has given him. It is that, precisely because he sees this time placed at his disposal, he becomes more daring. If the Lord inflicted instant punishment, how humble he would be. Because He preserves his life, grants him prosperity, allows him to exult in the flower of his age, he becomes the more insolent. Oh, what pride it is to abuse this great forbearance! “For because sentence is not speedily pronounced against the wicked, the children of men commit evils without any fear.”¹

III. Consider thirdly, the second reason why the sinner is said to “abuse it unto pride.” It is because, after he has acted in the ungrateful manner just described, he still presumes to think that he will work out his salvation. He flatters himself that at the last moment he will be able to arrange all his affairs with great ease, by striking his breast, by heaving a sigh or a groan; and he promises himself a place in Paradise at very trifling cost, though others have paid so much to gain it. What arrogance, what folly it is, to dream that he will be so singularly blest that, although hundreds of thousands of sinners like himself have a miserable death, and scarcely one dies happily, he may yet hope to be that one, a marked exception for men to point at with their fingers, like one that has escaped from the wreck of battle.²

¹ Eccles. viii. 11.

² Eccclus. xl. 7.

IV. Consider fourthly, whether thou art thyself the proud sinner here spoken of. At least, is it not true that thou hast many a time ungratefully abused the mercy of God. Reflect awhile. Even now art thou using thy life for that sole end for which God gave it to thee? Know that this thy life is a "place for penance." Dost thou take it to be such? Lament and be ashamed and humble thyself. Rest assured thou canst in thy employment of time offer no greater insult to God than to "abuse it unto pride."

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

O my people, they that call thee blessed, the same deceive thee and destroy the way of thy steps (Isaias iii. 12).

I. Consider first, what, after all, is the good which thou canst derive from the praises of men. They can call thee happy, but they cannot make thee so. In reality thou art such, as in the sight of God thou art. If in His eyes thou art wretched, pitiful, miserably poor, how canst thou be glad that all the world esteems thee otherwise? How great is thy folly thus to run eagerly after the praises of men, which are only vanity! Man may praise thee as he will, he cannot add to thy stature, I say not a cubit, but even a finger's breadth.

II. Consider secondly, that not only they do thee no good who praise thee, but they do thee grievous harm, because, in the first place, they take from thee the true knowledge of thyself—"they deceive thee;" they make thee fancy thyself what thou art not. Knowest thou not that no one is altogether happy? And yet they call thee happy! In other words, they hide from thee thy faults, they extenuate and defend them. At times they even give the praise of virtue to thy vicious conduct, worthy of rebuke. And canst thou, notwithstanding, give thy love to those who thus betray thee?

III. Consider thirdly, that when these men have taken from thee thy self-knowledge, so necessary to every one, they proceed to inflict on thee a further evil. They destroy for thee the path itself from which thou oughtest never to deviate one step: "They destroy the way of thy steps." What, then, is this precious way? Humility. This is the path along which Christ, when He came down from Heaven, delighted as a giant to run His way. This is the road traversed by so

many men and women saints of God, so many souls dear to Heaven; the road which thou thyself must tread if thou desire to go where they have gone. And now behold what thy flatterers have done. They not only spoil the path, so that thou canst no longer traverse it with speed, but they destroy it altogether. When they make thee entertain a high opinion of thyself, they at the same time inspire thee with contempt for thy neighbour, render the slightest reproof intolerable to thee, fill thee with a spirit of resentment and revenge, and prevent thee from submitting promptly to thy Superiors, so that thou dost come to be not more humble, but more proud. No words can tell the greatness of thy ruin.

IV. Consider fourthly, with what strength of resolution thou shouldst hereafter reject all praise bestowed by men. Never make the slightest effort to procure it for thyself, and if it come unbidden receive it not: say that thou wilt not give it lodging in thy breast, spurn it from thee, drive it far away. Put aside as importunate temptations all thoughts which lead to this. To conclude, bring thyself in everything to desire this alone, the approval of that Lord Who has the power not only to call thee happy, but to make thee so.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

For he also that striveth for the mastery is not crowned except he strive lawfully (2 Timothy ii. 5).

I. Consider first, what the Lord would have thee do in order to be crowned by Him. He wills that thou shouldst fight against thy evil inclinations. This warfare will effect thy sanctification in the end; for it consists not in many vocal prayers, or ecstasies, or revelations, or almsgiving, or use of the discipline, or fasting, or the like external practices of piety performed according to thy own caprice, but in a perfect victory over self. All those other good works are either the means of arriving at this victory, when they are practised with discretion, or they are the fruits which it produces. And in effect what value can all these external acts possess, if all thy passions are in full activity within thee, if thou dost still prefer thyself to others, if thou art ever ready to censure and to criticize, if thou art ruffled at every little word, if thou

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art slow to obey, if thou art a slave to vanity, and even in spiritual things art ever seeking thyself, that is to say, working for thy own pleasure or the applause of men? Assuredly this never was the sanctity which Christ intended.

II. Consider secondly, that to win the crown it is not enough merely to fight. It is necessary to fight lawfully, that is, according to St. Augustine, without ever growing weary or desisting so long as thou art standing in the field of battle, for to this the life of man is likened. Some fight, but they are not crowned, because they soon grow faint. It is not lawful to lay aside the lance. If thou hast upon occasion been worsted in the combat, have patience, and renew the fight more fiercely than before. The Lord says not that thou shalt triumph in such wise over thy bad inclinations, that none of them shall dare to give thee further trouble. He only bids thee go on fighting without ever consenting to treaty or truce with any one of them all. "Even unto death fight for justice."¹

III. Consider thirdly, that this ought not to terrify thee, because if thou wish to fight with advantage against thy own appetites, the only plan is to fight without stop or stay, and this both on their account and thine: on their account, because to grant them a moment's respite is to restore their strength; on thy own account, because these spiritual combats are not like external strife. In the latter, the greater thy exertions, the greater also is thy fatigue; in the former, every fresh effort gives increase of vigour, for it produces in thy soul a constant growth of grace, which is thy only vital energy.

IV. Consider fourthly, what are the arms which thou must use in this warfare, in order not to be overcome. Thy weapons should be three: self-distrust, confidence in God, prayer. Self-distrust, because it will make thee know thy own nothingness, will save thee from presumption and foolish daring, will make thee proceed prudently, and even when thou dost fall will make thee humble, without permitting thee to be discouraged, for thou wilt know full well that of thyself thou canst do nothing; confidence in God, since He alone can give thee victory, and desires to give it; prayer, since by means of it thou canst obtain the Divine assistance. In the Olympic games he who gave the prize to the combatants did not give them the strength to gain it. He sat there to award the judgment, but he did not stir to lend his aid, to keep them

¹ *Ecclus. iv. 33.*

from falling, or to raise them from the ground. He stood there as a spectator, not taking part. Not so with God. He promises thee glory and gives thee grace ; but He would have thee pray for it without ceasing.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

ST. MATTHIAS.

See then the goodness and the severity of God: towards them indeed that are fallen, the severity; but towards thee, the goodness of God, if thou abide in goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off (Romans xi. 22).

I. Consider first, the goodness and the severity of the Lord. The word "goodness" is in this passage to be understood in the sense of beneficence, or that goodness by which the Lord confers benefits upon thee without any merit of thine own. By severity is to be understood that rigorous justice with which He takes cognizance of our faults. God can never be said to be severe in the same absolute sense in which He is said to be beneficent; since He never punishes to the full extent of His power. He is ever merciful. He is said to be severe when He displays His justice rather than mercy. Now, therefore, see "the goodness and severity of God." The contemplation of the goodness and severity of God is the ladder which will enable thee to escape from the enemy. When he tempts thee to discouragement, then lift up thy mind to contemplate the wonderful goodness of God, exerted even in behalf of those who do not merit it. "See the goodness of God." When he tempts thee to presumption, then cast thyself down to contemplate the terrors of God's justice, manifested even towards those who are His best beloved. "See the severity of God." By thus ascending and descending, thou shalt keep thyself beyond the power of the devil to molest thee. Do not seek to remain stationary upon this ladder, for that is very dangerous. "See the goodness of God;" but at the same time "see His severity."

II. Consider secondly, with particular attention, the severity of the Lord, as it has been exemplified in the persons of the many whom He has allowed to fall from sublime heights of virtue—"towards them that have fallen"—in Judas, who fell even from the Apostleship, in Saul, in Solomon, in Origen, &c.,

in so many others, who were so near to the Lord. Terrible are His judgments! "The Lord hath cast down headlong and hath not spared."¹ And how many are there who day by day still fall in shameful ruin from the very heights of sanctity and wisdom, and go down into Hell? Are there not perhaps many who go there after the first sin committed?

III. Consider thirdly, the goodness of God as exemplified in thee: since He has been pleased to bear with thee, not only after thy first sin, but after many more. This certainly thou canst not attribute to thy own merit: from His goodness alone it has come; but know well that thou art not thereby made sure of thy salvation, for thou dost not know whether the Lord will continue to display His goodness if thou shouldst abuse it again. He will save thee "if thou abide in goodness;" that is to say, if "thou abide always in the same goodness of God;" if thou shalt always, as at the present time, find thyself favoured by God with efficacious, special, and superabundant graces. But who can ever assure thee of this? Is the Lord perchance bound to bestow on thee His goodness to the end? If so, His goodness would no longer be beneficence.

IV. Consider fourthly, the destruction which awaits thee should the Lord withdraw His beneficence from thee, as He has already withdrawn it from many and many a soul. "And thou shalt be cut off." Thou likewise shalt be cut off from the tree of life without mercy or commiseration, and cast into the eternal fire. Therefore, if thou art wise, commend thyself without ceasing earnestly to the Lord, as one who is ever standing between hope and fear; and remember always that He is good, but that He is also severe.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

Watch ye therefore, praying at all times, that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of Man (St. Luke xxi. 36).

I. Consider first, that the Lord by these words wishes to explain to thee that the working out of thy eternal salvation must not depend either altogether on thyself or altogether on Him. Not altogether on Him, forasmuch as He bids thee

¹ Lament. ii. 2.

keep watch ; not altogether on thyself, forasmuch as He bids thee pray. So far as thou canst thou must do thy part, being discreet and careful and giving no place to temptation ; for this is to "watch:" in the next place, as if with all this thou hadst done nothing, it is thy duty to pray, to have recourse to God, and to commend thy cause to Him, humbly imploring that He would deign to shield thee with His holy grace. This is the right rule of salvation.

II. Consider secondly, that it is not sufficient to commence this process, but it is necessary to carry it forward to the end, without ceasing or growing tired. "At all times." Some there are who think that it is sufficient to watch and pray in the time of temptation. It is not so. It is thy duty at all times. Observe the shepherd's faithful dog. He watches over the flock, even though the wolves and the robbers be far away ; and why ? In order to keep them far away. So shouldst thou keep watch for the welfare of thy soul. Watch and pray, even when temptation is not upon thee, that so it may not come. "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation." When thou dost no longer keep watch and ward over thyself, when thou are negligent in thy devotions, and hast little care to cherish the desire of seeking often during the day the face of God, and commending thy cause to His keeping, it is not needful that temptations come in search of thee, for thou of thy own accord dost give them entrance, since thou hast thrown away thy arms, and art unable to defend thyself. As then there is no time in life when, left to thyself, thou wouldst not be in extreme danger of perishing : so too there is no time when thou canst relax thy efforts to secure thy safety.

III. Consider thirdly, what are the good results of this anxious care ? Thou shalt escape on the Day of Judgment the evil doom, "the things which are to come," and thou shalt find a blessing, "thou shalt stand before the Son of Man." Of the just alone it is said, that they shall stand firm before the great judgment-seat, that they "shall stand in great constancy;" because they have the testimony of a good conscience. Of the wicked it is said that they shall fall without the hope of being able to rise again. "The wicked shall not rise again in judgment."

IV. Consider fourthly, that thy own efforts can never avail to render thee worthy of so great a blessing. Therefore thou must implore the Lord "that thou mayest be accounted

worthy ;” that is to say, that according to His great mercy He may treat thee as if thou were really worthy. This should be the burden of the prayers which thou breathest continually to God, to escape the dreadful doom and to receive the blessed summons. “Watch ye therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy.”

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

For what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer damage to his soul (St. Matt. xvi. 26).

I. Consider first, that Christ in this place does not say : “For what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the total destruction of his soul.” It is enough if he suffer damage. From this thou art to learn that not only is it an unprofitable transaction to gain the whole world at the price of the loss of thy soul, but even at the price of subjecting thy soul to the slightest possible spiritual detriment. For how canst thou ever give to thy soul as much as thou takest away? Knowest thou the value of one little degree of glory? It is worth more than all the monarchies combined of Romans, Medes, Macedonians, Persians, and all who ever sat upon imperial thrones ; so that if, in order to bring them under thy dominion, thou shouldst consent to commit one venial sin, thou wouldst be guilty of an act of folly. And it would be no less a folly if thou shouldst deem it a hardship to have to surrender in sacrifice to God any treasure however costly, although thou art not compelled to make it under pain of sin. For what hast thou to give Him for which He is not able one day to pay thee back with large advantage? “In their land they shall possess the double,” said Isaïas of the elect, who mortify themselves here for the love of God. But that seemed but a small return to Jesus ; for He was pleased to use a more expressive formula : “Good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom.”¹ When a friend sells thee a bushel of corn observe what he does. First, he takes a sack of the legal dimensions. This is to give thee “good measure ;” then he fills it with corn, and not satisfied with that he heaps it up,

¹ St. Luke vi. 38.

and then forces it in with both hands. This is to give it to thee "pressed down;" then he shakes the sack well and strikes it on the side till the grain settle close. This is to give it to thee "shaken together;" then he adds more corn, until it fairly overflows. This is to give it to thee "running over." A more generous measure than this it is not possible to give. And this is the measure according to which the Lord will pay thee back for the smallest coin which thou hast given in thy love for Him, for every word spoken, every step taken, every pleasure renounced. How good God is! And now reflect awhile how great is thy mistake when thou art not ready to sacrifice at once to God all that the whole universe can offer to thy acceptance. And yet thou art sometimes heard to say: If only I save my soul, I shall be satisfied. I do not care to be a saint. A terrible delusion is this. If thou wert Emperor of Rome, would it not be the height of folly to proclaim that thou wouldst not renounce a flower to join to thy European dominions all Asia, Africa, America? Yet know for certain that one little wild flower is worth more when compared with the three quarters of the globe than the three quarters of the globe are worth when compared with the very least degree of that transcendent happiness which thou holdest at so cheap a rate. "Better is one day in thy courts above thousands,"¹ said the Psalmist. This, then, is my reply to thee. If one who stood only in the entrance court of Heaven would not exchange one day there for all the happiest days that could be spent upon the earth, how shall it be with those who stand within the holy place, whither thou carest not to penetrate? It is beyond all doubt that no acquisition thou canst make, though it should be of all the world, will make thee adequate amends for the least injury accruing to thy soul by reason of thy self-indulgence and many imperfections, to say nothing of those actual venial sins, which thou wilt have to expiate hereafter in the flames of Purgatory. "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer damage to his own soul," even without entire destruction?

II. Consider secondly, that if all the gold in the world could never make thee compensation for the slightest injury inflicted on thy soul, much less could it repay thee for the loss of thy soul. What will all thy past delight in pleasure, grandeur, glory, profit thee if thou art damned? Dost thou think that the great kings who now are gnashing their teeth

¹ Psalm lxxxiii. 11.

in Hell find comfort in calling to mind the days of their prosperity on earth? Thinkest thou they have joy in the memory of their treasures once possessed, or find relief in the thought of their earthly triumphs? It is far otherwise. The memory of lost good is a sure cause of grief, and the greater the loss the keener is the sorrow. Nor only that, for beyond all doubt the pain to be endured shall bear proportion to the past enjoyment. He who has been most daintily feasted shall be most pinched with hunger; he who has been clothed in the softest garments shall be wrapped in the fiercest flames; he who has been loudest in laughter shall utter the most doleful lamentations. "The loftiness of men shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be humbled,"¹ said Isaias. He who used to carry his head on high shall bend beneath the mighty load of punishments which he bears upon his back, and he who has been haughty shall be bowed down. No joy whatever shalt thou take in having laboured hard for thy advancement, for the increase of thy fortune, for the foolish exaltation of thy family. Nay, all thy honours, if thou lose thy soul, shall but help to thy greater degradation.

III. Consider thirdly, that it will not only profit thee nothing in Hell to have neglected thy soul for the acquisition of the universe, but it profits thee not even here upon earth. What good then, in conclusion, can earth bestow upon thee, though it should exhaust itself of all its treasures in order to enrich thee, if thou for such rewards hast been forced to incur the least danger of damnation? "What exchange shall a man give for his soul?"² "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"³ Not only canst thou not give to thyself here an exchange, that is to say, full compensation for the loss of thy soul; but thou canst not even make any part of the payment. Is there any proportion whatever between the pleasures of sense thou dost here enjoy and the torments thou shalt endure in Hell? Between thy treasures here and thy destitution there, thy public honours here and the curses heaped upon thee there? Hear what "they who have sinned" are crying out in the deep pit: "What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us?"⁴ They do not say, "What doth it profit," but, "What hath it profited;" they do not say, "What doth it bring," but, "What hath it brought." For now that these wretched creatures have had their eyes opened, that is to say, have found out by actual

¹ Isaias ii. 17.² St. Matt. xvi. 26.³ St. Mark viii. 37.⁴ Wisdom v. 8.

experience the truth in which before they had very feeble faith, they see clearly that compared with the torments to which they are condemned all their joys were foolishness. An apple rotting on the ground is worth as much. Hence it is that Christ, Who often goes back upon this argument, at one time says, "What shall it profit a man," for the future; and at another time with practical prudence, "What doth it profit" at the present time. So insignificant are all the greatest enjoyments which can have place on this poor earth, compared with the least of the pains of Hell, that it is madness to care for them. What avail, I pray thee, thy titles of power? What avail the crozier and the purple? What avails, I say not a simple crown, but even the tiara; if, for the sake of any of these things, thou risk the loss of thy soul for ever? "The sons of men are lying in their balances,"¹ since in their calculation the temporal always outweighs the eternal, to which it does not really bear the faintest proportion. No balances ever made could give such false results of their own accord. Therefore the words are not, "Lying balances among the sons of men," but, "Sons of men lying in their balances." For men shift the balance to suit their own purpose as often as they rebel against any clear intimation of the light of reason. "They are rebels to the light."²

IV. Consider fourthly, that although Christ said, "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world," &c., yet no man ever really has any such reward in prospect when he damns himself. Most people lose their souls to gain some little portion of the world, so miserably small that it is enough to make one weep only to think of it. It does not come to pass that the devil, seizing his victims by the hair of their head, bears them off to the top of some Mount Olympus, in order to show them "all the kingdoms of the world," with the promise, "All these will I give to thee if, falling down, thou wilt adore me." To gain far less than this, many and many a man is well content to bend the knee to him in homage. Some are content, like Achab, with so poor a vineyard that it may be profitably turned into a garden. Some are content with a little benefice or a petty appointment: others again, like so many infamous Judases, will accept a piece of silver, and for such trifles they hesitate not to oppress the poor, to commit simony, to swear falsely, to betray their trust. Nor is this the worst. Thou shalt even meet with many men who demand

¹ Psalm lxi. 10.

² Job xxiv. 13.

no payment at all for sin, but are ready to pay for leave to commit it. The last misfortune reserved for the unhappy Jews was foretold by our Lord in these words: "Thou shalt be set to sale to thy enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you."¹ This prophecy was verified under Titus, when the unhappy people in vain searched through the Roman hosts for some one who would accept their services and found none, for such slaves could be procured at the rate of thirty for a piece of silver. So do some Christians act. They offer themselves after some fashion to the devil, that he may purchase them, whereas he intends that they shall purchase him. See how they follow madly after sensual pleasures; but they are now no longer capable of enjoying these from physical exhaustion, and the devil laughs to see them striving hard to find some method of giving new life to passion all but dead within them. See those unhappy men who writhe in rage yet cannot wreak their vengeance on the offender! See the agonies of avaricious men who cannot contrive to make one fortunate stroke of business! See how men are maddened by ambition, and can yet find no field for action! What to these miserable men is the result of sin? Only the dismal love they bear to their state of slavery. In fact, they cannot find "any one to buy them at any price." Say then art thou, to thy shame, one of these miserable men? Wilt thou insanelly pay so dear for leave to damn thyself? It profits not to lose thy soul for gaining all the world. "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" And thinkest thou, then, that it is profitable to lose thy soul for the sake of committing sin, which bears no fruit save only punishment?

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

Give glory to the Lord your God before it be dark, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains (Jerem. xiii. 16).

I. Consider first, what is the meaning of this phrase: "Give glory to God." It means to acknowledge thy lapse from virtue, to abhor it, to deplore it, to accuse thyself of it, and lastly, to make the atonement due. For then we give back to God the glory of which we have robbed Him by

¹ Deut. xxviii. 68.

sinning against Him in thought, word, and deed, when in thought and word and deed we declare that we have done wrong in sinning against Him. In "thought," we declare this by examination of conscience, repentance, and resolve to amend. In "word," by confession, with humility and truth. In "action," by the fulfilment of those penances, satisfactory or medicinal, which are enjoined. Thus the great goodness of the Lord is made manifest, since He is willing to receive from us as a gift that which is due to Him as a debt. And surely, to speak accurately, He ought to order us to restore to Him the glory of which we had robbed Him. And yet He does not say, "restore," but He says, "give."

II. Consider secondly, when does the Lord wish this glory to be given to Him? At once! at once! "Before it be dark." Thinkest thou this means when thou art face to face with death? Thou art much mistaken: it means as soon as possible after thou hast sinned. Because if thou delayest at all to make a good confession the shadows of night will fall on thy mind; and whereas at first thou didst look on thy sin as a great evil, suffering great uneasiness by reason of the same, and being anxious and alarmed, by little and little thou shalt begin to make light of it, and whilst thou shalt see all thy affairs prosperous as before, and that thou remainest in the enjoyment of good health, and that thou hast no lack of friends, and art greeted by applause, and that God has not shown thee in anything the severity of His countenance, thou wilt begin to suspect that really sin is not so great an evil as preachers say, thou wilt sink down to lower depths of vice, and wilt pass on from quarrelling to violence, from rivalry to vengeance; and when upon thy mind, at last, the night of horror has settled down, thou wilt not only make little account of sin, but thou wilt be glad to commit sin. Oh, how important it is not to give the shadows time to gather thick around thee! Make haste! make haste! Confess thyself, delay not, forsake thy sins "before it be dark."

III. Consider thirdly, that if thou dost not do penance at once according to thy duty, perforce thou must, if thou wouldst be saved, do penance before thou die: "Before thy feet stumble upon the dark mountains." Now pause and think well for one moment of the insuperable difficulty in which then thou shalt be placed. Alas! how high those mountains are which thou must cross on thy passage from life to eternity. They are gloomy and wrapped in mist, "dark mountains," truly so

called : and how wilt thou ever be able to find the path which leads to safety? Thou shalt have light to trace the path securely if thou restore to each one his due ; but herein is a great difficulty, for thy family will suffer loss of social rank. A lofty mountain to be crossed ! Thou mayest wish pardon to thy enemy, but lo ! another mountain rises before thee ! Thou art not able to change hatred into love. Thou wouldst wish to renounce a sinful attachment ; but lo ! another mountain ! Thou art not able to change the fire of love into hatred. Thou mayest wish to trust in the Divine mercy, but lo ! another mountain higher still : the recollection of thy past ingratitude. In one word, whithersoever thou turnest thyself "thy feet stumble upon the dark mountains," for the difficulties will be great, and thou, devoid of consolation, deprived of counsel, and shut out from the light of Heaven, shalt not discover the path which leads over them.

IV. Consider fourthly, that dark mountains are the very place where robbers love to dwell. In this thou canst discern another marvellous folly which thou dost commit if thou designest to defer thy repentance until death comes, since thou dost with confidence expect to place thy soul in safety whilst thou leadest her along a path where enemies are waiting in great numbers to take her from thee. Very great shall be the power of thy ghostly enemies in the midst of all the difficulties gathering around thee ; and as from hour to hour they gain increase of strength, they will force thee to believe that already the night has come upon thee, to which Christ alludes when He says, "The night cometh when no man can work ;"¹ that there is no longer any room for hope ; that there is no longer any opportunity of salvation ; that thou hast already fallen into their hands for all eternity. Now, therefore, thou seest well whether it be advisable to delay giving glory to God. Beseech the Lord to give thee grace at once to bewail all thy faults, while there is yet time ; begin to make easy the passage over those mountains which thou must needs cross in the hour of thy death.

¹ St. John ix. 4.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

My brethren, count it all joy when you shall fall into divers temptations
(St. James i. 2).

I. Consider first, the course pursued by multitudes of Christians, and be astonished. They say they hold it for a certain truth that upon earth real happiness consists in suffering much, and yet not one among them all would present at any shrine a little votive offering to attest his gratitude for the loss of sight or hearing. What man would make a pilgrimage to Loreto because judgment had been given against him in some important cause? Who dedicates a chapel because he has been banished from Court? Who endows a monastery because he has been dismissed from office? Who thinks of keeping as a high festival the anniversary of that memorable day on which some terrible disaster befell him? On the contrary, such a day is looked upon as an anniversary of grief, not triumph. But how comes this? It is only to be accounted for by the fact that the faith of Christians nowadays has grown feeble. "Truths are diminished from among the children of men."¹ It passes current, indeed, as if it were money of full weight, but it is no such thing, for it is debased and worn. The children of men have clipped the good coin: that faith bequeathed to them by the great ones of old, who, "went away rejoicing from the presence of the Council,"² who "gloried in tribulations,"³ who "gloried in infirmities,"⁴ who "gloried in the Cross;"⁵ they have robbed it of its noblest right, its claim to be the rule of their conduct. The rule of conduct is no longer faith. It is apprehension, it is inclination, it is complete subjection to the senses. And therefore St. James lays down in the first place that men should think, for in this matter no action can be taken except in the strength of a vigorous mind. If thou dost not make effort to persuade thyself to oppose the dictates of sensuality, thou art lost. Be ruled by that which Christ says, Who with His own lips termed him blessed who suffers most; be ruled by St. Peter, be ruled by St. Paul, be ruled by that which reason teaches thee, that adversity contains all joy, and let the foolish world say to thee what it will.

II. Consider secondly, that joy is caused by present good, and therefore adversities are to be considered as all joy, since

¹ Psalm xi. 1. ² Acts v. 41. ³ Romans v. 3. ⁴ 2 Cor. x. 9. ⁵ Galat. vi. 14.

they actually contain all advantages. What are these advantages? All are reduced to three—the noble, the delightful, the useful. Adversity contains what is noble: First, because it makes us like our Lord, causing us no longer to bear “the image of the earthly,” that is, of the old man, but “the image of the heavenly,”¹ that is of the new man. Secondly, because among men it raises us above the people and above the crowd, not one of whom can do that which belongs to the great of soul alone, can ever show the marks of the Saviour’s Wounds: “I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body.”² Thirdly, because it exalts us above the angels themselves, who are not able to suffer for God’s sake. The angels are clothed with beauty, according to the saying, “Every precious stone is thy covering,”³ but they are not clothed with the strength of endurance, because their precious stones were not fashioned by the stroke of the chisel as ours are. Of him alone who fears not to encounter death itself for the sake of God can it be strictly said that “strength and beauty are his clothing.”⁴

Adversity contains what is useful. The useful is that which removes evil and brings good. Now, adversity removes evil from us: First, because it lightens the debt of sin, and by a milder purgatory relieves us from the evil of punishment. “I will turn My hand to thee, and I will clean purge away all thy dross.”⁵ Secondly, because it tears up the root of all our vices, that self-love which causes to act more like children than men endowed with reason, and thus again it removes from us the evil of guilt. “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child and the rod of correction shall drive it away.”⁶ On the other, hand, adversity brings us good, first, because it brings that good which is most suitable to beginners, inasmuch as the wrongs we receive at the hands of our fellow-creatures (while they alienate us from them) impel us towards God: “And the Egyptians pressed the people to go out of the land speedily.”⁷ Secondly, because adversity brings the good that suits the state of those who are already advanced on the road to perfection, for it purifies the intellect, which, like the ancient Tabernacle, is illuminated by night and overshadowed by day. “By day (that is, in prosperity) the cloud covered it; and by night (that is, in adversity) as it were the appearance of fire.”⁸ And it purifies the will, which, like the vine, is more fruitful in every

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 49. ² Galat. vi. 17. ³ Ezech. xxviii. 13 ⁴ Prov. xxxi. 25.

⁵ Isaias i. 25.

⁶ Prov. xxii. 15.

⁷ Exodus xii. 33.

⁸ Numbers ix. 16.

virtue the more it has been pruned. "Every branch that beareth fruit He will purge, that it may bring forth more fruit."¹ Thirdly, because adversity brings with it the good which belongs to perfect souls, for it makes us rich in merit, and it disposes us to union with God by perfect contemplation. "Thy name shall not be called Jacob," as was said to Jacob after he had wrestled, "but Israel,"² which signifies seeing God. Again, adversity contains what is delightful: First, because it is a sign of predestination, and feeds us with the hope of reward. "It is a token of great goodness when sinners are not suffered to go on in their ways for a long time, but are presently punished."³ A great mercy is predestination; a mercy, because it is altogether gratuitous; a great mercy, because all else is as nothing compared with it. Secondly, because adversity is a sign of the love which God bears the soul at the present moment. "Whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth."⁴ Thirdly, because it is also a sign of the love which the soul bears to God at the present moment. "He that is a friend loveth at all times, and a brother is proved in distress."⁵ Fourthly, because God can in a thousand wondrous ways sweeten all the bitterness endured for His sake. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also by Christ doth our comfort abound."⁶ Thou seest here that the comfort is in proportion to the suffering, and therefore that it is truly said that in adversity all joy is contained, since it contains the three good things—the noble, the useful, and the delightful—bound together in a bundle of myrrh; and if this judgment with regard to adversity be correct, let not your conduct be ruled by your fears or by your appetites, but by the dictates of reason. "Count it all joy." Dost thou not see, on weighing the matter carefully, that there is nothing more to be esteemed on earth than suffering?

III. Consider thirdly, that all these great blessings do not come to one who meets upon occasion some casual tribulation, but to one who is really under affliction, so that St. James says not, "Count it all joy in one temptation," but, "when you shall fall into divers temptations," from which the saints learned to pray to God that they might not be released from their cross except on condition of finding another. Observe, too, that these same crosses must be not only many, but various. One is patient under illness, but impatient under humiliation;

¹ St. John xv. 2.

⁴ Hebrews xii. 6.

² Gen. xxxii. 28.

⁵ Prov. xvii. 17.

³ 2 Mach. vi. 13.

⁶ 2 Cor. i. 5.

another is patient under humiliation, but is impatient under illness. Such men as these will not experience "that all is joy." He shall experience all joy who knows how to bear with all tribulations, even of contrary kinds. "We have passed through fire and water, and Thou hast brought us out into a refreshment."¹

IV. Consider fourthly, that here St. James classes together, under the name of temptations, all adversities, both trials and direct assaults. The first are absolutely willed by God, the second are only permitted by Him; but even these, inasmuch as they are permitted by Him, may be regarded as so many proofs to which He subjects thee; for it is He Who gives the dog power to bark at thee, but not to bite thee against thy own consent. And if thou dost manfully resist, thou shalt experience all joy, even in trials of the latter kind, and this for the same three reasons; not indeed in this, that they incite thee to evil, for so they must ever be objects of horror, but in this, that they give thee, like other tribulations, opportunity of fighting. Indeed, they may be more profitable to thee than other tribulations, for they keep thee more humble, and humility is the foundation of a lofty edifice in spiritual life. "A grievous sickness maketh the soul sober."² Allurement to sin may be appropriately called this grievous sickness, because it will infallibly bring death to the soul if strong remedies be not applied.

V. Consider fifthly, that these temptations are not to be counted all joy when thou dost go to meet them, but only when they come upon thee unsought: "When you shall fall into divers temptations." As for those which proceed from the devil, it is thy duty to shun them with all thy power, and as for those which we have described under the name of adversity, although it be true that it is always lawful to procure them, yet it is not always wise to do so; for David on one occasion said, "I met with trouble and sorrow;"³ and on another occasion, "Trouble and anguish have found me."⁴ But the most useful trials are not those of thy own seeking, although they are most easily borne, being chosen by thyself. The most useful are those which seek thee of their own accord. These are the most keenly felt, for there is nothing of self about them. And therefore thou mayest observe that David in the former case speaks of his grief, in the latter of his

¹ Psalm lrv. 12.

² Eccclus. xxxi. 2.

³ Psalm cxiv. 3.

⁴ Psalm cxviii. 143.

distress. If, however, thou bearest up manfully, even under such tribulations as these, then surely thou shalt find "that all is joy," for thou knowest that the "trying of faith worketh patience," and, as St. James proceeds to say, "patience hath a perfect work."¹ This, however, is explained in the next meditation.²

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

The trying of your faith worketh patience, and patience hath a perfect work
(St. James i. 3, 4).

I. Consider first, why it is said that affliction brings thee all those advantages which have been declared in the preceding meditation. Because it brings thee patience: "The trying of faith worketh patience." But see in what manner. By working it out gradually. On this account, we are not told that it gives, but that it worketh. If there be any virtue which is acquired by degrees, it is patience, because nature recoils from suffering and repels it; and although the soul in the end submits, yet it is only after lengthened efforts. Ponder as thou wilt, pass in review as thou wilt, all the motives that can lead thee to the love of patience, thou shalt not find a better way than the practice of it. Seest thou not what was written of Christ: "And whereas He was indeed the Son of God (Who was all-wise), He learned obedience by the things that He suffered."³ Obedience here stands for patience, because the passage relates to Christ's resignation to the Cross and to trials and sufferings. Now, in order to learn the lesson of patience, it was necessary that He should practise it, because He was to master it not only in theory but in practice, and thus He became more compassionate towards us by the things which He suffered; in other words, not alone compassionate in act, as He was before (because He before bore with us and succoured us), but compassionate in affection likewise. The affection of compassion manifests itself in a far greater readiness to endure and to assist, and it was exemplified in the Person of the Son of God when He became Incarnate.

¹ St. James i. 3, 4.

² The next meditation in leap years may be reserved for the following day. At other times, it should be joined to the meditation just given.

³ Hebrews v. 8.

Think not that there is an easier way to the attainment of any virtue. Thou shunnest all suffering, thou seekest ease, approval, and applause; thou wishest that everything should be according to thy good pleasure, and how canst thou ever thus become a soldier of Christ? Didst thou ever hear of any one being made a valiant soldier by poring over books? No; a man must be trained to carry arms. Hence it is that even the sons of princes, who wish to learn the art of war, not only join the camp, but begin from the lowest rank (as all others do), and are raised step by step to the highest. Knowest thou not that "the life of man upon earth is a warfare?"¹ Thou shalt therefore greatly deceive thyself if thou thinkest to learn the art of war in quiet and solitude. "Labour as a good soldier of Christ."² Thou must take part in the siege and assault; thou must by endurance of hardships acquire that patience which is of all the greatest—the patience of a trained soldier. "The trying of your faith worketh patience."

II. Consider secondly, that no labour is too great that teaches thee the lesson of patience, because, in one word, this admirable virtue contains within itself, as has been said, all joy. It need not, then, be matter of astonishment that so sublime an eulogy has been pronounced upon it: "Patience hath a perfect work." Does patience possess all joy? If so, it possesses all good. Does it possess all good? If so, it possesses a perfect work. But this high praise is also due on another ground, for patience gives perseverance. This is the gift which crowns with perfection all the works of men. And this is the gift which it belongs to patience to bestow, because patience overcomes the most powerful obstacles by which perseverance is endangered—despondency and sensuality. Observe, therefore, that it is not said that patience produces, but that patience hath a perfect work. It is the part of all the other virtues to engender perseverance: the love of God makes it more easy to persevere in the good work thou art doing. Obedience leads to perseverance; humility leads to perseverance; devotion also greatly conduces to perseverance; but, to speak correctly, patience does not engender perseverance, but contains it. Finally, how shall we describe patience? It is itself a species of perseverance, but perseverance of that strong and vigorous kind which is required for the incessant pursuit of good under difficulties. Thou seest, therefore, that patience hath a perfect work, because it contains within itself

¹ Job vii. 1.

² 2 Timothy ii. 3.

the crown of labour. Therefore, whether thou art speaking of work in general, that is, of the whole course of thy life, in which sense Christ used the word when He said to His Father, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do,"¹ or whether thou art speaking of some particular work, as Christ did when He exclaimed to His persecutors, "For which of these works do you stone Me?"² it still is ever true that patience hath a perfect work, because for the whole course of thy life patience alone can give thee final perseverance, and for thy good works in succession patience must be thy daily perseverance. Without patience thou canst effect nothing of any value, because thou canst not love God without patience, or be obedient without patience, or humble without patience, or devout in prayer without patience. And as in this manner, so to say, patience stands to thee in the place of all virtues, so without patience thou shalt be devoid of all virtues of real worth. Sometimes, after working hard, thou shalt lose all the fruit of thy exertions for want of patience. So true it is that, from every point of view, patience hath a perfect work. Once more : convince thyself deeply that no labour is too severe for the acquisition of this virtue, and ask it earnestly of our Lord, Who is our sole good, and therefore may well be called our patience. "Here is the patience of the saints who keep the commandments of God."³

¹ St. John xvii. 4.² St. John x. 32.¹ Apoc. xiv. 12.

MARCH.

FIRST DAY.

Thou art my God, depart not from me ; for tribulation is very near, for there is none to help me (Psalm xxi. 12).

I. Consider first, that these words should ever be on thy lips, accompanied by the reflection that death is very near thee, for these words were spoken by the Psalmist as one about to die. "Thou art my God, depart not from me ; for tribulation is very near, for there is none to help me." What more pressing need hast thou than that the Lord should not depart from thee in thy last moments? Remember that on them depends an eternity of reward or punishment.

II. Consider secondly, that death is called tribulation, because in some sort it comprises all earthly sorrows. We look upon exile as a heavy affliction. But what exile can be more complete than that brought about by death? There remains for thee no longer then a place of refuge upon earth. It is a great affliction to thee to lose thy acquaintances, thy intimate friends, thy relatives, who are so dear to thee. And death takes them all from thee. The loss of a splendid fortune is a great affliction, and death leaves thee not one piece of money. And with thy property death robs thee, too, of all respect and of all thy retinue and magisterial power. It is a terrible affliction to lose the use of thy senses, so much prized by thee, thy sight, hearing, speech. But this befalls thee at the hour of death. Add to this the pains of thy malady, the loathing of food, the bitter taste, the burning fever, the convulsive movements. But above all it is called tribulation, because it brings the greatest tribulation that can be known, the pangs of an evil conscience. Oh, how cruel will be these pangs at the hour of death ! "Why shall I fear in the evil day?" saith the Psalmist. "The iniquity of my heel shall

encompass me."¹ Those iniquities on which thou dost now, so to say, trample with thy heel, those sins which are now unobserved or despised, shall at the hour of death rise before thee like giant spectres, and encompass thee round about with terror. Whithersoever thou turnest thy eyes in that hour, thy sins alone will meet thy gaze. All the delights, all the advantages, all the glories of life, will flit from thy mind, and leave nothing behind but the dark picture of thy sins. Pause, then, a little, and examine well what this iniquity is which at the hour of death shall prove so terrible, in order to forecast some method of defence. Oh! treat not this matter lightly; for it will not be then as now. Now thou canst in some manner silence thy clamorous conscience, by flinging to it some dainty morsel to engage its attention, by flattering and enticing it, and cheating it into the belief that the devil is not so black as he is painted. It will be far otherwise at the hour of death. Then thou wilt realize far better what sin is, a degradation, a monstrous evil, and at the same time thou wilt find thyself no longer able to pacify thy accusing conscience: "For at hand is the day of the end."² The end is come of all social meetings, all feasting, hunting, and merry-making, and thou mayest judge whether conscience grown frantic will restrain any longer its voice of terror. Dost thou sincerely desire to appease it? Lose not a moment in driving the traitor from thy heart, or conscience at the hour of death will show thee in clear colours thy grievous folly, thy faithlessness, thy ingratitude, thy rashness, and thy ruin, now beyond redress. This is of all pangs the worst—remorse of conscience. "Among the tribulations of the human soul there is none greater than the consciousness of sin," as St. Augustine says. This consciousness will never be greater than at the hour of death, when the soul, now near to the judgment-seat, will seem to behold there present the incensed Judge, will see her accusers standing round, will hear the charges made against her, and will fancy herself already delivered over to the executioners.

III. Consider thirdly, that this tribulation is "at hand," and probably much nearer than thou dost imagine. Thou art not wont to fear death, because thou dost always represent it to thyself as a long way off. Dost thou ever ask thyself how near it is? How many are the occasions, some arriving in natural course, others resulting from accident or design,

¹ Psalm xlviii, 6.

² Eccclus. xl, 2.

which may bring death to thy door at any moment! Perhaps thou art self-confident, because thou hast the fresh feeling of youth in its strength and vigour. Trust not in this, for death strikes down the young as well as the old. Therefore set death before thy eyes as armed with sword and bow: "He brandished the sword and bent the bow."¹ With the sword he strikes down the old and helpless, by the bow he strikes down the young; flight avails not. Suppose however that thou hast still a long life before thee; what may its length be? Say fifty years. That would be by no means a short term. Sixty years? Do not promise thyself so many. Seventy years? Do not hope for so many. Yet even if we take that length of time, "Shall not the fewnness of thy days be ended shortly?"² Dost thou see how quickly those years have passed away? Thou mayest depend upon it, that the years to come will not be more slow-paced than those which have gone. Turn thy thoughts to the years that have gone, and see if they were not fleeting. "My days have been swifter than a post," said Job;³ for a runner, however strong he be, requires from time to time to halt in order to draw breath, but time never halts. Therefore it behoves thee not to lose thy time. Haste thee, haste thee! put thy house in order without delay: "Furnish thyself to go into captivity."⁴ Confess thy sins now, as thou wilt at the hour of death wish to have done; pay at once the debts due to thy poorer creditors; pay what thou owest to churches and convents, and see that pious bequests are fulfilled. If thou bearest enmity towards any one, which rankles in thy breast, pluck it out, do away with it, resolve thy difference at once, at any cost, even with some slight loss of honour, since as the days are short thou shouldst not waste them. "For who hath despised little days?"⁵

IV. Consider fourthly, that death is not only the greatest tribulation of all, and the most imminent, it is also beyond the reach of help. "There is none to help." If the Lord be not there to help thee, thou art to be pitied. Thou shalt then see how all dear friends leave thee to perish alone. "A man is security for his neighbour, and when he hath lost all shame he will forsake him."⁶ Thou perhaps for some of these friends hast done more than duty permitted. But what of that? Wait till the doctors pronounce thy case hopeless, and that announcement puts an end at once even to the

¹ Psalm vii. 13.² Job x. 20.³ Job ix. 25.⁴ Jerem. xli. 49.⁵ Zach. iv. 10.⁶ Ecclus. xxix. 22.

reverence which mighty princes claim, and thou shalt quickly see what will happen then. Thy friends will turn their backs on thee; unless, indeed, as has sometimes happened in like case, they linger awhile, for the purpose of plundering before thy face the room where thou art lying. Even the good religious, who at this time come to thy aid from motives of charity, thy own parish priest or confessor, with difficulty constrain themselves to remain by thy bedside for any length of time, so great is the malignity of thy malady. Thy only source of comfort will be a little crucifix, in this the time of thy sorest tribulation. But how wilt thou venture to look upon it, after having neglected it so long. What sorrow, then, what anguish, what heartbreaking will be thine! Look now on those friends for whose sake thou hast often trampled under foot the law of God, or at least neglected its more perfect observance. Do they now come flocking to thy aid? "Let them arise and help thee."¹ "Let them arise and liberate thee."² They have vanished. "There is no one to help thee." And even suppose them ever so willing to help, what possible good could they do thee? Could they pray for thee? How very few will be found even to pray for thee earnestly! Knowest thou not that the day after thou art dead they will all of them be laughing as they did before? There is not one among them who, unless under pressure of fear, will renounce for thy sake one hour of sleep.

How much better then will it be for thee now to keep on good terms with thy Lord, Who alone can be thy helper at the hour of death! Forego once for all these multiplied friendships, these frequent visits, these midnight revels, these festive gatherings, in which whole nights are wasted. Think more of thy soul. Trample under foot all this human respect. Be no longer the slave of thy fellow-creatures, ungrateful and unfaithful, or to say the least, unable to assist thee. Press to thy heart that faithful friend, "For He hath said, I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee."³ Oh, what sweet words! Often clasp in thy hands that crucifix which will probably be thy companion on thy death-bed, and swear allegiance to it. Kiss it, embrace it, bathe it in thy scalding tears, as if thou wert already in the throes of death, and now do all which perhaps at that last hour thou shalt not have power to do. Beseech Him "not to withdraw His protection from thee." Beseech Him not to withdraw His presence. He has granted to many

¹ Deut. xxxii. 38.² Jerem. ii. 28.³ Hebrews xiii. 5.

in their last moments not only His protection, but His presence. If thy prayer be granted, thou hast little need to care about the absence of all other help. "So that we may confidently say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do to me."¹ If Jesus be on thy side, why fear what any mortal man can do to thee? If, indeed, by the word man, occurring in the foregoing passage, we are not to understand the devil, who is often in Holy Writ so styled, *Inimicus homo, malus homo, mendax homo*, not because at death thou mayest hope to find in him anything of human compassion, but because he has been the conqueror of man; as Scipio was surnamed *Africanus*, because he was the conqueror of Africa.

SECOND DAY.

The thoughts of the strong man always bring forth abundance (Prov. xxi. 5).

I. Consider first, how few there are in the service of God who can with truth be called strong. David had with him thirty valiant men, but only three who were strong. How, then, canst thou be said to be strong, when thou yieldest to every little difficulty thou meetest in spiritual life, some human respect, some insult or taunt, or a little word of ridicule. This surely is not to show strength of character. "The blast of the mighty," says Isaias, "is like to a whirlwind beating down the wall."² Happy thou if thou ever attain to this strength. Then, indeed, thou shalt find no difficulty in the service of God, for thou shalt find no obstacle able to overthrow thee. Thou shalt batter down the walls.

II. Consider secondly, what course thou must pursue in order to attain to this spiritual strength. Thou must adopt the same means by which thou attainest to bodily strength. Three things confer this: good health, good food, and exercise. Good health, because if thy health fail thy strength fails also; good food, because howsoever good thy health may be, if thou dost not nourish thy body properly, it grows languid; exercise, because the man who keeps his muscles in play, will have them in more vigorous condition than another who allows them to waste away in idleness. Thou must so behave in the case before us. In the first place, the soul must be kept free

¹ Hebrews xiii. 6.

² Isaias xxv. 4.

from sin, because the foundation of all is health. In the next place, it must be fed plentifully with its own proper food—assiduous prayer, spiritual reading, spiritual reflections, frequentation of the sacraments. In the last place, it must be kept in constant exercise. This last point is much more important than thou' dost imagine. If thou dost not daily exercise thyself in the practice of virtue, by using the opportunities of good which are offered, and even by going in search of them, be assured that notwithstanding all thy good principles and pious aspirations thou shalt quickly pine away. The victories to be gained every day over thy imperfections, in checking the words of flattery which rise to thy lips, in keeping down thy anger and impatience, and with unflinching will mortifying thy sensuality in food, these are the victories that will bring thee strength; for God does not choose to impart to us this strength of His own free gift (as He might do if it so pleased Him), but He desires that we should earn it by our own exertions.

III. Consider thirdly, by what symptoms thou mayest judge whether thou hast attained to this strength. By thy thoughts. Examine if they always tend "to bring forth abundance." If thou art content with merely doing what is of strict obligation, if thou art well satisfied to refrain from more flagrant offences, false testimony, murmuring, sinful excess; if thou sayest that for thee it is enough to enter into Paradise, thou art not strong. Nay, thy salvation is in danger. Perhaps thou thinkest that city secure against attack which trusts for safety to its strong wall, and is not solicitous to gird itself with a circle of outlying forts which are like works of supererogation. In truth, these outworks are the real defence, because they break the first assaults, usually the most furious. Thus, if thou art not careful to perform works of supererogation, on which Hell must expend its force, before it can advance to tempt thee in matter of strict obligation, thou art lost. Oh, how easily, then, will the powers of Hell carry thee by assault!

IV. Consider fourthly, that thou canst not become strong by merely doing those works of supererogation which thou art in the habit of doing. Thou must strive continually to do more and more. "The thoughts of the strong man always bring forth abundance." Art thou patient? Then try to make thy patience more invincible. Art thou humble? Try to make thy humility more profound. Art thou obedient? Try to make thy obedience more exact; and so of the rest.

In the practice of virtue, if thou dost not aim high, thou wilt always strike below the mark. "Be you perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

THIRD DAY.

What shall I do when God shall rise to judge? and when He shall examine, what shall I answer Him? (Job xxxi. 14).

I. Consider first, that the Lord, Who now sits at the right hand of the Father in the character of thy advocate, will one day rise up, no longer as an advocate, but in judgment against thee. Poor soul, and what will become of thee, if nothing else befall thee than this, to have lost such a protector? Therefore it is not said, "What shall I do when God shall come to judgment?" but, "when God shall rise." For this ought to increase thy fear. All the good which thou dost now possess comes from having Jesus for an advocate. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just."¹ It is for this that thy fellow-creatures show thee reverence, which is undeserved. It is for this that the earth, instead of yawning to engulf thee, not only bears thee up, but yields thee nourishment. It is for this that air and water are thy servants, and that the fire itself which ought by good right to be exacting atonement for thy sins, is ministering to thy wants. But on that last day Jesus will lay aside the character of mercy, and I leave thee to think how soon then thou wouldst be at the mercy of thy enemy, eager to inflict every torment upon thee. And yet it would be comparatively little only to lose a powerful advocate. The worst is that He will be changed from an advocate into a judge. This is the greatest misfortune that can befall a criminal.

II. Consider secondly, how shall it fare with thee then in the presence of this Sovereign Lord, "when He shall rise to judgment"? Whither shalt thou turn thyself? When an offender is on his trial in a court from which there is no appeal, he has only one of four courses to follow. He must either deceive or corrupt the judge, or make his escape, or come to terms. Which of these courses canst thou adopt when before the judgment-seat of Christ? Wilt thou try to

¹ 1 St. John ii. 1.

deceive Him? Knowest thou not that He is God? "When God shall rise to judgment." And if He is God, dost thou suppose that He can be deceived? "Shall God be deceived as a man with your deceitful dealings?"¹ What course then wilt thou adopt? Wilt thou try to bribe Him? But knowest thou not that "God is a just judge?"² Not like men, for He is not an acceptor of persons or a receiver of bribes. He is not an acceptor of persons, for He is Father of all men: nor a receiver of presents, for He is the Lord of all things. "Let the fear of the Lord be with you, for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor desire of gifts."³ What course wilt thou take? Wilt thou try to escape? Dost thou not know then that "God is an all-powerful judge"?⁴ His arm would full surely reach thee even if thou didst hide thyself among the stars. "Though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence I will bring thee down, saith the Lord."⁵ And once captured, dost thou think to escape from His hand? "He shall take hold of the prey, and He shall keep fast hold of it, and there shall be none to deliver it."⁶ And what course, then, wilt thou still take? Wilt thou try to appease Him? Do not hope to succeed. "God is a patient judge."⁷ Knowest thou what manner of judges they are who submit to be appeased? They are those who act under the impulse of passion, not those who attend only to the dictates of reason. They are never transported with rage, it is true: they are calm and dignified; but for that very reason all the more they are inexorable. Now, know for certain, that such shall thy judge be. "He is a patient judge." He is not quick-tempered, or given to anger. "Is He angry every day?"⁸ If He shall in the end determine to punish thee, this will not be from impulse, but for all-sufficient reasons, and therefore thou mayest judge how terrible He will be. Remember also that thy judge is one Who has shown unwearied patience in supporting thee, and therefore when at last His patience gives place to anger there is no longer hope for pardon. So that wherever thou turnest thyself, come back yet awhile to consider what course thou wilt take. Dost thou not see clearly that there will be no longer any way of escape open to thee? "God is a just judge, strong and patient." Thou seest then that thou canst neither deceive nor bribe Him, nor make thy escape, nor succeed in appeasing that anger which

¹ Job xiii. 9.² Psalm vii. 12.³ 2 Paral. xix. 7.⁴ Psalm vii. 12.⁵ Abdias i. 4.⁶ Isaias v. 29.⁷ Psalm vii. 12.⁸ Psalm vii. 12.

has been stiled the anger of the Lamb, to signify that it will prove unchangeable. "Hide us from the wrath of the Lamb."¹

III. Consider thirdly, that in order to convince thee that this judge proceeds strictly according to the dictates of reason, He will not condemn thee without first giving thee an opportunity of making thy defence. "When therefore He examines thee, what answer shalt thou make?" He knows perfectly all that thou hast done, because He is God; He has seen everything, heard everything, been present on every occasion, and nevertheless He desires to examine into thy affairs as if He knew nothing. He desires to question thee, to find out all about thee, nay, even to dispute with thee. "I will gather together all nations and will bring them down into the Valley of Josaphat, and I will plead with them."² "When He shall examine, what shalt thou answer Him?" Thou must either prove thy innocence, or find some excuse for thy conduct; these are the only two lines of defence which are open to thee. But as to proving thy innocence, that is impossible, for in thy case the crimes are clear and unquestioned. It remains for thee to find some excuse for thy conduct. But how? Thy excuses must fall under one of two heads: ignorance, which led thee into sin, or frailty. But canst thou plead ignorance, who wert born in the very heart of Christendom, brought up in the doctrine of Holy Writ and the lessons of saintly men, living in the midst of illustrious examples of virtue, like so many shining lights around thy path? True it is, that of thy free-will thou hast closed thy eyes in order to shut out the light, but this will only the more surely bring about thy condemnation. "And this is the judgment, because the light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than the light,"³ says the Lord. Thus, then, thou must fall back upon the plea of frailty. But how will this avail if thy frailty was thy own fault? Likely enough thou wert frail; but why? Because thou didst choose to be frail. Thou didst not care to employ the means which the Lord placed at thy disposal for acquiring ever new vigour; in time of temptation thou didst not call upon Him for help; thou didst not make frequent Confessions and Communions; thou didst not, though it was in thy power, keep away from occasions of sin; and thinkest thou he shall be excused who asked for no aid and refused all support, while he followed most perilous paths? Alas, who shall dare breathe a word in his own defence for fear of

¹ Apoc. vi. 16.

² Joel iii. 2.

³ St. John iii. 19.

making his cause more hopeless? "All iniquity shall stop her mouth."¹

IV. Consider fourthly, that although it is graciously granted to thee to plead in thy defence, there is really nothing which thou canst allege in thy favour. It follows by order of good consequence that nothing remains but to receive the sentence of eternal doom. Do not think it irksome to come back to the thought, what course wilt thou take. If thou know not "what thou shalt do when God shall rise in judgment," wilt thou perchance discover it when He shall sit down to pass sentence? Thou mayest indeed turn to the mountains and bid them fall upon thee, to the granite rocks to crush thee and grind thee to dust, to the depths of the earth to open and engulf thee; but to what purpose? It is no longer the time for praying, but for paying the price. "The Lord hath put on the garments of vengeance."² What then shall become of thee, when thou shalt hear thy sentence of condemnation to eternal flames pronounced by the lips of Him Who was once thy gracious advocate? If thy sentence had been pronounced by some one unknown to thee or from another land, or by some enemy of thine, thou mightest accuse him of being cruel. But it is thy advocate; one Who has shed His Blood for thee on the Cross, and Who at the right hand of the Father has never ceased to pray and intercede for thee and to seek by every means to bestow Heaven upon thee. From His sentence there can be no appeal if He condemn thee to the flames of Hell.

FOURTH DAY.

Thy humiliation in the midst of thee (Micheas vi. 14).

I. Consider first, that in order to find abundant matter for humiliation thou needest not travel one step beyond thyself. Seek it within thee: "Thy humiliation in the midst of thee." If thou lookest at thyself from without, thou will be more easily puffed up with pride; for perhaps thou will see thyself clothed in sumptuous garments and shining in purple and gold; perhaps also placed in authority, courted, applauded, and much esteemed. Not so will it be if thou search into thyself. It is enough to consider three things: what thou hast

¹ Psalm cvi. 42.

² Isaias lix. 17.

been, what thou art, and what thou shalt be. Any one of these reflections is by itself enough to make thee humble, fix thy attention on whichsoever thou wilt. Observe that there is no limitation as to time: "Thy humiliation in the midst of thee." It is not said, *was, is, or shall be*, but the assertion is absolute and without qualification; for to whichsoever of these periods thou dost turn thy attention thou wilt find ample cause for self-abasement.

II. Consider secondly, therefore, with attention, the wickedness of thy past life, the ingratitude of thy present life, and the uncertainty of thy future life. How miserable was thy condition when, having fallen into the power of the devil, thou wert made in thy degradation his servant and his slave, abandoned by God, disgraced, disfigured, a loathsome object, sentenced to the flames which were prepared for thee in the lowest abyss of Hell. I will suppose, however, that for the present thou hast been released from such a fate by the mercy of God; yet think how ungrateful thou art to Him Who has preserved thee! How dost thou correspond with the grace of the Lord? How dost thou think of Him and speak of Him? Dost thou ardently desire to please Him? Art thou not most lukewarm in all things relating to His service? Art thou not the slave of thy unruly appetites, vainglorious, unmortified, impatient, and strongly inclined to sins still more degrading? Canst thou tell me, what will become of thee in the future with a will so fickle, so weak as thine? The pillars of the firmament have been shaken, nay, have fallen! What then shall become of thee, a reed bending before every wind? Will not some storm of passion, gaining power within thee, suffice to cast thee headlong down? And once down, how knowest thou that thou wilt be able to rise again, to do better, and to reinstate thyself in the grace of God? Dost thou know what will be the manner of thy death?

III. Consider thirdly, that if thou hast any good at all, it has not its source within thyself, it has all come to thee from above. The clay of which thou art made can yield thee only thorns and briars. Thou seest then that thou hast within thee absolutely nothing but matter for humiliation: "In thy midst" what dost thou find? "Thy humiliation." And hast thou so much difficulty in humbling thyself?

IV. Consider fourthly, that thy humiliation ought to be "in thy midst," that is to say, in the depths of thy heart. For it is not enough that thou humble thyself in thy mind, acknow-

ledging in theory thy utter misery at every time, past, present, or future, and that whatever good thou hast is all the gift of God; but it is also necessary that thou acknowledge this in practice, declaring it in all sincerity, and being so assured and convinced of it as not to give place in thy heart to any manifestations of respect which come to thee from without, but to offer them up instantly to God in thought and word, as did the Virgin when she heard her glory announced by Elizabeth.

V. Consider fifthly, those words, "Thy humiliation." The words are not the humiliation of *another*, but *thine own*; because it is fitting that thou shouldst harbour in thy heart a lowly opinion of thyself, not of others. But how easily the very opposite happens, since thou art ever thinking of thy neighbour's faults, not of thine own.

FIFTH DAY.

Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? (Isaias xxxiii. 14).

I. Consider first, that the fire is called devouring, not because it ever consumes any one, but to signify the eagerness with which it seizes on its prey, the fierce energy and relentless severity with which it does its work, causing in every part excruciating pain. Again, if it could consume its victim, the question, Which of you can dwell? would not be asked. Endeavour, therefore, to gain a full conception of the fury with which this fire ever burns. Our fires on earth feed upon, but cannot be said to devour what they seize, because they ordinarily take effect only by gradual advance. The fire of Hell is at its worst at once, and the same eagerness and vehemence and fierceness which it will employ at first it will maintain through all eternity with unabated fury: "For the breath of the Lord like a torrent of brimstone enkindleth it." Woe to that unhappy nation which shall come to make trial of this dreadful fire. "By the wrath of the Lord of hosts," saith Isaias, "the people shall be as fuel for the fire."¹ The Prophet says not *food*, absolutely, for "the people" shall never be consumed by the fire, but says *as it were food*, because they are incapable of offering the least resistance to the flames, and are mere brands for the burning.

¹ Isaias ix. 19.

II. Consider secondly, how horrible it must be to "dwell," that is, to make perpetual abode, in the midst of such a fire. If thou wert sentenced to imprisonment for life in a dungeon with pavement, walls, and roof of fire, and with no air to breathe except the hot blast from the furnace, what would be thy thoughts? And yet our fires on earth compared with the fires below are painted flames. How shalt thou, then, endure this fire so many times more terrible, not only encompassing thee as a wall, but burning to the marrow of thy bones, so that thou shalt dwell in fire and fire in thee; as the iron in a furnace cannot be distinguished from the fire that surrounds and penetrates it. Either thou dost not believe my words, or thou hast lost thy senses, if for any worldly consideration, or unholy pleasure, for any profit, or for any glory, thou dost consent to run the risk of being shut up in such a dwelling-house for all ages to come.

III. Consider thirdly, that although the damned must all remain in the fire in the manner described, nevertheless the words are not, "Which of you can dwell in devouring fire," but, "With devouring fire," in order to rouse thee to contemplate the horrors of Hell. How great would thy terror be if thou wert caged in a wild beast's den with some lion or tiger ready to devour thee? Think, then, what it must be to be imprisoned in a dungeon with devouring fire. And think, moreover, that in Hell there are these wild beasts and very many of them, and they shall prey upon thee in a manner indescribably horrible, for they shall be all of fire, and far more ferocious than any creatures on earth. Every one of the damned shall be a mass of fire like thyself. Think of the horror of dwelling in such company. Now we understand how it is said with truth that they devour one another: "Every one shall eat the flesh of his own arm, Manasses Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasses."¹ For every one of the damned is himself a "devouring fire;" like burning logs of wood piled in an oven which devour one another, though they are devoid of that rage for mutual destruction which animates the damned. Say now, if thou canst, that if God send thee to Hell, He will send thee with many companions? So it seems to thee, then, that it will be a comfort to have many companions.

IV. Consider fourthly, that we are not told of a *burning* fire, or a *scorching* fire, but of a *devouring* fire, because the Prophet did not wish by using the former words to convey to

¹ Isaiah ix. 20.

thee the idea that the flames give light. Know, then, that this fire has no other property of fire except the power of inflicting pain : it has no power of giving pleasure by emitting light. The smoke sent forth from so vast a furnace would by itself suffice to make eternal night, a night upon which no ray of light can fall, for "there will be the voice of the Lord parting in two the flames of the fire." The express command of the Lord shall decree that there fire shall have only half its nature, and shall be capable of burning, so as to cause pain, but not capable of giving light, so as to cause pleasure. Think, then, what it shall be to burn for ever in this dreadful darkness. Oh, if only this smoke might one day suffocate thee ! But this can never be. Blind thee, torture thee it will, but deprive thee of life, never ! "The smoke of their torments shall ascend for ever and ever."¹ If the smoke of their torments shall endure for ever, the torments also which produce it must endure for ever.

V. Consider fifthly, that all which has been here described may easily fall to thy lot one day. It is not for thee to contemplate these things as in nowise appertaining to thee, but intended only for heathens or for heretics. "Which of you shall be able to dwell in devouring fire?" I say *of you*, who are to-day the true people of Israel? which of you Christians, of you Catholics? Thinkest thou that such persons as these are not damned? Nay, many and many a one! Turn thy thoughts, then, to thy own case. Does it really seem to thee that thou wilt have strength to abide in this terrible fire? "Wilt thou be able to dwell?" Remember thou art so sensitive, that if the linen on thy bed be not quite smooth, thou dost feel the annoyance. What, poor creature, wilt thou do with fire, and fire that devours?

SIXTH DAY.

I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service (Romans xii. 1).

I. Consider first, how sad a thing it is to see those who might have made their bodies a most beautiful sacrifice to God, and yet have not known their good fortune. Rich, young,

¹ Apoc. xiv. 11.

refined, accomplished, noble born—what choice victims they would have been had they offered themselves to God! And yet these unhappy creatures are perishing in the pleasures of this false world! Do not wonder, then, if the Apostle breaks out into compassion for them, and exclaims: “I beseech you, therefore, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice.” He saw plainly that many fail to do this for want of knowledge, and therefore he will not reproach them, he entreats them. And now, supposing it possible for any one in the world rightly to wish that he had been born the son of a king, gifted with every imaginable grace, beauty, and charm, for what reason should he wish it? In order that, like Adonias or Absalom, he might the more easily please himself? Surely not; but in order to imitate Isaac. It is true that there are but few who understand this language, and those who understand it have not generally the opportunity of making more than an ordinary sacrifice to God: those who have the opportunity of making a really noble one, do not understand it, and therefore would rather live for themselves than sacrifice themselves to their God. What dost thou wish to do? Dost thou not wish, whoever thou art, to love thy body only that thou mayest make of it a victim to Him Who gave it to thee? “I beseech you, by the mercy of God, that you present your body a sacrifice.” Therefore imagine to thyself that the Apostle says to thee in particular what he has said to all in general.

II. Consider secondly, that three things constitute a sacrifice: the victim, the oblation of the victim, and the slaughter of the victim. And all three are here expressed by the Apostle: *body* is the victim, *present* is the oblation of the victim, *sacrifice* is the slaughter of the victim. It is true that a metaphorical and not a real sacrifice is treated of here, and therefore it is said, “Present a living sacrifice.” Oh! blessed art thou, if ever thou art able to sacrifice thy body to God as the martyrs sacrificed theirs! but if this is not granted thee, thou must supply the sacrifice of death by the sacrifice of mortification. This is a continual martyrdom, and as this is what thine must be, bring before thy mind that though thy body is living, it must also be a victim. Thou thinkest only of preserving it, nourishing it; and yet the only reason thou shouldst have for preserving it is that thy sacrifice of it may be more prolonged. If it is not given to thee to die for God once for all, as it was to St. Stephen, to St. Peter, to St. Paul, to St. Laurence, thou

must rejoice to live in order that thou mayest die afresh each day. "To-morrow we shall die."¹

But what are the ways in which thou canst thus make of thy body a victim to God? They are three. (1) There are the sufferings thou canst go through to give to our Lord the worship due to Him, overcoming, for example, the difficulty that thou findest in rising from bed for prayer, in remaining devoutly kneeling when thou recitest the Office in private, or indeed when thou recitest it in public, in bowing the head, inclining the body, and in the reverent practices of the like forms of piety. This is the sacrifice of religion. "The sacrifice of praise shall glorify Me."² (2) There are the penances that thou dost undertake to punish thyself as deserving the anger of God, such as suffering hunger, and cold, frequently scourging thy rebellious flesh, and the like. This is the sacrifice of justice. "Offer up the sacrifice of justice, and trust in the Lord."³ (3) There are all the labours that thou endurest for the service of thy neighbour; wearing thyself out in study, preaching, travelling, or exercising any other work of mercy, not only spiritual, but corporal. This is the sacrifice of charity. "He that doth mercy offereth sacrifice."⁴ In which of these three ways art thou most disposed to sacrifice thyself? Dost thou disdain them all? If so, thou wilt not be a sacrifice to thy God.

III. Consider thirdly, that some persons sacrifice their body only *too* much; but to what god do they sacrifice it? To whatever they really make their god by affection. The gluttonous have their belly for their god, for they are those unhappy creatures "whose god is their belly."¹ The avaricious make money their god, the ambitious dignities, the licentious their evil practices; and therefore they make their body a victim to these gods, subjecting it for their sake to much greater sufferings, penances, and labours, than any they would ever have to suffer for Christ. Wouldst thou destroy thine in this way? Do not think of it. I would have thy body a victim, but a different one from that of certain martyrs of the devil. I would have it a holy victim. "I beseech you, therefore, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy." "Holy" means that which is consecrated to God, but to a true and not a false god, and therefore although the ancient victims of the Gentiles were also offered and slain, like the victims of

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 32.

² Psalm xlix. 23.

³ Psalm iv. 6.

⁴ Eccles. xxxv. 4.

¹ Philipp. iii. 19.

the Jews, yet they were not holy, but unclean, profane, and corrupt, because they were not sacrificed to the God to Whom they were due. Now give a little particular consideration to thy life, and examine whether it is ever to thy advantage to make a sacrifice that is not all in honour of the true God, all to please Him, all to give Him glory, and to acknowledge Him by the action thou performest, to be the God that He really is. If ever thou actest otherwise, thy body will be a victim, if thou like, but it will not be a holy victim. What am I saying? Not holy? It will be most wicked, because it is never right to spend thyself for any other but God. Art thou not all His? How then canst thou wish to be consumed for the benefit of others? Love thyself, appreciate thyself, do not throw thyself away as a victim to any one who wants thee. What are courts, what are tribunals? What is commerce? What are the pleasures of a deceitful world? If thou must be a victim, be a victim to the true God. "He that sacrificeth an ox" in any way but the right one "is as if he slew a man."¹ Now, if this is so, how will it be with him who "sacrifices a man." Every time thou spendest thyself for anything but the service of God thou murderest thy own body, thou dost not sacrifice it.

IV. Consider fourthly, that the Jews, after the coming of Christ, offered and slaughtered victims to the true God, and thus the victims were certainly holy; but of what use were they? They were still not pleasing, for the Lord had already rejected their sacrifices. "To what purpose do you offer Me the multitude of their victims? saith the Lord. I am full."² It is not then enough to sacrifice thy body as a victim to the true God by the sufferings, the penances, the labours, which have been spoken of: thou must also take care, when thou sacrificest it, to be in a state of grace, otherwise the victim, though holy, will still not be pleasing. Thy sufferings will be good, thy labours will be good, but yet they will not bring forth their proper fruit in thee. And this is why the Apostle says: "I beseech, you, therefore, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God." He would have thy victims different both from those of the guilty Gentiles, and from those of the reprobate Jews: from those of the Gentiles, and therefore he says "holy;" from those of the Jews, and therefore he says "pleasing."

Do not deceive thyself, then, because thou seest that the

¹ Isaias lxvi. 3.

² Isaias i. 11.

works thou dost are good in themselves. That is not sufficient : thou too must be good thyself when doing them. What is the use of beginning Lent, as is right, by fasting; hearing Vespers and Offices, reciting many rosaries, and then waiting till Easter to confess? This is an egregious folly. "Nor are your sacrifices pleasing to Me,"¹ says the Lord. It is true that such victims are not displeasing, because they are not like those of the sensual, the ambitious, the covetous, the gluttonous, who sacrifice their bodies to a false god ; but, all the same, "they are not pleasing." Thou shouldst confess first, and then these works will not only be holy, but acceptable : then they will bear the fruits of grace and of glory ; then they will bring thee that great benefit for which they were instituted. Canst thou complain that thy field produces little, if thou first sow and then clear it? "Break up anew your fallow ground, and sow not upon thorns."²

But thou oughtest not to be contented when thy actions are simply pleasing to God ; thou shouldst try to make them as pleasing as possible. And so, whenever thou sacrificest thy body, do it with the most perfect acts of Divine love that thou canst ; for it is to this, too, that the Apostle meant to allude, when he said that "you present a pleasing sacrifice." He meant that thou shouldst sacrifice it, as they said of old, in the odour of sweetness.

V. Consider fifthly, that for the reason which I have just told thee, the Apostle adds that thy service must be reasonable — "your reasonable service ;" because the service which thy body renders to God when it is presented to Him as a victim, must not be like that which was rendered of old by oxen, rams, lambs, and ewes, that is a service of brutes, it must be most reasonable all through : before doing it, in doing it, and after it is done. Reasonable before doing it, that thou mayest understand the honour God does thee in choosing thee for His victim, and therefore do not go to the sacrifice as it were by force, like all those animals which did not understand their good fortune ; but joyfully and courageously. This is what reason dictates. Wouldst thou go to sacrifice thyself to the true God as if thou wert going to the slaughter-house? "I will freely sacrifice to Thee."³ Reasonable in doing it, because these works of suffering, or of penance, or of any labour whatsoever, must not be performed as they are apt to be by those who look to nothing but what is material in the

¹ Jerem. vi. 20.² Jerem. iv. 3.³ Psalm liii. 8.

actions. They must be accompanied with suitable acts of religion, with acts of compunction, with acts of charity, for this is giving the actions their proper value. "The oblation of the just maketh the altar fat."¹ That which makes the altar fat is not the victim, it is the oblation, that is, the act of devotion with which you offer it.

And lastly, reasonable after it is done; for it is necessary to observe, by the aid of different personal experiences, whether the sacrifice thou makest of thyself is proportioned to thy strength, so that thou canst bear it. Thou knowest that the victim in this sacrifice has to remain living, so as to be able to sacrifice itself again and again. Thou must therefore neither spare thy body nor destroy it. "The King's honour loveth judgment." And therefore thou must also distinguish well between the exterior honour that thou payest to God, and the interior. The interior does not admit of any law. Believe as much as thou canst, hope as much as thou canst, love as much as thou canst. But the exterior not only admits of it, but demands it, as each victim always required its salt: "Your reasonable service." Therefore the rule is this: Do as much exterior good as helps thee to the interior, but do not go beyond thy strength, because the interior is the end, the exterior the means. And who does not know that it is the end alone which is to be desired without measure, as the sick desire health? The means are to be desired as far as this, that they may conduce to the end, as the sick desire medicine.

SEVENTH DAY.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS.

Say to wisdom, Thou art my sister, and call prudence thy friend; that she may keep thee from the woman that is not thine, and from the stranger who sweeteneth her words (Prov. vii. 4, 5).

I. Consider first, the difference that there is between the Divine wisdom, which is here spoken of, and prudence, both of which, however, are very closely united, as being gifts of the same Holy Spirit. Wisdom is that which makes us know in general our last end, which is no other than our God, and which makes us aspire to this alone. Prudence is that which

¹ Ecclus. xxxv. 8.

presupposes this end as the origin of its operations, and applies itself wholly to three things: (1) To decide rightly which are the means to be taken to arrive at it; (2) to judge between them in particular; (3) to command them according to the judgment which has been made, in other words, to cause them to be practised. Now, wisdom must be thy sister, that is, thy spouse, for so she is called a thousand times in the Scriptures, and especially in the Canticles. "Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister."¹ "Open to me, my sister."² "What shall we do to our sister?"³ and prudence must be thy friend. Wisdom thy spouse, because in her, by embracing the sublime contemplation of thy last end, thou must place thy delight; in her thou must repose and refresh thyself, and with her pour out all thy tenderest affections. "Say to wisdom, Thou art my sister." Prudence must be as a friend to thee—"and call prudence thy friend"—because thou must have it ready to thy hand in all those operations which occur in the day as a most particular, practical, and, as we may say, common virtue. Oh, how truly was wisdom a spouse and prudence a friend to the glorious St. Thomas Aquinas!

II. Consider secondly, on the contrary, that by the woman that is not thine (to speak according to the moral order) ought here to be understood, that which is contrary to wisdom, and by the stranger, that which is not in accordance with prudence. That which is contrary to wisdom, if thou considerest aright, is thy sensuality, which being dull in savouring heavenly things, and consequently foolish, places its end in every kind of good except that which is pure spirit, and desires those only which are subject to sense. To prudence is opposed thy human nature, which, though it does not, it is true, wish to deviate from its last end, yet does not apply itself, as it ought, to attaining it efficaciously. Sensuality may be called a "woman who is not thine," because it is utterly opposed to wisdom. Human nature may be called the woman who is a "stranger," because, though not contrary to prudence, it does not act in accordance with it in all things, and shows itself averse, at least, from working in an efficacious manner. And, oh! with what allurements do both these parts of thyself try to entice thee to their own desires! "She sweeteneth her words."

III. Consider thirdly, the allurements of thy sensuality. It studies to entice thee to itself by wishing thou shouldst not so much be regulated by reason as by the senses, and therefore

¹ Cant. iv. 9.² Cant. iv. 2.³ Cant. viii. 8.

not be so enamoured of abstract, imperceptible, unknown goods, such as heavenly ones, seeing that for their sake earthly ones must be forsaken, and that thou must give up enjoying the present for the future. And thus it is the tendency of this rash temptress to rob thee even of faith, because there is nothing that so much begets infidelity as this sensual way of acting.

IV. Consider fourthly, the allurements of thy human nature, that is, of that part of thy nature which is not depraved but weak, to which the Apostle alluded when he said, "I speak a human thing, because of the infirmity of your flesh."¹ This one also "sweeteneth her words," because she tells thee that it is right to serve God, Who is thy last end, but that thou must not kill thyself; that it is enough to be satisfied with a moderate goodness, without wishing to aspire to sanctity; that it is more to the glory of God to act with moderation, and thus, with time, to be able to do good to many, than to act with great fervour, but to kill thyself before the time.

V. Consider fifthly, how thy spouse and thy friend have to preserve thee from the allurements of these two. Wisdom, who is thy spouse, has to preserve thee from the allurements of sensuality by holding thee closely in her arms; in other words, by making thee always stand firm in the knowledge of thy last end. As long as this is so, there will be no danger of thy turning thy back on her to worship the things that are subject to sense. Prudence, who is thy friend, has to preserve thee from the allurements of thy human nature, by making thee use discretion in considering how far it is advisable to listen to it, because neither ought everything to be yielded to it, nor everything cruelly denied it. There must be prudence. No other rule can be laid down.

VI. Consider sixthly, how well the holy and angelic St. Thomas knew how to defend himself effectually from those alluring assaults which spring either from our wickedness or our weakness, with that wisdom and that prudence which in him were equally superhuman, since he lived on earth an angel's life. But never did he do this in a more divine manner than when he defended himself from the assaults of that wretched woman who came to tempt him. Then, indeed, he saw at hand the help that he received from wisdom and prudence. Wisdom made him drive her away from him at once without the slightest hesitation. Prudence made him do

¹ Romans vi. 19.

this in so determined a manner as to hurl a firebrand at her. And thou, too, must learn that wisdom and prudence are necessary to teach thee how to conduct thyself under similar assaults. Wisdom to keep the knowledge of thy last end so very vividly before thy mind, that thou mayest cling to it with constancy; prudence, to fly dangerous occasions, or to rid thyself of them when thou meetest them against thy will.

EIGHTH DAY.

Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance?
(Romans ii. 4.)

I. Consider first, what a pernicious ignorance this is, not to know why God bears with thee so patiently in thy sin. As long as thou dost not know that, there will be no chance of thy amendment. For it is one thing not to correspond to a favour, another not to value it, another not to know it. He who does not correspond is of the number of the ungrateful; he who does not value it, of the wicked; but he who does not know it, of the incorrigible.

II. Consider secondly, that if God bears with thee in this manner, it is not because He is not able to cast thee at once into Hell; it is because He is not willing to do so, hoping that in the meantime thou mayest repent. And who does not see how the benignity of God not only invites thee to penance, but so far as it may, leads thee—*adducit*, or, as others read it, *impellit*—urges, drives, forces thee? How canst thou resist, when thou seest that a Lord of so great majesty bears with all the insults that thou offerest Him, for this only that thou, vile worm as thou art, mayest not perish? Ought not so marvellous a benignity to be sufficient to move a heart of stone? So, in truth, it is. “Therefore the Lord waiteth that He may have mercy on you.”¹

III. Consider thirdly, what a dreadful evil it is that thou committest, if for this very reason, because the Lord shows Himself so benignant in bearing with thee, thou takest courage to sin more freely. Is not this to choose to be wicked purposely, because God is good? If thou wilt offend God because He does good to thee, then thou must offend Him

¹ Isaias xxx. 18.

because He has done so much good, because for thee He has taken human flesh, spent His life in labour, shed torrents of blood, and at last died for thee on the Cross. Think for a moment how barbarous such conduct is, and yet, if thou considerest it carefully, it is what thou art doing so long as the goodness of God not only "does not lead you to penance," but, on the contrary, leads to impenitence.

IV. Consider fourthly, that the goodness of the Lord in this case which we are considering, is benignity, the "benignity of God." That is, a goodness which is altogether gracious, altogether gratuitous, and which can therefore abandon thee when it pleases, and give thee over into the hands of Divine justice. How then is it possible that thou dost not tremble at thinking of what would become of thee if it should abandon thee? Has it not its limits, beyond which it cannot go? The Divine power is infinite, but for all that does not produce infinite things. Divine providence is infinite, but for all that does not provide infinite things. Thus, although Divine goodness is also infinite, for all that it does not endure an infinite number of times. It has a certain number prescribed to it by an inscrutable decree. And who knows that for thee it is not already filled up? Mercy is one thing in its attributes, and another in its acts. These have an end but too soon. "For His mercies are many,"¹ it is said, but it is never said they are infinite.

NINTH DAY.

ST. FRANCES OF ROME.

Take all that shall be brought upon thee; and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience. For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation (Eccles. ii. 4, 5).

I. Consider first, that there are three kinds of sick people. Some wish to be cured, but will not submit to remedies of any sort. This draught is too bitter for them, that fire is too scorching, that knife too cruel, and thus they take some exception to everything. Others will submit to remedies, but only to those which suit their fancy; as Naaman wished to be healed of his leprosy by the Prophet, but in his own way.

¹ Paral. xxi. 13.

He wished the Prophet to place his hands on his head, he did not wish to wash in what he considered so mean and wretched a stream as the Jordan. Others, lastly, offer themselves readily to any kind of treatment, and say to the Lord: Burn, cut, dispose of me as pleases Thee, I am in Thy hands. Now this is the only way to be cured. Thou art sick, and sick too unto death. Wouldst thou recover thy health? "Take all that shall be brought upon thee." Let the Lord apply to thee the remedy that pleases Him, because He alone knows which of them all will do thee most good.

II. Consider secondly, that the physician does not always apply the remedies to the sick person with his own hand. Indeed, he seldom does so; he makes use generally of a hand much less honoured than his own, as that of a surgeon, or of some common apothecary, or of a poor servant. God does the same. He does not let the adversity, which is to be thy remedy, come to thee immediately from Himself, but from some one of very mean condition, from a poor citizen, from a peasant, from one at any rate who is much thy inferior. Still, "take all that shall be brought upon thee." No one is named who is to apply the remedy, because that is of no consequence. Thou must not consider who applies the remedy, thou must consider who orders it, that is, God; all the more because it is He Who always guides the hand of him who applies it, in order that he may neglect no part of his duty. Not so the human physician.

III. Consider thirdly, that when the remedy is in its nature painful, thou art not asked not to feel it, but to bear it: "And in thy sorrow endure." If nature does its part in being disturbed, it is enough that thou triest to repress the feeling so as not to break forth in presumptuous murmurs against the doctor, or like a delirious patient to be angry with him who applies the remedy in time. Dost thou not feel in thy body the pain of the fire which is so hot, of the knife which is so cruel, and yet thou endurest it, and even payest the surgeon who uses it against thee, though he does not use it out of the affection that he has for thy health, but for his own gain. This is the way thou must act in the other case: "In thy sorrow endure." At least be brave, if thou canst not do more than to pay him who ill-treats thee by returning good for evil.

IV. Consider fourthly, that what commonly causes most trouble in human afflictions is not so much the pain as the

humiliation, and not so much the injury as the insult. If the disaster came to thee immediately from God thou wouldst certainly dispose thyself to bear it with greater courage, but because it comes to thee only mediately thou totally forgettest God, and art wholly occupied with considering the person in the world who makes thee suffer it; and this is what angers thee, disturbs thee, and makes thee break forth sometimes into shameful fury. "In thy humiliation keep patience." Thus God humbles thee, chastising thee, indeed, but by the hand of another. And thou, what must thou do? Bear with patience the humiliation. It is said of the pain that thou must bear it, "endure;" of the humiliation that thou must bear it with patience, "keep patience." All patience is endurance, but all endurance is not patience, because patience properly means a prolonged endurance; and this is what is asked of thee here, which is, therefore, translated in the Syriac: "Be long-suffering," instead of "keep patience;" all the more because pain does not generally last very long when it is excessive, and so an act of endurance suffices for it; humiliation can be both excessive and last very long, and therefore it requires a habit of endurance: "In thy sorrow endure; in humiliation keep patience."

V. Consider fifthly, what is the end for which God ill-treats thee in this manner: it is to try thee. When a prince wants to make up his mind whether a coinage shall be admitted into his dominions, what does he do? Is he satisfied with its fine appearance? Not so; he has it thrown into the fire, because this is the way to see at once if its solidity corresponds to its beauty. This is what God does. He is not satisfied with appearance, but sends adversity to try thee. "For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation." One who looks at thy exterior, who hears thee talk, who sees thy conduct, will take thee for solid metal, he will think that thou art a humble, obedient, devout Christian, one who is faithful to God; but how mistaken he is! Thou art not such a one; thou makest a good appearance, because as yet thou hast not been in the furnace; but come a little to the proof, and it will be seen that thy virtue is superficial, for then thou immediately murmurest against God, thou art disquieted, thou rebellest, thou lovest all submission to the will of God (in which true solidity consists), and, in a word, thou goest so far in transgression as almost to

want to escape from the fire by force. Do not wonder, then, if the Lord afflicts thee, because as the prince proves the coin to see if it is to be admitted into his dominions, so God also proves thee to see if thou art to be admitted into His kingdom. Dost thou suppose that false metal ever passes in Heaven? In Heaven there is no simulated virtue, as on earth; all is real.

VI. Consider sixthly, that adversity is also called "a furnace of humiliation," because there is nothing which weakens pride more. Until God tries thee, as has already been said, oh, how often it happens that thou art self-complacent. Thou trustest in those desires which come to thee in prayer, in those protestations, those resolutions, those pious affections, but by-and-bye when it comes to the proof, oh, how well thou knowest thyself that thou lovest weight, and by these means art brought to a seasonable confusion. Thank God then if He often keeps thee in this state, because the way of humiliation is the surest way to Heaven. Only pray God to give thee strength to endure manfully, and to be with thee in the furnace, "in the furnace of humiliation," as he was with the three holy children of Babylon, in "the furnace of burning fire;" not indeed that, like them, thou mayest not feel the heat of the fire, but only that thou mayest never cease praising Him even in the midst of it, although thou mayest feel the heat. Thus acted the great Saint of to-day, who may be justly called the valiant woman from the solidity she showed under the many trials both of pain and humiliation sent to her by God.

TENTH DAY.

THE FORTY MARTYRS.

Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown (Apoc. iii. 11).

I. Consider first, that what discourages many from persevering in the good that they have begun is their imagining that they have a long time to live. What then must thou do to encourage thyself? Just the contrary. Imagine that each day is to be the last of thy life. *Omne crede diem tibi diluxisse supremam.* And may not any day be thy last? Hear

what the Lord says to thee, "Behold, I come quickly." He does not say, "I will come," but, "I come," because He is already coming, and that speedily; "quickly," oh, how likely it is that He is even now knocking at thy door to say to thee: "Let us go." He "is nigh even at the door."¹

II. Consider secondly, that this same warning which is now given thee is in itself a very loud knock. The Lord might come to thee as a thief, letting thee live, as so many do, altogether forgetful of Him. But He does not do this. See how He warns thee: "Behold, I come quickly." Nay, how many other warnings does He continue to give thee; for as such thou mayest surely take that habitual infirmity under which thou art already beginning to sink, this failing of sight or of hearing, that hair that is already beginning to turn grey. The Apostle when he had to designate the famous trumpet that will sound to call thee before the tribunal of the Lord, calls it the last: "At the last trumpet."² There must then have been many others that preceded it. Who can doubt it? When thou hearest it said that such a one has fallen downstairs, the trumpet is sounding; that such a one has died by the sword, the trumpet is sounding; and another went to bed at night quite well, was seized with a violent cold of which he died suffocated, the trumpet is sounding. Dost not thou know how many times thou hast already heard it? But thou dost not believe that it ever sounds for thyself. And so if the Lord comes unexpectedly to thee it is thy own fault; He has sent the messages beforehand: "Behold, I come quickly."

III. Consider thirdly, that since the Lord is already on His way, thou must encourage thyself resolutely to persevere. "Hold fast that which thou hast;" for this is a point of the utmost importance. How would it be if, by a mere impatience of a few days, thou wert to lose that beautiful crown which is prepared for thee if only thou persevere? Oh, what grief would be thine! what torment! what despair! "Hold fast," then, "hold fast that which thou hast." But what is it thou art commanded to hold? Certainly not the crown itself, because as yet thou hast it not. It will only be given to thee after the battle is over. Thou hast to hold fast to thy post. "Be firm in the way of the Lord."³ Thou hast always to keep alive the desire which thou hast conceived of serving the Lord with fidelity, thou hast to keep up those devout exercises that thou findest most profitable to that end, that diligent prayer,

¹ St. Matt. xxiv. 33.² 1 Cor. xv. 52.³ Eccius. v. 12.

those exact confessions, those frequent Communions, that reading of spiritual books, that humility, that obedience, that zeal, that meekness of spirit, that mortification of the senses, that promptitude in driving from thy heart every temptation in its beginning. In a word, thou hast to hold fast vigorously to the good that thou doest, because it rests with thee to do so. If it were not in thy hands it would not be commanded to thee so expressly. "Hold fast that which thou hast," because though it is true that the grace of thy Lord is needed for this, that grace will be given to thee every time that thou askest for it, and the asking for it likewise rests always with thyself. "Knock and it shall be opened to you."

IV. Consider fourthly, how important it is to help thyself to persevere in the manner just spoken of; because this is only commanded thee for thy good: "That no man take thy crown." Do not think that the Lord commands it to thee for any interest of His own. If He loses thee will He want for other servants—as many as He desires? "He shall break in pieces many"—much better than thou—"and innumerable"—of those who are like thee—"and shall make others to stand in their stead."¹ See how, instead of the poor wretch who apostatized this day by coming out of the frozen water, the Lord at once had another ready amongst the infidels themselves, who throwing off his clothes went naked into the same water, to make up the number of the forty who were to be crowned. That thou mayest then live always in fear, thou must keep vividly in mind this conviction: that though thou mayest think thyself a great instrument for the glory of God, a great theologian, a great preacher, a great prelate, God has no need of thee, but thou hast an extreme need of Him. Dost not thou see how He let go Saul, Solomon, one of His most beloved disciples, and in place of Judas found Matthias?

V. Consider fifthly, that although this crown is as yet so uncertain, it is called thine—"that no man take thy crown"—because the Lord has prepared it for thee. It is true that as yet thou hast not that title to it which is called *possession*, but so long as thou perseverest thou hast that which is called a *claim*. And so thou seest that this crown can never be snatched away by force from thee by any one. If any one else has it, it will be because thou givest it up to him of thy own free-will; for thou must observe that it is not said that no man *seize (rapiat)*, but, "that no man *take (accipiat)* thy crown." Here again the

¹ Job xxxiv. 24.

Lord on His part has in no way failed in good-will to thee ; nay, He has shown more to thee than to many others. He has preferred thee, He has chosen thee, He has given to thee first the opportunity of gaining for thyself this splendid crown, if thou chooseth. How many souls he has left in America to whom He has not given the least portion of the graces that He has given to thee. If therefore, now that He sees thy ingratitude, He should leave thee and go to Peru, to Paraguay, to Chili, to find one to inherit the crown which was first offered to thee, canst thou complain of Him ?

ELEVENTH DAY.

And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him, but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come (St. Matt. xii. 32).

I. Consider first, that every one who sins does so either through frailty, through ignorance, or through malice. The first is in opposition to the Father, Whose attribute is power, the second to the Son, Whose attribute is wisdom, the third to the Holy Ghost, Whose attribute is goodness. Those who sin through frailty and through ignorance are readily excused by God ; but not so those who sin through malice, because their chief disorder is not in the sensitive appetite, as is the case with those who sin through frailty, nor is it in the understanding, as is the case with those who sin through ignorance, but it is in the will. Their sin is the greatest of evils, since they sin because they choose to sin. "They have sinned deeply,"¹ and, utterly despising their last end, they choose, with full advertence, to prefer a temporal to the eternal good. Alas for thee, if thou hast reached so fearful a state of perdition ! Is it anything short of this to have put the sceptre into the hand of sin ? Hear what the Apostle says to thee : "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body."² It is one thing for sin to usurp the sceptre within thy heart, either by force or cunning, as a tyrant would ; it is another to offer it to him voluntarily. This, indeed, is making it reign, and shows, consequently, that thou lovest it.

¹ Osee ix. 9. ² Romans vi. 12.

II. Consider secondly, that whenever thou sinnest thus, because thou choosest to sin, then it is that thou art least capable of amendment, because it is not so easy to cure the disorder of the will as that of the appetite or of the understanding. That of the appetite may be cured by proper tonics, which may lessen thy frailty; that of the understanding may be cured by wise instructions, which may take away thy ignorance; but by what can that of the will be cured? Thou art wicked because thou choosest to be wicked, and there is an end of the matter. "Thy wound is very grievous."¹ There remains nothing but that God should chastise thee as thou deservest. "Thou hast no healing medicines."² And now, if Christ says the sin which is malicious is unpardonable, He says so meaning that it is incurable, not because it is not sometimes cured, as even that most incurable of diseases, leprosy, is sometimes cured, but because it is almost a miracle when it happens.

III. Consider thirdly, that thou dost often flatter thyself by thinking that thou sinnest through frailty, when it is through malice. The reason is because it is thyself who art the cause of this frailty, by wilfully arousing that sensitive appetite, which afterwards hurries thee on to sin with so vehement an impulse. Thou art frail because thou wilfully placest thyself in dangerous occasions; thou art frail because thou dost not guard thine eyes; thou art frail because thou dost not guard thine ears; thou art frail because thou wilt read whatever pleases thee, go visiting, go to evening parties, and thus put the weapons into the hands of the temptation that afterwards overcomes thee. Dost thou think that frailty such as this is pardonable? The Apostle desires that no temptation should take hold on thee, save that which human life is never free from. "Let no temptation take hold on you but such as is human."³ How will it be, then, when it is thou thyself who bringest the temptation upon thyself? Is not this to choose it, and so to choose sin? Too well dost thou show the affection thou bearest to it by voluntarily entangling thyself in its toils!

IV. Consider fourthly, that thou often believest thyself to sin through ignorance when it is not so; thou flatterest thyself; thou sinnest, as has been said before, through malice. And this is when thou dost not take the trouble to learn certain very important truths, not because thou lackest the capacity or

¹ Jerem. xxx. 12.² Jerem. xxx. 13.³ 1 Cor. x. 13.

the opportunity, not because the study is distasteful to thee, but only that thou mayest be able to sin more freely, and not have that troublesome remorse which, so to say, reins thee in like a bridle. And what is this but to have great affection for sin? Thou art satisfied to be subject to so great an evil as ignorance; and to gain what? That thou mayest be less encumbered, more free to run in the way of iniquity. What worse can be said? And yet how many are there that act thus! "Who have said to God: Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways."¹ They do not go to sermons for fear of being undeceived of their errors. They purposely have recourse to ignorant confessors, they purposely seek unfaithful counsellors, they do not care to know too nicely the obligations of their state, and thus, as "they are wise to do evil," so "to do good they have no knowledge."² And how can ignorance excuse them from malice when the ignorance itself is malicious?

V. Consider fifthly, since there are so many people who sin through malice, it is not wonderful if so many are consequently lost. Their sin is not to be remitted, that is, it is not to be pardoned, at least, generally, because that which makes us readily forgive any one some grave fault is, seeing that he fell into it either through weakness or through inadvertence. And now, when thou hearest that there is a sin which is not forgiven, either in the present world or in that which is to come, thou shouldst conclude from this that there is in the next world a Purgatory, where mortal sins are cancelled as to the penalty, and venial ones, not only as to the penalty, but also as to the guilt.

TWELFTH DAY.

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT.

Or do I seek to please men? If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ (Galat. i. 10).

I. Consider first, how difficult it is to be able to please both men and Christ, since even the Apostle of the Gentiles could not promise it to himself. It is well known how many

¹ Job xxi. 14.

² Jerem. iv. 22.

contradictions he had to overcome for the honour of God. Which dost thou desire of these two things? To please men? "Do you seek to please men?" Alas for thee if thou dost seek it: thou art seeking thine own confusion, for "they are confounded who please men."¹ There are three unhappy conditions attached to the love of men. The first is, that it is difficult to gain. The second, that it is easy to lose. The third, that when possessed, it does thee more harm than good, because at the best it does not leave thee the entire freedom of giving thyself to God. And this, perhaps, was the principal reason why the Apostle showed how little he cared for it, when he said, "All things are lawful to me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."² It seems as if one who toils for the salvation of men might lawfully claim their love. But he must not care for it. When people pay thee an abundant meed of approbation, of applause, of other similar proofs of love, even when these are thy due, dost not thou see in what bondage it places thee? *You bring thyself at once under their power*, because thou becomest attached to them little by little, so that thou no longer remainest absolute master of thyself. It seems as if, for no other reason than gratitude, thou art bound to condescend to them in various ways which leaves thee not so free to run in the way of God's service. What then shouldst thou desire? To please Christ, conquering bravely, for this end, all human respect, so that either thou carest not, or at least seekest not, to please men. "Or do I seek?"

II. Consider secondly, that the Apostle does not say absolutely, "If I pleased men I should not be the servant of Christ," but, "If I yet pleased;" because sometimes we can for a little while please all men, and Christ too; but not for long. "For the bed is straitened, so that one must fall out."³ It must be that in course of time either Divine love or human love falls to the ground. Do not let thyself then be deceived, though thou shouldst seem almost to succeed in possessing both the one and the other. It can last but a short time, if thou really wishest to do thy duty. Therefore act so that Divine love may overthrow human love before it is itself overthrown.

III. Consider thirdly, that there are two ways in which we may desire to please men. One is for nothing but the mere sake of pleasing. And this is what has just been blamed,

¹ Psalm lii. 6.² 1 Cor. vi. 12.³ Isaias xxviii. 20.

because it is a very great evil. This is precisely the evil which introduced idolatry into the world. The artificer, for no other reason than to please him who employed him, tried to make his portrait to the life, to flatter it, to improve on it. And these were the pernicious works which, more than anything else, brought about the ruin of the human race, so much were they cursed of God. "For he" (the artificer) "being willing to please him that employed him, laboured with all his art to make the resemblance in the best manner. And the multitude of men, carried away by the beauty of the work, took him now for a god that a little before was but honoured as a man." Thus we find it written in the Book of Wisdom.¹ The other way in which we may desire to please men is, by pleasing, to draw them all the more easily to God; and this is most praiseworthy, because this is the method that the same Apostle recommended when he says, "Let every one of you please his neighbour unto good, to edification."² And therefore, whilst thou resolvest to hold fast to virtue, thou must endeavour to please up to the point which causes edification. At least, thou must endeavour not to displease, that is, not to be rude, uncivil, indiscreet, lest these faults, which are those of the virtuous person, should be falsely attributed to his virtue, which will in consequence be in bad repute and unamiable. Only thou must be careful always to preserve and renew a right intention, so great is the danger that thou, like a merchant, mayest come before long to make that the end which at the beginning thou intendest to seek only as the means.

IV. Consider fourthly, that there are seven singular prerogatives which enable one person virtuously to please another. They are, all seven, enumerated in the Holy Scriptures, and all seven may be aimed at with great merit, and obtained by every one. (1) Wisdom in speech: "And all these words pleased Holofernes and his servants, and they admired her wisdom."³ Wisdom in the speaker pleases every one, for the same reason that melody pleases the ear. (2) Prudence in counsel: "The counsel pleased Pharaoh and all his servants, and he said to them, Can ye find such another man that is full of the Spirit of God?"⁴ Prudence in the counsellor pleases every one, for the same reason that light pleases the eye. (3) Meekness in answering: "If thou please this people and soothe them with kind words, they will be thy servants for

¹ Wisdom xiv. 19, 20. ² Romans xv. 2. ³ Judith xi. 18. ⁴ Genesis xli. 37.

ever.”¹ Meekness in one who answers pleases every one, for the same reason that softness is pleasant to the touch. (4) Modesty in prosperity: “But the child Samuel advanced and grew on, and pleased both the Lord and men.”² Modesty in one who is in a prosperous state pleases every one, for the same reason that bashfulness is pleasing to the husband. (5) Fortitude in adversity: “And Saul commanded his servants to speak to David privately, saying, Behold thou pleasest the King, and all his servants love thee.”³ Fortitude in one who is in adversity pleases every one for the same reason that valour is pleasing in the soldier. (6) Liberality in doing good to those with whom we live: “And he” (Simon) “sought the good of his nation, and his power and his glory pleased them well all his days.”⁴ The liberality of one who benefits those who are on earth pleases every one, for the same reason that rain is pleasing to the garden. (7) Compassion in doing good to those who are already dead: “King David wept at the grave of Abner, . . . and all the people heard, and they were pleased, and all that the King did seemed good in the sight of all the people.”⁵ The compassion of one who does good to those who are dead pleases every one, for the same reason that the sun is pleasant to the rocks. Now then, these seven beautiful prerogatives were precisely those “seven” beautiful “women” who “took hold of one man.”⁶ I mean that they were all closely espoused to the Pope St. Gregory, and all said to him, as with one voice, “Take away our reproach.” These poor women found themselves in those calamitous times abandoned in such a manner by the Christian people that there was hardly a person who would unite himself to any of them, much less to all. And as it was they who made him so glorious, it is very evident that they were all very dear to the Saint who espoused them. Who among the Popes has gained, as he did, the name of “Great”? Yet all these prerogatives, although they are singularly appropriate to a great prelate, are such as thou according to thy state must seek after, in order that thou mayest please others in a laudable manner. True it is that there is no way of pleasing the envious, but what does that matter? St. Gregory did not continue to shine less brightly to the end on the throne of the Vatican because there were some who showed as great a dislike to him as the birds of the night show to the sun.

¹ 2 Paral. x. 7.² 1 Kings ii. 26.³ 1 Kings xviii. 22.⁴ Mach. xiv. 4.⁵ 2 Kings iii. 32, 36.⁶ Isaias ix. 1.

THIRTEENTH DAY.

For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen, are eternal (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18).

I. Consider first, that it is not any tribulation, but "that what is at present our tribulation," because if thou regardest tribulation which is past it does not give pain now, and therefore there is no occasion so much as to mention it. If thou regardest present tribulation, "that which is at present," what is it? "Momentary and light;" it is indeed an evil, but a momentary, that is a very brief one, especially if thou comparest it with eternity. And it is light also: light with respect to the faults for which thou hast to atone, light with respect to the grace which is granted thee to endure it, and light with respect to the reward, which is prepared for thee if thou bearest it patiently.

II. Consider secondly, above all, how great will be the good that this little evil will yield to thee, "above measure" and "exceedingly." "Above measure," because it will be immeasurable, that is to say, very far superior to all thy merits. For, although it is said that the Lord "judgeth according to every one's work,"¹ this "according" does not denote equality of quantity, as though each person were to enjoy precisely as much as he has suffered, but it denotes equality of proportion, so that he who suffered most enjoys most. "Exceedingly," because it will not be like the goods of this world, subject to various changes, but it will be placed on the summit of the true Olympus, immutable and imperturbable. "I will lift thee up above the high places of the earth,"² where no evil of any kind will come. Besides this it will be eternal. "Eternal" as opposed to momentary; and it will be like a very heavy "weight" as opposed to a light one. These are the four prerogatives that especially belong to the glory of Paradise: it is superabundant, it is unchangeable, it is eternal, it is weighty.

III. Consider thirdly, the reason why this glory, which is, in one word, the clear vision of God, is called a weight. Not, certainly, because it will ever become heavy to any one, for

¹ 1 St. Peter i. 17.

² Isaias lviii. 14.

after millions of centuries it will be ever new, most blissful, most joyful; but because it contains so exceeding a gladness, that human strength would soon be oppressed by it if it were not invigorated by the strength which is given to it by the light of glory. Or it may mean that it is like a weight, because as a weight draws to itself all things which are attached to it, so this glory will draw to itself the whole being of the blessed in Heaven, in such a manner that, not being able to resist so mighty an attraction, it will be compelled, with all its faculties, to yield to it, and so to become all glorious, both in body and soul.

IV. Consider fourthly, that it is not said that tribulation will bring thee so much glory, but that actually it produces it for thee in thyself—"Worketh for us"—not indeed as a physical, but as a moral cause; and not as an efficient, but as a meritorious cause. From which thou oughtest clearly to understand that this same glory is not a gift, as some would have it, but a reward, although indeed a superabundant reward. Think, therefore, that as God once placed Adam in the terrestrial Paradise "to dress it and keep it,"¹ so too He places in thee tribulation, poverty, ignominy, infirmity, that they may form in thee a paradise, though a much better, because a heavenly one. Let them do their work therefore, because the measure of thy reward will be in proportion to the merit they produce in thee by the trouble they cause thee. Would not the earth be foolish to complain of the labourer as unmerciful for maltreating it with the pickaxe, the spade, and the ploughshare?

V. Consider fifthly, the means which will help thee to suffer willingly all those trials which come to thee through tribulation. Look at those invisible, that is to say heavenly goods, of which we have spoken. Oh! how the hope of them will animate thee. But it is not enough merely to glance at them from time to time; it is necessary to contemplate them, that is, to gaze at them with special attention. Nay, even this is not enough, but it is also necessary, at the same time, not to look at visible, that is to say, earthly goods, because the sight of them fascinates the soul, distracts and diverts it, so that it is not altogether occupied with heavenly things. For it is not "while we look at the things which are not seen," but it is "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." Both our eyes must be fixed on heaven.

¹ Genesis ii. 15.

VI. Consider sixthly, how right it is that thou shouldst contemplate heavenly goods and that thou shouldst not contemplate earthly goods, since the former are eternal and the latter are transitory: "For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Wilt thou, then, stand so long gazing at things which pass away? Thou laughest at the rustic who stops to gaze at the river rushing past with great velocity. But what are all visible things? Are they not just like such a river? Let them go.

FOURTEENTH DAY.

Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words: for from it all perdition took its beginning (Tobias iv. 14).

I. Consider first, how truly all perdition has had its beginning in pride, which is an inordinate appetite of superiority: "All perdition took its beginning;" for the perdition of the world was two-fold. One came from the angels, the other from Adam, and both one and the other, not only sprang from pride, as is the case with every sin, but consisted formally in pride: for it is said not only "from it," but "in it all perdition took its beginning." For both the angels and Adam aspired beyond the limits prescribed them, to make themselves like to God, not completely, because that could not enter into their minds, but in the greatest possible degree. See, therefore, what a canker-worm pride is, seeing that it has been able to destroy cedars which might have been thought incorruptible, cedars not of Lebanon only, but of Paradise. Oh! how much it is to be feared! It creeps in everywhere, into the noblest as well as the commonest plants.

II. Consider secondly, in what this transgression of limits consists both in the angels and in Adam. The Divine attributes are three: power, wisdom, and goodness. Now the Angel was already very like God, both in goodness, because he was "perfect in beauty," and in science, because he was "full of wisdom."¹ What he lacked was the ruling power, and therefore he aspired to exercise dominion over the stars: "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God."² Adam was already very like God both in goodness, because he had

¹ Ezech. xxviii. 12.

² Isaias xiv. 13.

been endowed with original justice, and also in power, because he had been constituted lord of all things living. What he lacked was science, because at his creation he had not received it in act like the Angel, but he was to acquire it for himself little by little, and therefore he had an inordinate desire of it, and wished either to be able by his own strength to know good from evil, or else by his own strength also to foresee them. It is true that Adam sinned also (according to many) through gluttony. But if that was the case, it could not be the first inordinate appetite that was awakened in him; for this reason, that in him sense was not yet rebellious to spirit, and so it was not possible that when first he committed an interior disorder, he should aspire to a sensible, but to a spiritual good to which he had no right. See, therefore, of how much importance it is to thee, in every matter, to know how to confine thyself within those limits which God has fixed for every one. The humble are those who keep within these limits, those who desire to transgress them are the proud.

III. Consider thirdly, what terrible perdition has resulted from this pride. So many millions and millions and millions of the most sublime spirits, the most excellent works that had come forth from the hands of God, the most beautiful, the most gifted, to be cast down from the empyreal Heaven into the lowest abyss of Hell; and not only cast down but transformed into the most monstrous creatures of the universe! If thou knewest that a usually kind-hearted monarch had caused a hundred noble personages, marquises, marshals, dukes, who had hitherto been very dear to him, to be executed in the space of one hour on the public square, what wouldst thou say? Wouldst thou not say that the crime which they had committed must certainly have been quite unendurable? Now what are all these in respect of the angels! They are not fit even to be their servants. And yet this tremendous justice was exercised on them all! Oh! then, what a great evil must pride be, even of thought only.

IV. Consider fourthly, what perdition that was which took place in the terrestrial Paradise. A prince of such great excellence as Adam, stripped of his dominion and punished miserably, not only in himself, but also in all his posterity. Heap together all the evils that are to be found on this earth: labours, disgrace, infirmities, madness, pain, misfortunes, wars, pillage, massacres, desolation, ignorance, wickedness; and then say to thyself, What torrent could possibly have brought down

so foul a flood? It was pride, and the inundation was irreparable, because it came from high places. Oh! this same cursed pride, what a great evil it must be! Wilt thou allow it to reign in thyself for one single moment?

V. Consider fifthly, that this pride is here specially distinguished as "in mind and in word," that is, because these are the commonest kinds, and thou canst not always keep both one and the other far from thee. First, that which is "in mind," because from it that which is "in word" proceeds. If thou wouldst restrain that which is in the mind, think often who thou art, Who God is, and thou wilt see how just it is that thou shouldst be subject to Him in all things, conforming thyself to His will. "Shall not my soul be subject to God?"¹ If thou wouldst restrain that which is in words, consider how unpleasing and ridiculous this pride appears even to thyself when thou perceivest it in others, and hence thou mayest suppose that it is equally so in the eyes of others when they see it in thee. It is true that "word" in the Holy Scriptures very often signifies everything whatsoever. Because everything whatsoever cost Almighty God no more; it cost Him but a simple word. And so when thou art told that thou shouldst flee from pride "in thy mind and in thy word," it is meant by that that thou shouldst flee from it both interiorly and exteriorly, that is, that thou shouldst be wholly cleansed "from the great offence."

VI. Consider sixthly, that pride being essentially a spiritual sin, it is impossible to say how easily it may hide itself like a venomous asp, even in the midst of good works. Thou must then watch over thyself all the more to keep it far from thee. Remark that for this reason it is not said, "Pride shall never reign in thy mind or in thy word," but, "Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind or in thy words," because it is impossible that it should not sometimes surprise thee unexpectedly and reign over thee. But what must thou do? Drive it away as soon as thou perceivest it, either with a positive contrary act of humiliation, or when it is importunate by treating it with contempt and turning thy thoughts to something else. Otherwise, how unfortunate thou wilt be if ever thou consentest to give it the rule over thee. Thou wilt immediately come to perdition. Wouldst thou know how much God hates pride? Let that be enough for thee. No wise doctor lets his patient, who is dangerously ill, fall into another illness in order to cure him,

¹ Psalm lxi. 2.

unless it be much less serious than that which he is suffering from. Yet God, in order to cure a proud man, often suffers him to fall into sins which are manifestly foul and hideous, and so He humbles him.

FIFTEENTH DAY.

Or know you not . . . you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

I. Consider first, how true it is that thou art not thine own. Our Lord has bought thee at so high a price as His own Precious Blood. Oh, then, what wrong thou doest Him by wishing to dispose of thyself as best pleases thee! Those eyes are not thine, those ears are not thine, that tongue is not thine, and so thou mayest go on through thy whole being. What doubt is there, then, that thou art bound by reason never to employ the smallest part of thyself, except for His service to Whom thou belongest?

II. Consider secondly, the benefit that our Lord has done thee in condescending to redeem thee. Had He any need of thee? Was He not equally blessed, equally glorious, equally great without thee? He redeemed thee solely for thy own good, to deliver thee from the hands of Satan, from a tyrant, from a traitor. "For He shall deliver the poor from the mighty;"¹ the poor, I say, from whom He could expect no advantage. Yet see how He has acted. If any one has passed from the service of one master to that of another, the old master first asks if he wishes to return to his service, and then pays the price. But He has first ransomed thee, and then He asks if thou wilt return to His service. "Return to Me, for I have redeemed thee."² Who does not see, then, how much this increases the obligation thou art under of not belonging to thyself in the slightest thing?

III. Consider thirdly, the prodigality that our Lord has shown in redeeming thee. For, if He had given a single drop of His own Blood, would it not have sufficed? Nevertheless He gave it all, so as not to keep back a single drop. If thou sawest one who, though he could buy a certain jewel with a thousand crowns, yet gave the seller ten thousand, wouldst thou not think he had gone mad with the joy of being about to

¹ Psalm lxxi. 12.

Isaias xlv. 22.

possess this jewel? What ought thou, then, to think of Jesus? He could have obtained thee of His Father without blood, with His tears alone, with His prayers alone. "Ask of Me," it was said to Him, "and I will give Thee the people for Thy inheritance."¹ See how He might have obtained thee—like an inheritance, which is the most easy acquisition that can be made; there is no difficulty, no labour in it: sometimes it comes to a man when he is asleep. And yet, to have thee, He chose to give His life itself with such extremity of suffering. What doubt is there, then, that He bought thee "with a great price"? And yet thou refuseth to be His.

IV. Consider fourthly, how thou must draw from all this a firm resolution of determining to spend thyself entirely for the honour of God, without looking to thine own interest in anything. When there is occasion to take a journey for God, say to thy feet, tired though they may be, that they must remember Whose they are. Say the same to thy eyes, to thy ears, when it is well that they should be mortified for God, and do not allow them to see or to hear what is not right. Say the same to thy tongue, when it is employed not for God, but to coin for itself the reputation of eloquence. In a word, say to all your senses, interior and exterior, that they are not their own masters. "Know you not that you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price."

V. Consider fifthly, that as thou must not spare thy body at all, because it is not thy own, but Jesus Christ's, so for the same reason must thou guard thy soul with great care. If some precious crystal which belonged to thy prince was left with thee, wouldst thou not guard it with more solicitude, with more diligence, than if thou wert its owner? In the same way must thou also guard thy own soul from every risk. Thou art told generally that thou shouldst try hard to save thy soul, because the soul in question is thy own. "Keep, therefore, your souls carefully."² This time I would tell thee the contrary. Thou shouldst indeed think of saving thy soul; but for what reason? Because it is *not* thine, but thy Lord's. "Know you not that you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price." This is the most noble motive thou canst have for fleeing from Hell—to keep for Jesus everything which is His.

¹ Psalm ii. 8.

² Deut. iv. 15.

SIXTEENTH DAY.

Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee ; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? (St. Luke xii. 20).

I. Consider first, who would not have greatly envied that famous rich man of the Gospel, who had gathered so large a harvest that he did not even know where to bestow it ; had already in his possession goods "for many years ;" had as much opportunity as he could wish for giving himself to idleness, to feasting, to drinking, to the satisfying every whim ? Who would not have exclaimed, How happy he is ! what good fortune ! what luck ! And yet, in truth, at that very time he was most unhappy, being already on the point of losing all. Why ? Because he did not recognize these good things as coming from God ; because he did not thank Him for bestowing them on him ; because he did not pray to Him to preserve them to him ; because he did not think of giving to the poor their portion ; because he chose to spend all on the profit of his body and nothing on that of his soul. Oh, how many rich men like this there are in the world ! Do not envy them.

II. Consider secondly, the dreadful reproach that God made to him. He called him fool—*stulte*—because he gave his thoughts to that which signified least, namely, the present life, and not to that which signified most, namely, the future life. And so He told him that in that same night in which he promised himself such great things, "this night" (in his blindness, in his ignorance), the angels, as God's executioners, were already near, to require his soul from his body—"this night do they require thy soul of thee." It is not said *petunt*, but *repetunt*, to denote either that they had already asked it of him at other times by various admonitions which they had given him (although in vain) to prepare for death, or that they were taking it by force and with violence, or that they required it of him to bring it before its Judge.

III. Consider thirdly, the nature of the chastisement with which the Lord menaced him after death ; it was that his goods should go to those whom he least suspected. "Whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ?" It might seem as if He ought to have aroused a great fear in him by suggesting Hell. But He treated him as the fool that he was. He put before him, for his consideration, those things which

had the most power to grieve him. For worldlings do not grieve much when they are told that they will go to Hell to live amongst the lost, amongst devils; sometimes thou wilt hear them answer, Let God do as He pleases. But they grieve when they are told that their goods will be lost. "Whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Oh, immense folly of men, to make so much more account of what belongs to them than of themselves!

IV. Consider fourthly, whether in thy measure thou too dost not deserve this shameful reproach. Dost thou think of that which is really important? To what are thy studies directed? To what do thy labours tend? God grant that thou mayest not be toiling for thy impoverishment. That which is of no value for the salvation of the soul is of no value at all. To whom will thy beautiful compositions, thy houses, thy lands belong? Say, "Whose shall those things be?" Perhaps to those who will laugh at thee whilst thou art cursing thy own folly. There is, therefore, but one thing which is important—to think of thy own soul.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.

And they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences (Galat. v. 24).

I. Consider first, what is the mark of being dear to Christ. It is not being a worker of miracles, a preacher, a prophet, a doctor of the world; but it is being greatly mortified, a thing which all can attain by the grace of God, if they will. See, therefore, how much mortification should be esteemed.

II. Consider secondly, that this mortification is called *crucifixion*: "They have crucified." First, because he who mortifies himself should do it out of devotion to his Lord, that is, to make himself like Him on the Cross. Secondly, because mortification must be stable, solid, not inconstant like that of some. He who is nailed remains immoveable on the Cross, like Jesus, Who did not descend from it until He was taken down. Thirdly, because mortification should be painful, as the crucifixion of Christ was. He who is nailed to the Cross suffers much greater pain than he who is only

bound to it. See whether thou thinkest that thy mortification is of this sort.

III. Consider thirdly, that it does not say, "They have crucified their vices and concupiscences," but, "Their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences," because he who does not go to the root of the evil is not a good doctor. The flesh is the root of all the evils which the soul suffers, and therefore if we wish to be perfectly cured we must subdue the flesh. What corporal penances dost thou do? Dost thou try to subdue the flesh, or dost thou not rather pamper it?

IV. Consider fourthly, that it does not say the flesh alone, but the flesh with all the rest; because exterior mortification is worth little if it is not accompanied at the same time with interior. Indeed, the former ought to be regulated by the latter. What does it avail to take away that which was not the cause of the fever, if the fever itself, which is already in the veins, is not taken away at the same time?

V. Consider fifthly, what the things that thou shouldst destroy by this interior mortification are—the vices and concupiscences. The vices are the sins, the concupiscences are the passions. For if thou attackest the sins only, thou dost nothing; thou must also attack the passions; first, indeed, the sins, by cleansing the soul, then the passions, by putting it in order. Which are the passions that predominate in thee? Try to know them that thou mayest mortify them, so that if they live, at least they may live on the Cross.

VI. Consider sixthly, that nevertheless it does not say, "With the sins and concupiscences," but, "With the vices." *Peccata* are actual sins, *vitia* habitual sins. It is difficult to get so far, by the exercise of mortification, as not to commit a single actual sin, however small, but not so to avoid retaining any vice. Therefore thou must mortify the vices above all, whether they be little or great, not content with making them live on the Cross like the passions, but making them die there. And this also thou mayest attain to with the grace of God.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain (1 Cor. ix. 24).

I. Consider first, that this life is like a course, on which a race is run, the prize being the glory of Paradise. All men are admitted in this race; but how many, instead of running, stand still! Therefore, the Apostle does not say, "They that are in the race," but, "They that run in the race." There are countless numbers, sunk in sloth, debauchery, plays, amours, and other shameful occupations, who do not even take the trouble to put one foot forward. If, then, of those who run, one only reaches the goal—"One receiveth the prize"—how will it be with those who do not even walk?

II. Consider secondly, who that happy man, of whom it is said that he obtains the prize, is. Is there, then, but one such out of all those who earnestly seek after that which is good? Certainly not: for those who are saved are many. It is that only he who perseveres obtains it. See, then, how important it is to persevere instead of being, as thou art perhaps, so inconstant in the good that thou doest. Hardly dost thou understand a devotion when thou speedily weariest of it. This is a bad sign. Persist in conquering thy natural instability, for it is very dangerous; it is one of the greatest marks of belonging to the wretched number of the reprobate.

III. Consider thirdly, that it is for this reason that the Apostle adds, "So run" (that is, "like him who receiveth the prize,") "that you may obtain." He says "run," and thus thou canst see that in the service of God thou must go fast, tire thyself, strain thyself, and not like some persons, saunter on the way. He says "so," and thus thou seest too that thou must run in the right manner, and not act according to thy humour, but follow in the sure footsteps of those who have happily preceded thee, of the patriarchs, the prophets, the martyrs, and above all, of Christ, Who was the Giant of the course: "He rejoiced as a giant to run the way."¹ He says: "That you may obtain," and so thou canst see that thou must also run in such a manner as to win the prize, and consequently never cease running until thou reachest the goal.

¹ Psalm xviii. 6.

NINETEENTH DAY.

ST. JOSEPH.

For all seek the things that are their own: not the things that are Jesus Christ's (Philipp. ii. 21).

I. Consider first, with what tenderness of affection thou oughtest to compassionate thy good Jesus, when thou seest that there are so few in the world who take His part. Setting aside those who are called actually of the world, because they profess to serve the world, what are numbers of ecclesiastics, even of preachers, of parish priests, of prelates, of men who have given themselves to Christ doing? Are they all bound in league together for the sake of Christ? to resent the injuries of Christ? to be zealous in the interests of Christ? Nay, there are among them so many of those lovers of themselves who "seek" with the utmost avidity "the things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's," that they are spoken of as "all." It is true that they all love the good things of Christ, they approve of them, they applaud them, they desire them, but they do not "seek" them, for they act very differently in the cause of Christ from what they do in their own.

II. Consider secondly, that this singular diversity of acting is known by the two signs already pointed out: resentment of injuries and zeal for interests. As to injuries, dost not thou see how indignant they are at a wrong done to their person, to their relations, or sometimes even merely to their servants? On the other hand, they know that there are many who do nothing all day but blaspheme the name of Christ; and yet when are they kindled with anger against them? They are content to frighten them with empty sounds. How many adulterers are there, how many scandalous livers, how many sacrilegious persons who go unpunished every day because they injure only the honour of Christ? Then, again, as to interests, just take notice how eager they are to raise their family station, and if possible to ennoble it. On the other hand, who is there that ever provides with the same solicitude for all those poor people about the country who die without the food of the Word of God; or who takes the like pains to promote either the adornment of churches, or the increase of convents? Nay, is it not true that many spend even the

revenues of the Lord for the profit of their family? Poor vineyard of Christ! There are very many who act as though they were masters of it, for not content with gathering its fruit and satisfying themselves with it, they carry it away out of the vineyard, give it to their nephews, their cousins, their relations, to whom they please, an injury such as was never allowed to be done to the vineyard of any man, however low his condition. "Going into thy neighbour's vineyard," says God, "thou mayest eat as many grapes as thou pleasest, but must carry out none with thee."¹ And is this to have at heart the interest of Jesus Christ? It is to rob Him of His own, so that He is without the means of maintaining His younger brethren, of gaining over the rebellious to Himself, of subduing His adversaries, and rewarding His friends.

III. Consider thirdly, that not only do many not seek that which belongs to Jesus—"The things that are Jesus Christ's"—but it seems rather that they make use of Jesus in order to seek more easily that which belongs to them: "Those things that are their own." Thou wilt see it under these same two heads, of injuries and interests. For as to injuries, thou wilt find some that make use of Jesus, as of a cloak to enable them the better to defend their honour. And although it is indubitable that every one ought to entertain the highest reverence for a holy habit such as that of a priest, yet, for all that, thou wilt see that all do not claim this respect because it is a holy habit, but because it is theirs. If all claimed it because the habit is in truth holy, how is it that some treat it disrespectfully themselves by joining in profane conversations, by making love, by flattering, by trading, by doing actions that are so disgraceful to that habit? And again, as to interests, thou wilt observe that countless numbers make use of Jesus to push them more vigorously. They say that the reputation of Christ requires them to maintain the dignity of their state. Who can deny it? But does not the reputation of Christ also still more require that pity towards the poor, meekness, modesty, purity, should be maintained? It is certain that Christ recommended these virtues by His own mouth a thousand times, and never once did He recommend dignity, although that is praiseworthy when it does not degenerate into luxury. If thou talkest with some of them, about setting themselves to promote some great work for the Divine service—the erection of a seminary, of a church, of a

¹ Deut. xxiii. 24.

cloister, of a convent of virgins dear to Christ—they will answer at once that it is not the time. “The time is not yet come for building the house of the Lord;”¹ that to do the service of God as it ought to be done, it is necessary to take advice, to await more favourable circumstances, to watch for a more suitable opportunity, otherwise it is imprudence. And yet it is always time to enlarge their own house. Then all opportunities are suitable, all circumstances are favourable. Nay, thou wilt see what haste they are in, lest time, that hateful deceiver of the ambitious, should betray them. “The time is not yet come for building the house of the Lord” (this was precisely the complaint that God made), and then: “You make haste every man to his own house.”² But that is not enough. Thou wilt often find a man who preaches with vanity, and then shelters himself by saying that it is to the glory of God to fill the church. But he cares nothing for this glory of God when there is some one elsewhere who fills it more than he does. It is to the glory of Christ that the Cathedrals should be frequented. It is to the glory of Christ that the confessional should be frequented. It is to the glory of Christ that their own religious community should abound in palms carried off from the pagans, from the heretics, not to speak of sinners more easy to conquer. But is it to the glory of Christ to take it ill that palms quite as beautiful flourish in the works of others? See, then, to what a state this great Lord is reduced, to Whom we are under so much obligation. Not only we will not serve Him with fidelity; but we will also have Him serve us as a cloak to cover our faults, that is, to cover many of the causes of displeasure that we give Him. “Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins.”³

IV. Consider fourthly, how right it is to lament bitterly, that the injuries as well as the interests of Christ are so betrayed, “For all seek the things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ’s.” But if thou lamentest this strange disorder, as is right, thou oughtest at the same time to be very solicitous not to fall into it thyself, so as not to be like those who deplore the misfortune of their age in being so niggardly in remunerating the deserving, but do not perceive that they are precisely those who make it so by increasing the number of the ambitious. Make a very strict examination then of thyself, and see if thou in truth lovest Jesus. Dost thou wish really to know if thou lovest Him? See whether thou

¹ Aggeus i. 2.² Aggeus. i. 9.³ Isaias xliii. 24.

hatest thyself. This is the reason why Jesus is abandoned, because the faithful are all full of self-love. Set thyself to pull self-love up by the roots, by determining not to seek thyself even where it is lawful to do so. "Let no man seek his own."¹ Thou must not say thou wilt aim first at the glory of Christ, and afterwards at thine own; but that thou wilt desire nothing but the glory of Christ; for this way thou wilt be more sure that thou dost not make Him serve thyself as a cloak. Whenever any undertaking whatsoever is proposed to thee, let thy thoughts instantly fly to consider whether it will turn to the honour of Christ. Let this be thy motive for travelling or for remaining at home; let this be thy reason for watching or for taking rest. When by chance thou hearest worldly news, do not take part in it unless Christ also has a part in it. Renew to Him a thousand times, and from thy heart, this protestation: that thou dost not care to live a single moment unless it is to live for Him alone. Oh! how right it is that thou shouldst not only resolve once for all to love thy Lord far more than thyself, but not even to love thyself at all, except so far only as thou must do so for His sake.

V. Consider fifthly, how, in the most glorious St. Joseph, the Lord has been pleased to show us a man that was not in the least for himself, but all for Christ. For though it is true that he was spouse to the Blessed Virgin, this was in order to save the honour of Christ, so that he was the husband of the Blessed Virgin only to protect and support her ever-inviolable virginity. He espoused her in effect as the elm espouses itself to the vine, but has not any part in its fruit. It is true that he was, besides, father to Christ, but father purely in name, in support, in affection; that is, only as he was bound to have that care of Christ that every father has of his son. But he was not to enjoy the glory of having begotten Christ. None of his actions are known, except a few that conduce to the greater knowledge of Christ. And after death he was to remain for many centuries unknown, inglorious, and I might say little less than forgotten by the devotion of the people; because this also was necessary to the reputation of Christ. For as in the beginning some rash heretics disseminated this error amongst the people that Christ was the true son of Joseph, it was of necessity that the Church should provide against it by making less display of her esteem of St. Joseph: and so it is not wonderful if she placed him, in exterior

¹ 1 Cor. x. 24.

worship, below very many saints, who, nevertheless, were not his equals in merit. So that if we look closely into it, it appears that this sublime Saint came upon earth to obtain from God that most excellent honour, which St. Bernard sighed for with so much ardour when he said, "Well is it for me if He deigns to use me as a shield;" because in truth he was always as a shield to shelter Jesus, by receiving in himself all the arrows which otherwise would have wounded Him. He sheltered Him in life by defending Him from the sword of Herod, carrying Him off hastily into Egypt, with very great difficulty. He sheltered Him from hunger, for it was he who provided Him with food. He sheltered Him from the cold, for it was he that provided Him with clothing. He sheltered Him from the sad destitution which otherwise threatened Him in every way, for it was he who supported Him by his daily labour. And lastly, he sheltered Him from the sacrilegious calumnies of numberless slanderers, since living as well as dead he served to maintain His glory inviolate. And, therefore, he is the Saint whom thou shalt choose before all others for thy advocate, that thou mayest merit that grace which is the greatest of all, not to desire to live any longer on this earth except for Christ. It is true that he protects those who have recourse to him in every case: "He is a buckler to them that hope in him."¹ But thou needest only pray to him to defend thee from thyself, who art thy own most cruel enemy, since for the sake of living for thyself thou dost not live for Christ.

TWENTIETH DAY.

ST. JOACHIM.

For we are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from Him (Tobias ii. 18).

I. Consider first, what, in one word, has been the life of all the saints on earth: a continual expectation. "Thou shalt wait for me many days."² What did those who lived before the coming of Christ ever do but wait for the fulfilment of the promises made to them? Some saw these promises from afar off, and being unable to do more, saluted them. "All these

¹ Prov. xxx. 5.

² Osee iii. 3.

died, . . . not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off, and saluting them;"¹ as those pilgrims who see the Holy Land from a distance, without being allowed to enter into it, salute it. Others saw them more nearly, and not only saluted them, but aspired to them, longed for them, and in a certain way tried to take the land by storm, and to enter it by force, so fervent were those prayers which they sent up all together, like arrows, to Heaven. Even after the coming of Christ the expectation was not taken away. He had promised to return: "My people shall long for My return."² Our Lord came first as the Author of faith to redeem us from sin, to teach us by preaching, to encourage us by His example. Now He has still to return as Finisher of the same faith, to glorify us. For if the saints of the Old Law "were looking to the Author," those of the New were "looking to the Finisher of the faith—Christ Jesus." Dost thou see what thy life must be? A time of *waiting*. "And you yourselves like to men," said Christ, "who wait for their Lord when He shall return from the wedding."³ Waiting for a master who is returning from a great feast is somewhat wearisome, because it may last a long time, and meanwhile the servants are obliged to remain shut up indoors; they must deprive themselves of pleasures, they must lose their sleep. But what is to be done? The servants have to conform themselves to the master, not the master to the servants.

II. Consider secondly, for what reason these saints, who waited in this manner, have been called saints. Because they were, so to say, separated from all the rest of the human race; they considered themselves as having nothing to do with this world; they were always aspiring to Heaven, always longing for Heaven; they always lived here like pilgrims who are going to their native country. "How many are the days of the years of thy life?" Pharaoh asked of Jacob in Egypt, and he answered: "The days of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years" (observe, that not even in language would he conform to the usages of the world), "and they are not come up to the days of the pilgrimage of my fathers."⁴ This, therefore, is what thou oughtest to attain to in thy state: to live on this earth as a pilgrim, "For they that say these things do signify that they seek a country."⁵ Is it not a shame that thou shouldst attach thyself so much to the things of the land—which is not thine

¹ Hebrews xi. 13.

² Osee xi. 7.

³ St. Luke xii. 36.

⁴ Genesis xvii. 8, 9.

⁵ Hebrews xi. 14.

own! "For we are the children of saints," which is as much as to say, "The children of strangers," as Isaias called them when he said, "And the children of strangers shall build up thy walls."¹ It is not right, then, to degenerate so basely from them. Of what use is it for the brook to praise the purity of the spring if in the meantime it has become all turbid with mud? Thou art a child of pilgrims, of men altogether detached from the world, of holy men, of spiritual men, of saintly men. Seek then to be such thyself, so that when thou placest thyself in the presence of thy Lord in prayer thou mayest say to Him with truth, that though in intercourse with men thou art constrained in many things to talk and to behave like one of them, nevertheless, before Him thou art not so; thou art a pilgrim. "For I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner as all my fathers were."²

III. Consider thirdly, how clearly it appears that in this text "the children of saints" means "the children of strangers," since it immediately follows—"and look for that life which God will give to them that never change their faith from Him." Dost thou then think that this is so great a good thou canst not wait for it? Thou wouldst rather enter into possession of it before the time, and therefore what dost thou do? Thou seekest here what is reserved solely for hereafter—that is, enjoyment. Is not this the right rule: "They that fear the Lord keep His commandments," which all point to suffering. "They will have patience," says Ecclesiasticus. But until when? "Even until His visitation."³ Do not be in a hurry, for thou canst not commit a greater error than to occupy thyself in obtaining vain satisfactions now. They who do this are like gluttons, who, when invited to some royal banquet have not patience to wait for the hour, which is always late, and so filling the stomach with their own coarse victuals, render themselves unfit to regale themselves on the more delicate and choice ones to which they were invited. Who is it that really enjoys the latter? It is the man who comes to them fasting. Oh, if thou didst know what all thy worldly diversions are! They are so many thefts from those delights which will be all the more intense hereafter, from thy being in a better condition for enjoying them. Be content to wait, this is the wisest course; and rather, meanwhile, put out to interest, as it is said, what thou refrainest from drawing as income, because "The inheritance gotten hastily in the beginning," that is, when it

¹ Isaias lx. 20.

² Psalm xxxviii. 13.

³ Ecclus. ii. 21.

is as yet not well matured, "in the end shall be without a blessing."¹ Thy inheritance is Paradise, which is also the inheritance of thy forefathers. Wait till it is matured, and meanwhile strive rather to improve it by suffering.

IV. Consider fourthly, how much the Lord desires this patience, since it is said that He will give His glory only to those "that never change their faith from Him," that is, who are content to believe solely in His promises and do not wish for the reward, except in the way of hoping for it, before the time. Now is the time to live only by faith, which means to take comfort in faith, to take courage from faith, to lean upon faith, to be content that faith should make up for every other joy: "I know Whom I have believed." And so thou must never lose thy faith. *Never!* That is to say, thou must not lose it in prosperity or in adversity, but always continue thy pilgrimage with equal courage. It is impossible in the service of God that things should always be the same with thee: "If my covenant with the day can be made void, and my covenant with the night," said the Lord, "that there should not be day and night in their season."² Now thou wilt be in the light, now thou wilt be almost in the dark; now thou wilt have consolation, now thou wilt suffer desolation; now thou wilt be honoured, now thou wilt experience contempt; now thou wilt be in health, now thou wilt be afflicted with sickness. But however it may be with thee, thou must know equally how to serve God, to be faithful, to be strong, and even in the night to go forward on thy journey home. Would he not be a very delicate pilgrim who never chose to travel except by day?

V. Consider fifthly, that this glory, which the Lord promises thee, is called life, because life is the good to which man is most attached on this earth. Yet when it is necessary that thou shouldst give thy life for God in any way, by serving the sick poor in hospitals, by studying for God, by labouring for God, by spending thyself altogether for the honour of God, there is nothing at all to be frightened about, because thou wilt soon receive another, much better, which is prepared for thee above the stars. The life that is led on the road is one thing, and that which is enjoyed at home another. The one is laborious and fatiguing by its continual hardships, and therefore it is not right to prize it much. At any rate, he who is a pilgrim must run the risk more than once of dying on the road, that he may come at last to spend his life in his true country.

¹ Prov. xx. 21.

² Jerem. xxxiii. 20.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

ST. BENEDICT.

I will show thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee: verily, to do judgment, and to love mercy, and to walk solicitous with thy God (Micheas vi. 8).

I. Consider first, that nothing in the world is easier than to confound the true with the false good. This is the mistake that brings to ruin a great part of the universe. Therefore thou shouldst study with great diligence to know this good, and follow it, because if by chance thou take the false for the true thou art lost. This, then, is the true good: "I will show thee, O man, what is good," for this is what the Lord expects from thee, "and what the Lord requireth of thee." The Lord loves thee tenderly; He does not deceive, He does not flatter thee, He does not act like those who wish thee a false good.

II. Consider secondly, what it is, then, that thy Lord asks of thee. It is, without doubt, a rigorous judgment in respect to thyself: "Verily to do judgment." Observe, then, what are the parts of a very rigorous judgment: a diligent examination of the actions that come under it; a faithful sentence, a heavy punishment. And this is what thou oughtest to do continually in respect to thyself; not to live negligently, but to examine attentively the actions that thou performest, examine thy words, thy thoughts, and even thy most secret affections. Then pass sentence on thyself, but dispassionately. Oh, how ready thou often art to flatter thyself, excusing thy faults, or even defending them by attributing (if thou doest no more) the evil that thou doest, not to thine own great malice, but to the violence of the temptation of the devil, to the suggestions of companions, to the bad example of the wicked, and sometimes even to the scantiness of the grace which God grants thee. What sentence can be more perverse? Lastly, thou must give thyself a heavy punishment—that is, do penance: but not a light and languid penance such as is dictated by self-love. If thou wilt judge thyself in this manner, which God enjoins on thee, thou shalt not be judged by God.

III. Consider thirdly, that He requires of thee, in the next place, to love to show mercy towards thy neighbour, forbearing to examine his defects, compassionating him, pardoning him, and giving him help on every occasion as far as thy strength

allows. But note well how the Lord speaks here. He does not tell thee only that thou shouldst show mercy, but, still more, that thou shouldst love it—"love mercy"—because if thou lovest it thou wilt try to go beyond thy strength. Dost thou think that it is mercy to weigh nicely the wants of thy neighbour in order to see if thou art really bound to give him help?

IV. Consider fourthly, that what the Lord requires of thee, lastly, in respect to thyself, is to be solicitous to walk with Him: "And to walk solicitous with thy God." Thou must walk with Him, because through all this mortal pilgrimage thou must never leave His side, thou must love Him, thou must keep close to Him, thou must bear Him company wherever He goes, even when He goes to Calvary, and not act like those who then forsake Him shamefully, and only follow Him to Mount Tabor. But this is not enough, thou must be solicitous in following Him, because He walks fast; if thou art lazy thou wilt not be able to keep up with Him. Examine, then, whether thou art solicitous: solicitous in imitating Him, solicitous in obeying Him, solicitous in honouring Him, solicitous in pleasing Him, solicitous not to lose Him by the way in the midst of all the deceivers who want to rob thee of Him, solicitous to seek Him and find Him again when thou hast been so unfortunate as to lose Him. Solitude about the acquisition of temporal goods was forbidden by Christ, because, as to them, a reasonable diligence is enough; there must be no anxiety, no care, which is what solicitude means. But this anxiety, this care, are most praiseworthy affections in the acquisition of a Divine good, provided always that they are accompanied by confidence; and therefore remember that thou hast to do "with thy God," Who, being what He is, will never fail to give thee strength to follow Him, to obey Him, to honour Him, to please Him, to resist all those who would rob thee of Him, and to find Him again shouldst thou ever lose Him.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed (Lament. iii. 22).

I. Consider first, how it would be with a traveller, who, having walked the whole of the night, should perceive at dawn of day that he had been walking all the time on the edge of

a frightful precipice. Oh, how all his blood would freeze at the sight, from the thought of the manifest peril which he had run! Oh, how pale he would turn, how frightened he would be! What thanks he would render to God from the bottom of his heart for having been so protected by Him! And it would be the same with thee if God showed thee the great danger in which thou hast been of losing thyself eternally. What art thou about that thou dost not break out at least into devout thanks towards so merciful a Protector, and exclaim, "The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed"?

II. Consider secondly, how foolish that traveller would be who, knowing the danger which he had run, should, the next night, again walk by the same precipice. Would he not deserve to be wholly abandoned by the providence of God? But what art thou doing when thou returnest again to thy former sins? Look well to thyself, for as it was by a very little that thou didst not incur damnation in the past, so it may depend on a very little that thou dost not incur it in the future. Dost thou think that it would cost God much trouble to let thee go to ruin? Rather He has to labour in order to save thee, so many are the demons who are continually raving against thee, longing for permission to rush upon thee, and give thee the last blow. "I am weary of bearing them."¹

III. Consider thirdly, that the traveller who had once happily escaped from such an imminent risk, not only would never again walk by the same precipice, but would keep as far off from it as he could. Why, then, if thou dost not return to the precipice, dost thou at least go close to it? Thou hast resolved, it is true, by what thou sayest, never to sin again mortally; but meanwhile what dost thou do? Thou keepest constantly hovering on the skirts even of proximate occasions of sin. Does this show that thou understandest the benefit that God has done thee in preserving thee so mercifully from perdition? It is rather to provoke Him to anger, to irritate, to incense Him, because it is an abuse of His unwearied patience. "And they turned back and tempted God, and grieved the Holy One of Israel."²

IV. Consider fourthly, that if thou placest thyself on the brink of the precipice, and then puttest thy trust in the help of God, thou deceivest thyself indeed. "Behold his hope shall fail him," says Job; "and in the sight of all he shall be cast down."³ It may be that sometimes, out of special

¹ Isaiah i. 14.² Psalm lxxvii. 41.³ Job xl. 28.

mercy, the Lord may vouchsafe to preserve thee again on such an occasion. But what is the general rule? That thou fallest. And it is by general rules that a prudent man must always govern himself. Listen, then, to the order which the Lord has given by His own mouth to thy angel guardian, to protect thee in all thy ways. "For He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."¹ Not *on precipices*, but *in ways*. If on thy travels along the beaten road thou shouldst meet, as thou must do, with some stumbling-block, some obstacle, some very great risk of falling, even the angel who assists thee is commissioned to help thee promptly, so that thou do not fall. But not so, if thou goest wilfully amongst rocks, precipices, and stumps of trees, he will let thee fall then. Thou thinkest perhaps that on beaten roads such dangers are not to be found, so that it is not very necessary to have help ready. Thou deceivest thyself very much. "Our steps have slipped" (so says Jeremias, who yet was a saint), "our steps have slipped in the way of our streets."² Are there any roads smoother, cleaner, more open, than the streets of a town? And yet such is human weakness, even there one may fall.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

Whoever therefore will be a friend of this world (age, sæculum) becometh an enemy of God (St. James iv. 4).

I. Consider first, that *an age* is a measure of that which passes, and the largest measure. First comes the hour, then the day, then the week, then the month, then the year, then the *age*. Therefore the time in which we live, wholly employed in seeking the things that pass, has come to be called by the same name, *the present age*, for this is the longest period during which any one enjoys them—a hundred years. Indeed, who is there in these days that ever enjoys them so long? The same age gives them to thee, and takes them from thee. Now see whether this name alone does not at once bring discredit on the thing. On the contrary, what does the name God mean? The Lord of ages, He Who is immortal, He Who is unchangeable, He Who is not subject to any measure of time, because He has made it, and therefore rules it. "But God is our King before ages."³

¹ Psalm xc. 11.

² Lament. iv. 18.

³ Psalm lxxiii. 12.

II. Consider secondly, that the world having rebelled against its Lord, aims at having more power in thy heart than Himself, and although after all it can only offer thee those goods which it possesses, that is, goods that pass, and that are therefore called temporal and transitory, it nevertheless would have thee belong to it rather than to God Himself, Who promises thee goods like unto Himself, that is, eternal goods. It rests with thee, then, to choose. Represent to thyself the world on one side and God on the other, vying with each other to gain possession of thee. The world promises thee all its good things: it promises thee pleasures, riches, honours, but it promises them to thee only as long as thou art here, it promises them *for a time*. It goes no further. If thou farest badly in the other life, so much the worse for thee. God will give thee goods that are infinitely greater—but not in this world. He will give them to thee hereafter in eternity. On which side of these two dost thou deem it reasonable to range thyself?

III. Consider thirdly, that it would seem impossible to have a doubt on the matter if it were not that we see so many on the side of the world instead of on that of God. For most men live like animals. They consider the present a great deal, and the future but little. Be a real man, and look to the future more than to the present. Here are two roads before thee: the one by which the world would lead thee, and the other by which God would lead thee. Do not choose with thy eyes shut; look at them first. "The way of sinners" is the world's road, for it is the road of the many: "The way of sinners is made plain with stones." Oh, what a beautiful road: all paved with shining stones, all smooth and pleasant! Art thou not tempted to go by it? But go on a little, and thou wilt see. "And in their end"—this is the worst, the beautiful stones end so soon, and then what comes?—"And in their end is Hell, and darkness, and pains."¹ "Hell" to the proud, who have let themselves be puffed up by ambition; "darkness" to the avaricious, who have let themselves be dazzled by interest; "pains" to the impure, who have let themselves be seduced by lust. On the contrary, look at God's way, that is the way that leads away from the world. I do not deny that at the beginning thou mayest think it narrow, to live in purity, to live in poverty, to live in continual subjection—"strait is the way"—but then dost thou know where it leads

¹ Ecclus. xxi. 11.

thee? "It leadeth to life."¹ What dost thou say, then? Which of the two roads wilt thou choose, the world's road or God's? Now, once for all, make up thy mind, but in doing so, first remember that "whoever will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God."

IV. Consider fourthly, that it is not said that whoever will remain in the world is the enemy of God, but whoever will be a friend of the world: "Whoever therefore will be a friend of this world." For, to say the truth, thou mayest remain in the world and not be its friend, that is, not go by its road, but rather by the contrary road, by that of the religious, seeing that true religion is not obliged to fix her dwelling-place far away from men among the mountains and in rocky places. Any one who wills can find her in the midst of the world, provided he keeps himself unspotted from it. "Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this, . . . to keep oneself unspotted from this world."² But hast thou courage to be able to reach this point? If it were as easy as thou perhaps believest, would religion have fled to those mountains that have so much that is terrifying about them? It is very difficult to remain in the world, and not at the same time to become its friend. And when thou becomest its friend, it is all over—thou art already the enemy of God." "Whoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God." And dost thou think it a small evil, even if it were the only one, to be always in danger of incurring such a terrible enmity? What pains thou takest to escape the enmity of a prince, a knight, a citizen, a man like thyself! And wilt thou not use the means required to save thyself from the enmity of God, even if they are painful to thy sensuality? Note well, that to contract friendship with the world is to contract enmity with God, it is all one and the same thing; there is no middle course. "Whoever therefore will be a friend of the world, becometh an enemy of God." Not "will become," but "becometh." And what does "becometh an enemy of God" mean, but that he is at once so constituted as if he had been for a long time the enemy of God; that is, with a confirmed, strong enmity, that does not cease easily. He is not "made" God's enemy, he "becomes" so. For when a person once begins wilfully to value present goods (that is to say, to be a friend of the world), how unlikely it is that he will ever again be enamoured of the future one.

¹ St. Matt. vii. 14.

² St. James i. 27.

Wouldst thou then act wisely? Abandon the world as far as thou canst abandon it, and go to pass thy life out of the world. Go where thou seest that thou canst live, not only well, but holily on earth. "Go to the side of the holy age."¹

V. Consider fifthly, what thou must do if thou shouldst find thyself by chance in the position of not being able in any way to withdraw from the world. What must thou do? No other law can be given thee than that already hinted at, not to conform thyself to the world. "Be not conformed to this world."² Do not conform to its maxims, do not conform to its affections, do not conform to its actions. I know that it is very difficult to remain in the world and not to be conformed to it. But what can be done? So soon as thou chooseth to be conformed to it thou wilt become its friend. For to be the friend of any one is to follow the same maxims, have the same affections, do the same actions. Do not care, then, to follow the greater number. "Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil."³ Associate with those who are not friends to the world; love churches and cloisters, love those places that are averse to the world. In a word, never follow such rule of acting as is customary to the world; follow that only of the law of God. But how canst thou ever reach this point? By often thinking within thyself, What, after all, are those good things that the world can give me?—its pleasures, its riches, its honours? If even they are good at all, they are, at the most, the good things of *this age*.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God: and if sons, heirs also: heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ: yet so if we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified with Him (Romans vii. 16, 17).

I. Consider first, what testimony this is that the Holy Spirit gives us, that we are the sons of God. It is not external like that which Christ received at the Jordan: but it is internal. This is why it is said, that it is given to the spirit—"to our spirit"—not to the eyes by means of vision, not to the ears by means of words: "To the spirit." In what does this testimony consist? It consists in the intimate sense of filial love

¹ Ecclus. xvii. 25.

² Romans xii. 2.

³ Exodus xxiii. 2.

towards God that it infuses into us; so that we abhor sin, but purely because it is an offence against God; we love to think, to speak of God, we do many works, but solely for this great end: to seek the glory of God. Blessed is he who possesses this pure love in his heart. He has the most certain pledge that can be had, short of express revelation, of being the son of God, because to act from love, and not from fear, is the conduct of a son.

II. Consider secondly, the noble consequence which is attached to being the sons of God, namely, to be also heirs of God. Gifts (such as are earthly goods, temporal goods) belong to servants; so that Ismael had nothing but gifts—the inheritance comes to the son, as it did to Isaac. It is true that between human and divine sons there is a very great difference. Human sons do not enter upon the inheritance until the father dies: not so divine sons. Their inheritance is the Father Himself. “The Lord is my portion, said my soul.”¹ For their Father does not possess riches apart from Himself, He contains them in Himself, since He is God, the Immense Good, the Infinite Good. And therefore, as such, at the same time He enjoys Himself He gives Himself to be enjoyed. And not only to be enjoyed by some one in particular, but by all. Neither does the number of the new heirs, who one after the other come to enjoy this magnificent inheritance, diminish in the smallest degree the share of each. Where on this earth wilt thou find such an inheritance as this? And yet thou dost not care for it!

III. Consider thirdly, that if we are heirs of God there is another noble consequence from it, that we are also co-heirs with Christ. Christ is Son by nature, and we are sons by adoption, but although we are adopted we are to participate with the natural Son in the same inheritance. And who can ever tell the greatness of the glory which is ours? We should never have been able to attain it if Christ Himself had not won it for us by His prayers, by His sufferings, by His labours, nay, by all His most Precious Blood. But is not this in itself another marvel of Divine mercy? Amongst men no natural son ever besought his father to adopt a stranger as his son. Rather, through the wish of reigning alone, kings have slain their natural brethren, as did Abimelech, who slew with his own hand seventy men on one stone.² Christ slew

¹ Lament. iii. 24.

² Judges ix. 5.

no one; He gave Himself to be slain, that He might not reign alone. So great was His charity.

IV. Consider fourthly, that this word inheritance must not make thee think that thou canst attain to eternal beatitude without trouble, because eternal beatitude is not an inheritance like gifts of this world, which often come to those who do not deserve them, to those who do not strive for them, to those who do not think of them, to those even who are sleeping. It must, of necessity, be gained. Christ is the natural Son, and yet thou knowest how much He had to endure to attain to it. And dost thou, who art an adopted son, want it for nothing? If thou wouldst reign with Christ, thou must be content to suffer with Christ. This is a most express condition: "Yet so if we suffer with Him." Although thou never wilt have to suffer the least particle of what Christ has suffered, thou wilt suffer *with* Christ, but thou wilt not suffer *like* Christ.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

THE INCARNATION OF THE ETERNAL WORD.

For God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son
(St. John iii. 16).

I. Consider first, attentively, the sublime grandeur of this declaration, which, coming from the lips of Christ, contains in itself rather miracles than words. That God loves Himself is not wonderful; nay, it is of necessity that He should love Himself. But that He should love anything outside Himself is most wonderful, since He contains in Himself all that is good outside Himself, and to a much greater degree than the value of lead is contained in gold. For those very things like metals, stones, pearls, that in themselves are dead, in God are living. "That which was made in Him was life." Those that in themselves are mixed, in Him are pure; those that in themselves are imperfect, in Him are enduring. Whence it is that He could do of Himself without any of them the same things that He does with them. He can give light without the sun; He can cool without water, refresh without air, warm without fire, give as much fruit as He pleases without the earth, because He has in Himself the

perfection of all these creatures, and if commonly He makes use of them, it is through His goodness; it is not from necessity. What a great prodigy it is then, that He should love anything outside Himself! And yet so it is. "God so loved." There is only one prodigy to be found greater than this. And what is it? That thou, not having anything good in thyself, but all in God, shouldst, notwithstanding, be incapable of loving God, and love thyself only.

II. Consider secondly, that "God so loved," and that He "loved the world," the human race. Now see whether this is not surprising! One knows that some persons have fallen in love at times with very strange things—with birds, with dogs, with horses, with snakes. There once was one, we are told, who fell in love with a beautiful tree. But then these persons had received some service, some help, some sort of benefit from these things. But what had God ever received from man? or what did He hope to receive from him? His glory? How could that be, when He had been equally blessed from all ages without him? See rather how He loved the human race, not only without any antecedent merit that He discerned in it, but also notwithstanding a great deal of consequent demerit, since He saw that the greater part would be ungrateful to Him. And yet even that could not prevent His love from being equally extended over all. "He loved the world;" not some in the world, but "the world," for He does not exclude any one. "He will have all men to be saved."¹ And although He loves the predestinate in a more particular manner—"Jacob have I loved;" in comparison with whom it is said that He has hated the reprobate—"but Esau have I hated;" yet He loves all absolutely with the tender charity of a true Father, ordaining that His Divine Son, the Sun of Justice, should be born for the good and for the wicked, and that the rain of His heavenly doctrine should be shed on the just and on sinners. See, therefore, that in this word "world" is contained the first measure that the Apostle recognized of the love of God, which is its "breadth," as it extends to loving even His enemies, even the ungrateful. Is this the measure of thy love, when thou dost not even love Him Who could go so far as to love thee?

III. Consider thirdly, that it is not said "loves," but "loved;" because the love of God towards man had no beginning; it was from all eternity. It was only the effect

¹ 1 Timothy ii. 4.

of this love that had a beginning. For the rest, dost thou know how long it is since the Lord loved thee? Ever since He has loved Himself. As, then, this love of His had no beginning, so neither, on His side, will it have an end for all eternity. "But the mercy of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity upon them that fear Him."¹ Indeed, the durability of this love reaches so far, that when, even by our own fault, the friendship is broken that exists between us and Him, He is always most constant in desiring, in His infinite charity, that we should again renew it. "It never falleth away,"² and He is ready at any moment to admit us into His grace, just as if He needed us. We have but to ask His pardon, and He forgets at once the injuries we have done Him. "Thou hast committed fornication with many lovers, yet return unto Me and I will receive thee." The love of God is in itself most perfect. There is no danger that it will ever have an end, since it is the same love that never had a beginning. Love is intrinsic in God. "God loved," then He "loves," then *He will love*, then, so far as He is concerned, love will never fail. "I am God and I change not." And here these words, "God so loved," show us the second measure that the Apostle recognized of the love of God, which is its "length." And is this the measure of thy love, when thou canst not love even for a single day Him Who has loved thee for an eternity?

IV. Consider fourthly, that God not only "loved the world," but "so loved it as to give His only-begotten Son." Remark in this "so" the vehemence of the love in which God was transported to so strange an excess. And what was that? The greatest of all gifts. Dost thou think it a little thing that He should give "His only-begotten Son"? "His Son," not a subject, not a servant, not a man such as you, nay, not even an angel, an archangel, a seraph. A "Son," and "His Son," that is, a Son not received from another, as those sons are whom men sometimes say that they give to God, but who are rather given back to Him. A "Son" by every title "His." Besides which, amongst men the substance of the son is one, and the substance of the father another. Though Abraham gave his own son, he did not give one who was himself. But God does not give like men. If He gave His own natural Son, and not an adopted son, it was of necessity that He should give a Son Who was Himself—"His Son"—because the Son of God is not different in substance

¹ Psalm cii. 17.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

from the Father, although He is different in Person. And yet more; this Son was an only Son, "Only Begotten." If He, having more sons, had given one of them, even the eldest, it would not have been so wonderful. But to give the only one, this is what is incomprehensible. If He has given us the most that He could give us, we may easily believe that He has not denied us the less. Nay, in giving us Christ, what has He not given us of all that He could give? "He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?"¹ He has given us all things that are of a superior order to ourselves, to enjoy; as the Divine Persons. He has given us all things that are, so to say, of an equal order, to live with; as the angelic hierarchy. He has given us all things that are of an inferior order, to make use of; as are all other created things, the distribution of which depends on Christ, Who is the Master of them. As, then, He has given us Christ, who does not see that He has given us all things? The time is already come in which "they who fear Him lack nothing." And thus, in the words "His only-begotten Son" is comprised the third measure of the love of God recognized by the Apostle, which is its "height." Is this, then, the measure of thy love, when thou canst rise so little? Thou canst not even sacrifice some paltry satisfaction for Him Who has lavished so many favours on thee. "Set thyself up on high and be glorious."²

V. Consider fifthly, these last words, "to give," which show how low this love stooped, so low as to give away this only-begotten Son. It does not say to make a *present of*, it says, *to give*. A very rich jewel may be made a present of even to quite a common person without degrading it, but it cannot be given away for a worthless thing, such as an apple or a bit of bread, without degrading it. And yet why did God give His own Son? That He might gain man: "To redeem a slave Thou gavest Thy Son." If He had given Him that He might reign gloriously amongst men, that He might receive homage, that He might gain triumphs, even then it would have been an immense boon. But to have given Him that He might die for the salvation of men! Oh, how wonderful! Was not this lowering the Son in order to raise the servant almost higher than the Son? Certainly it was. That we might be made capable of the Divine Nature, He lowered the Divine Nature

¹ Romans vii. 32.

² Job xl. 5.

to the human. Thus it is that whenever the Scriptures speak of Christ being given to us, it is never expressed as a gift, as in the case of the Holy Spirit, but rather as a contract or exchange. "He sent redemption to His people." "He delivered Him up for you." He came "to give His life a ransom for many." And this seems the last excess of humiliation to which so good a God could attain; to make a free gift of everything except His Son, but to declare that He gives His Son almost by way of bargain! It is "expedient that one man should die for the people."¹ And this is how, lastly, this word "to give" shows us the fourth measure, recognized by the Apostle, in the love of God, which is its "depth." And is this the measure of thine too when thou art still proud—even after thou hast seen these miracles of abasement in thy Lord?

VI. Consider sixthly, as the climax of marvels, that all this love which is so strange was yet not unreasonable in God. And why? Because it is precisely the love of a God: "God loved." It is above all reason, it is above all rule, and it is a love that, although it has a foundation, has it in infinite goodness: "I will love them freely."² There is no other answer to be given that is entirely satisfactory. Therefore it is said that we can never arrive at understanding what this love is except up to a certain point. "I follow after if I may by any means apprehend."³ Only the saints understand it, who already know it clearly in Heaven. And therefore the Apostle exhorted the faithful so to dispose themselves that they too might one day participate in this happiness. "That you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth."⁴ For the rest, while we go about the world like birds of the night-time, how can we ever follow in such a luminous track as that of the Divine Sun? "Peradventure thou wilt comprehend the steps of God," was said to Job, "and wilt find out the Almighty perfectly? He is higher than Heaven, and what wilt thou do? He is deeper than Hell, and how wilt thou know? The measure of Him is longer than the earth and broader than the sea."⁵ These are the same four dimensions of the love of God that we have been considering according to the light furnished us by those great words of Christ, "For God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son," words upon which thou mayest well feed thy thoughts all thy life as a perpetual nourishment.

¹ St. John xviii. 14.

² Osee xiv. 5.

³ Philipp. iii. 12.

⁴ Ephes. iii. 18.

⁵ Job xi. 7.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

For the earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is tilled, receiveth blessing from God. But that which bringeth forth thorns and briars is reprobate, and very near unto a curse, whose end is to be burnt (Hebrews vi. 7, 8).

I. Consider first, the terrible difference that exists between one earth and another. Both receive the same graces from Heaven, but both do not correspond in the same manner, and so one is blessed and the other is reprobate. And this same difference is to be seen every day between two souls—souls which are equally benefited by Heaven, but not equally grateful. Set thyself then awhile to examine whether thou canst perceive in thyself signs of that which is blessed, or of that which is reprobate. There is no medium.

II. Consider secondly, that as no earth can, by its nature, however fertile it may be, produce of itself even one blade of grass without the benefit of water, so it is with every human soul. It may be naturally greatly inclined to do well, but that is not enough: Divine grace is necessary. "For the Lord will give goodness, and our earth shall yield her fruit."¹ Oh! happy wouldst thou be if thou couldst one day arrive at a thorough knowledge of this truth; I do not say in a speculative, but in a practical manner. Then indeed thou wouldst come to distrust thyself entirely, and to keep thy mouth always open, as the earth does in summer, saying to God, "My soul is as earth without water unto Thee."²

III. Consider thirdly, now for awhile, how often Heaven has shed its rain on your soul, and much more plentifully than on very many others that are born where there is a greater scarcity of spiritual helps. It is true, if thou considerest well, that this rain has been sometimes loud, sometimes quiet. The quiet are the interior inspirations which descend "like rain on a fleece;" the loud are the sermons, counsels, encouragements, corrections, by which God has even exteriorly made His will known to thee. But of whichever sort it may have been, how much more it is than can possibly have been the lot of many! Well may it be said that upon thee the Lord "hath poured out showers like floods, which flow from the clouds,"³ so abundant has it been.

¹ Psalm lxxxiv. 13.

² Psalm cxlii. 6.

³ Job xxxvi. 27, 28.

IV. Consider fourthly, that this rain, of whatever sort it may have been, came equally from on high "upon you," because it was always God Who "sent it from the clouds above." He it was Who inspired the tongue of that preacher, of that priest, of that confessor, and made him speak specially for thee. Now consider awhile how thou hast corresponded. Hast thou produced "herbs meet for them that tilled," wholesome and sweet, and abundant, a luxurious growth of good works? If so, thou mayest take comfort, for the Lord Himself, from on high, has blessed thee, which is as much as to say that He has prepared a reward for thee in Paradise, as one of those to whom it was said, "To this are you called, that you should possess a blessing by inheritance"—that is, as He has prepared it for the predestinate. But if, instead of such herbs thou hast only produced "thorns and briars," that is, sins, though some may be less which are represented by thorns, and others greater which are represented by briars, alas for thee! Oh, what great punishment awaits thee!

V. Consider fifthly, the formidable terms in which this earth is spoken of. There are three of these, and they contain its reprobation, its condemnation, and its punishment. It is first said that it "is reprobate," that God has rejected it from all eternity in His tremendous decrees, because one of the surest signs of reprobation is frequently to receive aids to do well and yet not to make use of them. It is said, secondly, that it is "very near unto a curse," that is, soon to receive the sentence of eternal condemnation, for God is not accustomed to tolerate ingratitude like this for very long: He is sure to avenge it speedily. Thirdly, "whose end" will be "to be burnt," that is, that He will punish it in hell-fire. For this is the punishment allotted to earth that is fertile only in weeds—to be burnt with fire.

VI. Consider sixthly, how carefully, then, thou oughtest to try and correspond with the innumerable graces that God continually rains down on thee, to incite thee to do well: all the more as the grateful earth "receiveth blessing from God" in another sense also, for it moves Him to water it each day with more beneficent showers, and to "enrich it in many ways,"¹ whereas the ungrateful soil moves Him to suspend the course of His mercies, and no longer to rain water, but fire, upon it.

¹ Psalm lxiv. 10.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

In all thy works keep the pre-eminence (Ecclus. xxxiii. 23).

I. Consider first, that this is what must be the end of all thy perfection, to perform those actions that are proper to the community, to the state in which God has placed thee, but to perform them thoroughly well: "In all thy works keep the pre-eminence." Thou allowest thyself to be attracted by actions that do not belong to thee, and thou imaginest that if thou wert in this or that position, thou, too, wouldst do excellent things, grand things, and that thou wouldst succeed in attaining sanctity. But who has told thee so? Thy pride. "Lift not up thy eyes to riches which thou canst not have;"¹ for instead of obtaining the riches of others thou wilt lose thy own, from which meanwhile thou art averting thy eyes. What are the works which it is certain that God requires of thee? They are the duties of thy state. Until thou resolvest to use all diligence in these—"in thy works"—the others to which thou aspirest, although very excellent, will not make thee holy; they will serve rather to keep thee in a state either of restlessness or of delusion.

II. Consider secondly, that holiness does not consist in doing great things, but in doing thy works perfectly. Thus it is said, "In all thy works keep the pre-eminence." Dost thou not see that holiness is not to be sought in the works, but in the worker? The work which falls to thy share may be ignoble, may be trivial, may be of little importance; yet do not doubt that it will suffice to sanctify thee, provided it is done with the greatest possible perfection. What were the great things done by that famous woman who is called the "valiant"? Did she go out to battle, like Debora, to defeat armies? Did she stab some Sisara, like Jahel? cut off the head of some Holofernes, like Judith? If we come to think of it, all her great actions come to this: spinning well—"And her fingers have taken hold of the spindle"²—providing herself with wool and flax, not letting her lamp go out at night: "Her lamp shall not be put out in the night."³ Yet this was enough to make her a saint; she did her duty well, or, to speak more truly, she did it perfectly.

III. Consider thirdly, that this perfection cannot be attained by the mere exterior manner in which thou performest

¹ Prov. xxiii. 19.

² Prov. xxxi. 19.

³ Prov. xxxi. 18.

thy actions, however perfect ; there must be interior perfection. And so to perform thy actions perfectly thou must aim at a great rectitude of intention in everything, always directing what thou doest to God, to the greater pleasure of God, to the greater glory of God. Thy aim must never be lower than this. We have all been created for God—this is our end ; and therefore when any one goes counter to this end, he does evil things ; when he does not pursue this end, he does unprofitable things. Hast thou ever been on some large vessel in a calm ? Thou wilt have seen the passengers all occupied in different amusements to pass the time. Yet if thou askest them what they are doing, they will answer, “We are losing time.” But how is that if, all the while, they are playing, singing, chattering, fishing ? Yes ; but he who is not always in pursuit of his end is losing time, and the end of a sailor is not to fish, chatter, or sing : it is to reach the port. Oh, how much time thou hast often lost in many actions that thou hast performed, because thou hast not always directed them all to God ! Thou hast done them for other ends, if not blameable, at least human ends. “Their works are unprofitable works.”¹

IV. Consider fourthly, that thou must not be satisfied with directing thy actions in this manner. “Keep the pre-eminence.” To make them more perfect, thou must unite them, and with what ? With those similar actions that Jesus performed. These indeed can give them value. For after all, do what thou wilt by thyself, “all thy justice is as an unclean rag.”² Deck thyself as much as thou pleasest in any garments of thine own, thou wilt always appear in the sight of God not only poor, but ragged. What must thou do then ? Thou must come dressed in the rich robes of Jesus. “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”³

Jesus is not like Esau, who took it ill when Jacob dressed himself in his clothes. He is infinitely pleased. And thou wilt thus steal for thyself a much greater blessing than that which was thine by right. For as soon as our Heavenly Father, by thy means, smells “the fragrant smell of His garments,” which is so pure and perfect, “like the smell of a plentiful field,” He considers nothing else, He puts His arms about thy neck, He caresses thee, welcomes thee lovingly, and because of the delight that He receives from thee, treats thee as His first-born, which means that He gives thee far more than thou deservest of thyself. “He hath graced us in His

¹ *Isaias* lix. 6.² *Isaias* lxiv. 6.³ *Romans* xiv. 14.

Beloved Son.”¹ Oh, what an admirable invention for innocently making ourselves cherished by means of that which is another’s!

V. Consider fifthly, that thy actions being thus united, thou must go further. “Keep the pre-eminence.” Thou must enlarge them with the desire of doing much more for God than the little that thou art doing. If thou bringest a contrite sinner to His feet, wish that thou wert able in the same way to bring thither all the universe. If thou givest the sweat of thy brow for Him, wish that thou couldst also shed thy blood for Him. If thou sufferest hardships, wish that thou couldst also suffer outrages for Him. “Lengthen thy cords.”² Dost thou not know how good our Lord is? He does the opposite to what men do: He pays the will just as He does the deed. Wherefore the last labourers, those that came into His vineyard at the eleventh hour, were made equal to the first in their wages, because if they did not work longer, at least they had the desire to do so, and had come to the market-place with their spades as early as the first, waiting to be hired. Since, then, thou hast to do with so good a Lord, do not shut thyself up like a poor snail in the shell of that simple action which thou art performing, but enlarge it with thy desire. “Enlarge the place of thy tent,”³ that it may be so much the more capable of merit. If thou only merit in proportion to the actions that thou performest, thou wilt merit very little. Thou must help thyself also with desires, for though these are unprofitable when at the same time thou neglectest thy actions, yet when they are added to them they are most profitable. “Having the same recompense” as if thou didst the same works that I do, “be you also enlarged.” Thus said the Apostle to his Corinthian disciples.

VI. Consider sixthly, that the action thus enlarged, thou must not even yet be contented. Go forward—“Keep the pre-eminence.” And this must be by recommending this same action to God, that it may be without defect of vanity, or impatience, or inconsideration, or weariness. Who can say how the enemy is always insinuating himself into every good thing that thou doest? Therefore thou must invoke the Divine help in everything, which is what the ancient Fathers of the desert so much recommended, saying that these words should always be on our lips, “O God, come to my assistance.”⁴ And do not allow thyself to believe that thou canst ever be

¹ Ephes. i. 6.² Isaias liv. 2.³ Isaias liv. 2.⁴ Psalm lxxix. 1.

troublesome to God by thus constantly having recourse to Him. Nay, thou canst never give Him greater pleasure. Dost thou not know that He is a lover Who has gone wild with love of thee? Now, one who loves much desires to have a share in every action of the loved one, to have to do with them all, to be mixed up in them all, to take upon himself his business just as if it were his own. If, then, thou wouldst give pleasure to One Who loves thee so much, lay upon Him all the actions that thou performest. Tell Him He must see to them, because thou canst not perform them of thyself, except in a very defective way. "O Lord, make haste to help me." O Lord, help me, for I have no helper besides Thee.

VII. Consider seventhly, that if in all thy actions—"in all thy works"—thou wilt make these four acts just mentioned, of directing them, uniting them, enlarging them, and recommending them, thou wilt do them with full perfection, thou wilt "keep the pre-eminence." It does not seem that more than these four acts can be equally combined in every action, "in all." Whether indeed all these acts do thus meet together in all thy actions, as though pervading all that thou performest, thou canst judge. It is true that at first thou mayest think it difficult to practise them frequently; but not if thou observest that they are not so much to be practised with the understanding as with the heart. This is what the Lord desires. "For who is this that setteth his heart to approach to Me?"¹ He does not say, "That setteth his intellect," He says, "That setteth his heart." If thou hast not the courage to do more, do thus much. In the morning make these acts in a general way, so as to spread them over all that thou doest in the day, and then renew them during the day from time to time, but more particularly, at all events, when thou hast to perform certain actions that are more important. And thus, at least as much as is possible for thee, "In all thy works keep the pre-eminence," doing them exteriorly with exactness, interiorly with very great charity, beyond what is commonly practised; for it is precisely this which is to be "pre-eminent," it is to be distinguished beyond the common condition of men.

¹ Jerem. xxx. 21.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

And My people shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest (Isaias xxxii. 18).

I. Consider first, that the blessed people who are here spoken of, cannot be a people who are imperfect, but a very spiritual, a very holy people: "a peculiar people." For it is presupposed that there is no longer any need for them to be fighting hard all day, but that they already enjoy rest, for they are at once spoken of as sitting: "My people shall sit." But who are they that attain this lot? Few, indeed. They are those only who govern their desires. Those who are governed by them cannot sit, they must always be under arms; and that thou mayest understand the rare happiness of one who, having first fought bravely for a long time, has attained to this dominion over himself, remark the manner of this sitting: he "shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest."

II. Consider secondly, that he who fighting manfully has conquered his passions, "shall sit" for the most part during the rest of his life "in the beauty of peace;" for peace is nothing else, as St. Augustine says, than "the tranquillity of order," so that thou seest that the disturbance of order is the destruction of peace. Now what is this beautiful order that the just man is spoken of as enjoying? He is in order with his neighbour, because he gives way readily to the wishes of others; he does not persecute, he is not ambitious, and he knows how to live in peace even with those who are lovers of war: "With them that hated peace I was peaceable."¹ He is in order with himself, because in him the appetites are subject to reason, and thus he enjoys the beautiful peace of conscience: "Much peace have they that love Thy law:"² and he never feels that solicitude, those bursts of passion, to which an irregular will gives way. He is in order with God, because he always submits to Him in everything, and so he has that deep peace of which it is said, that it surpasses every human joy. "The peace of God, which passeth all thought:" and no longer suffering any disturbance of mind, at least none that is serious, he is thus able to enjoy Him in the happy leisure of a blessed contemplation. It is true that the order is the reverse of what I have here described, because first comes that peace which he has in

¹ Psalm cxix. 7.

² Psalm cxviii. 165.

himself, and from this again springs that which he is able to keep with all his neighbours. Oh, happy wouldst thou be if thou couldst but once for all be enamoured of this precious peace! Dost thou not see how beautiful it is? "My people shall sit in the beauty of peace."

III. Consider thirdly, that this same just man, after having sat "in the beauty of peace" during his life, "shall sit" at death "in the tabernacles of confidence." He will not then be, like the wicked, agitated, anxious, restless, but he will be tranquil: "He will sit." In what? in himself? Not so: "In the tabernacles of confidence," which is as much as to say, in the Wounds of his Lord; for he will not place his confidence in the good that he has done, but in those torments alone which Christ has suffered for him. It is true that, unless it be by some special Divine favour, he will never esteem himself secure to the last; for it is not said, "In the tabernacles of security," but, "In the tabernacles of confidence." Still, the confidence which he has in his Lord will be the greater in proportion to the greatness of the reverential fear he has had for Him in this life, because he knows that so good a Father is sure not to abandon him in his greatest need. And because this extreme need proceeds from the great assaults that Hell makes at that time, the just man will not leave his tent: "He will sit in the tabernacles." He will not fight with Hell, he will treat it with contempt, and only occupy himself in begging his good Lord to keep him safe within His Sacred Wounds: like the dove who does not go out into the open air to fight with the hawk, but only retires into holes that are impenetrable to it, and thus saves itself: "My dove in the cleft of the rock."

IV. Consider fourthly, how this same just man, after having sat "in the tabernacles of confidence" at his death, "shall sit" after death in "wealthy rest," which is that which he will enjoy in the glory of Paradise. In that, indeed, will he rest, and his rest will be "wealthy" in truth! What is rest? Nothing else but the cessation of movement. But this rest is either not to be found on earth, or is not "wealthy," for temporal goods do not give content, spiritual goods do, but not completely; for here they are all given by measure, and so the soul has always something more to wish for. Whereas in Heaven not only will it be contented, but satisfied. "I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear."¹ The memory will be satisfied, for being immersed in so delightful an object as its God, it will

¹ Psalm xvi. 15.

always have Him present. The understanding will be satisfied, for it will see all things in God, will understand all things, will learn all things; will be no longer subject to darkness, any more than to ignorance. The will will be satisfied, for being full of God in the way of love, it will take so deep delight in the beatitude which it discerns in Him that it will make it as its own, and thus will have all that it desires, because it will desire all that which God enjoys. The soul will also be satisfied in the practice of virtues, because it will then practise them all in a perfect degree, except those that are proper to travellers, which being mingled either with sadness or fear, are left behind in the land of exile. It will practise charity, obedience, humility, religion, and above all it will continually practise gratitude, never ceasing to render praise to God. The just man will also be satisfied in the good that he will see imparted to his body also, by the brightness which renders it so beautiful, by the agility which renders it so swift, by the impassibility which renders it immutable, and by the subtlety which spiritualizes it, that is, which makes it act as a spirit. Satisfied in the complete satisfaction which he has in all his senses: his sight satisfied by the perpetual contemplation of the most beautiful, most lovely, most brilliant objects, ever new, in their perpetuity. His hearing satisfied by the sweet harmonies that he will hear resounding on all sides. His sense of smell satisfied by the fragrance which will be given forth by each glorified body, but especially by that of Christ, round which all will crowd like eagles, but not foul ones like ours which only love dead bodies. His taste satisfied by that celestial manna, which will contain, far more than did the earthly one, the multiplicity of all savours. His touch satisfied by the pleasure which is proper to it, and yet pure, which will make him forget all its former sufferings. Satisfied in the converse which he will hold with that great multitude of noble spirits, of saints, men and women, whose discourse will always be loving, prudent, pious, charming, full of delight. And lastly, satisfied with that fulness of satisfaction which there is in God Himself, because as God has no need of anything out of Himself, so the blessed will have no need of anything out of themselves, because in themselves they will have God, with the certainty of never being able to lose Him for all ages. This is the wealthy rest which springs from the possession of all riches.

V. Consider fifthly, that if thou wouldst arrive at this state, thou must belong to this people whom the Lord, in so special

a manner, has here called His—"My people shall sit"—and therefore thou must no longer wish to belong to thyself, but to God only. Try as much as thou canst to serve Him with faithfulness, not wishing to sit down before His own time. If thou desirest peace in life, before peace there must first come war, and therefore thou must thoroughly subject thy passions by mortifying thyself: "And the work of justice shall be peace."¹ If thou desirest confidence at death, fear must go before confidence, and therefore thou must be very solicitous not to displease Him in life Who then will be thy defender: so that, as much as thou canst, thou mayest make Him' thine own, by thinking of Him and recommending thyself to Him often. "With him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end."² If thou desirest rest after death, labour must go before rest; so that thou must spend thyself for God, thou must wear thyself out for God, and care little for human consolations, until at last the time comes when "the spirit," not the body, "bids thee rest from labours."³

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

Israel shall be confounded in his own will (Osee x. 6).

I. Consider first, that the chief reason why so many, even spiritual people, are bent on doing their own will, is because they hope to find rest in it. And yet it is just the contrary. "Israel shall be confounded in his own will." If there is one thing more than another which will put thee in a state of confusion, it is following thine own will. As long as thou followest it, thou wilt never find rest of any sort. Thou wilt always be in doubt whether it is better to act in one way or in another, to associate with thy neighbour or to hold aloof from him, to sleep or watch, to fast or to eat, and the more thou thinkest of it, the more confused thou wilt become. If then thou wouldst live at peace, resolve to live no longer in thine own way, but put thyself under a prudent director who will guide thee.

II. Consider secondly, what is done by two very subtle pleaders who can never come to an agreement between themselves. They elect to abide by the word of an arbitrator, who

¹ *Isaia*s xxxii. 17.

² *Ecclesi*. i. 13.

³ *Apoc*. xiv. 13.

arranges it amicably, and thus puts an end to the contest. "Let us choose to us judgment and let us see among ourselves what is the best."¹ Thus said Job's friends who were always disputing together. The flesh and the spirit are two very formidable pleaders: "For these are contrary one to another."² Oh, how well each of them knows how to bring reasons in his own favour! The spirit says that it is right to do more penance, because the saints did so, because our sins are great, because our passions are not mortified, because it is of no use living in this world except to suffer. And thus "the spirit lusteth against the flesh." The flesh says no, because if we undertake more penances we cannot give the help that we otherwise would to our neighbour. And thus "the flesh lusteth against the spirit."³ Let them contend as much as they like, there will never be any chance of these two pleaders coming to an understanding, unless they make a compromise. "Let us choose to us judgment," this is what they must say, "and let us see among ourselves what is the best."

III. Consider thirdly, that this conflict of which we speak goes on in every man, however learned, enlightened, intelligent, contemplative he may be. If he will guide himself, he will be confounded. "Israel shall be confounded in his own will." But how is this? When such a one as Ephraim is in question, who was weak, deluded, deceived, "not having a heart,"⁴ then, indeed, one could understand it. But Israel! And yet so it is. Israel himself, a man so great, so holy, "seeing God," even he shall be confounded. Therefore thou must understand that even if thou wert raised to high contemplation, to ecstasies, to revelations, to visions, so as to converse very familiarly with God like another Paul, who was rapt even to the third Heaven, thou must not be guided in anything by thine own opinion. Thou, too, must abide by the word of an Ananias: "It shall be told thee what thou must do."⁵ This is the practice of persons dear to God; even though in very high position, of mature years, prudent, and well fitted to guide souls, they let their own be directed by others, just as when they were yet beginners. Hear what is written of Esther, who when living in a palace was the pattern of such lofty souls: "For whatsoever he [Mardochai] commanded, Esther observed: and she did all things in the same manner as she was wont at that time when he brought her up a little one."⁶

¹ Job xxxiv. 4.

⁴ Osee vii. 11.

² Galat. v. 17.

⁵ Acts ix. 7.

³ Galat. v. 17.

⁶ Esther ii. 20.

IV. Consider fourthly, the happiness of him who having become a religious has vowed perpetual obedience, for by this means he is saved from this confusion. His Superiors are those who have to watch as having to render an account of his soul.¹ He can rest upon them most tranquilly in everything wherein there is not manifest sin. He has no longer to render an account of himself, others have to render it for him, he has only to obey. For the rest, whether he does little penance or much, studies or sings psalms, preaches, contemplates, or confesses, is occupied in the kitchen or in the pulpit, he is certain always to be doing what is most pleasing to God in that particular circumstance, even though he should be playing some game out of obedience at the time when others are all disciplining themselves severely. Is not this a marvellous rest? Yet so it is. "He that keepeth the commandments shall find no evil."²

V. Consider fifthly, that the other end for which people love so much to do their own will is to attain not only rest, but glory; almost as if it was a mean thing for any one to do the will of another, a grand thing to do one's own. And yet it is quite the contrary. If thou dost thy own will, not only thou wilt not have glory, but thou wilt have confusion. "Israel shall be confounded in his own will." It is extremely displeasing to God that men should follow their own wills, because He sees that these are like wild horses that drag them towards a precipice. What then does He do? He makes these horses stumble, so that their riders are ignominiously thrown on their faces to the ground, in mid-career, to the laughter of the bystanders. Thou succeedest by dint of incredible trouble in getting possession of a certain pulpit, a certain church, a certain post, without knowing, humanly speaking, how it will be with thee. Thou hopest to acquit thyself with credit, to get on, to make thyself a name; but if God is merciful to thee the contrary will happen, thou wilt find humiliation. For ordinarily speaking it would be very bad for thee to succeed in thy plans. Thou wouldst become so attached to thy own will, that thou wouldst lose thy soul. What, then, must thou do? Let thyself be guided by those whose business it is. "Obey your prelates and be subject to them."³ "Obey," by thy promptitude of action. "Be subject" with the subjection of thy understanding, which consists in the conviction that what is commanded is always the best. Consider the example of

¹ Hebrews xiii. 17.² Eccles. viii. 5.³ Hebrews xiii. 17.

Jonas. Thou mightest have thought that he was much better off in his ship than in the belly of a whale! And yet it was just the contrary. In the ship, because he had entered it of his own will—"he found a ship"—instead of enjoying peace he endured tempests, and instead of gaining glory he was put to shame. Dost thou think it was a light disgrace when the lots declared him to be the cause of the great storm that arose at sea? On the other hand, even in a whale's belly he enjoyed peace, because he did not enter it of his own will, and even in a whale's belly he gained glory. He enjoyed peace; for, as thou seest, he was able to sing hymns. He gained glory; for it was this monster that by vomiting him out on the shore, won for him so much credit that no sooner did he begin preaching than he sanctified sinful Ninive. Have, therefore, the greatest faith in the value of obedience, and hold it for certain, that whoever would rule himself will be confounded. "Israel shall be confounded in his own will." Who is it that will never be confounded? He, only, who obeys. "If they shall hear and observe, they shall accomplish their days in good, and their years in glory."¹ "They shall accomplish their days in good," because they shall live most tranquilly; "and they shall accomplish their years in glory," because they shall die renowned.

THIRTIETH DAY.

For the desire of money is the root of all evils; which some coveting have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows (1 Timothy vi. 10).

I. Consider first, that in one way the germ of the fruit is in the stem, in another in the root. Whatever is produced by the root, is produced also by the stem. But then the root has this superiority, that it nourishes it. Now this is the difference that exists between pride and the love of money, of which latter alone the Apostle here speaks, calling it covetousness, or as appears more clearly in the original text, *philargyria*, which means desire of money, "love of money." Pride also abundantly engenders all the same evils that the love of money does; but the love of money nourishes them as well. And so, whereas pride is simply called "the beginning of all sin,"² the

¹ Job xxxvi. 11.

² Ecclus. x. 15.

love of money is called "the root." If people were not so eagerly set on advancing their interests and heaping up riches, dost thou think that pride would have so much power? Look at a proud man who is poor : he cannot carry on his evil-doing for anything like the same length of time as a proud man who is rich : nay, he cannot even begin by doing so much. And therefore it seems that pride, considered by itself, is rather the beginning of all evil in the order of intention, because the first thing that man desires is pre-eminence, so that it may rather be considered as the stem : "Pride is the beginning of all sin." The love of money is rather the beginning of all evil in the order of execution, because it is the first thing which supplies man with the material for gaining the desired pre-eminence, by means of money which is all-powerful, and so it is rather to be considered as the root : "The desire of money is the root of all evils." Again, it is not said that the love of money is the root of all evils because it produces them all in every one, but because it is capable of producing them, and always does actually produce a great many of them : and it is in this sense, too, that pride is affirmed to be the flourishing stock from which spring so many evils. A tree does not always produce at one time all the fruit which it can produce. But what does that prove? Dost thou not at once root out of thy garden that which never produces any but poisonous fruits? Do not wonder then if the love of money has not yet produced in thee all those pernicious effects that belong to it ; it will produce them very soon. Dost thou not hear what the Apostle tells thee, that it is the root ?

II. Consider secondly, how, in order to say in a summary way, that the love of money not only can produce, but in fact also has produced every possible evil result, the Apostle says that it has even produced infidelity : "For the desire of money is the root of all evils, which some coveting have erred from the faith." Here for greater clearness thou must observe that the relative pronoun "which" does not apply to cupidity, but to money, which is understood but not expressed in the Latin text. This is what is coveted. The Apostle might have said, however, that the love of money engenders hardness of heart towards the poor, quarrels, deceit, frauds, breaches of faith, but he has contented himself with saying that it even produces infidelity. Now, see how this is in the understanding itself. There have been many who through fear of suffering have denied the faith, but the evil in them was not that their under-

standing was perverted, but that their will had gone astray and become weak : precisely as it was with St. Peter. But the love of money can do more than any fear, however great ; because it causes evil not only in the will, but also in the understanding. And yet the Apostle does not say, "Which some coveting have *denied* the faith," but "have *erred* from the faith." And the reason of this is, that the Christian faith is quite opposed to all the inclinations of those who love money, and yet being unable to resist the sharp stings of conscience, they go on deceiving themselves little by little, trying to persuade themselves that many things in the future life are not so certain as some assert them to be. "Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present."¹ But why such great confidence? "No man hath been known to have returned from Hell."² And this is not all : but inasmuch as it is their object at all costs to keep their evil gains, because this is their first principle, when they no longer find sound doctrines in their favour, they set themselves to get hold of broad, baseless, infidel doctrines, and very soon become so attached to what is false, that they not only embrace but worship it. "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped."³ See, then, whether it is reasonable to allow this accursed love of money to lord it over thee as thou dost. It will pervert thy understanding in such a manner, that it will take from thee even thy faith. Observe what these insatiable lovers of money come to : to making an idol of it. "Of their silver and their gold they have made idols to themselves, that they might perish."⁴ But do not think that they are only idolaters. They are schismatics, they are heretics, they are Jews and Turks, anything that you please, because the love of money makes them join any faith that from time to time they esteem more suitable to their present state. And so it appears that, to say the truth, they have no certain faith, but rather go wandering from one faith to another, as best suits them : "According to the multitude of his fruit he hath multiplied altars."⁵ And this is what the Apostle meant to say in a more forcible manner when he says that they "have erred from the faith." He means that they have wandered from faith to faith, and that therefore they are truly atheists.

III. Consider thirdly, how the Apostle does not say that "Having money, they have erred from the faith," but "coveting." Because he who has it, and does not covet it, will not

¹ Wisdom ii. 6. ² Wisdom ii. 1. ³ Romans i. 25.

⁴ Osee viii. 4. ⁵ Osee x. i.

fall into so much evil. But he who covets it will fall into evil, in order to acquire it, if he does not yet possess it. The evil is not, then, in having the money, for some have even reaped great profit from it; it is only in coveting it. "There is not a more wicked thing than to love money," says Ecclesiasticus.¹ He says "love," not "have." Nevertheless note well, that those who have reaped great profit from their money, have not reaped it as long as they have kept the money, but when they have dispensed it abundantly amongst the poor, to churches, or to convents, which is as much as to say when they have already begun to have it no longer. Nay, more, dost thou know who those are who have reaped profit from it, and not only great profit, but the greatest? Those who, trampling it under foot, have left it all for God. So thou seest, however thou mayest act, so long as thou keepest money it is good for nothing: it is able to do thee more harm than good, for it can make thee love it, if it can do no more. Then only will it do thee great good when, like those who are alms-givers, generous, and piously magnificent, thou deprivest thyself of it, in part, for God. And it will do thee the very greatest good, when thou deprivest thyself of it all for God, as the rich do who consecrate themselves to God in religion. You see clearly, then, that the supreme honour of being assessor to Christ in the Judgment is not promised to the rich who now and then distribute a great part of their possessions for Him in holy works, but to those who leave all for Him. "God doth not cast away the mighty, whereas He Himself also is mighty. But He saveth not the wicked, and He giveth judgment to the poor."²

IV. Consider fourthly, that even were there an end of this evil which the love of money causes in the understanding of many of its followers, by taking from them their faith, there are others without number which it produces continually in their will. And on that account the Apostle says, that these most wretched men "have entangled themselves in many sorrows." "Sorrow," in the Sacred Scriptures, has a double signification. Sometimes it signifies the evil of sin: "Suffer me therefore that I may lament my sorrow a little."³ Because the saints found no greater sorrow in the world than their own sin. At other times it signifies the evil of punishment: "And that this may be my comfort, that afflicting me with sorrow, He spare not."⁴ Therefore, in whichever sense thou choosest to take it, it is always most true, that these miserable lovers of

¹ Eccclus. x. 10.² Job xxxvi. 6.³ Job x. 20.⁴ Job vi. 10.

money "have entangled themselves in many sorrows." Because as to sins, thou seest that they have not only fallen into them, but "have entangled themselves;" they are so wrapped round and caught as it were in a net, that they cannot extricate themselves, and would rather die and lose their souls than faithfully make the reparation they ought. And this is why it is said that "they that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil."¹ Money, to those who have it not, serves first as a temptation to acquire it wrongly; and then again to those who have acquired it wrongly, it serves as a snare with which the devil binds them, so that he never lets them go again. "He that loveth gold, shall not be justified."² And as to the punishment, who can ever doubt that these wretches "have always entangled themselves in many sorrows." Oh, how thick are the thorns in which they entangle themselves up to the eyes. The labours that they endure in accumulating their money are thorns. The fears that they experience in possessing it are thorns. The torments that they suffer in being deprived of it are thorns. So that we may very justly say that they "sow sorrows and reap them."³ For they "sow sorrows," inasmuch as they are the evils of sin, "and reap them," inasmuch as they are the evils of punishment resulting from sin. And yet, would to God, that these sorrows ended with this life. There still remain those of the other, in which they have, likewise, but too truly "entangled themselves" by their own fault. For had Christ said: "Blessed are the rich, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven," they might justly blame Him if they did not save their souls, because their salvation would not always be in their own power. But since He has clearly said, "Blessed are the poor," they can blame no one except themselves. For they could easily have made themselves poor, and yet they would not. And now, what dost thou say? Dost thou think it well to give a place in thy heart to this love of money, which produces no other fruit save sorrow?

V. Consider fifthly, that if, unfortunately, thou hast already done this, thou must use every possible exertion in order to get rid of it. I say exertion, because no ordinary labour whatever is enough here. "For the desire of money is the root of all evils." When we have to do with sensuality, with envy, with anger, or other like affections, it is the branches of the tree with which we have to do. And therefore we must work hard, certainly, to break them, for they are branches of the

¹ Timothy vi. 9.

² Ecclus. xxxi. 5.

³ Job iv. 8.

tree of malice. But yet at last they are broken. When we have to do with pride it cannot be denied that we must work hard to cut it down, because it is with the trunk of the tree that we have to do. But at last, in spite of itself, it too must fall before the repeated blows of the axe. But when we have to do with the love of money, we have to do with the root of the tree. Oh, what strong arms are needed to root it up! What wrenches! What shocks! What toil! And God grant that they may be successful. Thou seest, then, that we must be convinced that this affection for money cannot be conquered except by dint of many contrary acts, by much care, much courage, and much prayer. It is the strongest of all affections. Nor shouldst thou be surprised at it, because all other affections tend to one definite good. Sensuality to the gratification of the flesh. Envy to the humiliation of our rival. Anger to the overthrow of our enemy. Pride tends to a good which is more diffused, the advancement of self; but still it also tends to a single good. But love of money tends to one which is reputed to contain in itself all other goods, that is, money. "All things obey money."¹ He who has plenty of money considers that he can easily compass his own advancement, the overthrow of his enemy, the humiliation of his rival, and even, what he desires more, the gratification of the flesh; and thus he who loves money considers that he loves a good which is at least equivalent to an infinite good, and in consequence he also loves it infinitely. "A covetous man shall not be satisfied with money."²

Now, if thou sayest that thou dost not know that this shameful affection exists in thee, that thou hast always detested it, consider well, for I greatly fear that thou indeed dost not know it. Dost thou not know that love of money is the root? "For the desire of money is the root of all evils." Sensuality, envy, anger, are all branches: they are seen directly. Pride is the trunk, which is seen still more easily. But love of money is the root, and therefore what wonder if the growth that it has attained is not perceived. It is underground. Oh, under what pretexts of necessity, of convenience, of charity, of the greater love of God, does that hateful love of money lie buried in the hearts of more than one of us! Dost thou not see how it creeps even into religious who yet have left all things? There may be a preacher who from his pulpit denounces the love of money as a hydra with a thousand heads. And yet, God grant

¹ Eccles. x. 19.² Eccles. v. 9.

that he may not have obtained this very pulpit for himself at the suggestion of this same love of money! Therefore thou must enter into and narrowly examine thyself, for the love of money lies deep. Besides, it is possible that thou mayest cherish a greater love for a very small sum than another does for a splendid inheritance. On what does the serpent feed but dust? And yet he enjoys it as much as thou enjoyest bread: "And dust shall be the serpent's food."¹ Thou must get the habit, then, of trying thyself in those little things which belong to thee according to thy state; see whether thou give willingly, deprive thyself willingly, spend willingly, give alms to the poor willingly, when thou canst, although they may be small. And if thou seest that thou truly dost this more than willingly, it will be a good sign. But if thou findest that there is a difficulty in thy heart in doing these things, do not flatter thyself. By the grace of God, those noxious fruits that the love of money produces will not be found in thee, because there is little to nourish them, but dost thou think that the root is not there?

THIRTY-FIRST DAY.

I will lead thee by the paths of equity, which, when thou shalt have entered, thy steps shall not be straitened, and when thou runnest thou shalt not meet a stumbling-block (Prov. iv. 11, 12).

I. Consider first, what are these paths of equity by which God offers to lead thee. They are His Evangelical Counsels. His Commandments are called "ways," His Counsels "paths," as follows: "Show, O Lord, Thy ways to me, and teach me Thy paths."² The ways are more apparent, the paths less so, and so it is enough for some one to point out the former to thee: "Show . . . to me;" for the latter thou must have some one to teach thee carefully: "Teach me." Pray to God, then, that He will make thee to know these also well, that thou mayest be incited to follow them too, if it be for His glory.

II. Consider secondly, the first reason for which the Evangelical Counsels are called "paths." It is because they are narrower ways than those of the Commandments. Nevertheless thou hast no occasion to be dismayed, for they are

¹ Isaias lxx. 25.

² Psalm xxiv. 4.

only narrow at the beginning. For the rest, "When thou shalt have entered," thou wilt walk in them with as much ease as in the broad: "Thy steps shall not be straitened." For what are the steps of the soul? They are the affections. By these the soul is brought to God, and as they become more inflamed they will always love greater strictness, purity, poverty, obedience, so that in process of time the soul goes so quickly that it runs. Spiritual steps are very unlike material ones. Material steps, after prolonged movement, grow weary at last. Spiritual steps not only do not grow weary, but it is then that, on the contrary, they become more vigorous. And so it is said, "When thou runnest thou shalt not meet a stumbling-block." For he who goes slowly in the service of God often stumbles, often trips, and often falls, whilst he who runs goes quite safely. Because running, in this case, is nothing but having a great love for our Lord, and he who loves much finds no difficulties. Therefore, if thou observest, it is not said that there will not be a stumbling-block, but that "thou shalt not meet," &c.; because in religion there is no lack from time to time even of great difficulties; but as the religious loves much, it is as if they did not exist: "Thou shalt not meet."

III. Consider thirdly, the second reason for which the Evangelical Counsels are called "paths," in comparison with the Commandments. It is because they are ways trodden by the smaller number of persons. Nevertheless, this again must not alarm thee; thou must rather take courage from it, for thou knowest that Paradise is for the few, it is not for the many: "Few find it." Those who profess the Evangelical Counsels are the fewer in number, it is true, but they are the greater in regard to worth; they are the more learned, the more wise, the more favoured by Heaven. In the world itself, the perfect ways of any sort are only trodden by the few. There are fewer theologians than canonists, fewer architects than bricklayers, fewer artificers than mechanics. And then who does not see that the paths are better than the public ways, exactly for this reason, because they are frequented by the few? So that thou canst walk along them more easily: "Thy steps shall not be straitened." There is not so much human respect, there are not so many checks, so many considerations, as where the multitude either leads thee out of thy way by bad example, or where many distract and divert thee by inviting thee to stop. Thus thou seest that although religious are the fewest in number, yet in proportion there are

more amongst them who go to Heaven. Observe who are the saints that thou oftenest hearest of being canonized. Thou wilt see that the most, without comparison, were religious. For although religious are bound to correspond with God more than others, on account of the greater gift that they have received from God, according to these words, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required,"¹ yet in fact they do correspond more. Hast thou ever remarked what thou hast so often listened to in the Holy Gospel? Which of the servants was it who left his talent idle and did not correspond to the master's expectation? Was it he who had received many? No, indeed. It was he who had received one only.

IV. Consider fourthly, the third reason for which, lastly, the Evangelical Counsels are called "paths," in comparison of the Commandments. It is because they are a kind of short cut which leads to Heaven more quickly. But neither oughtest thou to take fright at this, as if, as some think, they would kill thee before thy time. It is not so. It is not mortification that makes death come any sooner. It is those wrong-doings, those habitual debauches, those sensualities, those quarrels, that ambition, that audacity, all those other evils from which the religious state delivers thee. "Now the sting of death is sin."² Dost thou know why the Counsels are said to be short cuts to Heaven? Because they are, by their nature, more direct ways. They make thee live with greater perfection, since thou givest to our Lord not only the fruits, but also the tree, and so thou art out of the difficulty at once. "Running by a nearer way,"³ unhindered by that solicitude which comes with the care of property, of a family, or of thyself, whom thou hast consecrated to God by the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. And as they make thee live with greater perfection, so consequently do they bring thee more quickly to Heaven, because they make thy stay shorter in Purgatory. There is, however, another cause why thy stay there should be shortened: the penances proper to the religious state, the great number of Indulgences, the intercommunion of good works in religion, the succour, the suffrages, and the nature of the act that thou didst make in consecrating thyself to God by solemn vows, which is likened to the act of martyrdom. So thou seest that in every respect "thy steps shall not be straitened" by these

¹ St. Luke xii. 48.² 1 Cor. xv. 56.³ 2 Kings xviii. 23.

ways, and that "when thou runnest thou shalt not meet a stumbling-block," for at the least it will remove many of the obstacles which remain, even after death, to thy getting sooner to Heaven. And this is what the Apostle meant in these words: "Let us hasten, therefore, to enter into that rest."¹ Let us do a great deal of good, because then we shall go thither more speedily; there will be less to make good before we enter into it.

V. Consider fifthly, that these paths, that is, these narrower, more solitary ways, these short cuts, which are by distinctive name termed paths, are called paths of equity: "I will lead thee by the paths of equity," because it is not a matter of obligation but only of equity, that is to say, of rectitude, of propriety, of convenience, to go by them. Our Lord does not force us to embrace His Evangelical Counsels, He only exhorts us. But dost thou not see how becoming it is that thou shouldst embrace them? Becoming as regards thyself, becoming as regards God. As regards thyself, because thou dost a very great benefit to thy own soul, to which, it is true, thou art not bound. But what does that prove? Do it out of charity, if for nothing else. "Have pity on thy own soul." When thou contentest thyself with the precepts thou payest a debt to it, when thou embracest the counsels thou showest pity to it. And if thou dost not show pity to thy own soul, to whom wilt thou show it? As regards God—for since He has given Himself wholly to thee without keeping back anything, what is more reasonable than that thou likewise shouldst give thyself wholly to Him? But thou canst never give thyself altogether unless it be in religion. Out of religion thou mayest give Him the use of thyself. In religion thou not only givest Him the use, but also the possession. "Have pity," then, "on thy own soul, pleasing God,"² since not only is it a matter of duty, but the more thou hast pity on thyself the more wilt thou please God.

VI. Consider sixthly, that it is so excellent a thing to follow these ways of which we have been speaking, that notwithstanding all the virtuous actions thou mayest do, thou canst never merit, at least *de condigno*, to decide for thyself on following them. God must take thee, as it were, by the hand, and lead thee—"I will lead thee by the paths of equity"—for the religious vocation is, by universal consent, a gratuitous gift. It is true that thou canst do much to co-operate with it,

¹ Hebrews iv. 11.

² Eccclus. xxx. 24.

by begging it earnestly of our Lord; by often applying thy mind to such considerations as will incite thee to embrace it, by removing, as far as thou canst, any obstacles to it, by frequent confessions, frequent Communion, and by taking care, if thou art still young, not to ruin thy palate with the poisoned chalice of Babylon.

And if thou art already a religious, think often on the grace that God has given thee by deigning to place thee in this state: "He has led you." Dost thou think that God is under obligation to thee because thou hast left the world out of love for Him? Thou art much mistaken. Thou art under obligation to Him, and yet He, by excess of charity, will even reward thee as if He were under obligation to thee. Besides, thou didst not choose Him, He chose thee, "He has led you," and God grant that thou hast not made a very long resistance to Him! What must thou do, then? Try to correspond with Him, taking care not to be one of those who "have halted from their paths"¹ by going slowly, by wandering about, by stopping, and even sometimes by returning to the world. If thou dost this, what will it have availed thee to have wisely taken the shortest way to Heaven, "running by a nearer way"? Never let a day pass, then, on which thou dost not say to God from thy heart these words: "Perfect Thou my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps be not moved."²

¹ Psalm xvii. 46.

² Psalm xvi. 5.

APRIL.

FIRST DAY.

For what things soever were written, were written for our learning, that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope (Romans xv. 4).

I. Consider first, how great is the benefit which God bestowed on us when He left us a treasure so priceless and inexhaustible as that of the Sacred Scriptures. They were all directly dictated by His own mouth, and this is why they are called "Scriptures," not compositions: "What things soever were written," not, "What things soever were composed." For the Prophets did not employ labour or study on their books, as other saints did; they simply wrote what was dictated to them from time to time, understanding the whole of it at once. And as He Who dictated was most rapid, their only effort was to keep up with Him, and to this David alluded when he said: "My tongue is the pen of a scrivener that writeth swiftly."¹ Now these precious and Sacred Scriptures, which are described as "what things soever were written," were all intended for our good: they "were written for our learning," God having no need to dictate them, except for our instruction. See, therefore, how greatly you are bound to thank Him for so ample, so solid, so substantial a doctrine as this which you receive from His own mouth. What reason have you not to say, with Isaias: "Glorify ye the Lord in instruction."²

II. Consider secondly, that all teaching, to be perfect, must be profitable—profitable both to the understanding and the will—and such is the teaching which thou receivest in the Sacred Scriptures: "I am the Lord thy God, that teach thee profitable things."³ It is profitable to the understanding, because, when it is speculative doctrine, it teaches thee what

¹ Psalm xliv. 2.

² Isaias xxiv. 15.

³ Isaias xlviii. 17.

is true, and repels what is false; and it is profitable to the will, because, when it is practical doctrine, it withdraws thee from evil and leads thee to good; and more than this, no sound doctrine can do. Wherefore it is said: "All Scripture inspired of God is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct;"¹ "to teach and reprove" in so far as it is speculative, teaching what is true and reproofing what is false; "to correct and instruct," in so far as it is practical, correcting what is evil, and instructing in what is good. Oh, then, how perfect is this doctrine which God has given thee! And how greatly should it increase thy loving gratitude when thou seest that "what things soever were written, were written for our learning," and that they were written, not to give us an ordinary doctrine, but one worthy of God, that is to say, a perfect doctrine. Alas for those who not only despise but reject a doctrine such as this: "They have abhorred Him Who speaketh perfectly."²

III. Consider thirdly, that the main end which God had in giving us this perfect teaching which is contained in the Sacred Scriptures was to strengthen our weakness, in attaining that eternal beatitude which is the last end for which we were all created. For, as thou seest, eternal beatitude is a vast good, but hard to win; and so we often despair of attaining it, because as we are at first attracted by its greatness, so after a time we are daunted by its difficulty. What, then, has God done? He has so planned His Sacred Scriptures, both speculative and practical, that they have all one object, to enable us to overcome this difficulty, and that in two ways: by giving us wonderful precepts and examples of suffering, and by giving us wonderful precepts and examples of the consolation which suffering brings with it. It is incredible how these two things help us to overcome the difficulty which is attached to the attainment of eternal beatitude, and so to increase our hope of attaining it: and we find the Scriptures full of them both. Therefore, it is said that, "What things soever were written, were written for our learning," that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, that is, through the patience and comfort of which we read in the Scriptures, "we might have hope." Happy, indeed, wouldst thou be if thou wouldst one day set thyself steadily to study these wonderful precepts and examples which the Sacred Scriptures put before us, both of patience and of consolation! Thou wouldst very soon gain

¹ 2 Timothy iii. 16.² Amos v. 20.

such light in thy understanding, such strength in thy will, that in future no difficulty would be able to frighten thee. I cannot set all these things down here, for they are infinite; but thou mayest collect them for thyself if thou wilt, for the Scriptures are not a closed garden, but an open field wherein whoever enters may gather flowers.

IV. Consider fourthly, that the Sacred Scriptures not only describe the patience and consolation of which we are speaking, but, further, they impart them. When, therefore, it is said, "Through patience of the Scriptures," and "through consolation of the Scriptures," it does not mean only "of which we read in the Scriptures," but "which is imparted by the Scriptures." For God's words are efficacious, and have therefore a wonderful power, not only of impressing their meaning on us, but of infusing it into us. They set before thee the patience, the consolation of which they speak, and at the same time they infuse them into thee in such a way, that thou wonderest to see thyself so completely changed in so brief a space. This is why it was said of Christ that "His speech was with power."¹ And that not only because He always spoke by His own authority, from His own mind and thought, and not like the Prophets of old, who always added, "Thus saith the Lord," but also because He spoke with so strange an energy, so marvellous an expression, so rare an efficacy, that He obtained at once all that He intended. No sooner did He say to Matthew, when closely surrounded by a thousand snares of covetousness and fraud, "Follow Me," than he immediately came after Him, like a child. Now, the Holy Scriptures have the like power when read with suitable dispositions: they impart what they signify. So, in the case we are dealing with, they impart patience and consolation: patience, by causing the will, which at first so much abhorred suffering, to be actually in love with it: and consolation, by dispersing the clouds which at first darkened the understanding, so that it perceives clearly that after all the one true happiness of man on earth is to suffer for God: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations."² I know that a like effect is sometimes produced by other good books, but with a great difference, for it is neither so speedy nor so deep. When it is God Who speaks, how His words pierce the soul! "The Word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword."³ He is "living,"

¹ St. Luke ix. 32.

² St. James i. 2.

³ Hebrews iv. 12.

who, though not actually working, has yet the power to do so; but he who is actually working is "effectual" as well. And the words of God have both these qualities; they are "living and effectual"—oh, how effectual!—"more piercing than any two-edged sword." And what is it to penetrate like a sword, but to pass through with the utmost speed and to the utmost depth? So does the Word of God. And thou askest why it is likened to a two-edged sword?" It is for the same reason which I mentioned before, because it gains a double victory at the same moment, conquering the understanding with one edge and the will with the other, and so gaining entire possession of thee.

V. Consider fifthly, how right it is, from these considerations, that thou shouldst apply thyself to reading the Scriptures, such portions, at least, as are suitable for thee. It is true that Holy Scripture is not to be read like other books; it should rather be a careful meditation, for this is an act of reverence which we owe to God, Who speaks to us in them with His own lips. Thus thou wilt find that holy David never speaks of merely reading them, but always of meditating on them: "I have meditated on Thy law: I will meditate on Thy commandments. I will think of Thy justifications. My eyes to Thee have prevented the morning, that I might meditate on Thy words."¹ Besides, it is not possible in any other way to gather from them the fruit which is intended; for the words of God are very deep, and require profound research. "Blessed are they that search His testimonies."² It is not said, "They who read," but, "They who search;" for in order to discover a vein of gold, it is not enough to turn up the earth with a plough, we must plunge into its bowels with the pickaxe. And do not be afraid if at first thou seemest not to understand, for neither did Queen Candace's eunuch at first understand what he was reading out of the great Prophet Isaias, as he drove in his chariot: "Thinkest thou that thou understandest what thou readest?"³ And yet, because the poor man did what he could, on his part, by attentively reading the Scriptures, although he did not understand them, God found the means of enabling him to understand them thoroughly. So, too, will it be with thee. It may be, indeed, that no Philip will come to thee, as he did to the eunuch, to be thy teacher; but that matters not. "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding."⁴ God will

¹ Psalm cxviii.

² Psalm cxviii. 2.

³ Job xxxii. 8.

⁴ Acts viii. 30.

supply everything by His interior inspirations, as thou knowest He has often done in the case of so many simple virgins consecrated to Him in the cloister, who have had the wonderful gift of profiting by those Divine words which were never explained to them by any one. Make those words, therefore, thy favourite nourishment; let not a day pass without meditating on some of them. Gradually they will draw thee from taking pleasure in worthless books. "What hath the chaff to do with the wheat? saith the Lord."¹ They will wean thee from idle talking, they will give thee a taste for prayer, they will cure thee of idleness, they will purify thy lips by furnishing thee with matter for pious conversations; and, above all, they will provide ready to thy hand in all the difficulties of the spiritual life the help thou needest: so that thou wilt find patience and consolation, as those noble Machabees did who, when afflicted, forsaken, cast down, and persecuted, declared that they lacked nothing in the world: "We, though we needed none of these things." And why? Only because they had sufficient comfort in those Sacred Scriptures which they always carried in their hands even when under arms. "Having for our comfort the Holy Books that are in our hands."² Nor should this surprise thee: for it is, as I said before, the main end for which the Sacred Scriptures are intended: "What things soever were written, were written for our learning, that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope."

SECOND DAY.

In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin
(Ecclus. vii. 40).

I. Consider first, how greatly freedom from mortal sin is to be prized in this miserable world. This is the gift to obtain which the saints have wearied Heaven with so many prayers. And yet it is of faith, that if thou desirest this gift it is in thy power to gain it. All that is required is, I do not say to torture thy body, but to put in practice the very easy directions given thee by the Wise Man, which is in all that thou doest to remember the Four Last Things, which are so

¹ Jerem. xxiii. 28.

² Mach. xii. 9.

familiar to thee. "In all thy works remember thy last end." Do this, and see what He promises: "Thou shalt never sin." If thou hadst to spend an eternity on earth, thou wouldst keep thyself free from sin for that eternity. How great, then, is thy folly if thou forgettest it! Perhaps thou thinkest that God requires thee to be always considering these things, profoundly meditating on them? Not so; for He knows that this would be no easy task "in all thy works." What He requires of thee is to "remember" them, presupposing that thou hast already meditated on them, as thou oughtest from time to time.

II. Consider secondly, that the first of these Last Things is Death. But so far from the thought of it acting as a check to restrain some souls from sin, it has rather acted as a spur to urge them to commit it. "Our life shall pass away like the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist," said some of these wicked men, on remembering that death was hanging over them. And yet what consequence did they draw from this? Only to take every pains to pass the time pleasantly: "Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth."¹ For these men foolishly believed that death is the end of everything: "Our body shall be ashes and our spirit shall be poured abroad as soft dew."² Now, this is why the Wise Man does not bid thee remember *one* last thing (*novissimum*), but uses the plural number (*novissima*), because, in order to make the thought of death profitable to thee, thou must remember that after death will come a severe Judgment: "It is appointed to men once to die, and after this the Judgment."³ Nor is this all; but to that Judgment belongs the tremendous sentence of eternal punishment or eternal reward: "And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting."⁴ Here is the efficacy of this great preservative. It is undeniable that each of its four parts is very powerful, nevertheless their full force lies in their combination. Remember, therefore, thy last end.

III. Consider thirdly, the source of this great strength. It is this: So long as the four virtues called cardinal—prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude—reign in thee, there is no danger of thy sinning, for these are the virtues which regulate the whole man. Prudence regulates his reason, making it wise

¹ Wisdom ii. 3—6.

² Wisdom ii. 3.

³ Hebrews ix. 27.

⁴ St. Matt. xxv. 46.

in deliberating ; justice regulates his will, making it right in executing ; temperance regulates his concupiscent appetite, so as to make him spurn all that allures him to what is pleasant in vice ; and fortitude regulates his irascible appetites, so as to make him overcome all that is repugnant to him in the practice of virtue. Now if there is one thing more powerful than another to promote in thee the reign of these four noble perfections, it is the remembrance of the Four Last Things. For the remembrance of Death will clear thy brain of the fumes of ambition and pride, which are what most cloud the understanding ; and thus will give thee prudence. The remembrance of Judgment brings before thee that severe Judge, Who will review the account thou must render ; and thus will teach thee justice. The remembrance of Hell will subdue thy appetite for those pleasures which bring after them such grievous punishment ; and so will encourage thee to temperance. The thought of Heaven will lessen thy apprehension of those sufferings which shall be changed into such great joy, and so will give thee fortitude. And if this be true, how is it possible for thee to sin in such a state? "Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin."

IV. Consider fourthly, that in spite of what has been said, it seems as though this promise of Ecclesiasticus were not sure ; for there are many persons who frequently think of these last things, some preaching on them in churches, others lecturing on them from the professor's chair, others, again, representing them with consummate art on canvas or in marble, who do not, for all that, lead holy lives ! But, if thou goest closely into the matter, thou wilt see that these men treat the subject in the abstract. For it is not said merely, "Remember *the* last end," but, "*thy* last end." In order to be kept from sinning thou must always remember that it is thou thyself who wilt very shortly come to that bed of death, that coffin, that grave, and be food for loathsome worms. It is thou thyself that art concerned in the tremendous Judgment, and whom that punishment awaits, if thou yieldest to temptation ; or else that reward, if thou resistest it. Very different is the force of these truths when considered with regard to others, and when applied to ourselves. And is it not plain that what is here needed is not a speculative, but a practical reflection? For this reason it is said, "In thy works." Of what use is it to have beautiful representations of the last things on the walls of thy room, in thy writings or discourses ?

These are but dead images: what thou needest is to have living realities themselves in thy actions: "In all thy works."

V. Consider fifthly, how it is that this preservative of the Wise Man, though so easy to apply, is, nevertheless, applied by so few. The reason is, that it appears a severe remedy. This, however, it is not, nay, in process of time it becomes most delightful. It is true, indeed, that thoughts of the next world seem irksome and melancholy, but they are not so really. On the contrary, as thou hast seen, it is just such thoughts that contribute, more than anything else, to keep the conscience pure: "Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin;" and thus they bring with them that deep joy which springs, not from sight, or hearing, or any yet more ignoble sense, but from the heart, and which, therefore, surpasses every other. "There is no pleasure above the joy of the heart."¹ And so when the same writer says: "Give not thy heart to sadness, but drive it far from thee," he immediately adds, "And remember the latter end,"² as though the thoughts of these last things were the surest means of keeping man's heart free from those clouds which so greatly disturb its serenity, that is, from sins.

THIRD DAY.

Re:urn as you had deeply revolted, O children of Israel (Isaias xxxi. 6).

I. Consider first, that if thou wouldst know what is the test of a perfect conversion, it is here given thee. Thou must draw near to God in the same measure as thou hast departed from Him: "Return as you had deeply revolted, O children of Israel." But surely this is not a just rule; for it is but reasonable that thou shouldst do much more to appease God than thou hast done to anger Him? Seest thou how merciful He is pleased to be to thee: He will be appeased if only thou dost so much. Appeased, did I say? He will welcome thee, He will caress thee, He will do for thee every good thing that thou canst ask of Him. Wouldst thou see this clearly? Look, then, from what a state He calls thee—even from the depths! If, when thou art in such a state as this—"in the

¹ Ecclus. xxx. 16.

² Ecclus. xxxviii. 21.

depths"—He thinks of thee, seeks thee, cheers thee, invites thee to Himself, by saying so tenderly and lovingly, "Return," as though He actually needed thee, how will He treat thee when thou art clasped in His arms? How greatly He will love thee! Thou shalt no longer be "in the depths:" it is thy former sins that shall be there! He will cast all thy sins into the bottom of the sea. Is it possible that thou wilt not come at such a call?

II. Consider secondly, that there are two different ways of sinning: one is to go away from God, the other to plunge into the depths. Every one who sins grievously goes away from God; the man who sins deeply as well as grievously goes down into the depths. "They have sinned deeply as in the days of Gabaa."¹ What is this "sinning deeply"? It is sinning with deliberation, contriving evil, planning it, plotting it, like those wicked men of Gabaa, who treacherously waited till the Levite, spoken of in the nineteenth chapter of Judges, had sat down to table, and then, surrounding the house so that he could not escape, forced him to deliver up his wife to their insults. This is the worst kind of sin, for it is looking it in the face and choosing it; nay, more, it is studying how to commit it so as to succeed, in defiance of God Who so hates it: "He hath devised iniquity on his bed."² Now what must a man who has acted in this manner do, when he turns to God, in order to pay all his debt? He must devote as much study to thinking how to serve Him faithfully, as he once did to thinking how to offend Him. Do not say that thou prayest not because thou dost not know how, that thou knowest not what devotions to use when thou assistest at Holy Mass, that thou dost not know what dispositions are necessary when thou approachest the holy sacraments. If thou dost not know, thou must begin at once to learn: "Herein do I endeavour to have always a conscience without offence towards God and towards men,"³ said the Apostle. He did not say, "I desire," but, "I endeavour;" and further, he said "always." Thou knowest how much pains thou hast taken in doing evil. Now, then, take the same in doing good: "Return as you had deeply revolted, O children of Israel."

III. Consider thirdly, that beneath this depth of contriving iniquity, there is a still lower depth, which is to make light of it. For after a man has sinned in the detestable manner that has been spoken of, he thinks nothing of it: "The wicked

¹ Osee ix. 9.² Psalm xxxv. 5.³ Acts xxiv. 16.

man when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth."¹ And this is a depth out of which it is very difficult to get, because it presupposes not only the perversion of the will, as in the first depth, but that of the understanding. Still, if such a man does receive the grace to rise out of it, like another Lazarus from the tomb, and to return to his God, what must he do to correspond with that grace? He must think as little of whatever good he does as he formerly did of the evil, and never be satisfied with himself. "When you shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants."² But there are many who do not act in this way. Once they made nothing of all their mad follies, their gluttony, their debauchery, their shameful pleasures; and if, now that they have repented, they take the discipline once a week they imagine that they are performing prodigies of sanctity: "Return as you had deeply revolted, O children of Israel."

IV. Consider fourthly, that the sinner continues to sink lower and lower till he reaches, not the depth only, but the very centre of wickedness: "They are sunk to the bottom like a stone."³ What, then, is this fatal abyss? It is that they not only contrive sin, not only make light of it, but glory in it: "They that hate Thee have made their boasts."⁴ Truly may it be said of one who has fallen thus low, that he has reached "the deepest pit,"⁵ for if a man boasts of his sin he must be so mad as to consider it a virtue, and therefore his understanding is not merely perverted, but wholly depraved, for his actions are those of an infidel. Infidels are men who call *glory* what Jesus Christ calls *confusion*: "Whose glory is in their shame."⁶ And yet many who are not afraid to do this are Christians, so far at least as to make them inexcusable in leading the lives of infidels. Now, if God, in the abundance and richness of His mercy, gives grace to enable such a man as this to escape from so deep an abyss, what must that man do in return? He must with the greatest courage overcome all human respect, and, not satisfied with being penitent, he must show that he is so by glorying in humility, meekness, mortification, and tears, as he once did in wickedness. This is a work, not of supererogation, but of obligation; because he is bound, by acting in this manner, to make reparation not only for the great offence he has done to God when boasting

¹ Prov. xviii. 3.

² St. Luke xvii. 10.

³ Exodus xv. 5.

⁴ Psalm lxxiii. 4.

⁵ Job xvii. 16.

⁶ Philipp. iii. 19.

of his outrages, but also for the scandal he has given his neighbour: "Return as you had deeply revolted, O children of Israel."

V. Consider fifthly, although it seems impossible that so many Christians should fall into these lamentable depths, yet not only do they fall into them, but they fall because they are determined to do so. The truth of this is shown by the word which is so keen a reproach to these wretched men: "As you had revolted," for no one could have forcibly cast them away from God, they did so by their own choice. And so, it is not said, "You had stumbled or fallen," but, "You had revolted," implying full advertence: "Who, as it were on purpose, have revolted from Him."¹ Doubtless, then, they could not have been men of much conscience, wisdom, intelligence, or piety. Yes, assuredly, they were "children of Israel;" what more could be said? And yet they voluntarily went into these depths! How could they do so? Just because they "revolted;" that is to say, they went gradually, like those who walk, not like those who rush. If they had had to plunge down at one leap, doubtless sudden terror would have arrested them; but because, instead of that, they walked down, they not only felt no horror, but not even the slightest alarm. See, then, how little any man can trust himself, if step by step he departs from God. It is quite possible for him to reach the depths which thou hast here seen, even though he, too, were a child of Israel, not of Manasses, or of Memphis. Sometimes thou thinkest it a small thing to leave off thy devotions, to allow thyself distractions, to relax thy vigilance, and at last to commit some sin. Oh, if thou didst but know to what a depth such steps may lead thee, even to glorying in that sin which now thou art half afraid to commit: "Woe to them, for they have departed from Me."²

VI. Consider sixthly, that although the sinner's departure from God was gradual, his return must not be so, but immediate; for the particle *as* is not used here to denote proportion of similarity, but of quantity: and therefore it is not said, "Return as you had revolted," in which case the conversion would have to be of the same kind as the revolt; but it is said, "Return as you had deeply revolted," showing that the conversion should be in proportion to the depth of the revolt. There would be very little hope of any one succeeding in gradually climbing up so steep a precipice, since for each step

¹ Job xxxiv. 27.

² Osee vii. 13.

that he made forward he would slip back more than one, so great is the power of inveterate habit, unless destroyed by acts which amount to the heroic. And, therefore, it will not do to walk up, he must run—he must fly; he must “take wings as eagles.”¹ Divine grace is waiting to supply him with them. With wings like these—wings not of nature but of grace, a Pelagia, a Thaïs, a Theodora, a William of Aquitaine flew swiftly to the summit of the most perfect virtue; and shouldst thou require them, they will be ready for thee too if only thou trustest God as they did. All that He requires of thee is to set thy face resolutely towards Him, with the intention of drawing as near to Him as thou hast gone far from Him: “Return as you had deeply revolted, O children of Israel.” It rests with Him to give thee such grace as will enable thee at once to accomplish what thou intendest. Thou mayest infer this, if thou art afraid, from the invitation which He gives thee. Does not He know that of thyself thou canst do nothing? And yet He bids thee take a step of exceeding difficulty. This is a proof, then, that He has the grace ready for thee to enable thee to take it. Otherwise, what sort of an invitation would it be which He gives thee? Not certainly that of so tender a lover as He is, but of one who mocks.

FOURTH DAY.

But My just man liveth by faith (Hebrews x. 38).

I. Consider first, how blessed are all those just ones whom God here calls so lovingly *His own*: “My just man.” Some there are who are called indeed just, but who are not His, for they are just, not in reality, but in appearance. They are just only in their own opinion: “Not knowing the justice of God, and seeking to establish their own,”² or they are just in the opinion of men. Besides, they do not live by faith. They live by vanity, pride, ambition, self-interest. Those whom God here calls His just ones live by faith: “My just man liveth by faith.” Oh, that thou wert of this happy number! Pray Him to make thee worthy of so great a grace as to be His just one, for whatever glory any other kind of justice may have, it is

¹ Isaias xl. 31.

² Romans x. 3.

not that which alone is worth having—it hath glory, “but not before God.”¹

II. Consider secondly, what this faith is by which God declares that His just ones live. It is that which is called living faith, that is, a faith influenced by charity towards God: “Faith that worketh by charity.”² Any other faith besides this is a dead faith, and how can that faith which has no life itself give life to another? Dost thou know, too, why the just man is said to live by faith rather than by charity? Because it is faith which first gives life to the soul. What is the life of the soul? Is it not God? And it is faith which first unites it to Him: “He that cometh to God must believe that He is.”³ And so, just as it is said that the life of the body proceeds from the heart, because it is the heart which first unites the soul to the body, so too it is said that the life of the soul proceeds from faith, because it is faith which first unites the soul to God. See, then, how carefully thou oughtest to preserve this faith. Doubtless, thou must also watch over other virtues, over charity, patience, prudence, temperance, just as thou dost over the other members of the body, which do their part also in giving life to it; but thou art bound in an especial manner to watch over faith, because it may be described as the heart of the soul: “With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it.”⁴ Oh, how carefully shouldst thou drive away every little temptation against faith! I know that when any temptations which disturb thee are involuntary, thou needest not be greatly concerned about them. Every day renew thy promises to God; invoke Him, embrace Him, adore Him: tell Him that thou swearest allegiance to Him in spite of all His enemies, and then do not trouble thyself about anything to the contrary which may be suggested by thy thoughts. But thou must be careful never to give admission to these dangerous thoughts. Thou must have a horror of associating with those who now and then make use of free, not to say rash, expressions in matters of faith. Avoid them, flee from them. Do not allow thy mind to become entangled in those difficult questions which thou mayest indeed be clever enough to take in to a certain point, but which thou art certainly too ignorant to explain. Bow thy head reverently in the obedience of faith, and acknowledge that the vision of many saints of eminent learning, of a St. Jerome, an Ambrose,

² Galat. v. 6.

¹ Romans iv. 2.

³ Hebrews xi. 6.

⁴ Prov. v. 23.

an Augustine, a Thomas, penetrated where thine cannot: "They that go down to the sea in ships (not in a little boat like thine) doing business in the great waters, these have seen the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep."¹

III. Consider thirdly, that it is not only said that a man lives by virtue of that which was the source of his life, but also by virtue of that which nourishes it. Thus we say that the chameleon lives on air, serpents on poison, hawks on their prey. And this is another reason why God says that His just ones live by faith—"My just man liveth by faith"—because faith not only gives life to the soul, but nourishes and, consequently, strengthens it; and so, if you observe closely, the source of all deterioration in the soul is some weakness of faith. How does the man of sound faith triumph over everything which might separate him from God! Let him but stand firm by his understanding, "in the word of truth," and he will also be firm "in the power of God" by his will. No matter who may attack him, he conquers them all "by the armour of justice on the right hand and on the left."² He does not regard prosperity which is "on the right hand," he does not sink under adversity which is "on the left," because in both of them he always retains the sound faith which reminds him that only what is eternal is of any value. But how feeble is the man whose faith is weak, like bread that is not nutritious! See, then, what thou must do in order that thy faith may be of the right sort. Increase it by the reading of such spiritual books as are profitable for that end (especially the Lives of the Saints), but above all often beg it of God, for if there is a thing which is peculiarly His gift, it is faith: "The precious gift of faith shall be given to him."³ It is no common gift, but a very choice one, a "precious gift."

IV. Consider fourthly, that even this is not all, but that, further, God says that His just ones live by faith, because not only must faith be their food, but their habitual food. We do not say that a man lives on a kind of food which he eats once in a hundred times, but on that which he usually eats. Therefore, as a rule, thou must feed upon faith in such a manner, as not only to make it thy food, but sometimes even thy only food. How is this? There are times when the poor soul either receives, or is capable of receiving, no other nourishment from Heaven. God does not visit her, she has no light, no consolation, no tears. What must she do in this state? She

¹ Psalm cvi. 23, 24.

² 2 Cor. vi. 7.

³ Wisdom iii. 14.

must live by simple faith : " I know in whom I have believed." ¹ The world may be turned upside down—"the mountains be removed into the heart of the sea" ²—the imagination may be debased, the understanding darkened, the will grow cold, but the Word of God can never fail : "The truth of the Lord remaineth for ever." ³ This should be enough to make thee persevere firmly in the good thou hast begun. See, then, how needful it is to provide thyself with a good stock of faith to live on in time of scarcity, when, if thou hast not faith, thou will not endure for an instant : "If you will not believe, you shall not continue." ⁴ It was faith that gave life to thy soul, and it is faith which must always sustain it, but then especially when all other food fails : "My just man liveth by faith."

FIFTH DAY.

Be you, then, also ready, for at what hour you think not the Son of Man will come (St. Luke xii. 40).

I. Consider first, that whenever Christ our Lord was speaking of the Judgment, either General or Particular, He almost always spoke of Himself as the Son of Man : "The Son of Man shall send His angels." ⁵ "They shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud." ⁶ "You shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven." ⁷ Nor should this surprise thee. His humility was wonderful, and therefore when He had to speak of very glorious things concerning Himself, He veiled them as it were by His manner of doing so, not only speaking in the third person, but also making use of the most modest and reserved expressions that were consistent with the truth. This, then, is the special reason why our Lord calls Himself the Son of Man in this passage : "Be ye, then, also ready, for at what hour you think not the Son of Man will come." He is here speaking both of the General and Particular Judgment, which alike belong to Him, seeing He is "appointed to be Judge both of the living and of the dead" ⁸—of the living, at the Particular Judgment, which is at the hour of their death ; of the dead, at the General Judgment,

¹ Timothy i. 12. ² Psalm xlv. 3. ³ Psalm cxvi. 2.

⁴ Isaias vii. 9. ⁵ St. Matt. xiii. 41.

⁶ St. Luke xxi. 27. ⁷ St. Matt. xxvi. 64. ⁸ Acts x. 42.

when they shall rise again : and therefore He especially here calls Himself the Son of Man, to put men to shame who are more apt to claim or to multiply their most high-sounding titles when promulgating some authoritative edict than on any other occasion. It may be that thou feelest thy fear lessened by this title of "Son of Man," as though at the Judgment thou wouldst have to do with a man like thyself, whom thou wilt therefore be able to deceive, or elude, or bribe, or at all events may easily propitiate. But, if this is so, oh, how far thou art from the truth ! If, in speaking of the Judgment, Christ is more especially careful than at any other time to call Himself the Son of Man, it is a sign that then, more than at any other time, He will do actions which will show Him to be more than man.

II. Consider secondly, that if by Christ's command thou oughtest to be in a state of preparation even for the General Judgment, which morally in regard to thyself may as yet be very distant, much more oughtest thou to be in a state of preparation for the Particular Judgment, which cannot but be very near. Therefore think that it is in reference to it thou hearest these words : "Be you also ready, for at what hour you think not the Son of Man cometh." Observe the form of the expression. He does not say, "Make yourselves ready" (*paramini*), but, "Be ready" (*estote parati*) ; for the greatest folly thou canst possibly be guilty of is to lose an instant of the precious time which God gives thee to prepare for death. This was precisely the folly of the five foolish virgins. Dost thou think that thou art living in a state of preparation, or even that thou needest to prepare thyself ?

Think of it seriously awhile, for it is a point of the utmost importance. He who is not living in a state of preparation for death may be very sure that he will also have to die unprepared, for the real preparation for death is a good life : "Before Judgment prepare thee justice."¹ That is not preparation which is made at the last, it is confusion, perplexity, disquiet and disorder ; the same sort of hurried preparation which was made by the foolish virgins, not one suited to an action of such vast importance as the act of dying. The greater the business in question, the greater without doubt should be the preparation for it, for which reason the maidens who were to present themselves before King Assuerus were allowed a year to anoint and adorn and get themselves ready. Now, what act of thy

¹ Eccclus. xviii. 19.

whole life can be so great as this last act of all, if thou performest it well? And hast thou yet to begin thy preparation when thou oughtest at this very moment to be prepared? "Be you ready." There are two kinds of preparation to be made if thou hast not already made them, one remote, the other proximate. "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready."¹ The remote preparation is never to do anything in which thou wouldst not like the Son of Man to find thee engaged at His coming. The proximate preparation consists in the full satisfaction of the claims of conscience, settling every difficulty, getting rid of every doubt, discharging all the obligations, whether of justice, gratitude, or fidelity. If thou wouldst know in one word what it is to be prepared for death, thou art here told it: "Be you ready;" just like a ship in port which has taken in her cargo, and is only waiting for a fair wind to set sail. But if the shrouds of the poor vessel require repairing, or her sails have to be put in order, or if she has not yet begun laying in stores, who can doubt that she is unprepared, that her preparation has yet to be made?

III. Consider thirdly, how it is that thou dost not make any of these necessary preparations. It is because thou promisest thyself time; thou dost not really believe Christ when He declares that He will come when thou least expectest Him. And yet, what does He say? "Be you ready, for at what hour you think not the Son of Man will come." He does not say, "On what day," but, "At what hour," because not only are you not sure of a day, but not even of an hour: "You know not the day nor the hour."² Do not flatter thyself, then, by thinking that the Lord will deal with thee in a different way from that with which He declares He will deal with all. Thou shouldst believe, on the contrary, that He is speaking to thee more than to others; for the terrible part of the words on which thou art meditating is just this, that every one hears them daily from the altar, and no one believes that they are addressed to himself. Think, then, that it is to thyself in particular that He is speaking when He says that He will call thee at the time when thou least expectest; that is, that His coming will be sudden and unexpected, that His summons will take thee by surprise: "Behold, I come as a thief."³ Thou puttest off preparing thyself because thou hopest that thy death will, at any rate, be preceded by illness. And yet, if thou wouldst act wisely, thou shouldst make up thy mind that

¹ Psalm lvi. 8.² St. Matt. xxv. 13.³ Apoc. xvi. 15.

thou wilt die without previous sickness, like the flowers which we see cut down every day before they have begun to fade: "I know not how long I shall continue, and whether after awhile my Maker will take me away."¹

IV. Consider fourthly, that thou art all the more bound to show this solicitude because our Lord tells thee so plainly that He will come to call thee in His own Person: "At what hour you think not the Son of Man will come." He does not say, "Will send," He says, "Will come." And if this is so, how is it possible that thou canst delay to prepare thyself? When a judge gives thee a summons he sends his servants or officers, or some similar messenger, so that thou mayest in that short interval prepare the answers thou art to give him, difficult as it may be. But if he comes in person unexpectedly to arrest thee in thy house, thou hast not a chance. Now this is exactly what Christ tells thee He will do: "At what hour you think not the Son of Man will come." And when He does come, wilt thou dare to tell Him to go away and come again another time? I know that thou dost tell Him so a thousand times, when He comes to thee by His loving inspirations, His calls, His visits; and thou so often sendest Him away, as though thou wert too busy to attend to Him, saying: "Go, and come again." But thou canst not do this at the hour of death, for then Christ will come not as a friend, but a judge: "Behold the Judge standeth before the door."²

V. Consider fifthly, that by thus forewarning thee of the unexpectedness of His coming, our Lord shows His desire of not finding thee unprepared. The judge who wishes to take criminals in the act does not let them know his intention of coming upon them suddenly; he keeps them in complete ignorance of it, he tries to give them courage and confidence; for if they once knew his design it would no longer be possible for him to do as he said; whenever he came he would be expected. Christ tells thee that He will come when least thou expectest it: "At what hour you think not the Son of Man will come." How, then, can there be a doubt that He does not wish to take thee unawares? If He does, it is thy own fault for not heeding His warning. What, therefore, must thou do? Thou must most anxiously profit by it. "Say not: I am sufficient for myself."³

Now there is no practice which will be more helpful to thee for this purpose than that of living as if each day were to be

¹ Job xxxii. 22.

² St. James v. 9.

³ Ecclus. xi. 26.

thy last. If thou art about to say Mass, say it as if it were the last thou wert ever to say. Confess as if it were thy last confession ; communicate as if it were thy last Communion ; pray as though it were the last chance thou wouldst ever have of turning to thy God. Learn the habit of constantly recommending thy last hour to Him ; beg Him to be with thee, to help thee, to vouchsafe to keep thee safe in His arms so long as He is still thy Advocate. Do this, and thou wilt see in a very short time how profitable an exercise it is. It will calm thee, give thee compunction, rid thy mind of the vain thoughts which burden it because thou art in the habit of promising thyself a long life, and, above all, it will make thy life a preparation for death. Then thy Judge may indeed come "at what hour you think not," but He will never come at an hour when thou art not expecting Him, and therefore thou wilt be blessed : "Blessed are all they that wait for Him."¹

SIXTH DAY.

If thou be wise, thou shalt be so to thyself, and if a scorner, thou alone shalt bear the evil (Prov. ix. 12).

I. Consider first, that in the Sacred Scriptures "wise" has the same signification as "just," because holiness is true wisdom : "To fear God is the fulness of wisdom."² Now if thou art just, in whatever way thou art so, it will be to thy advantage. The fulness of justice has three parts, for three is the perfect number ; and therefore thou canst never be perfectly just unless thou art just in thyself, towards thy neighbour, and towards God. The duties which make thee just towards God are all those which are called religious ; the offices of fidelity, charity, and justice make thee just towards thy neighbour ; and thou art made just in thyself by the practice of all the other virtues which are personal to thyself, such as modesty, mortification, meekness, purity, obedience, humility, patience, and innumerable others. Whichever, therefore, of these heads of justice thou dost practise, thou art the gainer. "If thou be wise, thou shalt be so to thyself." If thou art just in thyself, it is evident that "thou shalt be so to thyself," for the whole advantage is thine. If thou art just

¹ Isaias xxx. 18.

² Ecclus. i. 20.

towards thy neighbour, still "thou shalt be so to thyself," for it is quite possible that he may sometimes derive no profit whatever from all that thou dost for him; he may take advantage of thy fidelity for a bad purpose; if he is sick, he may not recover in spite of all thy charitable care of him; if thou teachest him, he may not learn; if thou dost admonish him, he may not attend; if thou urgest him to do right, he may not be reformed; he may make a bad use of the very money which thou payest him as a just debt; but in all these cases it is impossible that thou thyself shouldst not be the gainer. And, lastly, if thou art just towards God, then, most of all, "thou shalt be so to thyself," for God gains nothing by whatever thou dost in His service: "What doth it profit God if thou be just?"¹ And yet He pays thee as though He had gained by it. What a grand thing, then, it is to do right! It is a commerce which never fails: "If thou be wise, thou shalt be so to thyself." Think it over as long as thou wilt, thou wilt never find that the same can be said of other riches as of the riches of virtues. If thou sowest seed, thou art not sure of the harvest; if thou makest a bargain, thou art not sure of the result; if thou receivest an income, thou art not sure of its lasting, but in well-doing, of whatever kind, thou art absolutely sure: "To him that soweth justice there is a faithful reward."²

II. Consider secondly, that as, in the Sacred Scriptures, to "be wise" is the same thing as to "be just," so, too, a "scorner" is the same as a "wicked man." And therefore as, if thou art just, it will be to thy advantage, so if thou art wicked, it will be to thy loss: "If" thou art "a scorner, thou alone shalt bear the evil." It is true that, speaking strictly, a "scorner" may be described as one whose actions are different from what they seem to be, because a person who behaves in this way deceives and insults thee, and seems as though he intentionally held thee up to contempt. But in the Sacred Scriptures there are three kinds of wicked men who are called "scorners." There are scorners of themselves, of their neighbours, and of God. The scorners of God most commonly found among Christians are those persons who pray, who are to be seen in choir and in church, as though they had the intention of honouring God by being there, but who rather dishonour Him, for while they pray their minds are distracted, they talk, they amuse themselves, and even

¹ Job xxii. 3.

² Prov. xi. 18.

during Mass they allow their eyes all sorts of liberty. Such persons are like the Jews who, on the night of the Passion, knelt before Christ in an attitude of worship, yet mocked Him in the act of doing so, putting a bandage over His eyes, and thus foolishly imagining that He did not see them: "And bowing the knee before Him, they mocked Him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews!"¹ The chief scorers of their neighbour, in the matter of fidelity, are those preachers who mount the pulpit as though they were zealous to promote the good of the people, and then do nothing but amuse them by falsifying the real sense of the Scriptures, playing with it, giving fanciful and exaggerated interpretations of it, and sometimes even by making absurd jests to gain applause. It was of men like these that St. Peter wrote, "In the last days there shall come deceitful scoffers, walking after their own lusts, saying: Where is His promise?"² For these false preachers rob God's Word of all its credit, just as heretics do, only in a more covert way. The chief scorers of their neighbour, in the matter of charity, are those bad companions who affect to praise thy piety, purity, and modesty, but who in reality mock at thee and turn into ridicule all the virtues that thou practisest. Such persons are like those insolent children, who when they saw Eliseus ascending a hill on his way to Bethel, pretended to encourage, whilst in truth they were deriding him: "As he was going up by the way, little boys came out of the city, and mocked him, saying: Go up, thou baldhead, go up, thou baldhead."³ The chief scorers of their neighbour, in the matter of justice, are those rich persons who pretend that they desire to make an agreement, not merely just, but advantageous to a poor man, whilst they are really draining the blood from his veins by usury, extortion, cunning, and litigation. They are like the Egyptians, who made a show of giving the Hebrews the opportunity of making large gains by adding to their tasks, while they were really oppressing them by withholding their wages: "And the Egyptians hated the children of Israel, and afflicted them, and mocked them; and they made their life bitter with hard works in clay and brick, and with all manner of service."⁴ Lastly, those who are most common, the scorers of themselves, are persons who manage to deceive themselves in a thousand ways, persuading themselves that they desire what is for their own

¹ St. Matt. xxvii. 29.² 2 St. Peter iii. 3, 4.³ 4 Kings ii. 23.⁴ Exodus i. 13, 14.

good, when it is really for their hurt. There are innumerable persons of this class, for it embraces all sinners, but more especially such as are Christians: "In the last days there shall come mockers, walking according to their own desires in ungodliness."¹ Their madness is especially evident in two points, the pursuit of evil and the abuse of remedies. In the former, they are full of delusions, for they take great pains to persuade themselves that sin is a light evil, a trifle, a mere piece of giddiness, in no way damaging to their good name, in order that they may commit it more freely and remain in it more easily: "A fool will laugh at sin."² They are full of delusions also in the abuse of remedies both such as incline the sinner to extricate himself from evil, and such as remove it. For they let it be known that they too frequent sermons, confraternities, conferences, as others do, but they take home to themselves nothing that they hear, considering it all to be spoken to some one who is in greater need of admonition than they are: "He that is a scorner heareth not when he is reprov'd."³ Nor is this all: they also profess that they frequent the holy Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist like others; but this is not so, for they are guilty of sacrilege by retaining in their hearts an affection for their sin, and not having a true repentance and a real purpose of amendment; they designedly make choice of an ignorant priest who will be careless in administering the sacraments; they take no pains to know what they are rightly bound to do as to avoiding dangerous occasions, making reparation when they have injured the character of another, restoring property, granting forgiveness when it is asked; sometimes they do not even make full confession of their sins. It is to all such persons, who are content to approach the holy sacraments anyhow, without regard to the proper dispositions, that Isaias exclaims: "And now do not mock, lest your bonds be tied."⁴ If, then, there are, at the present day, among Christians themselves, so great a multitude of scornors, mayest thou not with reason fear lest thou also shouldst be of the number? Examine whether in any matter thou art a scorner of God, thy neighbour, or thyself, for if so, thou thyself wilt in the end be the object of scorn: "If a scorner, thou alone shalt bear the evil."

III. Consider thirdly, that if thou art in this last class of scornors, thou wilt "bear the evil" beyond all doubt "alone,"

¹ St. Jude 18.

² Prov. xiv. 9.

³ Prov. xiii. 1.

⁴ Isaias xxviii. 22.

for, whether thou makest light of thy sin, or abusest the remedies for it, it will be equally to thy hurt: "They practise deceits against their own souls."¹ But this is no less true if thou art one of those who scorn their neighbours, for although thou wilt indeed be the cause of perdition to more than one by those sins of scandal which have been mentioned, and so thou wilt be the occasion of evil to others also, yet after all thou wilt have to bear thy punishment alone, and never through all the ages of eternity will there be any one to help thee to bear it; and so, in this way, "thou alone shalt bear the evil." Dost thou imagine that thou wilt find Hell more endurable because thou wilt have brought others there to burn and rage and curse with thee? On the contrary, this will be a cause of additional torment to thee, because thou wilt have to bear the two-fold weight of thy own sins and those of others. I know that thou wilt see those wretched souls suffering together with thee, but not in thy stead: "Every one shall bear his own burden."² And if thou art a scorner of God, how will it be with thee? Then most of all will it be true at the last that "thou alone shalt bear the evil," for all the mockeries thou practisest against God will then be poured on thy own head. He is always sitting on His throne, in perfect beatitude, and laughs thee to scorn who art not afraid sometimes to offend and insult Him before His eyes, which are not now bandaged, but looking upon thee: "He shall scorn the scorners."³ Yes, this is what God is doing in Heaven, He is scorning those who scorn Him. He scorns them now, making them, when they least expect it, find poison in those pleasures wherein they thought to find honey, disgrace in glory, loss in gain; and He will scorn them yet more in the future, when they will say, like His faithful servants, "Lord, Lord, open to us," and He will answer, "I know you not."⁴ Wilt thou now go and join that miserable company of scorners, as though after all it was no such great matter? Nay, rather they are sinners who are hateful in the sight of God, they are the vilest of deceivers; they deceive themselves, they deceive their neighbour, and they even try to deceive God: "Every mocker is an abomination to the Lord."⁵

¹ Prov. i. 18.² Galat. vi. 5.³ Prov. iii. 34.⁴ St. Matt. xxv. 12.⁵ Prov. iii. 32.

SEVENTH DAY.

I have brought up children, and exalted them, but they have despised Me
(Isaiah i. 2).

I. Consider first, that there are three conditions in which the children of a father may be regarded—as slaves, as freemen, and as heirs. They are in the condition of slaves so long as they are minors, living under tutelage. They are in the condition of freemen when, as adults, they have passed out of this first state. They are heirs when they have come into their inheritance, namely, the possessions of their father. In these three conditions, therefore, we have to contemplate those who, if belonging to the faithful, are admitted by adoption to the high dignity of sons of God, a privilege which no infidel can claim. The Jews were in the condition of slaves, because, like children who have not reached the legal age fixed by the father, they were always under the law as under a severe guardian. Christians are in the condition of freemen, because Christ by His coming delivered them from the slavery of the law. And the blessed in Heaven are in the condition of heirs, having already entered on their paternal inheritance, which is the clear Vision of God. Having said this, thou wilt easily understand who those children are of whom God complains so bitterly in the text. It is certain that they cannot be the blessed, for these are children overflowing with praise and love towards their Father, so that they can never be said to despise Him. They must therefore be the faithful, either of the Old or the New Covenant. It is true that it was to the former of these, namely the Jews, that this complaint originally referred, but it refers still more to the latter, that is, to Christians. Although the former were indeed truly God's children, yet He scarcely ever honoured them by that title. Ordinarily He called them His servants, His portion, His people, His chosen. "Thou, Israel, art My servant."¹ "They have trodden My portion under foot."² Be comforted, My people."³ "Israel was a child and I loved him."⁴ The express title of sons of God—not of Abraham, Jacob, or Juda—was reserved for Christians, as St. John observed when he said: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called

¹ Isaiah xli. 8. ² Jerem. xii. 10. ³ Isaiah xl. 1. ⁴ Osee xi. 1.

and should be the sons of God.”¹ He did not merely say “should be,” for this we have in common with the Jews; but he said too, that we “should be called,” showing that we have reached the condition of sons who have begun to be treated as such, that is, as free, not slaves. When, therefore, God here complains of those whom He calls in a true sense His “children,” is it not evident that His reproach is aimed at those Christians who are so ungrateful, impious, and faithless, as to insult Him all day long? Thou art a Christian, a “child of God:” but hast thou ever set thyself, as such, to consider seriously the way in which God treats thee, as a Father, and the return thou makest Him every day, as a child? It is high time to think of this, in order to alter thy conduct if thou art of the number of those whose daily occupation it is to be always causing fresh grief to their Father.

II. Consider secondly, the loving treatment which God here so justly brings before thee as a reproach. He says that He has “brought thee up” (*nourished* thee) as a child, “exalted thee.” What is this nourishment? Is it merely the gifts of nature which He has bestowed upon thee, and which are, indeed, innumerable? No. Thou hast these in common with infidels, who neither are, nor are called, children of God, because they have no part in the adoption. It is then, more especially, the gifts of grace. Above all, the nourishment, with the memory of which He here reproaches thee, is that which as a Christian thou receivest in the Blessed Sacrament and of which no one outside the Church has ever been a partaker. Yet He is ready, on His part, to give It to thee as thy daily Food, if thou chooseth to accept It: “Take ye, and eat: this is My Body.” And what is the exaltation He speaks of? It is the glory which thou enjoyest as a Christian, though it is refused to so many, and which makes thee an object of envy to the bad angels, of reverence to the good, bestowing on thee a right to the Kingdom of Heaven: “Unto this are you called, that you may inherit a blessing.”² Dost thou not think, then, that God had good reason to say: “I have brought up children and exalted them?” What more could He do after having given thee so rich a nourishment, and bestowed on thee so splendid an inheritance? The most loving father could do no more for his child than not only to bring him up, but to raise him from beggary to royalty, since this, not even as a father, is he in any way bound to do.

¹ 1 St. John iii. 1.

² 1 St. Peter iii. 9.

III. Consider thirdly, that the return which, notwithstanding all this, thou makest Him as a son, is really to despise Him. Not only dost thou not thank Him, not only dost thou not reverence Him, not only dost thou not love Him; but thou actually despisest Him, by transgressing His paternal prohibitions: "I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised Me." Oh, how significant is this word "but"! For it places the ingratitude complained of in a far stronger light by contrasting it, on the one hand, with the treatment shown by the Father to His children, and on the other with that shown by the children to their Father; it is this, therefore, which also shows how much greater is the offence committed against God by all Christians who despise Him, than was ever committed by the most savage barbarian; for, setting aside the sin of voluntary infidelity, which cannot be presupposed in a Christian, every other sin, whether of revenge, fraud, theft, or sensuality, except under very peculiar circumstances, is much more grievous in a Christian, and will, consequently, be much more severely punished in Hell, because they are insults offered to a God by a child: "I have brought up children, . . . but they have despised Me." And yet thou sinnest so lightly every day! Ah, how plain it is that thou dost not understand what thou art doing! Every single sin that thou committest contains an express act of ingratitude. And what sort of ingratitude? The most horrible that can be: the ingratitude of such a son to such a Father. Think of all that is comprised in those words, "they" and "Me," and this will give thee some understanding of it.

IV. Consider fourthly, that as this ingratitude which thou showest to God by despising Him increases thy guilt as compared with the like sins committed by infidels, so, also, does it increase it as compared with similar sins committed by the Jews. Because, although they too were in the condition of adopted children as thou art, yet, as has been said, they were still minors, and so had neither received the same kind of nourishment nor the same sort of exaltation as that which belongs to children who are free like thee. They have no richer food than the manna which they ate in the desert: "He rained down manna upon them to eat."¹ But what was that to the nourishment which thou receivest at the holy altar, where Jesus, in His own living Person, gives Himself to thee as thy Food? "I am the Bread which came down from

¹ Psalm lxxvii. 24.

Heaven.”¹ They had no higher exaltation than the Law which God gave them by His own mouth on Mount Sinai, their promises, their prophecies, the wonders wrought for them, and their consecrated priesthood. But what is all this to the exaltation bestowed upon us? Great and lofty and eminent as their exaltation was, its only dignity consisted, after all, in this: that it was ordained as a figure of thine; it was, therefore, a mere shadow in comparison of thine: “A shadow of things to come.”² It is true that the main purpose of their exaltation was the same in their case and in thine, namely, to enable them to attain the Kingdom of Heaven, for the right of inheritance is shared by all the children whether minors or free; but still there is a remarkable difference to be observed. If thou ledest a good life on earth, thou wilt, when thou diest, go straight to Paradise: not so the Jews. Even those among them who were saints, such as Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, or David, were obliged to wait for whole ages in Limbo, because so long as children are minors, their right to the inheritance is remote, not proximate. They must wait till they attain the legal age fixed by the father before they can take possession of it: “Until the time appointed by the father.”³ That time, in our case, was the coming of Christ. What reason hast thou not then for confusion when thou seest that though thy Father treats thee with so much more honour than He did them, thou actest as if it was of little account to thee. Hardly dost thou even understand this great dignity, much less value it. What wonder, then, if God complains of thee more grievously than He did of them, and if He punishes thee more severely? Lastly, those who sinned under the Old Covenant were regarded as children not yet endowed with perfect reason, because they were minors. But thou who hast attained the age of manhood, what excuse can be granted thee if thou art not afraid to despise thy Father? “I have brought up children and exalted them, but they have despised Me.” The worst contempt that can be shown to a father is that which is shown by grown-up children.

V. Consider fifthly, that God does not say, “Have offended Me,” but, “Have despised Me,” for after all, the chief malice of sin, that which so greatly moves Him to anger, is this contempt. Besides, what other injury is it possible for thee to do Him? Thou canst not rob Him of that deep peace which He enjoys in His Divine Heart; thou canst not deprive Him

¹ St. John vi. 51.

² Coloss. ii. 17.

³ Galat. iv. 2.

of His power, or His providence ; thou canst not dethrone Him by thy rebellion. "If thou sin, what shalt thou hurt Him?"¹ All the injury thou canst do Him is to despise Him ; and it is this which thou art doing : "They have despised Me." Therefore, when thou art guilty of any sin of sensuality, theft, or fraud, do not consider what the material action is in itself, but consider that it is an act of contempt of thy Father. Is it not God Who forbids thy doing that thing under pain of His grave displeasure ? Do not, then, seek any other reason for not doing it. I know that thou triest to excuse thyself by saying that thou dost not wish to do it out of contempt to God, but for the sake of feeling some pleasure, of procuring some gratification. But of what avail is such an excuse ? Thou couldst hardly despise God for the sake of despising Him : that is what is done by the damned, by the devils. And He does not say, "They have despised Me for the sake of despising Me," but simply, "They have despised Me." Art thou willing that thy servant should despise thee, not for the sake of doing so, but merely for the sake of taking his pleasure ? If he does not obey thy orders at once, thou considerest his contempt of them sufficient reason for thy anger. Why then shouldst thou expect that God will not be angry with thee ? Oh, it is this contempt which so grieves Him. "The house of Israel has despised me."² "He hath despised My judgments."³ "They have despised My law."⁴ "They have despised the fear of God."⁵ This is His continual complaint in the Scriptures. For if, when thou knowest that a thing is forbidden by God, thou chooseth notwithstanding to do it for the sake of gratifying thy unbridled appetite, thou thereby virtually sayest that thou carest nothing for thy Father's anger ; thou refuseth to obey Him ; thou deniest Him the respect due to Him ; thou rejectest thy inheritance to His face. Canst thou wonder, then, that the least possible mortal sin merits everlasting punishment ? It merits it because it is an act of contempt to God. There cannot possibly be any punishment in Hell grievous enough to punish so enormous an outrage adequately : and therefore, as satisfaction cannot be made by the severity of the punishment, it is supplied, as far as possible, by its duration.

¹ Job xxxv. 6.² Jerem. iii. 20.³ Ezech. v. 6.⁴ Ezech. xxii. 26.⁵ Ecclus. xlix. 6.

EIGHTH DAY.

I redeemed them, and they have spoken lies against Me (Osee vii. 13).

I. Consider first, that there are two ways of delivering a person from evil; one is by taking him out of it when he has fallen into it, and the other is by preserving him from it. And both of these are comprised in the single word, to redeem. It was in the sense of deliverance from an evil incurred that David used it when he said to God that He had saved His people from Egypt: "With Thy arm Thou hast redeemed Thy people."¹ And the same David used it in the sense of deliverance from a threatened evil when he said to God, that He had saved him from the sword of King Saul: "Who hast redeemed Thy servant David from the malicious sword."² Now in this passage on which thou art about to meditate, God complains that after He has delivered men in both these ways from a thousand different sins, they, instead of rendering Him the praise which is His due, ascribed the whole credit to themselves. "I redeemed them, and they have spoken lies against Me." This text, therefore, is aimed not only at the penitent, but at the just who foolishly ascribe to themselves anything that is laudable in their state. Art thou one of these? If so, what a wrong thou art doing to God. "Glory not, and be not liars against the truth."³

II. Consider secondly, that if thou art in the class of penitents, thou oughtest to think very meanly of thyself; because though it is true that thou hast escaped from the slavery of the infernal Pharaoh, yet it was only by the power of God: "With Thy arm Thou hast redeemed Thy people." See what thy God had to do in order to deliver thee from that condition: even to put forth the strength of His mighty arm, perhaps even to work miracles. And what a difference there is between what He has done for thee and what He did when He delivered Israel from Egypt! Then He had to weary Himself that Pharaoh might let Israel go, but now, that Israel may let Pharaoh go. What do I mean by this? That God now has not had to strive with the devil to make him let go his hold of thee, but with thee to make thee loose hold of the devil: because the greatest difficulty in the way of thy conversion was that God found thy will so ill-disposed. Canst thou, in spite of this, be vain enough to speak of having brought thyself at

¹ Psalm lxxvi. 16.

² Psalm cxliii. 10.

³ St. James iii. 14.

length to a better state? If thou doest so, God will have good reason to charge thee with falsehood: "I have redeemed them, and they have spoken lies against Me."

III. Consider thirdly, that even if thou art still in a state of innocence, which is hardly to be thought credible, thou shouldst think no less meanly of thyself; because, if this is so, though thou has indeed escaped from a "sword" so "malicious" as that of the infernal Saul, yet it was purely by the grace of God: "Thou hast redeemed Thy servant David from the malicious sword." Indeed, thou shouldst take notice how greatly the favour which God has shown thee surpasses that which He showed to David; for David never went forth of his own will to expose himself to the sword of his persecutor, Saul; on the contrary, more than once, with a prudence beyond his years, he turned it aside and eluded it, employing all his skill in doing this, so that it is written of him in reference to this matter, that "David behaved wisely in all his ways," and that therefore "the Lord was with him."¹ Very different has thy conduct been. How often hast thou imprudently exposed thyself to the danger of sinning? What was this but putting thyself in the way of thy enemy? If, notwithstanding, thou art unhurt, so much the more signal is the favour which God has shown thee. Is it possible, then, that thou canst boast within thyself that thou art not a sinner like other men? If so, God will have good reason to charge thee, too, with falsehood: "I have redeemed them, and they have spoken lies against Me."

IV. Consider fourthly, that these words are no less truly spoken against every sort of boaster, for all such are liars. They ascribe to their power, their prudence, their virtue, all the good fortune which they daily enjoy, as though God were not the giver of it, either by taking them out of evil, or by preserving them from it. How is it possible for them to lie more grievously? If they do not amend, what can they expect but that God will very soon put an end to their prosperity, because He is the Truth and He abhors all pride; and every lie comes from pride: "Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie."² And yet, is it to be believed, men so love lies that they are never out of their mouths? "The bread of lying is sweet to a man."³ This "bread of lying," which is so sweet, is self-praise. With regard to some persons it may well be called "bread," for they consume it at every meal. If thou hearest

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 14.

² Psalm v. 7.

³ Prov. xx. 17.

them talk thou wilt see that their mouths are always full of it ; but they little know what follows, that it is a bread which becomes hard to the teeth as a stone. "Afterward his mouth shall be filled with gravel."¹ For those who allow themselves this kind of vain talk are so abandoned by God that they are able to utter nothing, after a time, but complaints of their wretched lot. Cast this bread out of thy mouth, then, however sweet it may be to thy taste, for sweet though it be, it is not wholesome. Nay, that is saying little ; take care lest it should prove a poison which will slowly kill your soul : "The mouth that belieith, killeth the soul."²

V. Consider fifthly, that the grievousness of their lies is the greater, because they are of the sort that are injurious, that is, the worst sort. Whom, then, do they injure ? Is it thy neighbour, a man like to thyself ? Nay, it is God, and the injury they do Him is to rob Him of His glory. Therefore He says, "I redeemed them, and they have spoken lies against Me." Not "against men," but "against Me." There are two sorts of persons who speak lies against God—infidels and blasphemers. When infidels say what is false against God, they consent with their minds ; as, for example, when they deny His Trinity of Persons, His providence, His goodness, His love of justice. Those who are simply blasphemers give no such consent with their minds, but say these things merely in an ebullition of mad fury. Again, arrogant men, who are the third kind of liars against God, sometimes resemble infidels, sometimes are mere blasphemers. The former is the case when they really believe that whatever good they possess is due to their own power ; but such men must be mad as well as arrogant, like that famous King of Tyre, to whom God said : "Thy heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am God."³ Therefore they are few in number. The greater part are like ordinary blasphemers, but with this difference, that blasphemers lie against God in an ebullition of madness, the arrogant in an ebullition of vanity. But this matters little so long as they ascribe to themselves the happiness, providence, goodness, justice, which are all purely of God, and in no degree of themselves. Surely it may be said of them, as of the blasphemers, that "they have bent their tongue, as a bow, for lies, and not for truth."⁴ For the tongues of both wound God cruelly in His honour ; blasphemers do this directly with the intention of abasing Him, the arrogant indirectly, with the intention

¹ Prov. xx. 17.² Wisdom i. 11.³ Ezech. xxviii. 2.⁴ Jerem. ix. 3.

of exalting themselves. But, as thou seest, the injury done to God is the same in both cases, because the lie robs Him in both of the glory which is His due. Wilt thou not, after this, hold in unutterable abhorrence this vain foolish way of speaking? "Be not willing to make any manner of lie."¹ It may be that a vain word may now and then escape thee without thy perceiving it, and that is more excusable, because though thou liest, thou art "not willing" to do so, so that thou hast told, so to speak, a material lie against God. But whenever thou perceivest that it is a vain word, do not utter it; for then, not only wouldst thou lie, but be "willing" to do so, and wouldst therefore speak a formal lie, that is knowingly say what is false against God. Keep clearly before thy mind, that all the good that is in thee is not only *from* God, but *of* God, and therefore, if thou art obliged to speak of it, let it be clearly understood that thou speakest of something which belongs to Him, not to thee: "Not I, but the grace of God with me."² This is the language of the humble, of those who are like innocent children, and of whom, therefore, it is written, that "in their mouth was found no lie."³ For not only do they not praise themselves, but they are not even capable of doing so.

NINTH DAY.

We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil (2 Cor. v. 10).

I. Consider first, that this Judgment of which the Apostle is speaking, is not the Particular, but the General Judgment. Wherefore he says: "We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ." In the Particular Judgment, "we must be manifested" singly, not altogether, so that each man may know whether punishment or reward is to be his portion. The General Judgment is held that each man may also know what is the portion of every one else, and therefore in it "we must all be manifested," not each one only. See, therefore, for what chief end that great Judgment has been decreed: it is that the world may be ashamed of its followers, when it sees what hideous errors it has worshipped, both by abasing what

¹ Eccclus. vii. 14.

² 1 Cor. xv. 10.

³ Apoc. xiv. 5.

should be exalted, and by exalting what should be abased. Now this could not be without a very deep manifestation of all which is now hidden in every breast : of every thought, word, and deed. Therefore, "we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ." But, meanwhile, what art thou doing, who holdest the world's opinion in such high esteem? What does it matter if all the world blames thee, so long as God praises thee? And what does it matter if the whole world praises thee, so long as God blames thee? Wouldst thou know what thou really art? Just that which thou wilt appear at the judgment-seat of Christ.

II. Consider secondly, that it is not said, "All that belongs to us must be manifested," but, "We all;" because our Lord will not then make known our concerns by reciting and recounting them, as in the tribunals of men, but in such a manner that we shall in an instant stand revealed in the inmost recesses of our being, as though we had become transparent. And so the word which is rendered by "manifested" in our version, is, in the Greek text, "to be made transparent." Think, therefore, that just as in a vase of clear crystal, placed in the full light of the sun, the smallest speck is visible, so will it be with thee before our Lord : "Before the judgment-seat of Christ." Judge, therefore, whether all these will not stand out in the strongest light! How can it be otherwise? It must be so : "We must be manifested;" for the crystal will be right before the sun. Oh, what shame will cover thee when, perhaps, thou shalt be seen to be so different from what thou art thought to be now : "All that honoured her have despised her, because they have seen her shame."¹ Not merely "have known," but "have seen." And this may then be said of thy soul. Dost thou imagine that thou wilt have less ground for confusion, because if others will know all the evil that is in thee, thou, too, wilt know all that is, in them? "We must all be manifested." Oh, how mistaken thou art! Now, thou dost estimate thy sin by what is thought of it among men, who are wont to be less ashamed of it when it is an evil that is common to many. Nay, more than this, they are wont even to approve and applaud it; but it shall not be so then. Then thou wilt estimate it by what it appears in presence of the truth : "Before the judgment-seat of Christ." How great, therefore, will thy shame be! all the greater, because in the shame of others thou wilt see thine own more clearly.

¹ Lament. i. 8.

III. Consider thirdly, that this terrible revelation will be precisely like a compulsory confession which thou must then make of all that thou now either dost soften down or conceal, or, at any rate, excuse in the confessions that thou makest. Therefore the Apostle adds: "That every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil;" because thou wilt be obliged to declare, in the forcible language of thy utter nakedness, everything which thou hast done ever since thou wert clothed with thy mortal body; for this is the strict meaning of the words, "The proper things of the body;" although, indeed, it may well be that they have a further meaning still, and that thou wilt then have to give a particular account of those sins which have more special reference to the body. Oh, how often dost thou now make light of them! Thou followest the popular error, which thinks very little of sensual sins, or if thou dost not go so far as this, at least thou indulgest thy body more than is right; thou dost not mortify or chastise it; thou grantest it all the gratifications it desires, even to excess, under the pretext that virtue is interior, not exterior. Oh, do not speak thus; for thou wilt have to give a strict account of what is exterior also. Hear the words of the Apostle: "That every one may receive the proper things of the body, . . . whether good or evil."

IV. Consider fourthly, that the word *referat* means both "may utter" and "may receive;" and hence we may infer the chief end of this General Judgment's being held, namely, that each one may receive, not only in his soul, but in his body, either the punishment or the reward which is his due: "That he may receive the proper things of the body, . . . whether . . . good or evil." If, then, each individual has to receive "the proper things of the body," how can it be doubted that there is a resurrection of the body? Do thou set thyself now to examine more closely the meaning of these words, "Whether good or evil." What an awful declaration! There is no medium, either pure good or pure evil. Then, evil will not be mixed with good (as it is on earth), nor good with evil. Either all glory or all reprobation, all joy or all sorrow, all riches or all beggary, all happiness or all misery—"good or evil." And is it possible that thou knowest for certain that this is at stake, and yet makest no preparation for it? I know that this Judgment will be general, that is, for all; but thou oughtest to regard it as referring to thyself, for it will

be so strict in the case of each individual, that it will be no less a particular judgment of each than a general judgment of all. "We must all be manifested," says the Apostle; and then he adds, not, "That we may all receive according as we have done, . . . whether . . . good or evil," but, "That every one may receive;" in order that thou mayest understand this Judgment to be no less particular than general.

V. Consider fifthly, that thou art the more bound to think about thyself now, because the only rule which will be followed in rewarding or punishing thee will be the rule of thy actions: "That every one may receive according as he hath done," not, "According as others have done for him," but "As he hath done." What will it avail thee if every one prays for thee, if thou canst not bring thyself to spend a single hour in devout prayer? What will their fasting avail thee, if thou dost nothing but indulge thy appetite? What will their disciplines avail thee, if thou pamperest thy body all the while? How will it help thee that they spend all the night in reciting psalms for thee, if thou dost pass it in luxury? Remember that God "will render to every man according to his works;"¹ not the works of others, but *his own*.

I do not deny that at a human tribunal many other things are considered. There high birth, learning, wealth, eloquence, even readiness in speaking may stand thee in good stead; but at the judgment-seat of God nothing is considered but works: "Every one shall receive . . . according as he hath done." If he has done what is good he shall receive good; if he has done evil he shall receive evil. Therefore David said: "Give them according to their works."² What art thou about then, not to apply thyself seriously to the one thing which is important. "Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly."³ "Labour, exert thyself; for this, I repeat, is a matter that concerns thee nearly. "Bring your cause near, saith the Lord."⁴ How, then, canst thou bring it near except by representing it to thyself as present? Observe that the Apostle does not even exclude himself from this General Judgment, for he says: "We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ." And yet he knew that he was one of those whose business there would be to judge and not to be judged. And thou dost not even think of this Judgment, although thou art one of those who will not judge, but will have to be judged.

¹ Romans ii. 6. ² Psalm xxvii. 4. ³ Eccles. ix. 10. ⁴ Isaias xli. 21.

TENTH DAY.

Be nothing solicitous, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God (Philipp. iv. 6).

I. Consider first, that this same Apostle, who here commands us to lay aside all solicitude—"Be nothing solicitous"—speaks in another place of having himself felt the very greatest: "I would have you know what manner of care I have for you."¹ From which we see that there are two kinds of solicitude, one good and the other bad. The good kind means diligence, the bad means that restlessness, that anxiety, that trouble of mind, which are found together with diligence, when there is a lack of the right faith that should always be placed firmly in God. It is against this that the Apostle warns us in the words: "Be nothing solicitous;" for in place of this solicitude we must substitute that practice of having recourse to God, which he goes on to enjoin in the words: "Let your petitions be made known to God." And this in no way prevents the right kind of solicitude, which consists in the proper diligence which every one should on his side employ, notwithstanding the assistance he receives from God; for, although it is most true that it is God's part to help thee in thy necessities, both corporal and spiritual, yet it is thine to make use at the same time of those aids which render His assistance more natural, so as not to oblige Him to work miracles: "The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but the Lord giveth safety."² And so a right solicitude is not only praiseworthy, but necessary, being ranked among virtues: "That in all things you abound in faith and word and knowledge and all carefulness" (*sollicitudine*).³

II. Consider secondly, that eight kinds of this good solicitude are enumerated in the Sacred Scriptures. The first four belong to some particular classes of persons; the last four are general. Of the former, the first is a solicitude in ruling: for a prelate must be solicitous for his people, as a father for his children, or a shepherd for his flock, or a pilot for the ship which he has to bring into port: "He that ruleth with carefulness."⁴ The second is that of preaching; for the preacher must use the same solicitude in his labours as a nurse does in giving suck to her nursling: "We had confidence in our God

¹ Coloss. ii. 1.

² Prov. xxi. 31.

³ 2 Cor. viii. 7.

⁴ Romans xii. 8.

to speak unto you the Gospel of God in much carefulness."¹ The third is shown in providing, and concerns all who have the management of revenues, stewards, dispensers, and even poor persons who are obliged to earn bread for their daily subsistence: "In carefulness not slothful."² The fourth is that of working, and belongs to servants, artisans, labourers, and the like, in their ordinary occupations: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful."³ Of the solitudes which belong to all, the first is that of devotion, and regards God; for every one should be more anxious to please God than any subject is to please his prince, any servant his master, or any child his father: "I will show thee, O man, what is good, . . . to walk solicitous with thy God."⁴ The second is that of circumspection, and regards each man's soul, which he should be more careful to guard from the assaults of its enemies than any commander his fortress: "Keep, therefore, your souls carefully."⁵ The third is the solicitude of compassion, and regards our neighbour when in need, whom every one should be as anxious to assist in both his spiritual and corporal necessities, as though they were his own: "I hope, therefore, to send Timothy unto you shortly. For I have no man so of the same mind, who with sincere affection is solicitous for you."⁶ The fourth is the solicitude of love, and this regards our neighbour, whatever his state may be, because every one should live with him on terms of sincere friendship, in charity, harmony, and peace: "Be careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."⁷ Such are the eight kinds of right solicitude, and whoever possesses, out of this number, all those which belong to his state, of him it may be said that "he abounds in all carefulness." If the first four do not concern thee, yet the last four do; see, therefore, whether thou possessest them all in due measure; for the right solicitude, namely diligence, is not an ordinary, but a very special diligence, and does not lead us, as the wrong sort does, to lose sight of that confidence in God which we are bound to have in respect of each of the points now treated of, and which is therefore positively called trustworthy.

III. Consider thirdly, that as in the Sacred Scriptures the different kinds of right solicitude are enumerated, so, too, are those of the opposite kind. Of these there are four; solicitude about honours, or worldly gain, or as regards the needs of the

¹ 1 Thess. ii. 2.² Romans xii. 11.³ St. Luke x. 41.⁴ Micheas vi. 8.⁵ Deut. iv. 15.⁶ Philipp. ii. 19.⁷ Ephes. iv. 3.

body, or oversolicitude for a wife, whom, nevertheless, because honourably united to her, a man is bound to cherish as his own body: "They shall be two in one flesh."¹ The first of these leads a man to an excessive anxiety in maintaining, increasing, and extending his reputation, and it is very seldom found that ambitious men attain their desires: "The expectation of the solicitous shall perish."² The second, that of worldly gain, renders a man too eager to make and heap up money, and is the characteristic of the avaricious, and, indeed, of all men of the world, so that it was called generally by Christ "the care of this world."³ The third solicitude, that of the body, induces a man to take too much pains about his food, his comforts, his dress, and is found in sensual persons, who lead the lives of pagans rather than of Christians: "Be not solicitous, saying, What shall we eat or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed, for after all these things do the heathen seek."⁴ The fourth causes a man to be inordinately desirous of pleasing his wife, of adorning and pampering her; and this is why it is so difficult for married men to give their whole hearts to God: "He that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife; and he is divided."⁵ All these four kinds of solicitude are pronounced bad, not as denying it to be lawful for a man, up to a certain point, to maintain his reputation, gain an income, attend to his corporal wants, and please his wife; but because it is very difficult to keep within due bounds in these matters. An ordinary diligence with regard to them very easily degenerates into a serious fault, so as to occasion disquiet, overanxiety, and trouble of mind; all which implies not merely an entire lack of confidence in God, but a spirit of opposition to Him. There are too many who endeavour to attain their desires in defiance of God, that is, if they cannot gain what they want by lawful means, they will employ those that are unlawful. Is not this madness? Answer me, thou who wouldst supply thy wants by unlawful means, dost thou not see that thou will have to go to Hell for it? Thou repliest that God is merciful, and will forgive. But this is the very height of folly: thou trustest to God to give thee so great a gift as the remission of thy sin, and thou canst not trust to Him for what is so much less, namely, to provide thee with that for the sake of which thou committest the sin. Be satisfied with what is required for an honest maintenance, and then ask

¹ Genesis ii. 24.² Prov. xi. 7.³ St. Matt. xiii. 22.⁴ St. Matt. vi. 31, 32.⁵ 1 Cor. vii. 33.

God for it with confidence, and do not fear that it will be refused. Dost thou suppose that He also has not that due solicitude which makes Him ready to help and relieve thee? "The Lord is careful for me."¹

IV. Consider fourthly, that even with regard to those kinds of solicitude which are called good, there is much danger of going too far. With regard to the first four, which belong to particular states of life, those go too far who are overzealous in what they do. Thou seest persons who fulfil their duties admirably as to the diligence they show in them, but at the same time who are not only diligent, but excited about them; they are troubled like Martha, full of anxiety and disturbance, they lack that tranquillity which, in a holy soul, is never ruffled by anything that can happen: "The care for her taketh away his sleep."² If thou actest in this way thou art committing a fault in the very solicitude which is good in itself; and why? Because thou dost not put thy whole trust in God, and hence spring all this disturbance and excitement and loss of peace. If thou wert convinced that God will always let that which is best happen, thou wouldst show the same diligence that thou dost now, only without disquietude. With regard to the kinds of solicitude which are common to all, those persons fall into excess who are called scrupulous, because in everything that they do they are afraid either of offending God or of neglecting something in themselves, or of failing in their duty to their neighbour. This is an excess which, when moderate, is profitable, because it strengthens the right solicitude; but when it goes too far it is very pernicious, for it causes it then to degenerate into extreme disquietude: "Through care they could not rest."³ And so it is that a serious scruple very rarely comes from God, except permissively; for it is His property to still the storm, not to arouse it: "The Lord is not in the earthquake."⁴ It very often comes from the devil, who had probably the power of causing a violent tempest of this sort in the afflicted Job, in order to add to his sorrows, which he expresses in these words of anguish: "I feared all my works."⁵ "Let not thy dread terrify me."⁶ "Let not His fear terrify me."⁷ "When I consider Him I am made pensive with fear."⁸ But in most cases it proceeds from the temperament of the sufferer, which may be either gloomy or timid, or sensitive, or like those of stormy planets, that are very apt to

¹ Psalm xxxix. 18. ² Ecclus. xlii. 9. ³ Jerem. xlix. 23. ⁴ 3 Kings xix. 11.
⁵ Job ix. 28. ⁶ Job xlii. 21. ⁷ Job ix. 34. ⁸ Job xxiii. 15.

collect clouds, and by no means apt to disperse them. If, therefore, thou happenest to be suffering from a misfortune of this kind, thou shouldst take great pains to escape from it, otherwise, through fear of committing what is not in fact a sin, thou runnest a great risk of falling into a real sin, that namely, of living in a state of disquietude, which prevents thee from glorifying God, from governing thyself, and from being useful to thy neighbour. What, then, are the means of escape? The chief means is to acquire that perfect confidence in God which, as has been said, ought always to be combined with solicitude, in order to make it praiseworthy. If thou art subject to scruples, thy solicitude, though good in itself, becomes defective in thee, because thou hast not perfect trust in God: thou art afraid that thy malice will prevail over His goodness, as though He had not yet remitted the sins which thou hast confessed so often, as though He would not help and stand by thee, as though He would, at thy death, abandon thee to thy greatest enemies. Dost thou not see how greatly thou wrongest Him by this? See, then, that thou serve Him with the right solicitude, that is, with diligence. "Carefully study to present thyself approved unto God."¹ Not "confirmed" (*probatum*), for it is not possible for thee to know that without a Divine revelation, but "approved:" and then leave the whole matter to God, instead of spending all the day in wondering whether He approves thee or not, whether He accepts thee or not, whether He will save thee or not: "My lots are in Thy hands."² In this way thou wilt get rid of that anxiety and trouble which cause the solicitude which is otherwise good to degenerate into one that is vicious, or at least injurious. It is impossible to say how much time thou lovest in the day by dwelling on needless scruples. Instead of this, spend the same time in fervently commending thyself to God; spend it "in all prayer and supplication;" spend it in calling to mind "with thanksgiving" the benefits thou hast ever received from Him; and thus, instead of losing, thou wilt gain it, because thou wilt feel sure that God will bestow on thee all those things which now thy scruples make thee doubtful of obtaining. But as this leads us into a different subject, it will be better to give a separate day to its consideration.

¹ 2 Timothy ii. 15.

² Psalm xxx. 15.

ELEVENTH DAY.

In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God (Philipp. iv. 6).

I. Consider first, with what justice the Apostles requires that, instead of oversolicitude, we should in everything have recourse to God. "Be nothing solicitous, but in everything let your petitions be made known to God." Because thou mayest hope for far more from His grace than thou canst promise thyself from thy own zeal. I say, in all things, because there is no fear of thy ever becoming troublesome or displeasing to God by the multiplicity of thy requests. On the contrary, multiply them as much as thou dost wish: for this is why the Apostle says here "petitions," not "petition." All that is requisite is that they should be such as are worthy of being presented to God, and therefore that thou shouldst not ask Him either for useless or wrong things. As to anything else, never fear because they are many, nor because they are great, for great things are just what are worthy of so great a Sovereign. Earthly princes, indeed, are troubled by being asked many or great favours: so that when Bethsabee had a request to make even to her own son, she was careful to say to King Solomon: "I desire one small petition of thee."¹ But with God we need use no such precautions. No matter if the petitions made to Him are many and great: nay, then most of all do they beseem a God of such supreme Majesty: "Hitherto ye have not asked anything."² Is not this enough, of itself, to arouse in thee that confidence for lack of which thou art so solicitous and troubled in all thy concerns? "Be nothing solicitous, but in everything let your petitions be made known to God."

II. Consider secondly, in order to give greater force to thy requests, the Apostle here teaches thee a Divine method, which is that they should be "made known to God in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving." The meaning of thanksgiving is evident: and therefore it will be enough to explain what is meant by "prayer," and what by "supplication." Prayer is defined as "the lifting up the mind to God." And this is most correct, for when thou wishest to prefer a request to God, thou shouldst at the same time raise thine eyes to Him, and remember that thou art standing in

¹ 3 Kings ii. 20.

² St. John xvi. 24.

His august presence. Supplication is "the reason for asking what is asked," and this is also a necessary point; for no petition is ever presented to a prince without declaring the reason for making it. Not that thou must imagine that these two things, prayer and supplication, must precede thy petitions. They should always accompany them. The Apostle is not here concerning himself about the order, but only that "our petitions be made known to God in everything, by prayer and supplication." Thanksgiving accompanies these. Wherefore it is added, "With thanksgiving;" and it matters little whether thou renderest thanks before or after making thy petition. When thou combinest together these four parts, which are like four elements composing the most perfect formula of addressing God, dost thou not see how pleasing the result will be in His eyes, and how eager thou shouldst be to perform it?

III. Consider thirdly, that whenever anything is asked of God, it must be asked "in everything by prayer," that is, in everything lifting up the mind to Him. There must be no wanderings or distractions; thou must keep both eyes fixed on Him, the imagination, namely, and the understanding. The imagination brings Him before thee in idea, the understanding as the Object of faith. And thou must not think that this elevation of the mind is a very long journey, even to Heaven, for God is within thee: "There hath stood One in the midst of you Whom you know not."¹ And He is within thee most really, both by His presence and by His power. By His presence He sees what thou art doing, He knows, considers, and comprehends it; by His power He in addition helps thee to do it. Therefore thou hast not to seek God at a distance. The expression, "Lifting up the mind," is used to show that when thou art conversing with God thou must raise it above the temporal and earthly things which are below. "Arise, arise, stand up, O Jerusalem."² When once this is done, when the imagination and the understanding, which are two such important mental faculties, help together to place thee in God's presence in the most perfect manner, thou seest how well the third faculty, that is, the will, can now be exercised in preferring its requests. But without the concurrence of the first two, the last is incapable of acting at all profitably; and this is why the Apostle insists on whatever is asked of God being asked "by prayer," that is, "by lifting up the mind to Him." The petitions which are granted quickly,

¹ St. John i. 26.

² Isaiah li. 17.

are those which we offer up (as has just been explained) in the presence of God: "My cry before Him came into His ears."¹

IV. Consider fourthly, that whenever thou askest anything of God thou must do so "by supplication," that is, with all possible earnestness in the motives of thy petition. It is true that these reasons are innumerable, and therefore thou art quite at liberty to choose first one and then another, according as may be suggested to thee by the Spirit. On thy own part, there is always thy misery to assign, which, with One Who is so full of compassion, is a very powerful reason for obtaining ready help: "Incline Thine ear to my petition, for my soul is filled with evils."² Besides, the consideration of thy misery will humble thee before God, fill thee with confusion and compunction, and thus the better dispose thee to receive His favours. On God's part, the reasons are as many as are His glorious attributes, His omnipotence, sanctity, wisdom, majesty. But, above all, thou shouldst always call to mind His goodness, which makes Him do good even to those who do not deserve it: "According to Thy mercy remember Thou me, for Thy goodness' sake, O Lord."³ And this consideration follows too most fitly after the remembrance of thy extreme misery, because it will prevent thy losing confidence in consequence. And after these two motives for supplication come others, such as the desire that God may be gracious to thee by the love He bears His saints and our Blessed Lady; but above all thou shouldst plead the merits of Jesus, His labours, His sweat, and the Precious Blood which He shed for thee: "Behold, O God, our Protector, and look on the face of Thy Christ."⁴ It is impossible but that thy Heavenly Father should at once yield to this plea, for thou hast the promise of Jesus Himself confirmed by a public declaration: "Amen, amen I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my Name, He will give it to you."⁵ In a word, if thou wouldst know the manner of supplication, go and learn it from the poor: "The poor will speak with supplications."⁶ It is the poor, therefore, who must give thee the rule. See how they vie with each other in waiting for thee at the door of the church that thou frequentest, how they besiege thee, how they press upon thee, how they show thee their sores, how they beg thee as thou lovest thine own soul not to turn away from them, how they remind thee of Purgatory and Paradise, how

¹ Psalm xvii. 7.

² Psalm lxxxvii. 3, 4.

³ Psalm xxiv. 7.

⁴ Psalm lxxxiii. 10.

⁵ St. John xvi. 23.

⁶ Prov. xviii. 23.

they bid thee remember the Five Wounds which Christ endured for thee upon the Cross! Even so shouldst thou deal with God. The saints tell us that He Himself ordained that from the earliest times the poor should beg at the doors of the churches, in order to teach the faithful who seek Him there how to pray. Thou, indeed, art poor, but thou art not a beggar, because thou dost not know the right way of begging. I will tell thee who did know it, the holy King who made it his boast to say: "But I am a beggar and poor."¹ Not only was he poor, but a very good beggar, and so he was able to add with truth: "The Lord is careful for me."² If thou knowest how to beg, then thou knowest the right manner of supplication. Dost thou answer that thou art ashamed to do this where God is concerned? "To beg I am ashamed."³ But to know how to present to God petitions which are omnipotent is the highest possible honour. Such, then, is supplication.

V. Consider fifthly, that after supplication the Apostle adds thanksgiving, which may, as has been said, either precede or follow the petition. It seems best, however, that it should come first, and this not only because the gratitude thou showest for past favours makes thee more fit to receive future ones by rendering thee more pleasing to God, but also because by recounting the favours, both public and private, which He has granted thee, thou excitest thyself to confidence that He will readily grant thee fresh ones. And this is, after all, the most suitable disposition for receiving from God what we desire of Him—confidence. "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for my soul trusteth in Thee."⁴ Doubtless all those reasons mentioned under the head of supplication are great inducements to confidence, but after all what they prove is this, that God has reasons for granting thee favours if He pleases, but they do not also prove that He does so please. There is, however, very plain proof of this in the fact that He actually has granted them; this, therefore, more than anything else, is an inducement to confidence. "I have cried to Thee, for Thou, O God, hast heard me."⁵ Think then, over all God's benefits with which thou art surrounded; think over each one, public and private. I know that the thought of the latter has more power to inspire thee with confidence than that of the former; but this arises from a mistake, for if

¹ Psalm xxxix. 18.² Psalm xxxix. 18.³ St. Luke xvi. 3.⁴ Psalm lvi. 2.⁵ Psalm xvi. 6.

thou interest into the depths of the Heart of God, thou wilt see that He grants thee these public benefits with the same particular affection for thee that He shows in the others ; that is, as though He granted them to thee alone, so that in reality they are private. Give Him, therefore, the same heartfelt thanks for those that are peculiar to thyself as for those which thou hast in common with others, and *vice versa*. If, by means of these acts thou seest how good God is to thee, how canst thou help having the greatest faith when making the requests for which all that has been explained above is the preparation? "In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God."

VI. Consider sixthly, that this way of speaking of the Apostle seems scarcely correct, since God knows perfectly well what thou are about to ask Him before thou beginnest to do so : "Your Father knoweth what is needful for you before you ask Him."¹ How, then, can it be said that thou makest them known? "Let your petitions be made known to God." But why does this way of speaking seem improper to thee? Because thou wilt not remember that in dealing with man God chooses to act in all things after the manner of men ; and therefore it is His will that thou shouldst lay before Him all thy desires, as though He were ignorant of them. It is true that He sometimes forestalls us in this by granting our mere desires, as we do at times with the poor : "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor."² But this is going beyond His law. The ordinary rule is that He does not grant them unless they are expressly laid open to Him—"Ask and it shall be given you"—for He rejoices in being surrounded by our importunate desires. It is His joy, His delight. Do not, then, dare to say that God already knows all that thou needest ; for if thou dost not go and lay thy necessities before Him, it will be as though He knew them not. Did not God the Father know all that His Incarnate Son desired of Him? and nevertheless that Son entreated Him continually "by prayer and supplication," laying open to Him all His desires. So also must thou : and when thou dost, particularly when thou art not weary in asking, be very sure that thou wilt be heard. See how this habit of recourse to God will supply the place of that excessive solicitude which is forbidden. He who holds intercourse with God is like a tree planted by the water-side, by clear running streams. He is not solicitous.

¹ St. Matt. vi. 8.

² Psalm ix. 17.

What though the burning heat of summer strikes full upon him? He is beside the waters. "It spreadeth out its roots towards moisture, and it shall not fear when the heat cometh."¹

TWELFTH DAY.

And this is the judgment, because the Light hath come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light (St. John iii. 19).

I. Consider first, that this darkness, of which our Lord is here speaking, does not mean sins of the will, but errors of the understanding, which are commonly followed by sins of the will; for these are not usually called "darkness" in the Sacred Scriptures, but the "works of darkness." Errors of the understanding are called darkness: "Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light,"² that is, has called thee out of ignorance of the truth. Sometimes, also, those who are lying in these errors are spoken of as "darkness:" "You were heretofore darkness."³ But our Lord is not here speaking of these, who are, strictly speaking, rather dark than darkness, and to whom the latter word is applied only to show how very dark they are. He means here that which is darkness in the true sense of the word, namely, errors of the understanding which concern either faith, and this is the darkness of infidels, or works, which is the darkness of bad Christians. It is in reference to all who love this darkness that our Lord says their judgment is already manifest: "And this is the judgment." There is no need to seek further proofs for their condemnation. It is enough to know that "the Light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than the light;" for since they have so loved darkness, it follows as a consequence that they have also loved those sins of the will which accompany the darkness. Set thyself awhile to consider whether thou art of this unhappy number, for this is the very climax of evil, to know what darkness is, and in spite of knowing it to choose it. "They walk in darkness as if it were in light."⁴

II. Consider secondly, that all persons who are of the body of the faithful may be distributed among three classes. There are some who keep their windows wide open to that Sun of

¹ Jerem. xvii. 8. ² 1 St. Peter ii. 9. ³ Ephes. v. 8. ⁴ Job xxiv. 17.

which it is written : "Thou enlightenest wonderfully from the everlasting hills."¹ Others keep theirs shut close. Others keep them neither quite open nor quite shut, but between the two, as it is said, ajar. Those who keep their windows wide open are the souls whose only wish is to receive more and more light from God ; those who shut them close are the souls who hate nothing more than to receive it ; and lastly, those who half-close their windows are the many souls who love, indeed, to receive a certain amount of light from God, but not too much, for fear of being obliged to correspond largely with it. There are few in the first class, many in the second, and most of all in the third. Examine carefully the condition of all three, in order to understand rightly to which thou belongest.

III. Consider thirdly, the happiness of those souls who keep their windows wide open. These holy souls are wise enough to see clearly that the good they do is in proportion to the living light which they receive : "The Gentiles shall walk in Thy light."² This, therefore, is what they long for, what they aspire to and pray for more and more fervently : "O my God, enlighten my darkness."³ They love to hear God's Word, they love reproof, direction, and spiritual reading, because all these are means for obtaining light. To such souls God communicates Himself in a marvellous way, because He is the Sun : "The Light is come into the world." And, therefore, the more ways of access He finds into the house, the more He enters it. He does not force an entrance by breaking and shattering the windows, as the lightning does ; for when He gives light to any one He gives him the greatest possible blessing, and He does not force it upon him : "A benefit is not bestowed on the unwilling." Violence belongs entirely to the bearer of chastisement, the thunderbolt. Thou seest, then, what thou must do to gain much light from God : open your windows as wide as possible, as Daniel did in Babylon ; but do it quickly, for He is the Sun, and so He gives His blessings as He passes by : "He went about doing good."⁴ And when He has once passed by, how canst thou be sure that He will return ? Thou canst be sure of this in the case of the material sun, which thou beholdest with thy bodily eyes, but not so in that of the Divine Sun, which is not subject to laws like the former : "Unto you that fear My Name, the Sun of Justice shall arise, and health in His wings."⁵ The Divine Sun,

¹ Psalm lxxv. 5.

² Isaiah lx. 3.

³ Psalm xvii. 29.

⁴ Acts x. 38.

⁵ Malach. iv. 2.

unlike the material sun, has wings, and on them He brings thee salvation: "Health in His wings." Why in His wings? To show that He comes and goes as pleases Him, and that no one regulates the way He has to travel.

IV. Consider fourthly, on the other hand, the unhappiness of those who keep their windows shut close. They are the souls of the wicked who love to do nothing good, and therefore do not wish to see the light; in other words, they do not wish to understand their duty: "They will not understand that they might do well."¹ If a flash of light darts into their minds unexpectedly, they try to avoid it, to turn away from it: they "have said to God, depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways."² They like going to plays better than to sermons, they hate reproof and advice, they care to read none but profane books, and have sworn open enmity to Him Who is their Sun: "They have been rebellious to the light."³ It is easy to see that such souls are in imminent danger of damnation, for they are those which are actually "in darkness," and if so, they are on the point of being lost. Hence we may observe, that in the Sacred Scriptures darkness is so continually spoken of in connection with the shadow of death: "Let darkness and the shadow of death cover it."⁴ "He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death."⁵ "Such as sat in darkness and in the shadow of death."⁶ What does this expression mean but that he who is in darkness is living in very great danger of death, that is, of damnation? When thou seest a shadow approaching, thou knowest at once that the substance is close at hand. Know, then, that the damnation of these unhappy persons is very near. Oh, how imminent, how immediate is their peril! Not only is the shadow a sign of the approach of the substance, but of its presence. Know, therefore, that those on whom the shadow falls will very soon be overtaken by death. I will not suppose thee to be in this state, and therefore I would have thee pray earnestly to God, mercifully to enlighten those who are in it—"To enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death"⁷—for there is no hope of their ever praying for themselves. When a man is in the dark, he not only sits down, but is very apt to lie down and go to sleep. So it is with these unhappy persons: they do not think about their evil case, they do not understand or perceive it, and therefore

¹ Psalm xxxv. 4. ² Job xxi. 14. ³ Job xxiv. 13. ⁴ Job iii. 5.

⁵ Psalm cvi. 14. ⁶ Psalm cvi. 10. ⁷ St. Luke i. 79.

take no pains to escape from it. And this may be what is meant when it is said that "they who sit in darkness" also "sit in the shadow of death," namely, that they are overpowered by sleep as well as covered with darkness, for what is sleep but a shadow, that is, an image of death: "The shadow of death."

V. Consider fifthly, the state of the souls who keep their windows half-shut. This is the most numerous class, and therefore it is most probable that thou belongest to it. What kind of souls are these? They are those which desire some light from God, but have a certain dread of having a great deal. They imagine that they could not live if they had, because they do not wish to correspond with the light, and so they are uneasy. The words of the text on which we are meditating seem wonderfully suited to these souls, because God does not say that "men loved darkness," but that they "loved darkness rather than the light." They who keep the windows wide open absolutely love the light; they who keep them shut close absolutely love darkness; these others, who keep theirs neither open nor shut but more shut than open, love darkness more than light. However it may be, this certainly is no safe rule. Instead of telling the Sun not to shine so brightly on thee to show thee the truth, pray Him to give thee strength to do according as is shown thee: "O Lord, give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt:" then all vain fears will vanish. Dost thou fear that thou wilt not obtain this strength? Ask for it to-day and to-morrow and the next day and the next after that, and so on with great constancy, and I promise thee in the name of the God to Whom it belongs to give it that thou shalt obtain it. "Ask and it shall be given to you."¹ Besides, how much better is it to see what thou oughtest to do, even if thou dost not do it! For then, at least, remorse of conscience will prevent thy being at peace in thy shortcomings; and so there is hope of thy amending some day: otherwise thou art lost. Thou seest, then, how different thy course should be from what it is. Thou wouldst rather not have a great deal of light for fear of feeling too keen a remorse of conscience for thy faults, and I tell thee that thou oughtest to love a great deal of light in order to feel that remorse. Dost thou think that the dimness thou livest in, which is after all a faint and scanty light, is a small evil? On the contrary it is the very thing which the

¹ St. Matt. vii. 7.

devil asks of thee, and this for two reasons : first, because he is like those dishonest tradespeople who make sure of being able to palm off the goods they have so carefully adulterated, if only they can sell them in a dark shop : "The eye of the adulterer observeth darkness."¹ And the second reason is because he knows that nothing is easier than for obscurity to change quickly into complete darkness. Beware, therefore, of loving a perpetual twilight in thy soul, for after twilight it will soon be night.

VI. Consider sixthly, the great wrong which is done to our Lord by those who reject Him because He is the Light, when it is for this reason that He should be gladly welcomed ; for what does this Sun come to do but to drive away from them that which is a most hideous ignorance : "I am come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth in Me may not remain in darkness."² And therefore there is no excuse for one who loves ignorance, because voluntary ignorance does not lessen, but increase sin. And this is why God so severely rebukes those who "loved darkness rather than light," it is precisely because they "loved" it, that is to say, chose it. The greatest evil is not the being in darkness, but the loving it. And, therefore, He says that for such the judgment is already over : "This is the judgment ;" for there is no other way of convincing those who declare their aversion for the light ; by so doing they declare themselves deserving of all those falls which come from their state of darkness.

THIRTEENTH DAY.

ST. HERMENEGILD, MARTYR.

A holy man continueth in wisdom as the sun ; but a fool is changed as the moon (Ecclus. xxvii. 12).

I. Consider first, that the sun is here said to be stationary (*manet*), not that it is not continually moving, so rapidly indeed that it travels more than a million miles an hour, but because it never loses either any of its brightness, or its heat, or its living strength ; it is always the same, although we do not always feel its effects in the same degree, but according

¹ Job. xxiv. 15.

² St. John xii. 46.

to our distance from it. The moon, on the other hand, does not travel so rapidly, and besides, there is not a moment when her light is not either waxing or waning and changing considerably in a short space of time, being sometimes full, sometimes very small, sometimes pale, sometimes brilliant. Now this, too, is the chief difference between the "holy man" and the "fool," in other words, the sinner. They both move, doubtless, but the holy man moves in an equable manner, and "continueth;" he moves because he is always advancing. And in what way does he advance? "from virtue to virtue," and thus also he is always increasing, till he attains "even to the perfect day;" and yet at the same time he "continueth," because he never loses the least degree of the virtue he has already acquired, but rather strengthens and confirms it, thus imitating the true Sun of Justice, of Whom it is written, that from His first dawning He "grew and was strengthened," but was always "full of wisdom." The fool, on the contrary, moves, indeed, but according to no rule, sometimes he gains, then loses again, he is joyful and sad, courageous and cowardly by turns; if he begins to do right for a time, he changes his mind very quickly, and alters, in short, a thousand times a day. What canst thou say as to the strength of thy perseverance in well-doing. It is this quality which likens thee to Jesus, thy glorious Sun, Who never fails in the abundance or the treasures with which He is enriched: "With Whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration."¹

II. Consider secondly, the reason of this changeableness in the fool, this immutability in the holy man. It is that the holy man is like the sun, his wisdom is in himself, he has not to beg it from another like himself; whereas the fool has it not: "From the wicked their light shall be taken away."² And so, if he desires it, he must ask it of those who have it, as the moon does of the sun, and the consequence is that he is chaste with the chaste, impure with the impure, prudent with the prudent, shameless with the shameless, just according to the different impressions he receives first from one and then from another—"He never continueth in the same state,"³—because his object is, not to please God, but to accommodate himself to others. Oh, how important it is for a man to form his own judgment of his conduct, so as not to be lightly turned from his purpose by any one! This is "to continue in his wisdom." Is it not a slavish thing to be thus slavishly ready

¹ St. James i. 17.² Job xxxviii. 15.³ Job xiv. 2.

to obey the wrong suggestions of others? Be assured that the thing which will win for thee the respect even of the wicked, is constancy: "The Persians quaked at her constancy."¹

III. Consider thirdly, that it is said of the holy man, "He continueth in wisdom," not, "He continueth in knowledge;" for wisdom is concerned with general principles, and regards the end; knowledge is concerned with particular principles, and regards the means. Therefore the holy man "continueth in wisdom as the sun," because his end never changes, it is always the same, he is always tending to God—"It is good for me to adhere to my God"²—but he does not thus continue in knowledge, for in those things which are particular, that is, the means to the end, he changes according to the requirements of time, obedience, calling, or health. At one time he yields himself to contemplation, at another to action, sometimes he commands, sometimes he obeys, now he converses, now he studies, now he does more penance, now less; but all this is continuing in wisdom, because it is doing what he sees to be most conducive to the end he has in view, which is to do what is most pleasing to his God. So is it with the sun. Its end is to give life to the world; but it does not produce that result in the same manner in all, nevertheless, because it acts by rule its operations are familiar to every one: those of the moon may be guessed at, but who can be certain about them?

IV. Consider fourthly, that when the Wise Man had said, "A holy man continueth in wisdom," it might have been supposed that he would say, by way of contrast, "But the sinner is changed as the moon;" yet he does not say "the sinner," but "the fool." It is, however, the sinner whom he means by the "fool." And this should not surprise thee, for it is the title especially belonging to him in the Scriptures. Certainly the Wise Man hardly ever calls him anything else; at least, he much more frequently says the "fool" than the "sinner," so true is it that there is no greater fool in the world. Do not imagine that I intend here to set down all the follies of which he is guilty, for they are as numerous as the various forms of wickedness; but I will tell thee what is the greatest of them all. It is that he thinks himself wise: and when this notion becomes fixed it makes him quite incurable, because then he receives no counsel, attends to no rebuke, and thinks that those who call him a fool are fools themselves: "Yea, and the fool, when he walketh in the way,

¹ Judith xvi. 12.

² Psalm lxxii. 28.

whereas he himself is a fool, esteemeth all men fools." ¹ Thou seest, therefore, that the sinner does far worse than the moon; for, if we consider rightly, the moon wanes, not because she is inconstant and refuses the light with which she was filled, but because it is withdrawn from her, and withdrawn just when it would seem that she most deserved to be made still richer and fairer, just when she is nearest to the sun, so that, if there were any fault in her diminished radiance, she would be excusable. But this is not the sinner's case, he himself refuses the light, he will not have it: "They have been rebellious to the light," ² they have chosen the dimness, the obscurity, the shadows, and the darkness that surround them. "They have loved darkness rather than the light." Wherefore it is not said that "the moon is changed as the fool," but that "the fool is changed as the moon." For the moon is rather unfortunate, as we should say, than foolish in changing. Beware then of ever reaching the pitch of esteeming wickedness wisdom, for that is the very height of madness. Yet the world is full of it: "Folly is joy to the fool." ³ Is it not horrible to see people taking pleasure in their blindness, triumphing, exulting, glorying in it? "It is better to meet a bear robbed of her whelps than a fool trusting in his own folly." ⁴

V. Consider fifthly, that as the sinner is called a fool, so, on the other hand, the holy man is called wise, because to attain holiness is our true wisdom on earth. I say, to attain, for there are many who start in the path and stop half-way; for awhile they "continue in their wisdom," but not "as the sun," that is, they do not persevere to the end; they allow themselves to be scared by the monsters they meet on the way; they are "molested with the fear of monsters," ⁵ and so, like cowards, they turn aside. He who acts thus is not holy; and, therefore, it is not said that "a just man continueth in his wisdom as the sun," but "a holy man," for constancy like that of the sun, which, so to speak, fears none of the monsters it meets on the way, is no common virtue. I will tell thee an example of it. The royal youth Hermenegild, whose feast it is to-day. What monsters he met on his road! Riches, applause, flattery, pleasures, evil counsels, and worse—commands, imprisonment, fetters, bonds, and death by the axe at the hands of his own father; yet he always stood firm,

¹ Eccles. x. 3.² Job xxiv. 13.³ Prov. xv. 21.⁴ Prov. xvii. 12.⁵ Wisdom xvii. 14.

never swerving an inch from the royal road before him. This was the conduct of a wise man, that is, of a saint; and, therefore, thou hast not only a patron, but an example, in this youth of royal birth and dignity, whom thou seest, to thy shame, standing so unmoved in the midst of a nation infected with a thousand insidious errors. Truly he "continued in his wisdom as the sun:" and thou, whose difficulties are far from being like his, showest no constancy whatever, but art "changed as the moon."

FOURTEENTH DAY.

Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell
(Psalm xciii. 17).

I. Consider first, that the hell here spoken of by David seems to be the same which he elsewhere calls "the lower hell"—"Thou hast delivered my soul out of the lower hell"—because whereas he there spoke of having escaped from it, he says the same in our text, in which he presupposes that he had been in this hell, but that, thanks to the Divine assistance, he had not stayed there long, for he does not say, "Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost" descended, but "dwelt in hell;" showing by this that he had indeed been there, but only for a short time, because when we speak of "dwelling" in a place we mean rather having a settled abode there. What, then, is this hell from which it is possible to escape? It cannot be the Hell of punishment, for thither, save only in thought, David never descended; it must, therefore, be the hell which many of the saints call the hell of sin, and which may, perhaps, be styled lower, in comparison of the other, because there is a possibility of escape from it, and not from the other. Nevertheless, both are hells of sin, both of punishment; and happy wilt thou be if thou clearly understandest how much affinity there is between the two, and so art able to avoid both.

II. Consider secondly, how rightly sin is called hell, because it is the very abyss of misery: "Out of the depths have I cried to Thee, O Lord."¹ Thou canst not imagine the miserable condition of one who dwells there; he is

¹ Psalm cxxix. 1.

plunged in filth and corruption: "I stick fast in the mire of the deep."¹ Again, as Hell is a deep prison, so, too, is sin. Not, indeed, an eternal prison, because, as has already been said, the sinner may escape from it as long as he is yet living; but this is surely out of pure grace, and by its own nature sin is an eternal prison like the other. Since the sinner could never come out of it by his own strength, it is the hand of God that must open the door: "Bring my soul out of Hell."² Neither, too, does this prison lack very terrible gaolers, namely, all those demons of Hell who surround the sinner, pressing upon him, encircling him in vast multitudes, to cut off all his chances of escape: "Thy guards are like the locusts."³ This prison has also its two-fold pain, that of loss and that of sense. The pain of loss is the privation of God, and consequently of every claim to the glory of Paradise which the sinner once possessed: "He hath stripped me of my glory."⁴ The pain of sense is the chastisement which sin brings with it even in this world, the disgrace, the disease, the miseries which accompany it: "I will visit upon you according to the fruit of your doings."⁵ There is, too, in this hell a torturing worm, remorse of conscience: "The worm shall not die."⁶ There is darkness there, and terror, and the pitiless furies which from time to time assail the sinner even in sleep, and which would often drive him trembling from his bed, if they did not cease at length from troubling him in order to let him sleep in his sin: "The terrible ones shall go and come upon him."⁷ There is the disorder of all the interior faculties, making a horrible confusion within. The understanding perverts the will, the will excites the understanding. None of the appetites is any longer under the control of reason, but in rebellion against it, for all the virtues have deserted that wicked heart which has become no fit habitation for them: "From the daughter of Sion all her beauty is departed."⁸ Therefore in this hell is heard also a confusion of voices one blaspheming God's holy name, another questioning His providence, another insulting His goodness, another madly cursing His justice: "Who shall confess to Thee in Hell?"⁹ And there is one thing which thou wilt wonder at, which is that whereas in Hell there are only sounds of weeping, in sin there are many who laugh. But be not deceived by this, for

¹ Psalm lxxviii. 3. ² Psalm cxli. 8.

³ Nahum iii. 17. ⁴ Job xix. 9. ⁵ Jerem. xxi. 14. ⁶ Isaias lxvi. 24.

⁷ Job xx. 25. ⁸ Lament. i. 6. ⁹ Psalm vi. 6.

it is the greatest of all the evils of sin that in the end it so puts a man beside himself that he does not know what it is : "He hath inebriated me with wormwood."¹ Then it is that a man hardly ever escapes from it—"Because no one understandeth they shall perish for ever"²—and so at last sin becomes a real, because an everlasting, hell : "There is no redemption." Thus it is that whereas the devils do their utmost to make the damned weep, they endeavour, on the contrary, to provoke sinners to continual laughter, so sure are they then of not losing them unless God, Who "bringeth out them that were bound in strength,"³ should be pleased to put forth unwonted power to deliver them. And if all this be true, dost thou not think that sin may reasonably be called hell?

III. Consider thirdly, what reason thou hast to tremble when thou rememberest, with holy David, that thou hast been in such a hell as this. And if, as I would fain hope, thou art not now there, to what is it due but to the infinite goodness of God? "Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell." It was not thou who didst first stretch out thy hand to God; it was He Who stretched His out to thee. How did He do so? By making thee read some spiritual book, hear some sermon, talk to some particular person, witness some good example in a particular place. Had it not been so, "unless the Lord had been" thy "helper" in this manner, where wouldst thou now be? Thou wouldst have remained in sin till now: "Thy soul would have dwelt in hell." Well, then, mayest thou not truly say that thou hast escaped dwelling there by a very little—"almost," for how little a thing would have prevented thee from reading the book, hearing the sermon, talking to the person, witnessing the good example. As regards thy part in these things, thou seest plainly that they were accidents, but not so as regards God's part, for He by a providential arrangement of events and of circumstances, ordained that thou shouldst do that small amount of good which was to be the occasion of thy salvation. See, then, how greatly thou shouldst feel indebted to such immense goodness, and declare that if thou art saved it is of God alone: "Unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell."

IV. Consider fourthly, whether there is anything that a lost soul would not do if by God's mercy it were allowed to come out of Hell. Would it not fly to the woods and caves

¹ Lament. iii. 15.

² Job iv. 20.

³ Psalm lxxvii. 7.

to inflict on itself the severest tortures? would it not languish in a living death among the tombs? And yet thou canst think so lightly of the grace which God has shown thee in delivering thee from sin! Perhaps thou wouldst be ungrateful enough to return again to the hell He took thee from! But what a miracle of madness would this be. Think for a moment whether it were possible for a lost soul that had been delivered from the pit of Hell to go back to it in a few days, as though it regretted having accepted that grace from God? And wouldst thou go back to the hell of sin? Oh, how little canst thou understand the mercy He has shown thee! Take good heed, therefore, for though, while there is life there is always hope of escaping from that hell of sin, yet it is not every one who does escape from it. "You shall seek Me, and you shall die in your sin."¹

FIFTEENTH DAY.

When I was a child I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child (1 Cor. xiii. 11).

I. Consider first, that although little children are certainly men, as others are, they are imperfect men; and so too are we on earth, in our relations to God. We are exceedingly imperfect, we know neither how to speak of Him, understand Him, nor think of Him, and therefore we act towards Him like children. And why? Because we do just as we did in our childhood, when we could not speak or judge or think of anything but in a childish manner: we spoke as children, understood as children, thought as children. How do children speak? In a faltering, broken manner, slowly, and with difficulty; so that if they ever speak fluently, it is looked upon as a miracle: "Wisdom . . . made the tongues of infants eloquent."² And this is our way of speaking concerning God: "Ah, ah, ah, Lord God; behold I cannot speak, for I am a child."³ If any one in this world speaks aright of God, it is a miracle. How do children judge? In a false, distorted way; they think of great things just as they do of little ones which they hold in their hands every day, they have neither sense nor

¹ St. John viii. 21.

² Wisdom x. 21.

³ Jerem. i. 6.

experience by which to choose the true good: "The childish shall possess folly."¹ Such too is our understanding with regard to God. We talk of Him as we do of the things of this world which are appreciable by our senses: "Thou savourest not the things that are of God."² Lastly, how do children think? Just according to their fancy, and therefore in a wrong, inconstant manner, more like the visions of a dreamer than the thoughts of one who is awake.³ And our thoughts about God are of the same sort, for we are unable to form a right idea of Him in our minds; and when we think about Him we imagine Him in the likeness of a man, or a tree, or an animal, or the sun, that is, under the most senseless images of a dream: "To whom then have you likened God?"⁴ But when, in the next world, we shall have come to a mature age, then, like grown men, we shall lay aside at once our present childish ways, we shall "put away the things of a child," and we shall think, and understand, and speak of God as we ought. This is literally what the Apostle means. But when, oh, when will that time come? And is it possible that there is any man who would rather be a child than a man? "O children, how long will you love childishness?"⁵

II. Consider secondly, that the right order is, first to think, then to understand, and then to speak. But the Apostle has reversed the order, and put speaking first, then understanding, then thinking: "I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child." And why has he done so? Because this is the way with children. They speak of things before they understand them; they form a judgment of them before they think about them, such is their simplicity. And this is what is done in the world with regard to God. Dost thou not every day hear men speaking with the utmost rashness of the deepest mysteries, of God's vast judgments, His providence, His predestination, the immortality of the souls He has created? They utter the first words that rise to their lips, that is to say, they speak before they have formed a judgment, or they form a judgment without having thought properly on the subject; for if they happen to have a smattering of learning, pedantic and profane though it may be, they begin arguing as though they were theologians, but in such a manner that it may justly be said of them: "Who is this that wrappeth up.

¹ Prov. xiv. 18.

² St. Matt. xvi. 23.

³ "The thoughts of a fool are like a rolling axle-tree" (Ecclus. xxxiii. 5).

⁴ Isaias xl. 18.

⁵ Prov. i. 22.

sentences in unskilful words?"¹ How much better would they do to say that they are children, and so cannot speak of God: "I cannot speak." At least let them hear these words of the Preacher: "Think not anything rashly, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter a word before God. For God is in Heaven and thou upon earth."² This wrong order which prevails on earth will be corrected in Heaven, it will be done away; for there we shall first "see God," not as now, by the help of imagination, but "face to face;" then we shall admire and appreciate Him, and think highly of Him as He merits; and lastly we shall speak of Him, breaking out into those just and glorious praises which we shall never cease to render Him through all eternity. Happy wilt thou be if one day thou pass from thy present state of childhood to perfect manhood.

III. Consider thirdly, that all that has been said with regard to the state of glory in the future life may, in its measure, be said of the state of grace in the present life. For in it also there are children and grown men. The imperfect are children, the perfect are men. How much more numerous are the children! "Their little ones go out like a flock."³ If thou wouldst know in which class thou art, consider well the three marks already given: how thou thinkest, how thou judgest, how thou speakest. In the first place, dost thou love to think of God, to "think on the things of the Lord"?⁴ or dost thou rather think of all sorts of follies, gossip, news, trifles, not even knowing the meaning of the practice of the Divine presence, which is so necessary, not only in time of prayer, but all through the day? If so, thou art a child; for it is of idle things that children think: "He that wanteth understanding, thinketh vain things,"⁵ whereas to think often of the Divine greatness is the practice of reasonable, wise, and perfect men: "To think, therefore, upon her is perfect understanding."⁶ In the next place, dost thou think that thou rightly appreciatest the things of God, that thou lovest and relishest them? "Dost thou savour the things that are of God," or hast thou a far stronger taste for worldly vanities? If so, thou art a child; for children have a perverted taste: "As unto little ones in Christ, I gave you milk to drink, not meat."⁷ Whereas real men can take delight in God alone: "But strong meat is for the perfect."⁸ Lastly, how dost thou

¹ Job xxxviii. 2.² Eccles. v. 1.³ Job xxi. 11.⁴ 1 Cor. vii. 34.⁵ Eccles. xvi. 23.⁶ Wisdom vi. 16.⁷ 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2.⁸ Hebrews v. 14.

speak of spiritual things? Dost thou "speak . . . sound doctrine?"¹ Dost thou speak of them with pleasure, with reverence, or art thou scarcely able to say a word about them? In that case thou art a child, "For every one that is a partaker of milk is unskilful in the word of justice."² Those who are full-grown men in virtue, care for no other language: "We speak wisdom among the perfect."³ What, then, must thou do? Thou must "put away the things of a child," by changing thy language, thy judgment, thy thoughts. If thou wouldst change thy language, thou must change thy manner of judging; and if thou wouldst change that, thou must do away with those idle fancies which pervert it; for every one speaks as he judges, and judges as he thinks. If, therefore, thou considerest the matter carefully, thou wilt see that thou must begin by clearing thy mind of all idle, confused, and disordered imaginations, and setting thyself in earnest to think of God: "The prince will devise such things as are worthy of a prince."⁴

IV. Consider fourthly, that besides speaking, understanding, and thinking as a child, there is also such a thing as acting as a child, which must be explained in the last place: "Their children dance and play."⁵ And yet this is not mentioned by the Apostle among "the things of a child." But it is not to be wondered at, because his object was to speak of those things which, in the state of glory, will be changed from imperfection into perfection, just as it happens when a child becomes a man. For in Heaven thoughts will be made perfect, because our obscure earthly thoughts will be replaced by the clear vision of God: "His eyes shall see the King in His beauty."⁶ The understanding will be made perfect, because there we shall, without the aid of any teacher, at once understand all truth, and embrace it and cling to it with the certainty that to all eternity we shall never change our opinion: "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know Me, from the least of them even to the greatest, saith the Lord."⁷ Speech will be made perfect, because our faltering utterances will be changed into the clear praises of God: "The tongue of stammerers shall speak readily and plain."⁸ But action, strickly speaking, will not be made perfect; it will, so to say, be left as it is, because Heaven is the place not of

¹ Titus ii. 1. ² Hebrews v. 13. ³ 1 Cor. ii. 6.

⁴ Isaias xxxii. 8. ⁵ Job xxi. 11.

⁶ Isaias xxxiii. 17.

⁷ Jerem. xxxi. 34.

⁸ Isaias xxxii. 4.

work but of rest: "Now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours."¹ And so Heaven is called the city of rest: "Let us hasten, therefore, to enter into that rest."² There will then be only these three actions: to see God, to enjoy God, to praise God; and in these there will be perfect happiness. It is not so, indeed, in the state of grace, for a purely contemplative life belongs to that country which is the house of Mary's "best part:" in our earthly exile the active must be joined with the contemplative life, Mary and Martha must go hand in hand. And in this world there is but too much acting as a child. What are these actions? They are countless as the frivolities of childhood; yet thou mayest observe, if thou wouldst know them thoroughly, that there are three features belonging to them all. First, they are trifling actions; for children spend their time in playing and running about, and in imitating the serious business of others without really doing it, and this concerns the substance of the actions. Secondly, they are actions performed out of self-love; for children only do what will give them pleasure or procure what they want, never from the motive of the general good; and this regards the end of the actions. Thirdly, they are actions done with the greatest instability; for children are in the habit of taking a violent fancy for a thing and wearying of it as quickly; they are easily made angry and easily pacified, they laugh and cry with equal readiness, and this because they do things according as fancy moves them at the moment: and this, lastly, regards the manner in which the actions are performed. This, then, is acting "as a child" in the spiritual life; it is to do works which are unfruitful, as are all those that are indifferent but not profitable—"Their works are unprofitable works"³—it is to have an eye, in what is done, to self-interest, rather than to pleasing and glorifying God or to the good of others: "All seek the things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's."⁴ And lastly, it is to show instability in action, to be continually changing devotions, confessors, churches, confraternities, and manner of life. And as this is the most peculiar characteristic of children, so, too, is it of those who lead imperfect lives: "Jerusalem hath grievously sinned, therefore hath she become unstable."⁵ It remains that thou shouldst examine thyself, and ascertain how far thou hast reached the age of manhood.

¹ Apoc. xiv. 13.² Hebrews iv. 11.³ Isaias lix. 6.⁴ Philipp. ii. 21.⁵ Lament. i. 8.

SIXTEENTH DAY.

They shall be in the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them trembling (Ezech. vii. 16).

I. Consider first, that the dove has seven natural qualities which admirably express the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, and this may be one reason why He has always been pleased to appear in the form of a dove rather than of any other animal, even an innocent one. In the first place, thou mayest observe that there is in the dove a very great simplicity: she is frank and sincere, and entirely free from malice. This quality serves to express the gift of Wisdom, which is so different from the policy of men of the world. The latter is all fraud, deception, and self-interest: "The wisdom of a discreet man is to understand his way."¹ The former is simply the love of the truth: "My mouth shall meditate truth,"² as the Wise Man says. Next, thou wilt see that the dove is very clear-sighted in distinguishing the good seeds from the bad that are thrown to her, choosing the one and rejecting the other. And this quality expresses the gift of Knowledge, by virtue of which the saints habitually discern truth from falsehood, and so feed their souls with sound doctrine only: "Knowing to refuse the evil and to choose the good."³ Then, the dove will hatch a brood which is not her own, providing for and feeding them tenderly. And in this quality thou mayest see the gift of Counsel expressed, which leads the saints to do good to those who do not belong to them in any way. Their "law . . . is a fountain of life,"⁴ and, as such, it excludes no one who approaches it. Thou also seest that the dove likes to build near streams, so that when a hawk appears she may hasten to plunge into the water, and so escape its attacks. And herein is expressed the gift of Understanding, which makes the saints hover about the stream of the Sacred Scriptures—"They sit beside the plentiful streams"⁵—so that, by steeping their souls in the study of them, they may despise the thousand snares of the enemy. Then, see how free the dove is from all rancour, how meek and modest and loving she is. And this represents the gift of Piety, by which the saints, too, feel no anger against their neighbour, no sharpness, no bitterness, but are gentle to

¹ Prov. xiv. 8.² Prov. viii. 7.³ Isaias vii. 15.⁴ Prov. xiii. 14.⁵ Cant. v. 12.

every one, thus, as St. Peter commands, evidencing their piety by patience: "In patience, godliness."¹ Thou seest the dove choosing to build her nest in rocks, not trees, like other birds; and this may express the gift of Fortitude which makes the saints delight to dwell in the Wounds of their crucified Master, Who is their strength; and there, as in a strong rock, they find their rest and refuge: "My dove in the clefts of the rock."² The dove is exceedingly timid, more so even than other birds; she avoids all risks, she has no courage, and soars upward even when there is no necessity, so as to feel safer. This quality, lastly, expresses the gift of Fear, which is that which makes the saints never trust to themselves; they are cautious and watchful, and often fear when others make sure: "I feared all my works, knowing that Thou didst not spare the offender."³ If, therefore, there is one of her qualities which the dove ought to prize more than all the others, it is this quality of fear, which at first sight may seem the least noble, for it is the one which preserves the rest. Alas for her if she had it not! How could she defend herself? "Thou hast made his strength fear."⁴ So, too, with regard to the saints. Of all the gifts of the Holy Ghost, a chaste fear is the one which they must above all preserve till death: "Keep the fear of the Lord, and grow old therein."⁵ If they lose this, they are at once lost themselves. And therefore thou understandest how it is that God would have them all be as timid doves: "They shall be in the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them trembling." If thou sayest, but they are innocent, possessed of all those gifts which are represented in the dove, I reply that for that very reason they have greater cause for fear, as they are the more exposed to the snares of their treacherous enemy, the devil, who pursues them. How dost thou stand in this respect? Thou art, perhaps, ashamed of what is so necessary for all, when thou ourest rather to glory in it: "Let thy glory be in the fear of God."⁶

II. Consider secondly, that there are some persons who think that fear is a quality proper only for beginners, not for those who are advanced in the spiritual life. But this is untrue. "They shall be in the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them trembling." Those who are on the heights of perfection must fear as much as those who are still at the base. Doves, indeed, when they have soared above the

¹ 2 St. Peter i. 6.

³ Cant. ii. 14.

² Job ix. 28.

⁴ Psalm lxxxviii. 41.

⁵ Eccus. ii. 6.

⁶ Eccus. ix. 22.

mountain-tops, are less afraid than when they were in the valleys. But it must not be so with the just. They have as much cause for fear at the end of perfection (if such an expression is allowable) as at the beginning. If they become confident when they are soaring high, believe me it is a very bad sign. It is a sign that they hold themselves in some esteem, and, if so, God is sure to abandon them, for He more readily bears with a sinner who is humble than with a just man who is proud.

III. Consider thirdly, how many there have been who were lost after reaching the mountain-tops—Saul, Solomon, Didymus, Osius, Origen, Tertullian—were not all these accounted saints? Beware, therefore, of presumption; and even though thou mayest think that thou hast attained to a sublime state, think humbly of thyself—“Be not high-minded, but fear”¹—for God would have thee fear on those heights just as much as when thou wert beginning the ascent: “They shall be in the mountains, like doves of the valleys, all of them trembling.” The first fear, or that of beginners, must not be laid aside, but made perfect as time goes on; it must not become less, but better, and from its first stage must pass into that of chaste fear, and this is the case when it no longer regards the penalty, but the guilt of sin. When, therefore, it is said that “perfect charity casteth out fear,”² it must be understood of that fear which is contrary to charity, that is, “the fear of the punishment,” not “the fear of the guilt.” Besides, strictly speaking, there is greater cause for fear after some time, than in the first stages of conversion, just as there is more anxiety about a ship that is returning richly freighted from the Indies, than when she set sail without her cargo from a European port, because she is in so much greater danger of capture by pirates.

IV. Consider fourthly, how some persons persuade themselves that, even if the saints have cause for fear, those of them who live in the world, preaching, hearing confessions, teaching and directing others, have far greater cause for it than those who dwell in solitude in the peace of holy contemplation. But this is not true: “They shall be in the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them trembling.” Those holy persons who live in solitude must fear just as much as those who are in the world. The doves, indeed, which inhabit the mountains are not in continual fear, like those which are in the valleys, because, being far from the haunts of men, they are

¹ Romans xi. 20.

² 1 St. John iv. 18.

less frequently exposed to danger. But it is not so with the just. Even when they are on the heights, that is, in the cloister, in their cells, or in caverns, they must always fear, just as those do who are "in the midst of a wicked race," because their invisible enemies are all around, and everywhere laying snares for them, though in different ways. Were not Victorinus, Theophilus, Ptolemy, Hero, James, Guarinus, Macarius, all of them solitaires of the highest reputation, and were not they caught in the snare? And therefore, even if, by the grace of God, thou too hast embraced a solitary life, thou must fear just as those must who by the same grace have chosen to continue amongst men: "They shall be in the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them trembling."

V. Consider fifthly, there are other persons who think that, granting that all the saints, whether they have embraced the active or the contemplative life, are equally bound to fear, yet at least this fear need only be very moderate. But this, too, is quite untrue: "They shall be in the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them trembling." It is not said "timid," but "trembling;" for the fear that is required must be a fear that thrills through their hearts because God's judgments are so terrible: "His judgments are a great deep."¹ If thou lookest even from the window of a strong tower into some deep abyss, it gives you a feeling of horror. Why is this? Not that thou art in danger of falling into it, but because the very sight of it gives thee a sensation of fear. It is an instinct of nature which makes us tremble at the thought of a danger, to fall into which would be fatal and irremediable destruction. And grace too has its instincts, nay, even stronger ones, because in the order of grace the danger is not so easily perceived as in the order of nature. But yet it is always hanging over us. "Behold, they that serve Him are not steadfast, and in His angels He found wickedness."² And if this is so, hast thou not great cause to tremble? So long as fear is shut up in the heart, it is not "trembling" (*tremor*): trembling is the external mark of fear. Be not ashamed of letting others see that thou fearest. Show it by avoiding dangerous occasions, by shunning bad company, by abhorring evil talk; show it by not indulging that undue merriment which never is seen in one who fears. The dove is melancholy as well as timid: she does not sing, like other birds; her voice is like the complaint of one who mourns over her sorrowful lot. And so shouldst thou, too,

¹ Psalm xxxv. 7.

² Job iv. 18.

love to do. Immoderate laughter, tales, and jests, and sallies of wit, ill beseem a man who not only fears, but trembles for fear. And the fear of God must produce this trembling in all the just: "They shall be in the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them trembling."

SEVENTEENTH DAY.

I therefore beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called, with all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity, careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephes. iv. 1-3).

I. Consider first, that when God, by the mouth of so exalted a minister as an Apostle, not only demands a thing, but even entreats and beseeches it of thee, it cannot but be a most necessary thing. Hear what He says: "I beseech you." Thou knowest that the poor will speak with supplication: it is the poor who ask in this humble manner, who beg, who entreat. Who ever heard of a nobleman of great dignity condescending so far? Yet even thus far does God humble Himself to thee. He actually says, "I beseech you." This, therefore, shows that the thing He asks of thee is one which He greatly desires. And what is it? That thou mayest know how to live in peace.

II. Consider secondly, that if the thing which God asks of thee is simply that thou mayest know how to live in peace, it might appear like going out of His way to begin by bidding thee walk worthy of thy vocation. But it is not so in reality; rather, from this He would have thee infer the deep importance of the matter in question. What is thy vocation? It is, beyond a doubt, the Christian religion, either as it is professed, with less perfection, by seculars, or in the most perfect way, in religious communities. Now this religion, in whichever way it is practised, is entirely founded, if thou considerest it aright, "in the unity of the Spirit." And it is for this reason that Christ decreed that there should be in it but one head, namely, His Vicar, in order that it may be evident that it is to be but one body; and He has decreed that it should be but one body in order that it may be evident that it is to have but one Spirit dwelling in it: "One body and one Spirit."¹ Nor was He con-

¹ Ephes. iv. 4.

tented with this, but before He ascended into Heaven this was the one thing which He asked of His Father for the faithful who were or should hereafter be in the world, that they might all be one: "I pray . . . for them who . . . shall believe in Me, that they all may be one, . . . Father."¹ He might have prayed in terms as express that they might be poor, chaste, mortified; but He is satisfied with praying that they might be closely united in charity. If they had this virtue, there could be no doubt that every other would be seen to flourish in them. And to this end He was not satisfied with asking that there might be an ordinary kind of union amongst them—no, it was to be a sublime union, the highest possible; therefore He did not say to His Father, "I pray that they may be united," but, "I pray that they may be one." And how were they to be one? "That they may be one as We also are One." See how close a unity He desired to exist among His followers, even that which is between the Divine Persons. Not that it is possible for any unity among creatures ever to be the same as that wonderful unity, but that at least there might be some resemblance to it. This is the force of the word "as" (*sicut*), not equality, but likeness. And thus, even as in the Divine Persons there is diversity, but not division nor divisibility, so also should the faithful be among themselves, not indeed by nature, for that is impossible, but by force of charity: "One heart and one soul."² Not only "one heart," for that, after all, may be divided, as when Joab pierced the heart of Absalom with three javelins, but "one soul" also; and it is impossible to imagine, much less to cause any division in the soul. This, then, is the characteristic badge of a Christian; not piety, nor mortification, nor modesty, but brotherly union. And therefore this, beyond everything else, is the vocation to which thou art called by Christ, and according to which He asks, nay, He beseeches thee, to walk worthily: "I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called." And what is walking worthily? It is to do nothing contrary to thy vocation, but rather always to be gaining strength in it, pressing on, advancing in it, for this is what is meant by *walking*, and to walk in the ways of the Lord is to attain perfection: "Walk before Me and be perfect."³

III. Consider thirdly, that there are four vices which more than all others militate against the preservation of this unity which should be the mark of every Christian household;

¹ St. John xvii. 20, 21.

² Acts iv. 32.

³ Genesis xvii. 1.

namely, pride, anger, impatience, and indiscreet zeal. Thou must, therefore, combat these four vices by opposing to them four virtues which will overthrow them. The first vice is pride. Wherever it is found, where every one vies with the others in ruling, in having the mastery, there must necessarily be disputes: "Among the proud there are always contentions."¹ And therefore, in the first place, God commands thee to practise humility of every kind—"with all humility"—that is, interior and exterior. Exterior humility without interior is not lasting; and interior without exterior is not enough. Therefore, "all humility" means that which makes thee humble, at one and the same time, both exteriorly and interiorly; and such must thine be if it is to help in the preservation of unity: "In humility let each esteem others better than themselves."² The second vice is anger. Where it is found, that is, where every one is ready to irritate, to offend, to wound others, there must be quarrels: "A passionate man provoketh quarrels."³ And therefore, in the second place, God enjoins mildness: "With all humility and mildness," that is, "with all mildness;" for the word "and" attaches to what follows the same adjective which belongs to "humility." What, then, is that perfect mildness which must be the protection of humility? It is that both of words and of deeds. There are some who are able to repress their anger in speaking, and yet are not afraid to manifest it in action; and there are others who do not dare to show it in their actions, but who cannot restrain it in speaking. Take care that thy mildness be perfect: "My son, do thy works in meekness, and thou shalt be beloved above the glory of men."⁴ The third vice is impatience. Where this is, that is, where any one refrains indeed from giving offence and offering insult, but yet cannot command himself if he receives them, there, too, will be contention. And therefore, in the third place, God inculcates patience—"with patience"—for if a passionate person stirs up strife, a patient one not only does not stir it up, but quenches it. "A passionate man stirreth up strife: he that is patient appeaseth those that are stirred up."⁵ The fourth vice is indiscreet zeal; and where we find it, that is, where people are ready to judge their neighbour unfavourably, to find fault with him, to criticize, to speak against him, charity not only dies, but is torn to pieces: "If you bite and devour one another, take heed you

¹ Prov. xiii. 10. ² Philipp. ii. 3.³ Prov. xxix. 22.⁴ Ecclus. iii. 19.⁵ Prov. xv. 18.

be not consumed one by another."¹ And therefore, fourthly, God charges thee that as thou wishest to be borne with in thy own faults, thou shouldst be ready to bear with those of others—"supporting one another"—not that thou oughtest not to rebuke a person who deserves it, but that thou mayest learn to do it with charity, that is, in the right place, at the right time, and also in the right way, and therefore it is added, "in charity," to show thee that thou art not to bear with faults which thou art aware of from a motive of carelessness or cowardice, but only of charity. "Charity beareth all things, endureth all things."² It *bears* the faults of a neighbour in the spirit of peace, and *endures* in patience, if he is slow in correcting them. These, then, are the four vices which, like furious winds, strive to destroy those strong foundations on which Christ has built His Church, that is, not merely union, but unity. What thou hast to do, therefore, is to examine thyself in order to discover whether one or other of these winds may not be lurking in the secret recesses of thy heart; for, like those which cause earthquakes, they cannot injure others without first making fatal havoc in the heart which they have entered.

IV. Consider fourthly, that this unity which our Lord so much desires in His followers is so excellent a grace that no ordinary care is sufficient for its preservation! it must be an exceedingly watchful care. Thou must believe, therefore, that those only who are not merely diligent, but anxiously careful, in this respect, fulfil the obligation they are under: "Careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." And here it must be observed that in the households and communities of which we are speaking there may sometimes be too much unity amongst the different members, but not the unity which Christ requires; since it is a unity for a bad end, a unity of party spirit, plots, and persecution. This is indeed unity, but a unity of the flesh, and not that which our Lord requires of thee. What He requires is expressly called "the unity of the Spirit," as was said at the beginning, that is, a unity like that of the Divine Persons, Who are all united in one end, which is that each may work with the other by power, wisdom, and goodness: "That they may be one as We also are One." But this unity cannot subsist without a bond, for persons who are not only different, but separated from each other, as men are, cannot be joined together without some link. What must

¹ Galat. v. 15.² 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

the link be? Not love so much as friendship, because even a mutual love which is hidden does not thoroughly bind men together. To do this it must be something which is shown openly. Neither is every kind of bond the right one. It must be one which is ample enough to embrace all those who are to be united, and strong enough to keep them together. It must not, therefore, be thought that every sort of friendship is fit for our purpose. There are five kinds of friendship, that which is vicious, that which is common, that which is natural, that which is virtuous, and that which is Divine. Vicious friendship which unites men for a wicked purpose, such as sensuality, gluttony, and the like, certainly cannot be good. It cannot even be properly called friendship, but rather malevolence; for a man who tries to induce another to sin, in reality hates him even as he hates his own soul, for "he that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul."¹ Such a friendship, therefore, cannot be the bond we are in search of. Friendship which is called common, that is, which unites men by a community of country, interest, calling, studies, or even of intercourse, is not indeed bad, but neither is it universal, because it is restricted to a few, nor lasting, because the slightest thing may break it: this, therefore, is not what we want. Natural friendship, which unites men by consanguinity, is not only not bad, but praiseworthy. Yet neither is this sufficient; for this, too, is not universal, neither is it lasting, since it is sometimes changed into the fiercest hatred: a disputed inheritance is enough to do this. Besides, this kind of friendship is very often injurious to those to whom it does not extend; for thou seest that the love which some persons bear to those of their own blood makes them all the more savagely bent on sucking that of others: so that this bond is not the right one. Virtuous friendship, which unites men by the virtues they see in each other, is far better than all the preceding sorts. Nevertheless, neither is it widely extended, because the virtues which it loves belong only to a few, and then also this love is as liable to change as the virtuous persons are on whom it is bestowed, so that it cannot be the bond we want. Lastly, there is Divine friendship, by virtue of which we love men because it is the will of God that we should love them, according to these words: "And this command we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother."² And thus we love them for God and in God.

¹ Psalm x. 6.² St. John iv. 21.

This is perfect friendship, and it is a bond long enough to extend to our enemies, and strong enough to resist the devouring teeth of time, as well as fire and sword; it continues to love even when those it loves lack merit, because it is not their merit which is the true reason of its love, but God. This, then, is the bond in search of which we have made this digression. And now, dost thou think that thou possessest it? If not, thou must set about procuring it to the exclusion of other friendships, whether bad or imperfect.

V. Consider fifthly, that all is not done when the true bond is found: for even amongst persons who love one another for and in God there sometimes arise inquietudes which are no slight obstacles to unity. Why is this? Because, in such cases, the bond is indeed a bond of charity, but not so much a bond of peace; and thou must strive anxiously to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." To understand this aright thou must first understand what peace is: "Peace is the tranquillity of order." This is St. Augustine's definition. The maintenance of order, therefore, is peace: for just as the elements, which are otherwise so hostile to each other, are only at peace when they are in due order, the fire above, the air beneath, then the water, and lower still the earth, so too is it in households and communities. When, therefore, any one, even ignorantly or thoughtlessly, deranges the right order, he immediately destroys peace and creates confusion. Contemplate the Divine Persons, Whom Christ bids thee make thy sublime model. Amongst Them reigns a profound peace, because in Them is the perfection of the tranquillity of order, and it is never disturbed. The Father begets but is not begotten, the Son is begotten but does not beget, the Holy Ghost proceeds from both, neither begetting nor begotten. And thus there is amongst Them that perfection of unity to which thou oughtest to aspire, even though thou canst not attain it. The bond of peace, then, must be the maintenance of order, which is as much as to say that thou must devote thyself to the right discharge of thy own duty, not meddling or concerning thyself or interfering with that of others. "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it."¹ The Apostle says, "Which thou hast received," not, "Which thou hast taken up thyself," and therefore it may be truly said that the bond of peace, that is obedience, is seen in the greatest perfection in the cloister,

¹ Coloss. iv. 17.

where the spirit of the Church most flourishes. Whoever violates obedience violates order, and by so doing disturbs peace.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions (Ecclus. xli. 1).

I. Consider first, how great is the unhappiness of the man who places his peace in earthly goods, in riches, comforts, good cheer, or honours. He is unable to think of death, that is, he is unable to think of that for which alone life was given to him. What is the end for which God keeps us in this world? Is it to study how to take our pleasure here, to follow our fancy, to let nature have its way? Most surely not. We are kept in this world that we may prepare for death, for that passage on which depends an eternity of reward or punishment. Is it not, then, the height of misery to be unable even to think of it? And yet this is the condition of those who are surrounded by every comfort and luxury: they cannot bring themselves to think of the day when they will have to leave all these things: "O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions." Deplore, therefore, the wretched condition in which so many persons are without being aware of it.

II. Consider secondly, that this misery is the more evident from the terms in which thou hast just heard it described. For it is said that to these persons not only the anticipation, but the "remembrance" of death is bitter: "O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee." It might seem as though it were more correct to say "expectation," because death is in the future, and "remembrance" refers to the past. Yet for all that it is not the expectation of death that is said to be bitter to these persons, because they never do expect it, at least not in the sense of looking forward for it, longing for it, preparing for it: and if they were asked what they were doing in this world, they could never be ready to answer with holy Job: "I expect until my change come."¹ But it is truly said that the "remembrance" of it is exceedingly bitter to them,

¹ Job xiv. 14.

because although they never set themselves to think of the death which will one day be their lot, yet they cannot help thinking of the deaths of several of their acquaintances, which have occurred from day to day. They hear of the death, now of a friend, now of a fellow-countryman, now of a relation, now of a servant whom they sent away as soon as he was taken ill for fear of his dying before their eyes; and they are overwhelmed with bitterness at the bare remembrance of this evil to which they are themselves liable. They begin searching for some reason which may help them to make sure that they have nothing to fear, and therefore they never say that a person has died simply because he is mortal. If they are young, they say he died because he was old: if they are strong, they say he died because his constitution was worn out: if they are rich, they say he died because he was too poor to have doctors and medicine and proper treatment; and thus they go on hunting out some explanation or other in order to flatter themselves with the belief that the case is quite unlike their own. And why do they thus flatter themselves? To sweeten the bitterness with which the mere thought of death fills them. Hence they are addicted to a thousand superstitions which they practise in all their actions, dressing, travelling, or eating, to such a degree that if they are invited to dinner, and unfortunately find seats prepared for a number of guests which they think unlucky, they would rather starve than make one of the party. And so all the sweetness of life is turned into gall for them by the bitterness which the thought of death mingles with it even when this thought is presented to them by what is in reality unconnected with death. How will it be, then, when they are actually in its presence?

III. Consider thirdly, that death, when it comes, will cause them a strange, nay, an inexplicable bitterness, because it will not only separate them from their bodies, but also from all those possessions which were not only as dear to them as their bodies, but even dearer than their souls: those gains, those distinctions, those pleasures, which they so loved. How full of pain will that separation be! Then, indeed, will these poor souls exclaim: "Doth bitter death separate in this manner?"¹ For it will not be one single blow with which death will strike them, but as many as they have possessions from which they must be parted; so that, as each stroke is dealt, they will have to repeat each time: "In this manner,

¹ 1 Kings xv. 32.

and in this, dost thou separate." Yes, even thus dost thou separate from the palaces we dwelt in, from our gardens and terraces and villas, from all our pleasures, from the chase and the theatre and banquetings, from love and kindred and country, from rank and titles and distinctions; alas! what is there from which thou dost not separate? And more than this, the blow will fall on them suddenly, unexpectedly, it will take them utterly by surprise. And so, for this reason, too, they will cry out in still greater bitterness: "Dost thou separate in this manner?" that is to say, when all seems most prosperous, the wind fair, and we in the flower of our age. O bitter death, dost thou separate in this manner? Would not these poor souls, then, do better to begin gradually and voluntarily to detach themselves from those things from which, unless they do it themselves out of love, they will in the end be rent by force, and with as many blows as there are binding links.

IV. Consider fourthly, that there are two ways in which this most necessary detachment from earthly possessions may be accomplished, in affection and in effect; the latter is done by abandoning everything for the love of God before death, and the former by retaining them till death, but without being attached to them. This detachment in affection is certainly enough, for the Wise Man does not say, "O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to the man who *has* possessions;" he only says, "To the man who hath *peace* in his possessions!" But oh, how much better is it to be detached from them, not only in affection, but in effect! Why? Because to retain them without being attached to them is almost a miracle. Dost thou know why the world calls these goods "substance"? Because it believes that there is no subsisting without them. Therefore, until it finds by experience that it is possible to do so, and yet to be happy and at peace, it will not cease to love these things. Wouldst thou know that the world is mistaken? Give them up, and thou wilt learn that God is sufficient for thy complete happiness. Let Him be to thee in place of all thy present possessions. Let Him be all thy consolation, all thy glory, all thy wealth, and that when death comes to call thee thou needest feel no sorrow, for it will be able to take nothing from thee. Can it deprive thee of thy God? Nay, it will give Him to thee, for thou wilt have purchased Him by having chosen for His sake to live in poverty, chastity, and obedience; in a word, to consecrate all thy

substance to Him: "My substance is with Thee."¹ There are those who think that to do this is to die before death, but it is in reality to live. And even if it is to die before death, that is just why it ought to be chosen, for it is the right disposition for death: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

V. Consider fifthly, that even if thou canst not give up all thy possessions for God, thou oughtest at least to cease to love them: "If riches abound, set not your heart upon them."² And how canst thou do this? By thinking every day that thou must one day leave them, for if they are abundant (*affluunt*) they are fleeting (*fluunt*). And thus, by degrees, death will not be so bitter to thee; nay, far from being coward enough to fear the remembrance of it, thou wilt not even fear its anticipation. For the thought of death is like the book which God made the Prophet Ezechiel eat: "Eat this book."³ The first taste was exceedingly bitter, but gradually it grew sweeter and sweeter as he ate it: "It was sweet as honey in my mouth." The man who often thinks on death detaches his heart from everything which death can take away, and thus he comes to despise it.

NINETEENTH DAY.

I am the door. By Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved: and he shall go in, and go out, and shall find pasture (St. John x. 9).

I. Consider first, that the one longing of the world has always been to find the land of happiness. And so, to gain its favour, very many have offered to be its guide thither; Stoics, Platonists, Peripatetics, Epicureans, and others as bold as they, all promised to lead it to the land it so longed for: in other words, to make it happy. But how fallacious were their promises! Not only did they fail to bring the world into the happy land, but they dragged it with them over the precipice to ruin. And why was this? Because, however often they sought this land, they could not find the door. The true door was Christ—"I am the door"—but they either did not know this or did not believe it, and so

¹ Psalm xxxviii. 8.

² Psalm lxi. 11.

³ Ezech. iii. 1.

“became vain in their thoughts, for professing themselves to be wise they became fools.”¹ Thank God from thy heart that He has allowed thee to be born at a time of so much light that any poor old woman may easily find that door which was unknown to all these grand philosophers. How didst thou ever merit this great grace? “Behold, I have given before thee a door opened,”² not “before them,” but “before *thee*.” If thou dost not enter courageously, alas for thee!

II. Consider secondly, that Christ is the door of that land of happiness, because He is the door of Paradise. Therefore, when He had said, “I am the door,” He added, as though in explanation, “By Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved,” that is, he shall be safe; he shall be saved from those wicked men who, under pretence of desiring his happiness, would drag him down with them to Hell. He shall be saved from the devils, who are his deadly enemies, from flames, from savage beasts, from all those torments which awaited him in Hell: “I will give salvation to Sion.”³ But this is not all, for beatitude does not consist merely in deliverance from evil, that is, salvation; it consists in the enjoyment of good, and therefore, besides being saved, he who dwells in Heaven “shall go in, and go out, and shall find pasture.” “He shall go in” by the vision of God’s interior works; “he shall go out” by the vision of His exterior works, but all will be “by Him,” for whether those blessed ones contemplate the interior works, that is, those works of God which do not regard creatures, or the exterior works which do regard them, they always see them all “in the Word,” and so they “find pasture,” such pasture as will suffice to satiate them for all eternity: “There shall they rest on the green grass, and be fed in fat pastures.”⁴ O happy thou, if thou art found worthy of those pastures! then indeed shall “thy desire be satisfied with good things.”⁵ Think now for awhile what these pastures are which will never lose their freshness and verdure.

III. Consider thirdly, that the beatitude of Paradise is perfect beatitude. It is not, therefore, that which alone is longed for by the world; the happiness which is to be desired there is one which can be enjoyed, though imperfectly, on earth. And of this, too, Christ is the door: “I am the door.” For never was there a glutton or epicure who found in the

¹ Romans i. 21, 22.² Apoc. iii. 8.³ Isaiah xlvi. 12.⁴ Ezech. xxxiv. 14.⁵ Psalm cii. 5.

world such pleasures as all Christ's true followers shall and do enjoy. For the pleasures of the former are the pleasures of the brutes, those of the latter the pleasures of angels, because the first are suited to that part of his nature which man has in common with the brutes, and the last to that which he has in common with the angels. Hence thou mayest infer the difference between the two. Christ says then, "I am the door," and next goes on to explain: "By Me, if any man enter in," by means of a living faith, "he shall be saved" from all the evils of guilt, ignorance, folly, and disquietude, to which those who do not follow Him are liable: "Every one that shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, for in Jerusalem shall be salvation."¹ Nor is this all, but further, "he shall go in" by the consideration of His nature, "he shall go out" by the consideration of its effects, and he "shall find pastures," because true beatitude on earth consists in never departing from Jesus Christ. Is He not the door of Paradise? "I am the door." Blessed, then, even on earth, is he who, not yet being able to enter Paradise, is at least at its door: "Blessed is the man who watcheth daily at My gates."² Resolve, then, to place thyself at the feet of thy Crucified Lord; thou mayest indeed "go in and go out," but always "in Him." Never think of Him as God only or as Man only, for this would be an error; then, too, if thou wouldst enjoy the "going in and out" here spoken of, regard Him in His nature and in its effects, and so thou wilt in some degree imitate what the blessed do in Heaven.

IV. Consider fourthly, that wonderful as are these pastures, they are not met with by chance, they must be sought for, and therefore Christ did not say, "He shall meet with" (*reperiet*), but "shall find" (*inveniet*). The first word is used properly of things which are found without seeking: "In His angels He perceived" (*reperit*) "wickedness;"³ the last word of those which are found after seeking: "I have found" (*inveni*) "the groat which I had lost."⁴ Now the blessed in Heaven find pasture not by chance, but after seeking; he shall find those pastures which he sought on earth by self-abnegation, obedience, humility, penance, and other exercises of mortification taught him by Christ. He, therefore, who desires blessedness so far as it is possible on earth, must "find pasture" by means of the same practices by which the blessed in Heaven found

² Proverbs viii. 34.

¹ Joel ii. 32.

³ Job iv. 18.

⁴ St. Luke xv. 9.

theirs. But this manner of seeking is remote, by the way of merit: "Seek and you shall find;" there is another and a proximate manner, by the way of inquiry and study: "He looketh round about the mountains of his pasture, and seeketh for every green thing."¹ This cannot be in Heaven, for there instead of study is bestowed that sublime infused science which the light of glory imparts. But on earth that study is greatly needed. If thou wouldst find this pasture in our Lord, thou canst study Him closely—"Go in and out"—for here on earth it is not His way to infuse this science into us, sending it down like the rain from heaven when the earth least expects it; it is His will that we should acquire it by labour, drawing it like water from a deep well.

V. Consider fifthly, in what manner thou mayest "go in" to seek pasture from Christ by contemplating Him in His nature. And here thou shouldst consider that although there is but one God by nature, yet by participation there are many, for in the Sacred Scriptures God has given this name of "gods" to several persons, as though He desired from the earliest times to shadow forth that full participation of Himself which He was to grant in the fulness of time. He called all the angels gods: "When the sons of God came to stand before the Lord."² He also called some amongst men gods, certain of the most eminent of the prophets, as, for example, Moses: "I have appointed thee the god of Pharaoh."³ And so of His priests: "Thou shalt not speak ill of the gods."⁴ Thus thou mayest observe there are "those who are called gods either in Heaven or on earth."⁵ But they "are called" so: they "are not" so as your Lord is. Why are priests "called gods"? Because they are God's ministers: "To you it shall be said, Ye ministers of our God."⁶ But is it the same thing to be in the house of a prince as his minister and to be there as sovereign? "Thou art Lord of all."⁷ Priests minister in God's house as in the house of another, your Lord rules it as His own: "Christ as the Son in His own house."⁸ And here thou must consider the supreme dignity which is His as Son, since He can not only dispose of the servants, but even of the Father. The prophets "are called gods" only because God vouchsafed to speak to them directly as He did to Moses: "He called them gods to whom the Word of God

¹ Job xxxix. 8. ² Job i. 6. ³ Exodus vii. 1.

⁴ Exodus xxii. 28. ⁵ 1 Cor. viii. 5.

⁶ Isaias lxi. 6. ⁷ Wisdom xii. 16. ⁸ Hebrews iii. 6.

was spoken.”¹ But what is all this to the dignity of thy Lord, Who is essentially “the Word of God”? Here consider the supreme power which He has in Himself, since the Divine Word created and the Divine Word redeemed the world. Lastly, the angels “are called gods” because of the abundance of the Divine charity which shines in them: “Is there any numbering of His soldiers, and upon whom shall not His light arise?”² But what is it to receive a reflection of divinity compared with being the very mirror which reflects it? “The unspotted mirror of God’s majesty.”³ And here thou must consider how great His wisdom and holiness are in themselves when they are so glorious as reflected in the angels. With what ineffable joy oughtest thou to contemplate thy crucified Lord, knowing as thou dost by studying Him interiorly that, though bruised and wounded and bleeding, He yet is God, not merely by title, as those of whom we have spoken, but in substance. Is it not a pasture full of sweetness merely to say to Him: “There is none among the gods like unto thee, O Lord, there is none like unto thee.”⁴

VI. Consider sixthly, how thou mayest also “find pasture” in Christ by “going out,” that is, by contemplating Him in His exterior operations, so that thou mayest finish those words of King David, and say, “There is none among the gods like unto Thee, O Lord, and there is none according to Thy works.”⁵ The principal acts of Christ for the good of the world may be conveniently reduced to these three: He enlightens it as its Teacher, justifies it as its Redeemer, pleads for it as its Advocate. See how wide a pasture opens before thee here: “There is none according to Thy works,” with regard to the enlightenment of the world, which is the first of these acts, for who has ever enlightened it like Christ? nay, all beside Him have rather wrapt it in darkness. It is He Who has given it the True Light: “I am the Light of the world.”⁶ He has enlightened it both by His doctrine and His example. And here thou mayest see how glorious a Sun He is both as to wisdom and holiness. The angels, “who are called gods,” give great light to men it is true, but what is it compared to the light of Christ? Besides, if their wisdom is able to enlighten us, it is not the same with regard to their holiness, because our nature is so different from theirs. Christ has the same nature as ourselves: “As one of us.”⁷ Then,

¹ St. John x. 35. ² Job xxv. 3. ³ Wisdom vii. 26. ⁴ Psalm lxxxv. 8.
⁵ Psalm lxxxv. 8. ⁶ St. John viii. 12. ⁷ Genesis iii. 22.

to go on to the second act : "There is none according to Thy works" in the matter of justification. For who ever suffered the smallest portion of what Christ suffered in order to make the world just? Think what it cost Him to save man ; dwell upon His sorrows, His labours, His sweat ; the insults and the shame that He endured for thee, even to the death upon the Cross. The prophets, "who are called gods," laboured by the power of their word to make the world just, but how did they do so? not by justifying it, but by pointing out Him Who was to justify it. And if in so doing they suffered much, if "they were stoned, cut asunder, put to death with the sword," what were their sufferings to those of Christ, Who bore the sorrows of all? "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."¹ Lastly, as to the third point : "There is none according to Thy works," with respect to His defence of us. For what earthly advocate was ever like Christ, Who is for ever standing before His Father, and showing Him those gaping wounds which He received on the Cross for love of us? Alas for us if we had not this Advocate! Priests, "who are called gods," were placed in the world by God especially to intercede for sinners ; but what, after all, is their intercession in comparison with Christ's, when they themselves are in need of an intercessor? And here, in the last place, thou seest how earnestly thou oughtest to commit to Him all that concerns thee, beseeching, imploring, and humbling thyself before Him, that He may deign to undertake thy cause. Here, then, thou hast set before thee the manner of seeking, both by "going in" and "going out," these choice pastures, which are able to make thee blessed even here. It is for thee to make use of it if thou thinkest fit. But if God calls thy soul to a higher way, then do not hesitate to seek a still richer pasture, for it is not for thee to make choice of it at thy own will, it is He Who must guide thee to it : "He hath set me in a place of pasture,"² said David, not, "I have set myself there," and yet how full of wisdom was his soul. There are, as thou knowest, pastures in the plains and pastures in the mountains : the latter are the choicest, the former the most abundant. These last are those which I have put before thee, because they are intended for the meditation of dwellers in the plain. If thy Lord calls thee to the mountains, then thou must climb to those heights of contemplation, and there follow Him. For all of them are pastures of salvation, all are provided by the

¹ Isaiah liii. 6.² Psalm xxii. 2.

Good Shepherd: "I will feed them in the most fruitful pastures," here thou hast those of the plain, "and their pastures shall be in the high mountains,"¹ these are the lofty pastures of the mountains.

TWENTIETH DAY.

Every man's work shall be manifest, for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire, and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is (1 Cor. iii. 13).

I. Consider first, that, strictly speaking, that is called "the day" of any one in which he is at liberty to show how much he can do. If, therefore, we inquire what is especially "the day" of any man regarded as man, it is the fatal day on which he chose to use his free-will to the utmost even against that God Who bestowed it on him: "I have not desired the day of man, thou knowest."² As, therefore, man has his sinful day in regard to God, so God has His just day in regard to man: "Woe to them that desire the day of the Lord."³ It is that day on which He in an especial manner exercises His supreme power in trying, punishing, and dealing with every man according to His pleasure. And therefore, He has not one day only, but three, of all which the Sacred Scriptures speak. The first is the day of General Judgment, which, because it is the chief of these, is called "the great day," and it will be at the end of the world: "The great day of the Lord is near, that day is a day of wrath."⁴ The second is the day of Particular Judgment, which precedes the general one, and will be at the death of every man: "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night."⁵ The third is the day of tribulation, which is a kind of judgment antecedent to the Particular Judgment, when God tries a man, and, as it were, examines him in order to see whether he is strong and faithful, by inflicting suffering on him; and this comes during every man's life: "The voice of the day of the Lord is bitter, the mighty man shall then meet with tribulation."⁶ Now, all these three days, which God has chosen in an especial manner as His own, are expressly directed by Him to the end of

¹ Ezech. xxxiv. 14.

² Jerem. xvii. 16.

³ Amos v. 18.

⁴ Soph. i. 14, 15.

⁵ 1 Thess. v. 2.

⁶ Soph. i. 14.

making manifest what man is. And therefore it is with respect to all three that the Apostle says, "Every man's work shall be manifest, for the day of the Lord shall declare it." Now, therefore, examine thyself, and consider how thou thinkest that thou wilt appear on each of these three days, all of which are days of judgment.

II. Consider secondly, how "every man's work shall be manifest" on the first day, which is that of the General Judgment, because on that day the most hidden actions will be brought to light: "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men."¹ Now, He gives sinners, as He gave our first parents, skins to cover themselves decently after sinning; but in that day He will strip them of these in His wrath; and then think how shameful a nakedness will be that of all the adulterers who now pass themselves off for chaste men, of all ambitious, avaricious, and sinful persons of every kind: "Behold I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will discover thy shame to thy face, and will show thy nakedness to the nations."² Then thou wilt no longer be able to employ all those arts which thou practisest now to hide thy wickedness from the household or the community in which thou livest, for then, at last, "the day of the Lord shall declare it."

III. Consider thirdly, how "every man's work shall be manifest" on the second day, that of the Particular Judgment; for then the poor man, on whom no one deigned to cast a glance in his state of misery, will be in Abraham's bosom, and the rich man who was courted, flattered, worshipped, who sat every day at splendid banquets, shall be dragged by devils down to Hell, where in his raging thirst he will vainly long for one drop of water: "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried in Hell."³ Oh, what a marvellous change of scene will that be, most of all when it will come so suddenly, so unexpectedly to the very men who will be the actors in it! And it is the last act. There will be no hope that the scene will ever change again to all eternity! "When the wicked man is dead, there shall be no hope any more."⁴ Which character, then, wilt thou have to represent in this act, that of the beggar exalted to a palace, or of a king condemned to an everlasting prison? Do not deceive thyself, for "the day of the Lord shall declare it."

¹ Romans ii. 16.

² Nahum iii. 5.

³ St. Luke xvi. 22.

⁴ Prov. xi. 7.

IV. Consider fourthly, that in its degree, the third day, that of tribulation, is also a day of judgment: "Tell me why Thou judgest me so?"¹ that is, "Why Thou afflictest me?" On this day also "every man's work shall be manifest," though not so plainly in the sight of men as of God. The end which He especially has in sending tribulation is to try man: "The Lord your God trieth you, that it may appear whether you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul."² Not that this is not manifest to Him without such trial, but because in His dealings with man it is His will to act after the manner of men. And how very often does tribulation show a man to be quite another person from what he seemed in prosperity! It is in this, therefore, that God's judgment of men in their lifetime consists, in sending trouble upon them: "Whilst we are judged we are chastised by the Lord."³ Until thou hast been thus tested do not flatter thyself, do not believe any good of thyself, for it is a delusion. What will really show thee as thou art is the unjust persecution which will be raised against thee, the disgrace, or sickness, or interior desolation which will come upon thee. Then, if thou art firm and faithful, thou, too, shalt be in the number of those of whom it is written that "God hath tried them and found them worthy of Himself."⁴ But if thou failest under the test, if thou shouldst murmur, complain, or blaspheme God, if thou leavest off thy accustomed exercises of piety, thou wilt be rejected by God as unworthy: "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me is not worthy of Me."⁵ Do not, therefore, trust to any good resolutions which thou mayest fancy thou hast made in thy heart till the time of trial comes, for "the day of the Lord shall declare" whether they are efficacious or not.

V. Consider fifthly, it is declared of all these judgments that they will be made by fire: "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." For just as fire has the property of distinguishing true from false gold, so will each of them distinguish the true from the false Christian: "Thou hast tried me by fire, and iniquity hath not been found in me."⁶ There is a fire which belongs to the General Judgment, "because it shall be revealed in fire;" that fire which will fill the whole universe, and by means of which the true gold will be distinguished from the false: "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." For whilst its effects on the reprobate will

¹ Job x. 2.

² Deut. xiii. 3.

³ 1 Cor. xi. 32.

⁴ Wisdom iii. 5.

⁵ St. Matt. x. 38.

⁶ Psalm xvi. 3.

be so terrible, the elect will feel no heat whatever from that tremendous conflagration. "A fire shall go before Him, and shall burn His enemies round about."¹ There is also the fire belonging to the day of the Particular Judgment, "because it shall be revealed in fire;" the fire of Purgatory for the elect, and the fire of Hell for the reprobate, and this fire also will separate the true gold from the false: "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." It will wrap the reprobate all round, so that they shall never any more come out of it; the elect will indeed all come out, but one sooner, another later, according as more or less dross clings to them when they leave this world: "He trieth me as gold that passeth through the fire."² Lastly, there is the fire belonging to the day of the judgment of tribulation, "because it shall be revealed in fire," that tribulation which is called fire in innumerable passages of the Sacred Scriptures, from the intensity of the pain it produces in the soul, as great as that which fire causes the body: "I will refine (*uram*) them as silver is refined (*uritur*)."³ Here, again, it is by fire that the true gold is distinguished from the false: "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is;" for the wicked will fail and the just stand firm under the suffering of tribulation. And thou must observe that if tribulation is a fire, it must necessarily be a thing that is keenly felt, that scorches, and tortures, and causes acute anguish: but to feel all this is no hindrance to virtue: "Thou hast tried me by fire, and iniquity has not been found in me." It is not said that pain, or faintness, or sadness, or sighing has not been found, but "iniquity," for this only is the dross which lessens the value of the gold of which we are speaking. Did not the martyrs at the stake feel the fire which was consuming their flesh? And were not they the purest gold? It is enough, then, that thou dost not try to escape from the fire, that thou art brave and faithful, not complaining, or being angry with God, not being overcome, but as far as possible retaining thy usual serenity of demeanour. It is true that the grace of the Spirit of comfort which is varied in its operations allows this fire to be more or less keenly felt at different times, as was the case with the martyrs. But to feel it more or less is no sure sign of more or less merit; that is shown by the way of acting being more or less just. There were times when the Apostle Paul, like the three children in the Babylonian furnace, rejoiced and triumphed and sang in the midst of this fire, as

¹ Psalm xcvi. 3.² Job xxiii. 10.³ Zach. xiii. 9.

though it had been a garden of flowers: "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations."¹ At other times, like many of the martyrs, he felt this fire penetrate into his very bones, and frankly owned it, in these plaintive words: "We would not have you ignorant, brethren, of our tribulation, which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above our strength, so that we were weary even of life."² Yet he was always the same Apostle Paul, because he always acted as an apostle, never abating a jot of his wonted fervour in journeying or preaching, or promoting the glory of his Lord in every possible way, on account of his being more or less sensible to suffering. Thou, too, must strive to act in like manner. But if thou shouldst feel very acutely the trials which God sends thee, do not be afraid, do not despond, for this is no obstacle to sanctity. Only be constant; for if the tribulation is beyond the strength of nature, which is what the Apostle meant by "above our strength," it will never be beyond the strength of grace: "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able."³ And after all, there is no help for it, thou must suffer: for so does God try men on all those days which He calls "His." He tries them by fire: "The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

Fodder and a wand and a burden are for an ass; bread and correction and work for a slave. He worketh under correction and seeketh to rest; let his hands be idle and he seeketh liberty (Ecclus. xxxiii. 25).

I. Consider first, that the slave here spoken of is (in a moral sense) your body. It is a slave, because it was not born free, but in subjection. It is, moreover, a rebellious slave, and therefore, if thou wouldst act wisely, thou must reduce it to a state of servitude. How is this to be done? By indulging it? Just the contrary, by chastising, by humiliating it, by treating it as what it is, as a wretched ass is treated. Dost thou see how unruly it is? It would fain lord it over its master, the soul. Canst thou allow such a thing? Oh, how necessary it is to understand the right way of keeping so-

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 4.

² 2 Cor. i. 8.

³ 1 Cor. x. 13.

unsubmissive a servant in order: "It is not seemly for a servant to have rule over princes."¹

II. Consider secondly, that the way to keep such a slave in order is often to remind it that it is an ass. This has been done by innumerable saints, especially by the Seraphic St. Francis, whose mission in the world seemed to be that of reducing the human body to true obedience. But it is not enough to remind it of this in words, for "a slave will not be corrected by words."² Thou must make use of practical reminders, that is, thou must treat the body as a beast of burden: "Fodder and a wand and a burden are for an ass." And in the same way, "Bread and correction and work for a slave." A beast of burden must be fed certainly, otherwise it would be of no use to thee. But how is it fed? With common food—"fodder:" and common food is what thou shouldst give thy body. "Bread for a slave:" it is not said "dainties," but mere ordinary food. "Delicacies are not seemly for a fool." But to what purpose is it to feed it unless it labours? Thou must give it a burden to carry. And do not imagine this can be managed unless thou first break it in. It is stubborn, unruly, and therefore there is need of the whip to make the restive animal bear the burden. And so thou seest that the second thing mentioned is "a wand:" this, too, must be used upon your body, particularly at the beginning of the spiritual life, which is the time for teaching it to bear the burden: "Correction for a slave." This correction is corporal penance. But what is the rule to be followed in practising it? The same as in the treatment of the ass. He is beaten to make him carry his load; he must therefore be so beaten as to urge him to do this, not to incapacitate him from doing it. And the same rule should be observed with regard to corporal penance. Such penance as unfits thee for thy duties was never thought right, and therefore "a wand" is spoken of for the ass, and "correction" for the slave, that the words may suit each case. The important point is that both should work, but each in the proper way, and so we have "a burden for an ass," and "work for a slave." We load a beast of burden with as much as he can carry, and the same should be done with the body: "Continual labours bow a slave."³ Now consider awhile how thou treatest thy body, and humble thyself if, like most persons, thou art given to pampering it and making it not only elegant, but splendid. Do not regard the practice of this

¹ Prov. xix. 10. ² Prov. xxix. 19. ³ Eccles. xxxiii. 27.

foolish world: nay, dost thou not think it a most ridiculous thing to see every one in it vying with his neighbour in decking his ass in magnificent trappings? "You that ride upon fair asses."¹

III. Consider thirdly, how mischievous this indulgence of the body is, and that just because it is an ass, and so is always trying to get its liberty. What, then, must thou do? Keep it under. I will make this plain: even when a beast of burden is well broken in he tries in a thousand ways to get rid of his hateful burden, and to rest: "He worketh under correction and seeketh rest." What then will happen if thou shouldst slacken thy hold on him? "Let his hands be idle and he seeketh liberty." How quickly will he then shake off his load and get free! All these three things, then, are necessary to manage him: "Fodder, a wand, and a burden;" fodder for his sustenance, a wand to make him obey, and a load to make him work. Think that the same treatment is needful for thy body. Dost thou not see that even when it has been brought into subjection it is every day seeking after fresh ways of evading the labour thou imposest on it? How many excuses it makes, how many subterfuges, how many pretexts even of the glory of God! "It worketh under correction," we see this even in holy men, "and seeketh rest." It wants more sleep, more comforts, more rest from so much incessant labour. Only think, then, how it will be if thou treatest it in all ways as it likes; in the end it will insist on liberty so perverse, so mischievous, that it will say plainly, "I will not serve." "Let his hand be idle and he seeketh liberty." Take care, therefore, to keep it in as much subjection as possible, for then the worst that can happen will be that it will ask for rest; but if thou dost not keep it in subjection, it will ask not for rest, but for indulgence, for licence; it will ask to go and wander at will in all pastures—"He seeketh liberty"—and not only seeks by making a modest request, but by defiantly running away. Be very sure that this is always the case with the body: indulge it, and immediately it is "lifted up into pride, and thinketh itself born free like a wild ass's colt."² Remember, then, the three things which it requires, "bread, and correction, and work;" bread, that it may not be feeble; correction, that it may not be insolent; work, that it may not be useless.

¹ Judges v. 10.² Job xi. 12.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?
(St. John xviii. 11).

I. Consider first, that in these words, which our Lord addressed to St. Peter, He has taught thee an excellent answer to make to thy rebellious senses whenever they would prevent thee readily accepting whatever tribulation, shame, sickness, or trouble God may send thee, but rather persuade thee to get rid of it altogether, even by means which are not right: "The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" This should be thy immediate answer, and be very sure that however much thou mayest consider and speculate on the matter, thou wilt never succeed in finding a fitter reply, for on such subjects thou must not argue with the senses, but silence them at once. If thou shouldst bandy words with them they will soon conquer thee, for their cunning, acuteness, art, and plausibility in persuading thee to do as they wish are incredible, so much so that in the end they will make thee believe that they are giving thee good counsel, and thou wilt yield to their suggestions. Thou must, therefore, take a short way with them, such as the reply just quoted, which likewise comprises, as in a rich compendium, all the reasons that there are for conformity to the will of God. Take care, therefore, to understand it well, so that thou mayest profit by it when the occasion comes.

II. Consider secondly, that our Lord lessened the apprehension of His approaching Passsion, with all its terrors, by calling it merely a "chalice." And yet thou knowest what that Passion was! Whenever the prophets speak of it they compare it to the sea: "I am come into the depths of the sea."¹ "Thy billows have passed over me."² "Thy waves Thou hast brought in upon me."³ "Waters have flowed over my head; I said, I am cut off."⁴ And, in terms still more full of horror: "The waters compassed me about; the deep hath closed me round about, the sea hath covered my head."⁵ Thus did the prophets speak of the Passion, and most justly, for in Christ every kind of suffering, which is divided amongst men, met together, as rivers meet in the ocean. And yet, see how He speaks of His Passion. He calls it a "chalice," not

¹ Psalm lxxviii. 3.

² Psalm xli. 8.

³ Psalm lxxxvii. 8.

⁴ Lament. iii. 54.

⁵ Jonas ii. 6.

only here, but elsewhere: "Can you drink the chalice? . . . My chalice indeed you shall drink."¹ "If this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it."² Another time, by a different metaphor, He called it "a baptism."³ "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized,"³ that is, the lightest, most delicate and careful washing that could be performed on a tender infant. And why does He so speak of it? To teach thee that when God sends thee any trouble thou shouldst try to make it more endurable by making as light of it as possible. Whereas thou dost the reverse; thou callest to mind all the reasons which can make it appear more grievous than it is. What wonder is it, then, that after this thou art smitten with fear, and that thou thinkest that it is as though thou hadst the sea to drink? Do not act in this way, rather seek for reasons which will make it seem like a chalice, that is, a very slight trouble. And how can this be done? By comparing it to three things in turn: to the sins which thou hast committed, to the grace which strengthens thee, to the glory which will crown thee. But Christ could not call His Passion a chalice by help of such a comparison. For He was entirely without sin, He was already full of grace, and in possession of glory; by what standard, then, did He measure it when He called it a chalice? By that of love. Do thou try, then, to feel some small degree of this love for Him Who always thought it so sweet to suffer for thee, and thou wilt see that instead of every little chalice seeming a sea to thee as it does now, a great sea will seem to be but a chalice. Thou shalt "suck as milk the abundance of the sea."⁴

III. Consider thirdly, how Christ said that this chalice, with a view to the sin which it remits, the grace which it contains, the glory which it promises,⁵ had been given to Him by His Father, not by Judas, nor the scribes, nor the priests, nor the Pharisees, but by the Father: "The chalice which My Father hath given Me." Why did He say so? To teach thee not to look at the immediate cause of thy trouble, such as thy enemy if it is an intentional evil, or some accident if it is fortuitous: thou must look at the mediate cause, which is God, and remind thyself that no enemies, no accidents, no imaginable creatures could have any power whatever to hurt thee, if they did not receive it from God: "Thou shouldst not have any power against Me unless it were given thee from

¹ St. Matt. xx. 22, 23.² St. Matt. xxvi. 42.³ St. Luke xii. 50.⁴ Deut. xxxiii. 19.⁵ St. Bernard.

above."¹ How is it, then, that thou utterly forgettest God, and only thinkest of secondary causes, like a dog who bites the stone and pays no attention to the arm which threw it at him? What wonder is it if, like the dog, thou behavest unreasonably, impatiently, and angrily. But this is not all, for instead of saying "My Father," Christ might have said "God," as Jeremias did, when he said, "I took the cup at the hand of the Lord;"² but He chose rather to say "Father," in order that when thou thinkest that it is God Who sends thee thy trial, thou mayest also think that He does so as thy Father, that is, with the tenderest desire for thy good: "For whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth, and as a father in the son He pleaseth Himself."³ Dost thou think that a father acts as a father only when he lavishes caresses on his child? Not so, for even servants may do so to a child of high birth. He acts as a father most of all when he punishes his son, for that no servant can do unless he is expressly charged to do it. If, then, when He sends trouble upon thee, God is only acting as a Father, why art thou so strangely disquieted? Dost thou not see that He did not spare Him even Who was His Son by nature, and perfectly innocent? "He spared not even His own Son."⁴ How, then, canst thou expect to go unpunished? Thou oughtest rather to be profoundly humbled in presence of such an example; God has been pleased to act as a father who sees his younger son refractory under a merited punishment, and who, to teach him his duty, punishes in his presence his elder son, who has committed no fault, in order that seeing how modestly he casts down his eyes, and in silent submission bows to his father's correction, the other, who rebels against it now, may learn to bear it patiently.

IV. Consider fourthly, that our Lord said, "The chalice which My Father hath given Me," not "gives," but "hath given," to show that this was not a new resolution, but a very ancient decree; one, indeed, made by the Father from all eternity, although then only to be finally executed. So, too, must thou act. Thou must remember that this trouble which God now visits thee with was preordained by Him ever since He elected thee, that is, from all eternity. And the reason is, that when first He predestined thee to glory, He also decreed the means by which thou wert necessarily to gain it, and in the number this trouble which now is trying thee. If, therefore,

¹ St. John xix. 11.² Jerem. xxv. 17.³ Prov. iii. 12.⁴ Romans viii. 32.

thou shouldst cast it from thee, thou at once throwest into complete confusion the whole order of thy predestination, and consequently exposeth thyself to the greatest risk of damnation, for it is quite possible that God may have attached thy salvation to this particular trial in such a manner that He will not give it to thee without it. It is certain that if there is one thing to which the salvation of men is more closely bound than another, it is suffering: "All that have pleased God passed through many tribulations remaining faithful."¹ And so, if thou wouldst cast off this present trouble, be afraid and tremble, for thou art casting off what is most necessary for thy salvation. Thou wouldst, I know, choose some other in its stead, for the trouble we are enduring always seems the hardest and most painful. But if God has preordained this particular trial rather than any other, what is to be done? "If this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy will be done," not merely "the chalice," but "this chalice." Wouldst thou rebel against His decree? Do not imagine that He has simply allowed this chalice to be, as it were, put in thy way. He appointed it for thee with a special intention in regard to thee; He "has given" it to thee, not permitted it, but given it, and given it to thee because He knew thy particular need, He proportioned it to the amount of thy strength and fervour, and decreed it with regard to all these circumstances: "Thou wilt give us for our drink tears in measure."² Is it not right, then, that thou shouldst accept this trial—*this* one, *this* in particular? "The chalice which the Father has given," not any other which thou mayest prefer. It is most right, not only that thou shouldst accept it, but be glad of it, rejoice in it, give humble thanks for it, because of the great favour attached to it, which is your election to glory: "My chalice which inebriates me, how goodly is it!"³

V. Consider fifthly, that our Lord said, "Shall I not drink it?" to continue the metaphor taken from the chalice presented to Him, and also to show us that this trouble is, after all, a trouble which passes, for it is a draught which we drink. Thou drinkest medicine, and certainly in drinking it thou findest it very bitter, distasteful, repulsive, but it is soon over, and after a short time the pleasure of the good it has done thee takes the place of the bitterness of the medicine. And this is our case. How long will this great trouble thou art

¹ Judith viii. 23.² Psalm lxxix. 6.³ Psalm xxii. 5.

suffering last? If it were to last an age, still it would come to an end, but it will not last nearly so long, twenty years, ten years, sometimes only a month: "Thy health shall speedily arise,"¹ more speedily than thou thinkest, and yet thou art full of fear. Not so; take the chalice courageously from thy Father's hand, put it to thy lips, drink it, drain it to the dregs, for this is to drink it all up, not a part only; if it is bitter, it is after all a chalice containing medicine, the bitterness of which will soon be followed by health: "I will take the chalice of salvation."²

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

We ought always to pray, and not to faint (St. Luke xviii. 1).

I. Consider first, what it is that our Lord desires of thee when He says that thou oughtest always to pray if thou wouldst obtain grace, and that thou must never cease to pray: "We ought always to pray, and not to faint." Does He mean thou art to be always on thy knees? That cannot be, for elsewhere He commands thee to practise many works of mercy, both spiritual and corporal, and the two things are incompatible. He means, in the first place, that thou shouldst not neglect to pray at stated times; this is the first meaning of the word "always." In this sense King David told Miphiboseth that he should always dine with him: "Thou shalt eat bread at my table always."³ By "always" is here meant the times set apart for meals. And hast thou not also times set apart for nourishing thy soul? At such times always ask of God the grace which thou desirest. In the second place, He means that thou shouldst be given to prayer, praying as often as thou canst at other times beside stated ones. This is the second meaning of "always." When we say that such and such persons are always gambling, always sleeping, always fasting, always studying, we mean that they are in the habit of doing these things. And why? Because these persons are so fond of such things that they are accustomed to give more instead of less time than is usual to them. In this sense King David said, "I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise

¹ Isaias lviii. 8.

² Psalm cxv. 13.

³ 2 Kings ix. 7.

shall be always in my mouth.”¹ He could never be satisfied with praising God. Thus shouldst thou do; be not content to ask of God the grace thou desirest at set times of prayer, ask it as often as thou canst at other times. In the third place, he means that if, even when thou prayest as perseveringly as has been described, thou findest that thy prayer is not granted, thou must not leave off praying, not be frightened, nor despair, as though our Lord did not concern Himself about thee, but be constant and faithful. This is the third meaning of the word “always,” and it was in this sense that David again said to God, “I am become as a beast before Thee, and I am always with Thee,”² thereby implying that, however God might have treated him, he would never have turned his back upon Him, as though despairing of His grace. And this third meaning seems to suit our case best of all, for by these words, “We ought always to pray and not to faint,” it was our Lord’s object to encourage every one to pray with unwearied importunity, in spite of God’s apparently repulsing them, as the poor widow was repulsed by the cruel judge. Do thou now apply to thyself the three meanings just mentioned, and examine whether thou always prayest in all these senses. If so, be very sure that thou wilt in the end obtain the grace thou seekest, provided it be for the good of thy soul, because thou art doing what thou “oughtest” to do.

II. Consider secondly, why our Lord uses so strong an expression as “ought,” a word not only implying suitableness, but necessity, when, on the one hand, He knows our desire before we lay it before Him—“He knoweth the secrets of the heart”³—and, on the other, He is by His nature infinitely disposed to relieve us, to aid us, to do us good, as is plainly seen by the many benefits which He has bestowed upon us before we were able to call upon Him: “Before I formed thee in the womb I knew thee.”⁴ Why, then, this “ought”? If He so loves us, does it not seem dishonouring to Him to desire to be besought with these incessant prayers? Quite the contrary, for He desires it just because He loves us so much. The mistake that thou makest is in supposing that to entreat God is the same thing as to entreat earthly princes. With the latter the mere supplication is of no profit; if the request is not granted the whole labour is lost, thrown away, and therefore it is better to obtain what thou desirest without

¹ Psalm xxxiii. 2.

² Psalm lxxii. 23.

³ Psalm xliii. 22.

⁴ Jerem. i. 5.

entreaty. With God this is not so; with Him the mere entreaty is an unspeakable gain: "Only let Thy name be invoked over us."

III. Consider thirdly, how many acts of virtue thou dost practise by prayer. In the first place, there is the greatest of all those which form the fair company of the virtues which are called moral, that of religion, and together with it the practice of all the other virtues which are allied to it, or which accompany it. Thou practisest faith, because, if thou askest a thing of God it is a proof that thou believest Him to have the power of granting it. Thou dost practise confidence, because if thou askest, it is a proof that thou hopest that He has the will to grant what thou askest. Thou dost practise humility, because by asking thou acknowledgest thy own need of help. Thou dost practise patience, because in asking, thou wilt meet, like the woman of Canaan, with more than one rebuff. Thou dost practise longanimity, because, in spite of rebuffs, thou goest on asking, as she did, without growing weary: thou dost not "faint." Thou seest, then, that no prayer to God can be said to be thrown away: "The same is Lord over all, rich unto all that call upon Him."¹ "Rich" unto those who obtain, and unto those who do not obtain what they ask. For he who obtains receives the blessing he asked for, and he who does not obtain receives the blessing of having asked, and so both leave Him laden with riches. Did not our Lord, then, say with good reason that "we ought always to pray and not to faint"? We "ought," because if we pray we are sure to be the gainers, if we leave off praying we are sure to lose.

IV. Consider fourthly, that to pray to God is so wonderful a blessing, that even if it were in thy power to obtain the same gift from God without praying, thou oughtest not to care to do so, but to prefer greatly to obtain it by the way of prayer. And the reason is, that in the former case thou wouldst only gain one thing, namely, the favour which thou wouldst receive from God, whereas, in the other, the gain is two-fold, the favour received, and the means by which thou hast received it. For if thou considerest it aright, the favour which God shows thee by making thee worthy to obtain His gifts by prayer, is far higher than if He gave them without thy prayer. Even brutes receive His gifts: "Thou openest Thy hand and fillest every living creature with blessing."² Look around on

¹ Romans x. 12.

² Psalm cxliv. 16.

the beasts of burden, on the doves, the ravens, on the poor little sparrows which thou wouldst not admit under thy roof, they all receive whatever they have from God: "Not one of them is forgotten before God."¹ But though they all receive, none of them receive by asking. That is reserved only for men; and therefore when God gives thee a favour which thou hast not asked of Him, He by doing so only declares thee to be worthy of receiving it. When He grants it in answer to thy prayer, He also declares thou art worthy of obtaining it by thy request; and this is the highest honour: "Thou shalt lift up thy face to the Lord, thou shalt pray to Him and He will hear thee."² Besides, when thou receivest any good thing from God without praying for it, thou seldom returnest thanks for it: it cost thee nothing to receive it, and therefore thou dost forget it; thou thinkest so little of it that very often, to punish thy ingratitude, it is taken from thee. But it is not so when thou obtainest it by prayer; when that is the case, thou art usually more careful about keeping it. It is, therefore, much more profitable for thee to receive favours from God by means of prayer than without it, and this is why He obliges thee to pray so perseveringly: "We ought always to pray and not to faint."

V. Consider fifthly, as the next step, that if thy prayer is not granted, thou canst not do thyself a greater injury than to leave off praying; because by not obtaining thy request thou lovest a gift certainly; but by ceasing to pray thou lovest a merit. Thou shouldst, therefore, be persuaded that prayer must be, not a means, but an end, and that in consequence it should be practised as much as possible: "Pray without ceasing."³ If thou findest that change of air does nothing at all towards curing thy sickness, which was thy object in leaving home, thou resolvest to return thither, but after thy return thou art as anxious as before to regain thy health, and why? Because the change of air was desired by thee as a means, and therefore only up to a certain point, that is just so far as thou thoughtest it would help to restore thy health; but health itself thou desirest as an end, and therefore thou continuest to do all thou canst to obtain it. Prayer, then, is not a means, but an end; if, therefore, thou dost not obtain thy request, how does that affect the question? Thou hast obtained what is far more desirable, namely, intercourse with God. Is not this an honour in itself to be highly valued?

¹ St. Luke xii. 6.² Job xxii. 27.³ 1 Thess. v. 17.

If thou goest to Court, and observest those whom thou knowest to be the particular favourites there, thou wilt see that their reason for coming so often into the presence of the Sovereign is not to present to him the memorials entrusted to them by different citizens, for very often they take no interest whatever in them; but they present them for the sake of having the opportunity of addressing the Sovereign. And this should be thy motive in frequently praying to God: thou shouldst pray for the sake of praying. Alas! for the man who leaves off praying in impatience because his request is not granted. He inflicts on himself the same punishment which Job pronounced against the wicked man, in these words: "Can the hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty, and call upon God at all times?"¹ And dost thou not, consequently, see how true it is that "we ought always to pray and not to faint," even if we obtained nothing by it? How much more when, by praying in this manner, we are, at least, certain beyond all doubt of obtaining salvation?

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

Expect the Lord and keep His way, and He will exalt thee to inherit the land: when the sinners shall perish thou shalt see it (Psalm xxxvi. 34).

I. Consider first, that as the life of man is composed of nights and days, which alternate with each other, so, too, is it a mingled web of prosperity and adversity. With some, there is a greater amount of prosperity, as there are countries where there is more day than night; other persons have more adversity, like the countries which have more night than day. But prosperity and adversity alike come from God: "Thine is the day, and Thine is the night."² In the former, the difficulty is to observe moderation: "From the height of the day I shall fear."³ In the latter, the difficulty is to maintain confidence: "Her lamp shall not be put out in the night."⁴ The man who has been thoroughly tried in both, shall in the end receive from God the reward he has merited, for he is of the number of those of whom it is written: "They serve Him

² Psalm lxxiii. 16.

¹ Job xxvii. 10.

³ Psalm lv. 4.

⁴ Prov. xxxi. 18.

day and night.”¹ And this is what David means here, when he says: “Expect the Lord and keep His way, and He will exalt thee.” “Expect the Lord” in the night of adversity, not letting thyself be overpowered by despondency, and “keep His way” in the day of prosperity, without being uplifted by gladness; “and He will exalt thee” to the glory of Paradise, where “night shall be no more,” but everlasting day. In adversity be content to wait: “Expect the Lord,” for it will come to an end, and never allow thyself to suppose that God has forgotten thee. Oh, how tenderly will He again visit thee, if only thou hast been willing to wait for Him patiently, without neglecting thy accustomed devotional exercises. “Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord: behold, the husbandman waiteth,” &c.² In prosperity, take care not to be like those rivers which, when they are full and swollen, overflow their banks and, leaving their proper course, meander in various directions: “Keep His way.” Go by that straight road which our Lord showed thee when He lived on the earth. “This is the way”—Jesus Christ—“walk ye in it, and go not aside, neither to the right hand nor to the left.”³ “Neither to the right,” by presuming that thou canst be saved in any other way, “nor to the left,” by doubting of thy salvation in this. And if thou dost this now, He will hereafter exalt thee, that is, He will raise thee as high as heaven is above the earth. If thou art in adversity, “He will exalt thee,” by raising thee from misery to beatitude; if thou art in prosperity, by raising thee from a temporal to an eternal beatitude. Is it not just, then, that for such a recompense thou shouldst “expect the Lord and keep His way,” serving Him alike in prosperity or adversity, “day and night”?

II. Consider secondly, that this exaltation will consist in thy entering into possession of that glory, to which, at present, thou hast only the right, and therefore the Psalmist says: “He will exalt thee to inherit the land.”⁴ This “land” is Heaven, and it is so called, because it was prefigured by the land of promise which the Israelites only reached after much suffering, although they had been long since declared by God to be its rightful inheritors. Now, on the day of thy exaltation, thou shalt “inherit the land,” because it will become thine, with possession not only *ad rem* as it now is, but *in re*, and so thou wilt “inherit” it, that is, thou wilt possess it by

¹ Apoc. vii. 15.

² St. James v. 7.

³ Isaias xxx. 21.

⁴ Psalm xxxvi. 34.

the hereditary title which belongs to thee as a true Israelite, as a true child of God. When, therefore, thou so often hearest Heaven spoken of as an inheritance, do not let thyself be deluded into the idea that thou canst ever obtain it without suffering and labour, as if it were like an earthly inheritance which often falls to the son of the house whilst he is sleeping, for such is the case only when he succeeds to it by the death of his father independently of any will; it is not so with an inheritance expressly left to him by his father during his lifetime, and inherited by right of will. To possess such an inheritance the son must behave well to his father, he must obey and respect him, and show himself such as the father has a right to expect, otherwise, in the end, he will certainly be disinherited by him. Now, Paradise is undoubtedly an inheritance, but one which can never come to thee *ab intestato*, for thy Father will never die; and, therefore, if thou desirest it, thou must win it by rendering to thy Father the service which thou owest Him, and also stand whatever test He chooses to put thee to: "The just shall possess the land."¹ After the same manner the promised land was an inheritance, and yet the children of Israel had to attain it by means of a thousand trials which God made of them in the desert. And how many there were who never did attain it! Of six hundred thousand who went out of Egypt to go and take possession of their land two only entered it, because the Father struck those ungrateful children out of His will, and put in their stead those more obedient children who were born to Him later. If, then, thou wouldst not have God deprive thee also of thy heavenly inheritance, bear bravely every test, both of prosperity and adversity: "Expect the Lord and keep His way;" then "He will exalt thee," so that as a worthy son "thou shalt inherit the land."

III. Consider thirdly, that if thou actest rightly this exaltation will be thine at the instant when the tests are over to which God is now putting thee, that is, immediately on thy death. But not so instantly wilt thou be able fully to understand how marvellous an exaltation it will be. When wilt thou understand it? On the Day of Judgment. "When the sinners shall perish thou shalt see," that is, when thou seest the justice which God executes on all those whom He condemns, thou wilt understand what mercy He has shown to thee in saving thee. "When the sinners shall perish thou

¹ Psalm xxxvi. 29.

shalt see ;” because our blessings are never so clearly seen as when they are contrasted with the contrary evils. And this is one of the ends which God has in view in decreeing the General Judgment, which will show in so strong a contrast the glory of His elect children and the infamy of the reprobate : “When the sinners shall perish thou shalt see.” What wilt thou see? Thy blessedness and their misery. Imagine thyself, during the general sacking of a city, placed, by the favour of the King who has taken it, in a place of safety on some lofty tower, whence thou canst look down upon the slaughter, the weapons, the fire of the soldiers in fierce rage against the citizens, what horror yet joy in thy own safety wouldst thou not feel! How many wouldst thou see struck down dead, some calling for mercy, others weeping, others uttering cries of fury, but all in vain: all those wretched creatures must perish, and thou art safe! And yet this is but a feeble representation of what will take place on the Last Day, when thou shalt see countless millions of men who have rebelled against God, driven at the sword’s point by the hosts of angels, and thou, who once deserved to share their fate, hast been granted grace to escape it! Who can describe what thou wilt then feel? “They shall go out,” so God said of the elect, “and see the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me.”¹ Oh, how wilt thou then lift up thy hands to Heaven, and thank God for the mercy He has shown thee! how wilt thou bless the service thou hast rendered Him, and what a mere nothing will seem the tests of fidelity which He required of thee, now that they have been followed by the exaltation which thou enjoyest in so lofty and so safe a dwelling-place! “Thou hast made the Most High thy refuge.”² When Israel looked down from the top of a hill on the bodies of the unhappy Egyptians which were cast one after another on the shores of the Red Sea, they could not but tremble at the spectacle, though to themselves it was one of triumph: “They saw the Egyptians dead on the sea-shore, and the mighty hand that the Lord had used against them; and the people feared the Lord.”³ And what wilt thou do when thou witnessest the far more terrible destruction of the reprobate? I was about to say that thou wilt hardly believe in thine own salvation. But fear nothing, it is more than certain: Heaven is thine, and what a glorious possession is that! “When the sinners shall perish thou shalt see.”

¹ *Isaias lvi, 24.*² *Psalm xc, 9.*³ *Exodus xiv, 31.*

IV. Consider fourthly, that even as the exaltation of the elect will not be thoroughly understood till the Last Judgment, so neither will the perdition of the reprobate. Therefore, it is said that they shall perish on that day: "When the sinners shall perish thou shalt see," not that they will not perish immediately after death, but that they do then wholly perish, for at least their bodies remain in the earth, and on that day they will perish together with their souls for all eternity. That will be their final and entire perdition. Then all the world will be cleansed from these sinful dregs of people who will be as though utterly lost when thus imprisoned in the lowest centre of the earth as in some deep pit, their very memory will have passed away: they "are perished as if they had never been,"¹ not "as if they were not," for their existence is but too certain, but "as if they had never been," so entirely will they be forgotten: "I will utterly forget them."²

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (St. John xiv. 6).

I. Consider first, Jesus Christ as the perfect Preacher, Who came down from Heaven to earth to show how this great work should be done: "To preach the Gospel to the poor He hath sent Me, to preach deliverance to the captives, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."³ Now to be not merely a good, but an excellent preacher, three talents are requisite: those of teaching, of moving, and of delighting, and all three are tacitly implied in what our Lord here says of Himself: "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life," because as the Way He teaches, as the Truth He moves, and as the Life He gives happiness. Happy wilt thou be if thou shouldst come one day to know this glorious Preacher as He is! Trust me, thou wilt never weary of His sermons.

II. Consider secondly, that Christ is the Way, and that, as such, He teaches. What does He teach? The short way to Paradise. This is the science which, beyond all others, it is important to learn, and which, by listening to Him, thou soon wilt learn. It cannot be denied that, before He began

¹ Ecclus. xlv. 9.

² Osee i. 6.

³ St. Luké iv. 18, 19.

to preach, the way to Heaven was known, and yet how few reached it! And why? Because the only way which was generally known was the way of the Commandments; and this, although it may appear the easiest, is really the most difficult, because there are so many dangers to which the man is exposed who will not do anything for his salvation but just such things as he knows to be of obligation. Then Christ came, and by His word He taught the way of the Counsels, and by His example opened it. And what is the result of His doing this? That countless multitudes have been saved who would otherwise have been lost. For, as thou knowest, there are three principal obstacles to salvation, the love of the flesh, the love of ease, and the love of our own will. Now, the Commandments allow the love of these three within certain limits, but how few keep within them! It is more difficult to eat in moderation such fruits as are very agreeable, but injurious to thee, than to make a courageous resolution of abstaining from them altogether. This, therefore, is what Christ, the greatest of preachers, has counselled: to make this generous resolution by vowing absolute purity, poverty, and obedience, which is precisely the same as giving to God not only the fruits which are so injurious to man, but the tree itself. And thus, whereas so long as only the way of the Commandments was known, few reached Heaven, thousands and thousands reach it now. If, then, thou wouldst do so easily, thou knowest the way: "I am the Way." Follow the Evangelical Counsels as far as possible. Dost thou not know that to do so is to act wisely? "He that is wise hearkeneth unto counsels."¹ It is possible to be saved without them: no one denies this. But it is far more difficult. Hence it matters little that they are not precepts of obligation: it is enough that they make salvation easier—nay, if they are not enjoined by obligation, all the better: they are enjoined by love, and therefore thou shouldst observe them the more gladly. By so doing thou wilt show thyself worthy of that high destiny which has been allotted to thee, not to have been born a slave, as all were under the Old Covenant, but to have been born the friend of God. And why, dost thou think, were no counsels given to them? Because precepts of love were not suited to a state of servitude.

III. Consider thirdly, that Christ is the Truth, and that, as such, He moves men. Wouldst thou see the truth of this?

¹ Prov. xii. 15.

Look how, in a very short time, He drew the world after Him : "Behold, the whole world is gone after Him."¹ And how did He draw it? By the force of truth. This is the most powerful means of influence with a good preacher. Energy and the power of exciting emotion are all very well, but after all these are not the arms which conquer men's souls—that conquest belongs to truth. And therefore thou seest that it was by the truth that Christ subdued the world : "Sanctify them in truth."² No drums or trumpets sounded before Him ; He sent no armed hosts to the assault ; He only made the truth heard throughout the world, and thereby sanctified it. It is true that He worked miracles also for this end, but they came afterwards : "The Lord co-operating with them and confirming the word with signs that followed."³ Observe, they "followed," they did not come first. For ordinarily these miracles served to make the victory more glorious, to confirm those who believed, and to confound the obstinate ; but still it was the truth which gained the victory, for it has more power over men's minds than miracles. If miracles are not believed to be true, what power have they to conquer thee? whereas the bare truth is no sooner known than the victory is won : "What does the mind desire stronger than truth?"⁴ If, then, thou hast not yet been brought to follow Christ, what must we say? That thou hast not yet studied, or considered, or set thyself to think about His words. Otherwise it would be impossible to withstand such a Preacher, so full, not of grace only, but of truth : "Full of grace and truth."⁵

IV. Consider fourthly, that Christ is the Life, and that, as such, He gives happiness ; for the greatest happiness is that of living, and therefore the crown of beatitude is almost always called a crown of life : "Receive the crown of life."⁶ "I will give thee the crown of life."⁷ What is this life which comes from Christ? It is two-fold : the life of grace and the life of glory, and both are full of ineffable happiness. The life of grace is the beatitude of this life ; the life of glory is the beatitude of that which is to come. The one indeed is the flower, the other is the fruit, but both are full of the utmost sweetness : the fruit is the perfection of the flower, and the flower is the promise of the fruit. Each, therefore, has its own sweetness to delight thee. And if thou wouldst know

¹ St. John xii. 19.² St. John xvii. 17.³ St. Mark xvi. 20.⁴ St. Augustine.⁵ St. John i. 14.⁶ St. James i. 12.⁷ Apoc. ii. 10.

how sweet the words of Christ are, see how He makes those who come to listen to Him care for nothing else. Magdalen never thought of bodily food when seated at His feet: "Sitting at the Lord's feet she heard His word."¹ That was enough for her. And innumerable saints in their cells, or in caves, have been entirely satisfied with listening to Him. If His word gives thee no delight, how must thy taste have become spoiled by those preachers who cause "itching ears"! If thou examinest thyself well, thou wilt see that intercourse with men has perverted thy hearing. Thou hast mixed with them more than thou oughtest, and so thy ears have become accustomed to nothing but news, and scandal, and jesting, and all kinds of worldly talk, so that it is no wonder if thou art quite incapable of tasting that pure happiness which comes from Christ. He gives happiness because He is the Life, and life is certainly the greatest happiness that there is, so much so that all others should be sacrificed for it; but it is a deep, grave, and solid happiness, not one belonging to the senses, like that which comes from hunting, feasting, dancing, and the like, which are frivolous tastes when we compare them with life. And yet how many there are who even shorten life through an excessive indulgence in these things! So, too, mayest thou risk doing as to Christ, by forsaking a happiness which is life itself for those pleasures which are but vanity.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

Three sorts My soul hateth, and I am greatly grieved at their life: a poor man that is proud, a rich man that is a liar, an old man that is a fool and doting (Ecclus. xxv. 3).

I. Consider first, how unhappy these three sorts of men are, since God says that He so hates them, that He cannot bear their existence in the world without grief: "I am greatly grieved at their life." And who are they? A poor and proud man, a rich liar, and a foolish, doting old man. He can hardly endure pride in a poor man, because it may seem in some measure excusable in a rich man, but in one who is poor there is no excuse of any sort, since his mean condition seems to oblige him to humility: "Why is earth and ashes proud?"²

¹ St. Luke x. 39.

² Ecclus. x. 9.

"Earth" while living, "ashes" when dead. He can hardly endure "a rich man that is a liar," because it is not so much to be wondered at if a poor man is tempted through want to deceive others by telling a falsehood, to practise trickery and fraud; but for a rich man to lie is most disgraceful. For he is not induced to do so by want, but by cupidity and greed of gain. How blinded must he be by the love of money who feigns poverty in order to avoid paying his debts! "They shall be clad with a garment of sackcloth to deceive."¹ He can hardly endure "an old man that is a fool and doting," because a young man who is so is an object of compassion to all: it is his hot blood, his want of thought and experience, which prevent his acting with the prudence belonging to maturer years. But how can such excuses be offered for an old man who dyes his hair, studies his dress, and indulges his appetites like a young person? "Surely thou seest, O son of man, what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every one in private in his chamber; for they say, The Lord seeth us not," so mad are they, "the Lord hath forsaken the earth."² All three are human monstrosities, and it is no wonder that God so greatly abhors them: "I am greatly grieved at their life." And yet how many such monsters do we meet every day, not in the woods and caves, but in households and communities! Thou mayest learn from this how great God's mercy is, since, although He is "greatly grieved at their life," He yet bears with them.

II. Consider secondly, that in the three monsters here enumerated we have an admirable mystical representation of the world, the flesh, and the devil, those three cruel furies who constantly make such havoc of men's souls. For if thou wouldst see one who is poor and proud, look at the devil. Most miserably poor, indeed, since he has been utterly stripped by God of grace, condemned to bonds and fetters, and deprived by Christ of all his power: "Thy pride is brought down to Hell."³ And yet in his poverty he retains all the pride which he had when he was rich, so that it may truly be said that "he is king over all the children of pride."⁴ He is a slave, and nevertheless he dares to make war upon God: "I will be like the Most High."⁵ If thou wouldst see "a rich man that is a liar," look at the flesh. How versed is it in deception, by which it seeks to avoid paying those debts

¹ Zach. xiii. 4.² Ezech. viii. 12.³ Isaias xiv. 11.⁴ Job xli. 25.⁵ Isaias xiv. 14.

to which it is obliged by the soul, which is its creditor, though a merciful one. It artfully pleads want of ability; it cannot fast, it cannot take the discipline, it cannot even pray much for want of strength. Yet thou wilt find that it has plenty of strength for plays, races, and wicked pleasures. For purposes of dissipation it can command twice as much capital as would satisfy the claims of the soul, and then it feigns bankruptcy. "When they should repay they will ask time," that is, a respite, "and will return tedious and murmuring words:"¹ "tedious," when they allege their inability, and "murmuring," when they complain of the harshness of their creditor. "And if he be able to pay, he will stand off," going about in search of fresh pretexts: "he will scarcely pay one half."² The payment will be not only unwilling, but niggardly. Such is this deceitful flesh of ours. Lastly, if thou wouldst see "an old man that is a fool and doting," look at the world. Judging from its age, it ought by this time to have learnt how it ought to live. It is nearly six thousand years old, and yet it behaves with more of the levity of youth than ever, so full is it of licence, debauchery, and luxury, and such, above all, is the iniquity of the maxims it professes. Though Christ came down from Heaven to earth on purpose to teach it, it still goes on declaring that it is a great disgrace to forgive one's enemies, to embrace poverty, to practise obedience, to walk in the saving way of the Cross, so little has it profited by the long time it has been at school. It is still foolish, as is shown by its attachment to evil, and doting, in its ignorance of its true good; foolish as to the will, doting as to the understanding. The world, therefore, is that miserable child of a hundred years, of whom it is written that he shall be condemned to death without pity: "The child shall die a hundred years old," for if, at so great an age, it has so ill learnt how to live that it still behaves like a child, it is in vain to hope that it will ever learn. God, we are told, holds all these three in the utmost abhorrence: "I am greatly grieved at their life," that is, their character, their conduct, or, as is more commonly thought, at the fact of their living; since these three monsters are continually robbing Him of souls whom He would have in Paradise. And yet so far art thou from hating them, that thou hast a great regard for them, which thou showest by obeying one, indulging another, and even worshipping the

¹ Eccclus. xxix. 6.² Eccclus. xxix. 6, 7.

third: thou obeyest the devil, thou indulgest the flesh, and thou worshippest the foolish world.

III. Consider thirdly, that it is quite possible that all these three different monstrosities may be contained in thyself, and it is necessary, therefore, to examine thyself well and to see how thou standest as to the poverty of nature, abundance of grace, and maturity in the spiritual life. As to poverty of nature, thou knowest that thou art utterly destitute, possessing nothing of thy own but sin. And yet how easily thou art possessed by that accursed vanity which is called "the pride of life," not of virtue, or wisdom, or science, or riches, but merely "of life," since thou art inclined to pride thyself on so small a thing as the mere fact of living, as if it were not a distinction which every animal shares with thee. As to the abundance of graces which God bestows on thee to strengthen thy weakness, it is very likely that they have been so plentiful, that if some highway robber, as St. Francis said, had received the half of them, he would now be a saint, and thou, who allowest them to lie idle when occasions of mortification, self-conquest, and humiliation present themselves, dost not scruple to complain of God Himself, as though He gave thee His grace in scanty measure. This is not only a wicked, but even a sacrilegious falsehood, by means of which thou accusest God to excuse thy own slothfulness? "Better is the poor," that is, the man who is without grace, "than the lying man," that is, the man who says he is without it in order to avoid making use of it. Lastly, as to the spiritual life in whichever way thou art leading it, thou must take notice whether, as time goes on, thou art making progress or going back. It is only right that the more thou advancest in years the more thou shouldst advance in solidity of spirit; and yet it is not unlikely that thou, like many others, may be going back almost to childhood, and that at the beginning of thy conversion thou wert bolder and more manly in overcoming human respect, more secluded from worldly company, more detached from creatures, more occupied during the day in fervent prayer to our Lord. Is not all this to lose, when thou oughtest to have gained ground as to wisdom? "When he was now old," that is, at the time when such a one as Solomon should act most wisely, then (can it be believed?) "his heart was turned away by women to follow strange gods;"¹ and so he became a dotard. And oh, how often is this terrible instance repeated in different

¹ 3 Kings xi. 4.

degrees. These, then, are the three monstrous things which God so abhors and abominates: "A poor man that is proud, a rich man that is a liar, and an old man that is a fool and doting." And if each one by itself is so insupportable, what must all of them be together? Will not God have still more reason then to repeat: "I am greatly grieved," although it is a load which, heavy as it is, does not, after all, hurt the one on whom it is laid, but the one who lays it upon him, and therefore God does not say, "I am grieved," or more strictly "burdened" (*aggravor*), as to Himself, but "at their life."

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you
(St. Matt. v. 44).

I. Consider first, how this appears a thing so difficult as to be all but impossible, to love and do good to one who hates thee, since nature teaches thee the very opposite. But this is not so. If Christ bade thee love and do good to thy enemy because he is thy enemy, thou wouldst be right. But He does not say this: He bids thee do so because He commands it: "But I say to you." And what is there that cannot be done for the sake of Christ? Dost thou not see how many millions of martyrs for His sake rushed into the flames, rejoiced in captivity, triumphed amidst the wild beasts? And although they did this, undoubtedly, through the strength bestowed on them by grace, yet they did not act in a way contrary to natural instinct, for even nature teaches us that we should meet death joyfully for the sake of such a King, Father, and Benefactor as we have in Christ. Thou seest, therefore, that Christ did no violence to nature when He said: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you," because He prefaced the command by the words, "I say to you;" and more than this, He bound Himself, by giving the precept, to supply the strength necessary for fulfilling it, that is to say, grace; and is not grace able to conquer nature? "I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth Me."¹ And besides, what command could be more reasonable? Imagine what the world would be if every one were free to revenge his private wrongs! It would

¹ Philipp, iv. 13.

be a den of wild beasts. What disorder, what confusion, what ruin would be the consequence! But if vengeance is forbidden, love must be commanded, since the most intolerable of the torments of the damned is that they hate and cannot avenge themselves.

II. Consider secondly, that all who are thy enemies hate thee, but that those who hate thee are not all thy enemies: strictly speaking, those who hate thee openly are thy enemies. "Mine enemies have spoken evil against me,"¹ that is, not only concerning me, but "to me" (*mihi*). This being so, observe our Lord's heavenly prudence in commanding thee to love thy enemies, and to do good to those who though they hate thee do not show it openly; and who are comprised under the title of haters, as distinguished from enemies. It is not always possible to do good to one who hates thee openly as an enemy, because he will often disdain, refuse, and spurn thy kindness, behaving even worse to thee when thou treatest him gently; but it is always possible to love him, and therefore Christ said: "Love your enemies." On the other hand, a man who hates thee without showing it, will be ready to receive a kindness from thee through the very desire he has of concealing his hatred, and, therefore, in his case it is possible not only to love him but to do him good; and so Christ said: "Do good to them that hate you." Thou shouldst, however, also love those who hate thee, and do good, when it is possible, to thy enemies. But Christ's reason for saying, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you," was to deprive every one of all excuse for disobedience, by using this form of command.

III. Consider thirdly, what our Lord means when He bids thee love thy enemy for His sake. He does not mean that thou art to love the ill-will, ill-treatment, the angry words which mark him as your enemy, for that would be to love not only the evil-doer, but the evil deed. He means that thou shouldst love what good there is left in him, which is that he is still thy neighbour, in spite of his sin, and loving him as such, thou shouldst therefore love him as thyself, wishing him always from thy heart all the real good that thou wishest thyself: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."² And here observe that there are two ways of wishing well to any one, one general, and the other particular. As to the first, it is of obligation to wish well even to thy enemy, as, for example,

¹ Psalm xl. 6.

² St. Mark xii. 31.

when thou prayest for, all men in general thou art not at liberty to exclude him: "Thy commandment is exceeding broad."¹ The commandment of love is so extensive that it includes all men. But to desire for him some particular good is not a precept, except when the occasion presents itself. To seek such an occasion purposely is only a counsel. In the next place, when Christ would have thee love thy enemy, He would also have thee give some tokens of this love, otherwise, what sort of love would thine be? Dost thou know what the love is which Christ requires amongst Christians? It is that love which unites us, as in one body. But to do this an interior love is not enough, there must be also one that is exterior. And has He not made mutual love the distinctive badge of Christians? "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another."² But how could that be a badge which is kept carefully hidden under a cloak? It must be shown. And here thou shouldst observe that there are two sorts of signs, common and particular. The former, which are such as thou showest to others for some common reason, to a fellow-countryman, for instance, to a relation, or to a neighbour, just because they are so, are matters of precept, and must be shown also to an enemy when he is comprised under the general head of country, relationship, or neighbourhood, and they cannot lawfully be refused to him simply because he is an enemy. Particular signs, which thou showest to others on account of particular friendship, such as living together, having intimate intercourse, and the like, are not matters of precept, but, generally speaking, of counsel, unless in a case when some great scandal would be the consequence of refusing them. Now, having settled this, see what thy disposition of mind is, when, perhaps, thou canst not clear thy heart, at least not perfectly, of all bitterness. Do not say that thou hast forgiven thy enemy, for that is not enough unless thou showest it. Christ Himself commanded that if, in the very act of making an offering to Him upon the altar, thou shouldst remember any grudge thou bearest to another, thou art to leave the gift, go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come back to offer the gift: "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother."³ This, then, is a proof that interior reconciliation is not enough, for that could be made at the altar at the moment of offering the gift: exterior reconciliation must be added.

¹ Psalm cxviii. 96.² St. John xiii. 35.

And this is what Christ means when He says: "Love your enemies." He would have thee love thy enemy not only with an interior but an exterior love, for this is the love which is necessary among Christians. The first without the second must be left to the heathen.

IV. Consider fourthly, what our Lord requires of thee when He commands thee to do good to those who hate thee. He means that thy love must not be like the fig-tree which He saw in the field, fair in appearance, but barren of fruit. If so, He will curse it, for He requires fruit from Christians, and such fruit, too, as He looked for on that tree, fruit that is out of season, that is, works difficult to nature. If he does not find these, then alas for them, for He will curse them. What is this fruit in the case we are considering? It is of two sorts, negative and positive. The former consists in not offending one who has offended us: "The love of our neighbour worketh no evil."¹ The latter consists in defending him, praying to God for him, forgiving him, feeling at peace with him, and rendering him, at the least, every service we can without injury to ourselves. This is really "doing good" to him. But thou mayest observe that the negative is matter of precept, the positive of counsel, except in those cases when, if he were not thy enemy, thou wouldst be bound to do good to him; and then thou canst not refuse to do so because he is thy enemy; if thou dost, thou art injuring him, and therefore revenging thyself. And, indeed, who is there to whom thou oughtest to be more glad to do good than thy enemy? Such benefits are glorious, profitable, and blessed; they are glorious, because if thou doest good to one who loves thee, what is there glorious in that? "Do not also the heathen this?"² Thy glory should be to imitate thy Heavenly Father, "Who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad."³ They are profitable, because no good that thou doest to a friend, other things being equal, will procure thee as much merit as what thou doest to an enemy; and they are blessed, because there is nothing that will fill thy heart with such pure consolation; by this means, if there is no other good resulting from it, thou wilt escape a thousand difficulties, troubles, and sorrows, so that this beautiful law of forgiveness is really much more to the advantage of the giver than of the receiver. Happy wilt thou be if thou fulfil it perfectly.

¹ Romans xiii. 10.² St. Matt. v. 47.³ St. Matt. v. 45.

V. Consider fifthly, that it may be asked whether it is an act of greater virtue to love or to do good to thy enemy. I answer, that if thou doest good to thy enemy from the motive of love, it is clear that it is the greater, because the loving him is included in the good thou doest him; still, speaking absolutely, loving him is the greater, because a man may confer a benefit on another from many motives which are very easy to nature, such as pride, policy, prudence, self-interest, and sometimes even from anger; but to love is not possible, save for love's sake; and for love of whom? For love of a God to Whom we are so deeply indebted, our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer. And so thou seest that in the Old Law it was expressly commanded to do good to an enemy, but not to love him. It was commanded to show him the right road, to give him food and drink, even to help him to raise up his beast of burden if it had fallen: "If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lie beneath his burden, thou shalt not pass by, but shalt lift him up with him."¹ But nothing was said of loving him; it was indeed said: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart,"² but this was the utmost. It was reserved solely for our Lord to have the glory of saying in express terms: "But I say to you, love your enemies." And this may be the chief reason why He called the commandment of brotherly love, new. "A new commandment I give unto you," not because it was new in substance, but in expression. Never, since the world began, had such words as "love your enemies" been heard: for they would have been terrible words so long as they were not made sweet by the love of Jesus.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

I have seen the wicked highly exalted, and lifted up like the cedars of Libanus. And I passed by, and lo, he was not, and I sought him, and his place was not found (Psalm xxxvi. 35, 36).

I. Consider first, that the exaltation and the lifting up (*elevatio*) of the wicked which are here spoken of are two different things. The former is any kind of exterior honour, applause, popularity, pleasure, position, wealth, or fortune which may be possessed by the wicked: "In the midst of her

¹ Exodus xxiii. 5.

² Levit. xix. 17.

own people she shall be exalted."¹ The latter is the interior pride which is produced in the heart of the wicked by all these things, exterior though they be: "Thy heart was lifted up by thy beauty."² The one comes before the other, since the wicked man first contemplates himself in all his glory, and then prides himself upon it as though it were his due. But it is no such thing; and therefore it is not said that he is "exalted," but "highly exalted" (*superexaltatum*), that is, inordinately exalted, because he is always exalted beyond his deserts, and so there cannot possibly be any exaltation of the wicked which is not "superexaltation." And yet, incredible as it may seem, he is so blinded by the glitter of all this external splendour about him, this gold and purple and retinue, that not only does he believe that he merits such an exaltation, but that he merits it as much as those who are the most deserving of it. And therefore the Psalmist adds that he saw the wicked lifted up "like the cedars." Those trees are indeed in high repute, but they deserve to be so, for they are fragrant and luxuriant, and they bear such abundance of excellent fruits that as one ripens, another forms. Yet, though the wicked bear no fruit, at least none that is worth anything, they believe in their hearts that they are equal to these which bear so much. Nay, it may even be said that they think themselves "like the cedars" for another reason, because they consider themselves immortal; and therefore it is not simply said, "like the cedars," but "the cedars of Libanus," because these are the least liable to decay of all their tribe. Look at the behaviour of those whom we call the great ones of the world: do they not act exactly as though they were never to die? Do they not love their money as if they were never to be parted from it, fill their position as if they were never to lose it, pamper their decaying bodies as if they were never to become the food of worms? All this is summed up by King David in these words: "I have seen the wicked highly exalted and lifted up like the cedars of Libanus." He means to express briefly that he has seen him exteriorly and interiorly as full of pride as though he were immortal. But wait a little, and thou wilt see the end.

II. Consider secondly, that thou needest not even wait long to see this: for all the glory above described is but a stage-pageant; the scene is changed in a moment: "I passed by, and lo, he was not." Apelles painted Alexander with a

¹ Ecclus. xxiv. 3.

² Ezech. xxviii. 17.

thunder-bolt in his hand, to denote the rapidity with which he had overrun so much of the world. He might have painted him thus with greater reason to denote the rapidity of his disappearance from it. Dost thou not constantly see how shortlived is the happiness of the great ones of the world? "I passed by." Thou hast only to make one step forward, "and lo," in a flash, in a twinkling, in an instant, "he was not." Not merely "he *is* not," but "he *was* not," because this sort of happiness passes as time does, and time passes so swiftly, that even while thou art speaking of it as a thing present, it is already gone: "The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment."¹ Think awhile of those proud men whom thou hast known in thy lifetime, who were so great, so lauded, so flattered—where is their glory now? Has it not all vanished like a flash of lightning? "What is your life? It is a vapour which appeareth for a little while, and afterwards shall vanish away."² Well, then, may it be said, not only that it "is not," but that it "was not;" so superficial, false, and unreal was that glory; it was a glory "which appeareth," it was not even what it seemed to be, and therefore it "was not." That alone is glory which will always continue, the glory of virtue: "Our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience."³ A glory which comes to an end like the glory of vice was never true glory even while it existed, for it had no reality in itself, it was all in appearance; and how can such glory be glory at all? Those who think it is, ought also to admit that to be real glory which is enjoyed by a person who dreams that he is a king. Is it possible that thou art captivated by such glory as this? Do not admire or value or become attached to it, for it is unworthy of even a passing glance: "Like to him that catcheth a shadow and followeth after the wind, is the man that giveth heed to lying visions."⁴

III. Consider thirdly, how wisely the Psalmist describes himself as beholding the false glory of the wicked merely whilst he "passed by." He did not stop to look at it, and therefore he says, "I have seen" (*vidi*), not "I have contemplated" (*aspexi*). He saw him perhaps not intentionally, but quite by chance, and to show this, he had no sooner seen him than he passed on. Such, then, is the fruit thou shouldst gather from this day's meditation; not to take any heed of the prosperity of the wicked, but to pass on. If thou stoppest

¹ Job xx. 5.

² St. James iv. 15.

³ 2 Cor. i. 12.

⁴ Eccclus. xxxiv. 2.

to look at it thou at once runnest the risk of a thousand evils, such as accusing Providence, murmuring, indulging in bad thoughts, repenting of living virtuously, and perhaps even of becoming enamoured of this prosperity, which is not for thee, just as happens to the man who stops to gaze upon his neighbour's beautiful wife: "Many, by admiring the beauty of another man's wife, have become reprobate."¹ What must thou do then if it happens to come in thy way? Thou must pass on, praying earnestly in thy heart to God: "Turn away mine eyes, that they may not behold vanity."² Do not stop to admire those grand equipages, having their wheels glittering with gold, which is thus degraded by being covered with mud, instead of adorning God's altar. Do not stop to stare at those lackeys, whose wages rob so many of the poor of bread; nor at the splendid liveries, the cost of which has deprived them of needful clothing for the winter. Do not stop to look at those spirited horses, whose very stables are better cared for by many than even the churches, whence perhaps their cost is supplied. Alas! what sad sights these things are to a true Christian. Pass by, therefore, as the Psalmist here tells you that he did; and whither shalt thou go when thou hast thus "passed by"? Pass on to contemplate in thought the grave; which will so soon be the end of all this glory; pass on from the grave, where the bodies of all those miserable men will lie corrupting, to the pit of Hell, where their souls will be tormented; thence, again, pass on to contemplate the glory of that Paradise which they will never enter, even in thought, if they would not increase the intensity of the rage with which they are already consumed. Oh, how salutary is it thus to "pass by," if only thou knewest it! Then, indeed, wouldst thou be able with good reason to say, "I passed by, and, lo! he was not." For none are so well able to understand the vanity of temporal things as those who pass from them to meditate on those which are eternal: "I passed further to behold wisdom, and I saw that wisdom excelled folly, as much as light differeth from darkness."³

IV. Consider fourthly, how this same David, who would not stop to look at the wicked whom he accidentally saw in such prosperity, but passed him by, had hardly done so than he perceived that he was gone, and immediately turned back to look for him: "I sought him." And why was this, but to teach us a deep lesson, namely, that just as it is injurious

¹ *Eclus. ix. 11.*

² *Psalm cxviii. 37.*

³ *Eccles. ii. 12.*

to contemplate worldly prosperity when it is present, so is it profitable to do this when it has passed away. Then only do we really understand its utter emptiness. Go, therefore, and seek for the wicked upon the earth after his death. Wilt thou find him? "I sought him, and his place was not found." And in another place the Psalmist says: "Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be, and thou shalt seek his place and shalt not find it"¹—that is, "thou shalt not find him in his place." Thou shalt seek him in the splendid mansions he inhabited, in the theatres, gardens, galleries, villas—in a word, in all the most attractive of his favourite resorts, but not in any of them wilt thou ever find him. Nay, more than this, the very place will not be found: "Thou shalt not find it;" for not only have the kings, but the kingdoms passed away. Where are now those renowned monarchies of the Romans, the Medes, the Macedonians, the Assyrians? Not a trace remains even of the cities their sovereigns ruled in, still less of their courts. They have all vanished like a dream: "As a dream that fleeth away he shall not be found."² Now, then, thou seest plainly how false is the happiness of worldlings. And wouldst thou still stop to contemplate it? Do so if thou wilt; but on this condition, that thou act with regard to it as thou dost in the case of all works of art, literature, and any other kind, and wait till it is finished before forming thy judgment of it.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

Love is strong as death ; jealousy as hard as Hell (Cant. viii. 6).

I. Consider first, that by love is here meant the love thou shouldst have for God, and by jealousy the desire thou oughtest to have that others should love Him: "And he that heareth, let him say, Come."³ For the love of God is very different from the love of men. If thou lovest a man intensely, thou wouldst have him loved by others; but not by many, because thou art afraid that if the number of those who love him is very great, they may take him from thee, and for this reason thou art often chary of extolling and making known his merits, lest by this means thou shouldst increase

¹ Psalm xxxvi. 10.

² Job xx. 8.

³ Apoc. xxii. 17.

the list of thy rivals. But if thou lovest God, it is not so. Then thou wouldst have all men love Him: "That all nations may acknowledge that Thou art God, and there is no other besides Thee."¹ And the reason is that the heart of the man who is dear to thee is finite, and so, if he has to return the love of many, he must love thee less in proportion. But the Heart of God is infinite: "According to His greatness, so also is His mercy with Him."² This love for all does not in any way diminish His love for one; neither does His love for one diminish His love for all. He is "rich unto all that call upon Him."³ Therefore, thou hast no fear of His loving thee less because Thou makest Him known to others; rather thou hast confidence that He will love thee more. Now, this love of God is compared to death in its strength: "Love is strong as death;" and this jealousy, or rather, zeal for this glory, is compared to Hell in its hardness: "Jealousy is as hard as Hell." Thou must strive to possess them both if thou wishest to please God. But unless love comes first, jealousy will not be aroused, because thy desire that others should love God truly will be in proportion to the strength of thy love for Him, a love which is said to be as strong as death, for death precedes Hell, not Hell death: "The rich man died, and he was buried in Hell."⁴

II. Consider secondly, that we shall see the terrible strength of death in nothing so much as in its power of separating: "Doth bitter death separate in this manner?"⁵ And it more than separates, it snatches thee in an instant from everything to which thou art bound by the closest ties. It snatches thee away from country, kindred, friends, comforts, offices, honours, and all besides. But, above all, death severs thee from thyself; for it makes that tremendous separation, which nothing else has the power to make—I mean the separation of soul and body. What a perfect bond of union there was between these two! and yet death divides it. Nothing short of this must the love of thy God work in thee, for which reason Christ said: "Think ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you no, but separation."⁶ How thinkest thou then? Has it done this work in thee? Oh, rather, how many ties there are which bind thy soul, not only to thy body, but to thy reputation, thy possessions, and I know not what empty things of this world! How can there,

¹ Judith ix. 19.² Eccclus. ii. 23.³ Romans x. 12.⁴ St. Luke xvi. 22.⁵ 1 Kings xv. 32.⁶ St. Luke xii. 51.

then, be a doubt that this strong love has not yet found an entrance into thy heart? "Love is strong as death;" it leaves nothing from which it does not separate thee. If one single attachment remains, the love is not what it should be; it is not death. For this is just the difference between death and sickness, that sickness deprives thee of one good, and leaves thee another; it deprives thee of sight, but spares thy hearing; it deprives thee of hearing, but spares thy sight; and if it deprives thee of both these, it leaves thee some other sense, at least, some interior one. Not so death; it takes everything from thee, and it does its work in an instant. Take care, then, that thou dost not make the mistake of thinking that thou lovest God while thou retainest an attachment to any creature whatsoever; for true love of Him is said to be strong, not as sickness, which is mortal only, but as death itself.

III. Consider thirdly, that this strong love must necessarily, as has been said, come before "jealousy." For unless thou art first detached from all creatures that have any hold on thee, it is impossible for thee ever to apply thyself in earnest to win souls to thy Lord. To this end thou must consider neither country, nor friends, nor kindred, nor comforts, nor office, nor honours: "When it pleased Him Who separated me from my mother's womb, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, immediately" (observe, not after awhile, but "immediately") "I condescended not to flesh and blood."¹ Thou must not, then, consider thy body, but expose it boldly to any suffering or danger, placing it in God's hands as a body already dead, after the example of those of whom it is written that they never loved it in their lifetime: "They loved not their lives unto death."² If thou art at all careful of thy body, it is impossible that thou shouldst ever use it in seeking for souls that are sunk in sin, and yet the fervent "jealousy" here spoken of goes even beyond this, for if "love is strong as death," "jealousy is as hard as Hell." By "Hell" some understand the grave, as it is said: "My life hath drawn nigh to Hell."³ But others, with still better reason, understand the word to refer to the true Hell, the Hell of the damned: "Hell below was in an uproar."⁴ And that Hell may indeed be said to be "hard." But if thou wouldst enter fully into the meaning of this passage, thou shouldst understand by "Hell" all the devils who are the chief part of it: "O Hell,

¹ Galat. i. 15, 16.

² Apoc. xii. 11.

³ Psalm lxxxvii. 4.

⁴ Isaias xiv. 9.

I will be thy bite."¹ Dost thou not see what these devils do to rob God of souls? Thou must do the same to win them to Him. This is, in my opinion, the meaning to be preferred, but as it requires careful consideration, it will be better to transfer it to the following day, on which it will also come in with peculiar fitness.

THIRTIETH DAY.

ST. CATHARINE OF SIENA.

Jealousy is as hard as Hell (Cant. viii. 6).

I. Consider first, that the raging desire which the devils have to rob Heaven of souls is beyond all words. It tortures, torments, inflames, and consumes them; and so it is called hard or grievous: "I am sent to thee with heavy tidings."² Now, thy zeal in saving for Heaven the souls of which Hell would rob it ought to be the very same. It should be "hard," that is, a zeal which allows thee no peace of mind, but which is a pain to thee: "Jealousy is as hard as Hell." Such was the zeal of our Lord Jesus Christ, a zeal which prevented His being seen to laugh even once in all His three-and-thirty years, but very often to weep: "I walked sorrowful all the day long."³ This is the zeal which thou shouldst aim at having in thy heart; for a faithful servant not only will not himself offend his master, but cannot endure that others should do so: "I beheld the transgressors, and I pined away."⁴ If thou hast this, it will in great measure supply the place of those talents which thou mayest lack: "My indignation itself hath helped me."⁵ You may lack eloquence, learning, grace in speaking, but this simple hatred of sin will be instead of all these to thee. Consider the holy virgin Catharine, whom we honour to-day. Was she not a poor woman of humble rank? And yet how many illustrious men she surpassed in the saving of souls! And how did she do so? Not certainly by the power of eloquence or learning; it was by the power of her zeal against sin. She sharpened "her severe wrath like a spear."⁶ This zeal was the spear which won for her so many victories over Hell, a sharp, painful zeal, which wounded her heart

¹ Osee xiii. 14.

² ³ Kings xiv. 6.

³ Psalm xxxvii. 7.

⁴ Psalm cxviii. 158.

⁵ Isaias lxiii. 5.

⁶ Wisdom v. 21.

even as the zeal of her spiritual enemies consumed theirs: "Jealousy is as hard as Hell." And why shouldst not thou feel a zeal like this?

II. Consider secondly, that this jealous fury of the devils makes them utterly insensible to every injury, which is another reason for calling it "hard:" "Fire trieth hard iron."¹ Canst thou conceive any trouble, any insult, any shame, which they will not endure to gain one single soul? Thou knowest what their pride is: yet they have a thousand times over stooped to serve man in the most menial capacities in order to gain him over. They have done him service as valets, nay as horses and dogs, they have actually made themselves his beasts of burden. Even such ought thy zeal to be: "Jealousy is as hard as Hell." Thou oughtest not to be afraid to condescend, not merely to laborious, but even to mean services, if so thou mayest but gain one soul more: "Whereas I was free as to all, I made myself the servant of all, that I might gain the more."² But there is a power of endurance beyond this. The devils know that their damnation is more fearful for every soul of which they rob God, and yet they take no heed of this. They are willing to suffer more and more intensely through all eternity, so that God may not have the glory He desires of saving all men. Dost thou not think that this shows how "hard" their zeal is? Well then, charity must produce in thy heart the same effects which the fury of malice produces in them: "Jealousy is as hard as Hell." It must make thee ready, after the example of so many glorious saints, to prefer the salvation of others to thine own honour and pleasure: "I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ for my brethren," said the Apostle.³ What does he mean by "an anathema from Christ"? He cannot mean that he wished to be separated from His grace, for this can never be lawfully desired, but from intercourse and intimacy with Him, a state as of one who is excommunicated *in foro externo*, and even this he does not wish absolutely, but only for a time, till he should have gained over to God new worshippers. This is the affliction of which the Apostle here meant to speak, an affliction which may seem to thee easy to endure because thou dost not understand the blessedness of being with Christ; but it did not seem so to that great Saint who had tasted at least a large measure of that blessedness. Yet, not only did he offer, but desire to endure that great affliction: "I wished." And

¹ Eccus. xxxi. 31.² 1 Cor. ix. 19.³ Romans ix. 3.

in this he has been followed by many other saints, and particularly by the holy virgin Catharine, who was willing to be so far separated from Christ as to go to the very mouth of Hell if she might close the way to it by her tender body and no soul should ever again pass through it. Oh, this was indeed, not only to rival, but surpass the powers of endurance possessed by the devils: for they indeed are willing to augment the suffering to which they are already condemned as it is, but the saints are willing that this suffering should be laid upon them.

III. Consider thirdly, that this fury of the devils of which we are speaking is, besides all that has been said, obstinate, treacherous, enduring and ceaseless, and for this reason also it is called "hard:" "Thy sins are hardened."¹ Dost thou not see how they never relax in their pursuit of the souls. they desire to get possession of? How do they beset and assail them! how do they endeavour by every means to entangle them in their toils! And what does this perseverance of theirs teach thee but that thou shouldst show equal constancy in helping those poor souls? "Jealousy is as hard as Hell:" it must never grow weary. Nay, very often, when the devils perceive clearly that instead of conquering they will be shamefully defeated, they still go on making onslaughts and laying snares, as they did in the case of holy Job, in the hope that there may be a solitary chance, however slight, of victory. How, then, shouldst thou persevere, when thou hast so sure a foundation for hope? Never give any up for lost; the man who will not yield to thy persuasions to-day will yield easily to-morrow: "Be not weary," therefore, "in well-doing."² See, what often happens to the fisherman: he may have dragged his nets all night in vain, and then, just as he was giving up in despair, and when he least expected it, some chance cast gives him the fish which had eluded him so often. What will not unwearied patience succeed in gaining! There are a thousand examples to the point in the life of St. Catharine, but none more striking than the case of that ungrateful and perverse woman whom she nursed so long. And one thing more: if the devils do not gain the victory they meet with disgrace; but even if thou art defeated thou wilt always win glory; for it is not the man who converts sinners to whom the reward is promised, but he who does his utmost to convert them: "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his

¹ Jerem. xxx. 14.

² 2 Thess. iii. 13.

own labour,"¹ says the Apostle, not "according to his success." And so it was that Christ called fishermen to be His Apostles, not when they were in the act of drawing their laden nets to shore, but when they were "casting a net into the sea." Why, then, shouldst thou shrink from the labour of persevering, when perseverance must be a gain?

IV. Consider fourthly, that this furious zeal of the devils in dragging souls with them down to perdition is called "hard," because it is utterly insatiable: "Hell never saith, It is enough."² However many souls they get into their power, they always crave for more. This also is implied by the word "hard:" "I know that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown."³ How different it is with thee who art so quickly satisfied! If thou hast brought one soul to God thou seemest to think thou hast conquered a new world. Thou shouldst desire to win as many as possible to Him, for the greatness of every monarch consists in the number of his subjects: "In the multitude of the people is the dignity of the king."⁴ Shall we, then, allow Hell to rob Him of more than we gain for Him? "Jealousy is as hard as Hell." If thou canst not gain many by words, gain them by example, by penances, by prayers and tears. How many did St. Catharine gain in this way! I need not enumerate them, thou hast only to read her Life to see how insatiable her zeal was, what art and ingenuity, what more than woman's inventiveness she practised for this purpose! She "never said, It is enough:" and canst thou be so easily satisfied? Remember that "jealousy is as hard as Hell."

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 8.

² Prov. xxx. 16.

³ St. Matt. xxv. 24.

⁴ Prov. xiv. 28.

MAY.

FIRST DAY.

THE HOLY APOSTLES SS. PHILIP AND JAMES.

Behold, Heaven is the Lord's thy God, and the Heaven of heaven, the earth and all things that are therein. And yet the Lord hath been closely joined to thy fathers, and loved them (Deut. x. 14, 15).

I. Consider first, the beauty of the firmament, that is, the heaven studded with stars on which thou dost gaze with delight, and the still greater beauty of the Empyrean, which is "the Heaven of heaven." And if thou dost doubt the power of thy thoughts to soar so high, then cast a rapid glance over this great land in which thou livest, the earth with all its manifold productions, so fertile, sweet, health-giving, rich, fair and wonderful: "The earth and all things that are in it;" all these are the work of God, they are "the Lord's thy God." He created them all by the mere power of His will: "Whatsoever His soul hath desired, that hath He done."¹ Thou dost see clearly, therefore, that He is in no need of anything. As He created this world by a word, so also He could have created countless worlds besides this. "Many other like things are at hand with Him,"² "and yet" (here is the wonderful part of it), "and yet" this same God actually not only loved men, but so loved them as to form with them the closest friendship possible: "And yet the Lord hath been closely joined to thy fathers, and loved them." See how close a tie He formed with Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and so many other celebrated Patriarchs. Was not His intercourse with them rather that of a Friend than a Master? Therefore Moses here says that "the Lord hath been closely joined" to those Patriarchs, for He loved them as a man loves his own soul, which is implied by the words, "and loved them," which follow:

¹ Job xxiii. 13.

² Job xxiii. 14.

even as it is said of Jonathan in another passage of the Sacred Scriptures: "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him." How? "As his own soul."¹ And it may be that God did not suffer Moses to add those words here, in order that he might not say less than the truth; for after the lapse of ages there was to come a time when our Lord would show, by dying on the Cross, that He loved those Patriarchs not only as a man loves his own soul, but far more, since He gave it for them. Meanwhile, therefore, these words, "and loved them," were left, as it were, broken off: because there could not then be added all that we know now, that "He hath laid down His life for us."² And, if this is so, do not be frightened at thy own vileness, for it matters not how poor, how miserable thou art: God loves thee, not for any need that He has of thee, but because He is moved to it by His pure goodness. Do thou, therefore, say to Him with confidence, that the very fact of His having no need of thee makes thee sure that He will deign to give Himself to thee: "Thou art my God, for Thou hast no need of my goods."³

II. Consider secondly, that these holy Patriarchs we have been speaking of were those of the Old Covenant. The fathers of the New Covenant were the Apostles, who were the successors of those Patriarchs: "Instead of thy fathers, sons are born to thee"⁴—sons as much greater than their fathers as the New Covenant is greater than the old. Therefore, if "the Lord hath been closely joined" to the former "and loved them" as thou hast seen, judge how it must be in the case of the latter. The former are called servants as compared with the latter, the latter are called friends as compared with the former: "I will not now call you servants, . . . but . . . friends."⁵ And, therefore, it is the latter, not the former, who are to be the princes of the earth: "Thou shalt make them princes over all the earth."⁶ Never wilt thou fully understand how great is the dignity of the holy Apostles: it not only excels that of all the saints of the Old, but also of those who belong to the New Covenant, for if Divine grace abounded in the rest of the saints, it superabounded in them: "He hath graced us in His beloved Son, . . . according to the riches of His grace, which hath superabounded in us."⁷ It may be true that others of the saints have endured severer sufferings for God's sake, borne greater poverty, done more penance than any of them

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 1. ² 1 St. John iii. 16. ³ Psalm xv. 2.

⁴ Psalm xlv. 17. ⁵ St. John xv. 15. ⁶ Psalm xlv. 17. ⁷ Ephes. i. 6—8.

did, but merit is measured not by the severity of the works done, but by the affection of the doer, and this was more intense in the Apostles than in any other saints, and therefore as they courageously encountered for God's sake all the sufferings which came to them daily, so they would have gone on accepting more and more, in case of need: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"¹ Neither must thou say that the hearts of other saints may have been possessed by a love equally intense, for unless God gave it them by His grace they could not have it. This grace, then, which is given by measure—"To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ"²—has been given to none (with the exception of our Lady, and as is probable of her spouse) in greater measure than to the holy Apostles, who were to be the twelve foundation-stones on which the Church rested: "God, indeed, hath set . . . first Apostles."³ Therefore, as they were privileged in grace, so were they also in other gifts, in wisdom, piety, prudence, fortitude, and the rest, because of them it is written that they had "the first-fruits of the Spirit."⁴ And, as thou knowest, the first-fruits are the richest and choicest produce of the field: "Israel is holy to the Lord, the first-fruits of its increase."⁵ And therefore Christ, in His own Person, took care of these, not trusting it to any other, in fulfilment of the words spoken by God to Aaron the High Priest: "Behold, I have given thee the charge of My first-fruits."⁶ Must thou not, then, conclude that "the Lord hath been closely joined" to them, "and loved them"? Let this be sufficient, that if not an express error, it is at least, as St. Thomas teaches us, temerarious to assert that He was more closely united to any of the saints than to them. Therefore, whereas it is not permitted to dispute which of the rest of the saints is to be esteemed the greatest, because "the Lord is the weigher of spirits,"⁷ it is not only permitted, but enjoined, to put the Apostles before them all: "Instead of thy fathers, sons are born to thee: thou shalt make them princes over all the earth."

III. Consider thirdly, if this is true, how great a dishonour is done to these illustrious princes of the Church by some persons, thyself, it may be, among the number, who trouble themselves so little to understand their merit, to reverence

¹ Romans viii. 35.

² Ephes. iv. 7.

³ 1 Cor. xii. 28.

⁴ Romans viii. 23.

⁵ Jerem. ii. 3.

⁶ Numb. xviii. 8.

⁷ Prov. xvi. 2.

their memory, and to invoke their names. If nothing else moves thee to love them, the great love which Christ bore them should be enough to do so. For what is the most perfect order in the matter of charity? To love most those who are dearest to God. This is the order which is observed in Heaven, and this, too, is the order which should be observed on earth. But those who are dearest to God are those who are perhaps the least dear to thee, the glorious Apostles: "The Lord hath been closely joined to thy fathers, and loved them." Thou shouldst think that it is said, "and loved them," without any additional words expressive of the measure of the love, because He loved them without measure. But this is not the rule of thy love. Thy love is interested; and thus thou honourest first one and then another of God's servants, according to the power they show from time to time of doing thee favours, and hast more devotion to those from whom thou lookest for them, than gratitude to those from whom thou then receivedst them even before thou wert born. Are thy obligations slight, dost thou think, to these exalted persons whose labours and works and wise laws have done more for thy salvation than any other of the saints have done? It should be enough for thee to know that they were thy fathers: "The Lord hath been closely joined to thy fathers;" do thou, therefore, join thyself closely to them, all the more since, if they are thy fathers, thou behavest very ill to them if thou dost not give them a love that is not only appreciative, but full of tenderness, such a love as all children should have for their father if they would not be guilty of ingratitude. Happy wilt thou be if they, acting as fathers to thee, obtain for thee from God the grace to be united to Him by a tie similar if not equal to that which binds Him to them.

SECOND DAY.

With fear and trembling work out your salvation, for it is God Who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will (Philipp. ii. 13).

I. Consider first, that thy salvation is a work of continuous labour. If, therefore, thou wouldst secure it, thou must not indulge in slumber or amusement, but work incessantly till

death, and this is why the Apostle uses the word "work," and then says that thou must do this not only "for your salvation," but actually "work out your salvation," because thy salvation is not a work, part of which concerns thee and part God, but it is both wholly God's work and wholly thine, and therefore thou hast to work it out entirely, that is to say, incessantly: "He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved."¹

II. Consider secondly, that not only must thou work out thy salvation to the end, but thou must do this with the utmost carefulness, because, as thou wilt be uncertain of attaining it up to the last, so too up to the last shouldst thou fear: "Fearing and trembling,"² like the woman healed by our Lord. And therefore the Apostle adds these very words, "with fear and trembling;" fear, because the danger is so great, and trembling, because it is so easily incurred. First, consider the greatness of the danger. Oh, how all-important is the matter in question! If thou do not make sure of it, thou art lost for ever: there is no help, no escape, thou wilt be for all eternity tormented in Hell: "The eyes of the wicked shall decay"—whilst they look all round to see whether they can discover any opening, any door of escape from that terrible gulf, but there is no hope—"The eyes of the wicked shall decay, and the way to escape shall fail them."³ Then, after having considered the greatness of the danger, which may well make thee fear, go on to consider how very easily thou mayest fall into it; and the thought of this will make thee not fear only, but tremble, and tremble so greatly, that the terror will pierce the very marrow of thy bones: "Fear seized upon me and trembling, and all my bones were affrighted."⁴ Thou seest Hell yawning beneath thee, and sending forth army after army of dark spirits to assail thee. Thou seest around thee this deceitful world full of hidden snares in which it seeks to entangle thee. Thou seest above thee the Heaven thou hast so justly offended, that thou hast little reason to hope for further intercession in thy behalf. Lastly, if thou lookest into thyself, thou findest a host of turbulent passions also banded together to conquer thy soul in this tremendous battle. Who, beholding these things, can help being overcome with terror? A man must have lost the faith altogether, if "in all these things his heart is senseless."⁵

¹ St. Matt. xxiv. 13.² St. Mark v. 33.³ Job xi. 20.⁴ Job iv. 14.⁵ Ecclus. xvi. 20.

III. Consider thirdly, in what this fear should consist, for thou art, at the same time, to be performing good works ; this is taken for granted, because the persons addressed are those who are "working." Does it mean that thou art to be always grieving, always discouraged? By no means, for such a condition is for those who do not work, or whose works are evil: "Anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil."¹ It must consist in keeping thyself humble: and why? Because, however much thou workest, thou needest the help of God to make thee work, and therefore the Apostle continues: "For it is God Who worketh in you, both to will and accomplish according to His good-will." The work thou dost is in proportion to the grace God gives thee to enable thee to work. Of thyself thou canst do nothing: and this should show thee how much reason thou hast to fear and tremble in His awful presence, acknowledging that all the good thou dost is of Him: "If He withhold the waters, all things shall be dried up."² And further, this grace which He gives thee He is not in any way bound to give, it is all of His kindness and charity, otherwise it would not be grace. Therefore, whenever He chooses, He can cease pouring it into thy heart: "He removed the south wind from heaven, and by His power brought in the south-west wind."³

IV. Consider fourthly, that although it is beyond a doubt that God can, whenever He chooses, cease giving thee this grace which enables thee to work, that is, efficacious grace, yet He never will cease giving it to thee if thou on thy side art faithful in His service; because, though it is true that He gives it "according to His will," it is also according to His "good" will, that is to say, a will which is not malcontent nor harsh nor severe, but exceedingly desirous of doing thee good: "The Lord waiteth to be gracious to you."⁴ All that is necessary, therefore, is that thou shouldst not be wanting to thyself, that thou shouldst exert thyself, help thyself, and commend thyself earnestly to Him. For this is, in a word, the result He desires above all things from thee, fear and trembling, namely, that thou shouldst continually wait upon Him. And thus, if thou considerest it rightly, it is for thy greater security that this fear and trembling are required of thee, that they may have the effect of making thee turn immediately to God: "Josaphat, being seized with fear,

¹ Romans ii. 9.² Job xii. 15.³ Psalm lxxvii. 26.⁴ Isaiah xxx. 13.

betook himself wholly to pray to the Lord.”¹ It must make thee call upon Him, arouse Him, entreat Him, and, in a word, cause Him to save thee in the storm. No sooner dost thou leave off commending thyself again and again to Him than thou art lost. The first grace is given without asking, but after that we have St. Augustine’s assurance that no other is given but to him who prays for it: “Ask and it shall be given to you.” And so God promised that the spirit of grace and of prayer should be poured out upon the Church in equal measure: “I will pour out upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of prayers,”² for without the spirit of grace there can never be the spirit of prayer; and without the spirit of prayer, there can never be the spirit of grace. What, then, is it which will secure thy salvation? It is this “fear and trembling,” for this will lead thee to pray, by every moment showing thee thy imminent danger of shipwreck. If, therefore, thou fearest and tremblest it is well, for it is the Holy Spirit Who says: “Blessed is the man that is always fearful.”³

V. Consider fifthly, that this necessity of praying is always increasing immeasurably, because it is God Who works in us “both to will and to accomplish;” to will, by preventing; to accomplish, by concomitant grace. Preventing grace is that grace by which He first incites thee to good. How does He do this? In two ways: by enlightening the understanding, and by inflaming the will. He enlightens thy understanding by giving thee a keen perception of the necessity, the fitness, the advantages, and the profitableness of well-doing; and He inflames thy will by infusing into thy heart the sentiments which make thee efficaciously love what thou perceivest. In this way does God “work in you to will,” forcing thee indeed to what is good, but by a force which is worthy of thee, the force of love. Concomitant grace is the grace which afterwards accompanies thee step by step to make the work perfect. And therefore it is in substance a continuation of those lights and impulsions which God gave thee at the first to work, if indeed it ought not rather to be called an augmentation of them; for with marvellous tenderness He is always encompassing, guiding, and defending thee by this grace, lest the lights should be quenched and the impulsions slacken, which bear up the frail bark of thy free-will amidst all the tempests which assail it from above and below. Thus does God “work” in thee not only “to will,” but also “to accomplish,” and so

¹ 2 Paral. xx. 3.² Zach. xii. 10.³ Prov. xxviii. 14.

all thy work is in truth His : "Lord, Thou hast wrought all our works for us."¹ And if this is so, dost thou not think that thou art living under a continual necessity of commending thyself to Him? Either He is preventing thee, or following thee by His grace; and He is always doing what He is not bound to do, since in both these ways He is equally showing mercy towards thee: "Thy mercy shall go before me. . . Thy mercy shall follow me."²

VI. Consider sixthly, that this passage of the Apostle on which thou art meditating, though it contains but a few words, has been like a well-stored quiver which has continually supplied arrows wherewith to put to flight numerous monstrous errors which have sprung up, and are still springing up, among Christians. There are some who say that works are not necessary for salvation, and that faith alone is sufficient. But how can this be when the Apostle requires works in express terms? "Work out your salvation." Others say that every one ought to be absolutely certain of being in the grace of God, of being acceptable to Him, of being justified, and infallibly elected to glory. But how is that possible when the Apostle enjoins not only fear, but trembling, on those persons who are busied in working out their salvation? "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Others say that a man can be saved by the mere virtue of his free-will, without the help of God. But how then does the Apostle say that "it is God Who worketh in us"? Others say the contrary of this, that man has no free-will, but is forced to act in a certain way by the stars, by destiny, or by the necessity of Providence. But how is that possible, when the Apostle says that "God worketh *in* us," not "outside of us"? Others say that God enables us to persevere in good works, but that the beginning of them is of ourselves only. But how is this, when the Apostle says that "God worketh" not only "to accomplish," but "to will"? Others, again, say the contrary, that the beginning is of God, but the perseverance of ourselves. But the Apostle says that "God worketh" not only "to will," but "to accomplish." Lastly, there are those who say that it is true that God works in us all that is good, but by means of our merits. But this, too, is impossible, since the Apostle asserts that He "worketh according to His good-will." There can be no merit presupposed in us that is antecedent to grace, since all our merit depends on grace. Thou seest, then, that

¹ Isaias xxvi. 12.

² Psalm xxii. 6.

in this passage there are as many arrows as there are words, and these arrows are here prepared by the Apostle against the monstrous errors which his prophetic spirit saw would arise. Do thou receive these words, value, reverence, and keep them laid up in thy inmost soul, to help thee to work out more earnestly the only thing which is important, thy salvation. For if even when thou art engaged in working it out, thou hast to fear and tremble continually, what would become of thee, poor soul, if thou didst not labour to work it out? "If the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"¹

THIRD DAY.

THE INVENTION OF THE HOLY CROSS.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting (St. John iii. 14, 15).

I. Consider first, how admirably our Lord Jesus Christ crucified is typified by the brazen serpent which was lifted up on a pole by Moses for the healing of all those who looked upon it; for as that image of a serpent had not caused any of the deaths which followed the bite of real serpents, and yet was lifted up in the form of a cross to heal all who were bitten, even so was it with our Lord. And this is the force of the words "as" and "so," that when thou beholdest Him hanging on the Cross thou mayest understand that He is there exactly as that serpent was. Not only is He hanging there without having given cause for it, as in the case of the serpent, but unjustly, wickedly, and contrary to every rule of justice: "Being made" (*factus, not natus*) "a curse for us."² Consider that serpent, or rather that representation of a serpent, for it was not one really: it was formed by the action of fire in a founder's furnace, and not only contained in itself no venom of any sort, but was incapable of containing any. So neither did Christ bear within Him the sin which He seemed to bear, nor was He capable of doing so. Thou seest Him hanging on the Cross in the likeness of a sinner: "In the likeness of sinful flesh."³ He was not what He seemed: He suffered

¹ 1 St. Peter iv. 18.

² Galat. iv. 13.

³ Romans viii. 3.

Himself to be made in that likeness by the force of heat, that is, by a most burning charity. The true reason of His hanging on the Cross is that which was the reason for lifting up the brazen serpent. The latter was fixed on the pole in order that the persons who were bitten by serpents might be healed by looking upon it; and Christ was crucified that by looking upon Him those might be healed who were bitten by serpents far more venomous, that is, by all those evil passions which were causing their death. Cast thyself upon thy knees before Him, and look steadfastly upon thy Saviour, that He may heal thee, at the same time that thou art covered with confusion at seeing thy Lord dying naked on a Cross for thy sake, like the vilest criminal, when He is, at the same time, seated on His throne in Heaven as the King of glory.

II. Consider secondly, that although Christ appears on the Cross as the sinner which He is not, yet He does not esteem it a disgrace to hang there—nay, rather He considers Himself exalted by it: “As Moses lifted up” (*exaltavit*) “the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (*exaltari*). He might have called His Crucifixion by innumerable names of harshness, cruelty, and ignominy; yet He chose to call it exaltation. It is by this title He usually described it: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself.”¹ “When you shall have lifted up the Son of Man.”² Is not this of itself enough to overwhelm thee with confusion, that He deemed Himself thus honoured in dying for thee? By this word He intended also to express how notorious, public, and manifest a death is that of one who hangs on a lofty cross. And there were two principal reasons for His choosing this death. First, that no one might ever be able to call it in question, and so to throw a doubt over both His Death and His Resurrection. Secondly, that it might be understood that He died for the salvation of all alike: “That whosoever” (*omnis*) “believeth in Him may not perish.” He does not say “some” (*aliquis*), but “whosoever” (*omnis*). The serpent which Moses lifted up in the desert was fixed on a very high pole, in order that all the people alike might look upon it, and all alike be healed; and in the same way did Christ ordain concerning Himself: “Christ unto justice to every one that believeth.”³ He chose to die thus lifted up to show that He died as much to save those who were far off as those who were near: “Peace to

¹ St. John xii. 32.

² St. John viii. 28.

³ Romans x. 4.

you that were afar off, and peace to them that were nigh."¹ He died in a conspicuous place, in order that those who would not look on Him, the Saviour of all alike, might only have themselves to blame. How dost thou act in this respect? Art thou in the constant habit of looking on Him? The diseases of thy soul are innumerable; wouldst thou know why thou art never completely cured of them? It is because thou dost not keep thy eyes fixed steadily on Jesus hanging for love of thee upon the Cross in the extremity of destitution, shame, and anguish.

III. Consider thirdly, that the serpent was lifted up in the desert that it might be a sign amongst all the people: "Make a brazen serpent, and set it up for a sign; whosoever, being struck, shall look on it shall live."² So, too, is Christ upon the Cross; He is "for a sign." Now, there are three different meanings of being lifted up "for a sign." It may be done to serve as a standard, as a target, and as a spectacle of awe and terror. And in all these three ways may we consider our Lord. He hangs upon His Cross "for a sign," as a standard, because He was lifted up that He might be the glorious standard of Christians, which was to be borne aloft by the noblest persons, by princes, potentates, and kings, to show that the crucified Jesus was all their glory: "He Who standeth for an ensign of peoples, Him the Gentiles shall beseech."³ He hangs upon His Cross "for a sign," as a target, because He was thus lifted up to receive all the arrows that we deserved: "He hath set Me as a mark for His arrows."⁴ Long since ought these arrows to have ceased to be aimed at Him, but it is not so. See how many there are who are mad enough to direct them against the King of glory, because they see Him hanging on the Tree of shame, although it is for love of them. Is not this done by Turks, Jews, Pagans, and heretics, nay, even by many bad Christians, who persist in following the laws of their own senseless code of honour, rather than those which Christ gave with His own lips concerning self-restraint, yielding to others, and forgiving them, and which they look upon as despicable, because they were promulgated by One Who died a death of shame upon the Cross? Miserable men! They will see one day what it is to have found death where alone was hope of life for them. And lastly, Christ hangs upon His Cross "for a sign," as a

¹ Ephes. ii. 17.

² Numbers xxi. 8.

³ Isaias xi. 10.

⁴ Lament. iii. 12.

sight of terror, for He was lifted up upon it in order that His true followers might, through Him, affright and put to flight all the armies of Hell: "A sign and a wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia."¹ Is Christ crucified thy standard or thy target? If the latter, beware, unhappy man; for a day will come when He will be a spectacle of terror to thee.

IV. Consider fourthly, how surpassing was the charity which our Lord Jesus Christ displayed towards us in letting Himself be lifted up, like the serpent, upon the Cross. It was so surpassing as to be even an excess of charity. Listen to His words: "The Son of Man must be lifted up." And why? "That whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." How could our perishing affect Him? Would His greatness, His glory, His holiness, have been in the very smallest degree lessened thereby? No; His beatitude would have been just what it now is. And yet He speaks of our salvation as though it were a great gain to Himself. It would not have seemed so strange a thing if He had said that He must die upon the Cross for us in order that we might all afterwards die upon a cross for Him, although even this would in truth be very wonderful, if we consider the infinite disproportion between such a Leader and His soldiers, such a Shepherd and His flock, such a Prince and His subjects, such a High Priest and His Church. But to say that He "must" die on the Cross for us that we may live—oh, this is beyond all comprehension! this is a love beyond all that could be dreamt of in leader, shepherd, prince, or priest! Yet so it is: "The Son of Man must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." Art not thou bewildered when thou thinkest of it? The serpent exposes the whole of his body to be pierced with darts, in order to save his head, and yet he is the emblem of prudence: "Be prudent as serpents." But Christ did the reverse of this. In order to save the body, that is, all mankind, He exposed the head, that is, Himself; so that in truth, in loving us, He has been guided by rules superior to the very prudence which He taught. What, then, must thy heart be like, if thou dost not, after this, give Him love for love? Keep thy prudence for thyself if thou art ashamed to be stretched with Him upon the Cross, and there to die, stripped of all things, in perfect humility, obedience, and renunciation of all thy irregular appetites. This is truly to believe in

¹ *Isaias xx. 3.*

Christ. If thou sayest that thou believest without imitating Him, thou mayest indeed believe Him, but thou dost not believe *in* Him ; for to believe in Him is, as St. Augustine says, to place in Him all thy good, and not to be ashamed to show thyself boldly His follower. And it is to such a one that Christ here promises life everlasting : "That whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." He does not say, "Whosoever believes Him," but, "Believes *in* Him." To believe Him is a thing we have in common with the devils : "The devils also believe and tremble."¹ Bad Christians, whose allegiance to Him is that of the understanding only, believe Him in another way ; but His true followers, whose allegiance is of the will also, believe *in* Him.

V. Consider fifthly, in order to make the comparison complete between the exaltation of Christ and that of the brazen serpent, in which He was so long ago prefigured, that He, like it, was lifted up "in the desert." Christ, indeed, for His greater ignominy ordained that He should be crucified before the gates of a city thronged with people, as Jerusalem was at the feast of the Pasch ; but thou must not think that He did not find the desert there even in the midst of that crowd. Alas, what a desert was Calvary to Him, forsaken as He was by the Apostles, the angels, and even by His Father, and hearing around Him only the hissing of those blaspheming serpents, who did but add to the horror of the desert, where, in addition, He suffered that burning thirst which made Him long, and long in vain, for one poor draught of water. Would that now at least there were an end of this desert for Him ! But, alas, there are still persons who leave Him hanging on this Cross, without caring even to glance at Him. "Am I become a wilderness to Israel ? Why, then, have My people said, We are revolted, we will come to Thee no more ?"² Do not thou at least behave so ungratefully to Him Who hangs there forsaken of all for love of thee. Well will it be for thee if thou always lookest upon Him with a vivid faith, and most miserable wilt thou be if thou darest to turn thy back upon Him.

¹ James ii. 19.

² Jerem. ii. 31.

FOURTH DAY.

I have seen a fool with a strong root, and I cursed his beauty immediately
(Job v. 3).

I. Consider first, that the fool here spoken of is not any kind of wicked person, but a wicked man who is rich, as the Hebrew text shows; neither should we be surprised that the rich sinner is called a fool, for it is the very title which our Lord gave him with His own lips: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"¹ And, in truth, what greater folly canst thou be guilty of than to hold in thy hand the means of purchasing the glory of Paradise, and not to choose to employ them for that purpose, but rather to spend them on the chase, on amusements, or to leave them to persons who are ungrateful enough to desire thy death as a boon. If thou art one of these, thou needest go no further, for the folly of which thou art guilty is in itself sufficient to give thee ample occupation for an hour in its consideration. But if this is not so, go on to the misery of that fool, whom perhaps thou hast sometimes even envied as though he were very happy.

II. Consider secondly, that he who saw this wicked rich man, beheld him, as it were, like a tree of many years' growth, which appeared to have thrown out into the earth firm and strong roots very difficult to dig up; and this is only the case with trees which have attained a great height. "I have seen a fool with a strong root." What were his feelings on seeing him? Did he take pleasure in the sight? Quite the contrary: all this fair show immediately excited in him feelings of compassion, and he cursed it: "I cursed his beauty immediately." But here it is important to understand the right meaning of the word "cursed." Does it mean that he did as Christ did to the barren fig-tree, on which He imprecated evil? No. Does it mean that he spoke or wished evil to it? No. All these meanings undoubtedly belong to the terrible word, "I cursed," but not as it occurs in the passage we are considering: for thou must learn not to take upon thyself an office which does not belong to thee. No matter how wicked that rich man may be whom God has made to prosper as thou seest, thou art not only forbidden to imprecate on him any of the three kinds of curses which have been enumerated, but

¹ St. Luke xvii. 20.

thou must, on the contrary, pray to God to have pity on him and to give him grace to repent. To curse authoritatively, as our Lord did, is for God alone, or for those who represent Him in the world; to curse abusively is the part of the violent; and to curse by way of imprecation is the part of the malicious. Therefore, however great may be the prosperity of a wicked man, thou mayest not behave to him in any way but that of charity, which teaches thee to do nothing to others but what thou wouldst have done to thyself: "All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them."¹

III. Consider thirdly, then, in what sense it is said that the beholder of this flourishing tree cursed it: it is not in the sense of commanding, speaking, or wishing evil, but merely in that of foreboding it. No sooner did he see the tree than he prognosticated the worst in his mind. "He cursed," or, in other words, "He augured ill of its beauty." This is the meaning of the word here, as it stands in the original: precisely the same as in the passage where Balac said to Balaam: "I sent for thee to curse my enemies, and thou contrariwise blessest them."² Balac had summoned the Prophet in the hope of hearing the ill-fortune which should betide his enemies, and instead he heard of their prosperity; and the Prophet defended himself in these words: "Can I speak anything else but what the Lord commandeth?"³ So, on seeing that tree which looked so fair the beholder here augured ill of it, that is to say, he prognosticated that it was about to be struck by some fearful thunder-bolt, some tempest, or whirlwind, or to be swept away by the rush of some sudden inundation. In this sense it is not only lawful but salutary to "curse" the wicked who prosper, because it prevents thy being enamoured of their unblessed prosperity. This was what David taught when he said: "Envy not the man who prospereth in his way."⁴ And why? Because of the prognostication of ill which follows: "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be."⁵

IV. Consider fourthly, why, when this tree was seen to have "a strong root," it caused the beholder to augur ills so terrible concerning it. The strength of its root was the very reason of this. The prosperity of the wicked is always a very bad sign; but when it is deeply rooted, that is to say, continual and unbroken, then it is the worst, because it is a sign that God is bearing with that wicked man, protecting and prospering him

¹ St. Matt. vii. 12.

² Numbers xxiii. 11.

³ Numbers xxiii. 12.

⁴ Psalm xxxvi. 7.

⁵ Psalm xxxvi. 10.

in this life, because He will punish him more terribly in the next: "The Lord patiently expecteth that when the Day of Judgment shall come He may punish them in the fulness of their sins."¹ Ordinarily the prosperity of the wicked is brief, wherefore it is written that "bastard slips shall not take deep root;"² but when it is of long duration, oh, how clear a mark it is of reprobation! It is never a thing to be envied by thee, least of all when its solidity makes it seem more enviable: it is then that, on the contrary, it is most deplorable.

V. Consider fifthly, that the evil prognostications formed by him who saw this tree were occasioned entirely by its beauty, that is, its leaves and blossoms, not by its fruits, for it bore none: "I cursed his beauty immediately." All the glory of the wicked is outward show, it has no substance, and this is another reason for not envying it. It is "the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven."³ I know that beauty alone is enough to charm the eye, even when unaccompanied by goodness; and therefore just as when thou lookest upon a beautiful woman, thou shouldst reflect, in order to avoid falling in love with her, that she will shortly be the food of worms, hideous, repulsive, and covered with ashy paleness, so on beholding the prosperity of the wicked, thou shouldst reflect on the destruction which God in His anger will one day bring upon them. No matter how deeply they are rooted here, "as the green herbs they shall quickly fall."⁴

VI. Consider sixthly, that the beholder of the prosperous fool did not hesitate a moment in forming an evil augury from his flourishing condition; he did so "immediately," and it is precisely in this that he showed his wisdom. If he had delayed in this matter, he would have done only what any one is able to do if he has time enough. The fool himself will know one day that his prosperity was not to be envied. He will hate and abhor it, and say with all others like him: "What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us?"⁵ The advantage consists in knowing this quickly. The man who comes soonest to this knowledge is the wisest. And therefore he who speaks in the text was very wise, for he could not do so more quickly: "I cursed his beauty immediately." Do thou follow his example, and not hesitate in a matter which is beyond a doubt, otherwise thou runnest the risk of admiring the prosperity of the wicked before thou

¹ 2 Mach. vi. 14.² Wisdom iv. 3.³ St. Matt. vi. 30.⁴ Psalm xxxvi. 1.⁵ Wisdom v. 8.

comest to the knowledge of its falseness ; so that thou wilt need some one to reprove thy dangerous ignorance, and to say to thee : " Envy not the glory and riches of a sinner, for thou knowest not what his ruin shall be." ¹

FIFTH DAY.

When a man hath done, then shall he begin (Ecclus. xviii. 6).

I. Consider that the first meaning of these Divine words is that in the spiritual life thou must always act as a beginner. Wherefore it is not said, " When a man hath done, then shall he think he is beginning," but, " Then shall he begin ;" for in truth thou must always be beginning, that is to say, always act with the fervour that thou hadst when thou didst first begin to serve God. But most of all must thou always keep firmly fixed those stones which are the foundation of thy spiritual building, the maxims of faith, hatred of sin, love of penance and the fear of God, so as to advance indeed, from day to day, in perfection, but always in the way which thou didst first begin to walk in : " That we may walk in newness of life." ² Never delude thyself, as some do, with the idea that thou mayest have become impeccable. Oh, how great a delusion would that be ! No matter how advanced, how sublime thy state may be, it is quite possible for thee to sin, and to sin grievously ; and therefore, even when thou art among the perfect, thou must communicate, defend thyself from sin, practise penance, as though thou hadst done none of these things up to the present time : " Perfecting sanctification in the fear of God." ³ Sanctity begins by the fear of God—" The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" ⁴—and yet this fear is, according to the injunction of the Apostle, to be also the perfection of sanctity : " Perfecting sanctification in the fear of God." And why is this unless, even when thou art far advanced in the way of perfection, thou art still to be a beginner ? " When a man hath done, then shall he begin." Alas for him who does not act thus ! " When he hath done," when he thinks himself sufficiently advanced in perfection, " then shall he begin" to fall lower than he ever fell in his youth.

¹ Ecclus. ix. 16.

² Romans vi. 4.

³ 2 Cor. vii. 1.

⁴ Prov. i. 7.

II. Consider secondly, the second meaning of these words, which is that, as soon as thou hast finished one work for God's service, thou oughtest immediately to begin another, without losing any time in idleness: "When a man hath done, then shall he begin." From active work pass to contemplation, from contemplation to active work, always reminding thyself that the worst thing that can happen to thee is to be unemployed: "Idleness hath taught much evil."¹ Look at field labourers; they are always at work, gathering in the vintage, sowing, reaping, thrashing, or busy in some other of the thousand ways of their calling, and by these means they are healthy as well as occupied. Idle persons are more liable to sickness than any others. Wouldst thou enjoy health of soul? Take care to be always at work, for idleness is the source of all evil. "In all thy works be quick," that is, pass as quickly as possible from one kind of work to another, "and no infirmity shall come to thee."² But if thou spendest thy time in vanity, in gossip, in entertainments, in unnecessary rest, what wonder is it that thy soul is feeble? Dost thou not know that thou wilt have to render to God a strict account of all the time thou hast wasted in thy life, and perhaps art still wasting? Thou wilt see things clearly when thou comest to die, and God will reproach thee with thy ingratitude in this matter: "He hath called against me the time."³ Then will He show thee how much good thou mightest have done in the time He was pleased to give thee, so much longer a time than He gave to many, and which thou hast neglected to do. Do not then go on losing it so foolishly. "My son, keep the time,"⁴ for time is one of those blessings the value of which is not known till they are taken from us. And how must thou avoid losing it? By passing as quickly as possible from one kind of work to another: "When a man hath done, then shall he begin."

III. Consider thirdly, the third meaning of these words, which is, that when thou hast made great progress in the spiritual life, thou wilt see clearly that thou art but beginning. Now, perhaps, thou thinkest in thy heart that thou hast attained perfection, but why dost thou think so? Because thou art a beginner. When thou art really perfect, thou wilt know that thou art not what thou now imaginest thyself to be, for thou wilt see more and more how much is wanting in order to attain real mortification, real humility, real obedience, real submission. And so thou wilt then say with holy David,

¹ Ecclus. xxxiii. 29. ² Ecclus. xxxi. 27. ³ Lament. i. 15. ⁴ Ecclus. iv. 27.

“Now have I begun.”¹ The scholars who were sent to study at Athens thought themselves very learned at first, but as they went on studying they thought themselves less learned every year, so that when at the end of their time they went home, they said that they knew nothing, because they understood how much is required in order to be really learned. And this was the surest sign that they had made progress. Now if this is true of human science, much more is it true of that which is Divine. “Man shall come to a deep heart, and God shall be exalted.”² The higher thou risest in the endeavour to grasp it, the better wilt thou know how far thou art from doing so. Therefore, “When a man hath done, then shall he begin :” when he is perfected in virtue, then is the time when he will begin in earnest to apply himself to its acquisition. If thou thinkest that thou hast already attained to it thou art greatly deceived : “Thy justice is as the mountains of God ;”³ not “the mountain,” but “the mountains,” because the greater the height to which thou hast climbed the greater is that which thou hast yet to climb. Hast thou ever travelled for a long time among the mountains? When thou thinkest thou hast reached their limit, then they are beginning ; so that, as time goes on, thou seest how far thou art still from those summits which at first seemed to thee but a few paces distant. And therefore our Lord said in His Divine wisdom : “When you shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants,”⁴ because no one can really attain to saying from his heart that he is an unprofitable servant but the man who has “done all things.”

SIXTH DAY.

Remember that death is not slow (Eccclus. xiv. 12).

I. Consider first, that all the sins committed by Christians are caused, as a rule, by their persuading themselves that death will not overtake them so quickly as preachers say. And this is not wonderful—they are slothful servants ; and we all know that for such persons to know, or even to suspect, that their master will be late in coming home, is enough to make them

¹ Psalm lxxvi. 11.

² Psalm lxiii. 8.

³ Psalm xxxv. 7.

⁴ St. Luke xvii. 10.

neglect all the work of the house. It is the same with Christians: so long as they can fancy that our Lord is far off they will spend their time in idleness, play-going, feasting, and amusements, if in nothing worse. I add the last words, because the result of this mischievous idea in most people is that they are emboldened to plunge into every excess, as that wicked woman said when she invited her lover to indulge in unlawful pleasures: "My husband is not at home, he is gone a very long journey."¹ So, too, that rich man who thought of nothing but taking his ease, getting on, heaping up wealth, and oppressing the poor, said to himself when he lay down to rest: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years."² And why did that wicked servant begin beating his fellow-servants, opening cellars and cupboards, and consuming all the food and wine he found there with drunken companions? Because he "said in his heart: My lord is long in coming."³ And this is not all, but the same pernicious idea which makes Christians commit excesses, makes them also defer their repentance from day to day; and go on defrauding churches and convents, keeping up anger in their hearts, neglecting Confession and Communion, till at last it brings them to perdition; just as it was in those terrible days when Noe lived, and the world was destroyed in its impenitence, because men would not believe that the Flood would overwhelm them as rapidly as was threatened: "And they knew not till the Flood came and took them all away."⁴ Do not be surprised, therefore, that the Wise Man says to thee so plainly, "Remember that death is not slow," for it is of the utmost importance to keep clearly before thy mind this conviction, that death will not be slow. And yet, observe that he does not say "know," but "remember," for he will not suppose that thou hast yet to learn a thing which is so well known. He takes it for granted that thou knowest it, and so he gently bids thee "remember" it.

II. Consider secondly, that Christians find no great difficulty in remembering that death will come, but they find the utmost difficulty in choosing to remember that it will come quickly. This is the tormenting, the terrible thought, and so they go on deceiving themselves in a thousand ways till "death comes upon them," surprises, overcomes them; and they "go down alive into Hell," so that they are there, unhappy creatures, before they have perceived where they are. And therefore the

¹ Prov. vii. 19.

² St. Luke xii. 19.

³ St. Matt. xxiv. 48.

⁴ St. Matt. xxiv. 39.

Wise Man says, "Remember that death is not slow." If, then, it is not slow, it is a sign, not that it will come some day, but that it is now coming, and coming too in haste, without delay, never turning aside; for all this must be implied in not being slow. And how can it be otherwise? Whenever any one is slow in coming on his way, he must be delayed by some obstacle, internal or external. But death knows of no such obstacles, for as to any which are internal, there is no chance of its growing weary or losing breath, or failing in strength: on the contrary, it is like a swollen stream, the farther it advances on its journey, the stronger and swifter it becomes, because it robs us more and more of vitality: "What taketh away life? Death."¹ And as to external hindrances, not only is it impossible that it should be stopped by violence, since God has given it full liberty to go where it will; but no possible accident can affect it, for it is not bound to any kind of circumstance, by time, or place, or manner of acting. Death is royally free: it "shall tread upon him like a king;"² royally free as to place, for it is able to lay its hand on thee everywhere alike, by land or by sea, at home or abroad, on hill or in valley, in woods, or gardens, or deserts, for everywhere the rule of death is absolute: royally free as to time, for it can lay its hand on thee at any hour of the day or night: it has no reverence for old age, no fear of the strength of manhood, no tenderness for blooming youth, no pity for helpless infancy—all ages belong to death. Lastly, if we consider its manner of acting; here, too, we find the same royal liberty; for death is as little bound by one method as another, it chooses now one, now another kind of disease as its weapon, and it needs neither sword nor steel to do its work, but creeping into thy breast, and secretly eating thy life away, it can make an end of it before thou art aware: "They shall be consumed as with the moth."³ Now, therefore, is it possible for anything to be a hindrance to death; and, if not, canst thou imagine that it will linger? "Remember that death is not slow."

III. Consider thirdly, that all that I have been saying is known by every one; and yet, wonderful to say, in spite of this, there is the greatest need that people should be reminded of it: "Remember that death is not slow." Who is ignorant that he is mortal? "I know that Thou wilt deliver me to death, where a house is appointed for every one that liveth."⁴ And yet the Church has appointed one day in the year for

¹ *Ecclus.* xxxi. 34.

² *Job* xviii. 14.

³ *Job* iv. 19.

⁴ *Job* xxx. 23.

the purpose of reminding men and women, small and great, the just and sinners, ignorant and learned, of this truth, as though every one had forgotten it: "Remember, O man, that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return." Preachers are continually speaking to their people from the pulpit of death; and how many are the trumpet-tongued words with which the Sacred Scriptures again and again remind us of it: "Remember thy last end."¹ "Remember thy last things."² "Remember the end."³ "Remember my judgment, for thine also shall be so."⁴ It may be said, therefore, that it is not unnecessary to remind all men that they are mortal: and if so, much more is it necessary to remind them that they must die soon, when this is the very thing that every one tries to drive away, like a vision of evil, as much as possible. This surely is not the right rule to follow. The right rule is to conform ourselves to that wise arrangement by which God has been pleased to fill the world with images of death, so that wherever we go it may be before us: "He filled all things with death."⁵ Do thou, then, accustom thyself to see it wherever thou goest. If thou art in a garden, and seest the flowers fading on their stems almost as soon as they have opened, "remember that death is not slow:" if thou seest the trees in the orchard, which were a little while ago so flourishing, begin to shed their blossoms and leaves on every side, "remember that death is not slow:" if thou seest the yellow ears in the corn-field waiting for the sickle to cut them down, "remember that death is not slow:" if thou seest the waters of thy fountain, which, after having flowed so long to spring into the light sink back again to be hidden in darkness, "remember that death is not slow:" if thou warmest thyself at the fire, and seest the logs, which, however long they may be in catching fire, must at last burn and blaze and turn to ashes, "remember that death is not slow:" if thou seest the sun sinking lower and lower till it plunges in the western ocean, "remember that death is not slow:" nay, the very candle which gives thee light as thou sittest in thy room or cell, and which gradually burns down to nothing before thy eyes, may bid thee "remember that death is not slow." These and numberless other images like them are all like so many beautiful masks under which thou mayest everywhere meet death in a veiled form, though thou canst not always be in church or contemplating it in its nakedness

¹ Ecclus. vii. 40.² Ecclus. xxviii. 6.³ Ecclus. xxxvi. 10.⁴ Ecclus. xxxviii. 23.⁵ Wisdom xviii. 18.

in the cemetery. Dost thou not think that all these things will be very useful to thee? If they do nothing more, they will keep constantly alive in thy mind this thought of death being very near. And this is of itself enough to drive all vanity from the head, all vice from the heart of a Christian, and so bring him to live for the only thing which is necessary, namely, eternity.

SEVENTH DAY.

A perverse heart is abominable to the Lord, and His will is in them that walk sincerely (Prov. xi. 20).

I. Consider first, how much to be pitied are some persons whom we find in the world, who devote so much study to learning a science so hateful to God as that of false policy. Their object is to compass the attainment of their private ends, and then they endeavour to cover it with the cloak of the public good, of charity, of propriety, of honour, and consequently of God's greater glory: "A perverse heart is abominable to the Lord." Such a heart is full of crooked ways, in which it hides its wickedness, and decks it out to seem fair and pleasant: "There is one that humbleth himself wickedly, and his interior is full of deceit."¹ But what will it profit him? He may thus deceive men, indeed, but not God: "Shall He be deceived as a man with your deceitful dealings?"² Not so, for God sees all things: "Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart."³

II. Consider secondly, why such a heart as this is said to be not merely hateful, but abominable to God: "A perverse heart is abominable to the Lord," because it is utterly opposed to God's way of acting. God is Truth, and therefore He must necessarily abhor false, double-faced, deceitful, and perverse men: "Dissemblers and crafty men prove the wrath of God."⁴ "Dissemblers," those who affect virtue, and "crafty men," those who conceal vice, both these "provoke the wrath of God;" not only do they incur His anger, but they prove it. And thus thou seest that when our Lord was on earth He treated no one severely (not even great sinners) but hypocrites. In one single discourse to these persons He exclaimed eight

¹ Ecclus. xix. 23.

² Job xiii. 9.

³ 1 Kings xvi. 7.

⁴ Job xxxvi. 13.

times, "Woe to you!"¹ He called them "whited sepulchres," "serpents," children of the devil, but above all He called them "fools," because they acted as though they believed that the semblance without the reality of piety would satisfy God: "Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without, make also that which is within?"² What is the greatest evil that a sinner can be guilty of? It is to pretend to the glory of the just; and this is precisely what deceitful men do, so that while other sinners are described by the names of animals—usurers as wolves, the proud as panthers, the sensual as swine, the cruel as tigers, the passionate as dogs, the idle as rabbits, the talkative as frogs, deceitful men only are called by St. Augustine monsters, because, by the most unnatural of unions, they endeavour to combine in themselves all the vices just mentioned, with the virtue of which they make an outward show. What wonder, then, that God not only hates, but abominates them! He hates those who are as beasts among Christians, He abominates those who are monsters: "A perverse heart is abominable to the Lord."

III. Consider thirdly, that just as God hates the deceitful, so does He, on the other hand, love those who act with holy sincerity: "His will is in them that walk sincerely." He takes pleasure, He delights in them, and loves to hold intercourse with them: "His communication is with the simple."³ It is this which especially marks them as His true children. The distinctive characteristic of children is to represent their father, and therefore the Son of God is called the mirror, the likeness, the form, the image of His Eternal Father, because He represents Him most perfectly in every way. Now, those who are simple have this relation to God: they resemble Him more than all others, because simplicity is God's great attribute; there is in Him no mixture of any kind, no deception, no illusion: "I know, my God, that Thou lovest simplicity,"⁴ and therefore it is not surprising that He should have a predilection for the simple: "His will is in them that walk sincerely." They are His favourite children, therefore He puts His will in their power. "His will is in them," therefore He treats them with special tenderness, helps and protects them in all their ways: "He will protect them that walk in simplicity."⁵ Do thou, then, love this virtue, if only to avoid fearing that at the Last Day thou wilt be shamed and scorned with the

¹ St. Matt. xxiii.² St. Luke xi. 40.³ Prov. iii. 32.⁴ 1 Paral. xxix. 17.⁵ Prov. ii. 7.

“deceits of the devil” are so dangerous, that they may almost be considered as violence, and this is the reason that thou art commanded to be armed. As a proof of the danger, the Apostle does not promise thee a great and triumphal victory over them, it is enough if thou art not beaten: “Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil.”

II. Consider secondly, in what these deceits of the enemy especially consist, so that thou mayest not make a mistake by arming thyself in one way rather than another. These deceits are innumerable—“They are the snares of the deceitful”—but they may all be classed under one head, that of not appearing as an enemy, but disguising himself as a friend. Never does he approach thee openly, or propose sin as sin to thee, but always under the mask either of pleasure, gain, or glory, choosing whichever of the three he sees thee most inclined to. He takes care never to show thee sin in its naked deformity, knowing that then thou wouldst abhor it. And if he sees that thou makest a profession of virtue, what does he do then? He represents the sin as a virtuous action: and this is the greatest evil of all, for it is then that the wicked one “transformeth himself into an angel of light.”¹ It is then, too, that it is most difficult to recognize him: “Who can discover the face of his garment?”² Therefore there is never so much reason for thee to fear vice as when thou takest it for virtue, as when thou believest detraction to be sincerity, insolence firmness, or passion wisdom. If, when this is the case, thou do not repent in time thou art lost, for the first remedy against vice is always to recognize it to be vice.

III. Consider thirdly, that this being so, the chief weapon thou must employ is prayer, for it is that which more than all besides enlightens the mind to detect deceits: “Above all these things pray to the Most High that He may direct thy way in truth.”³ Next, thou must apply thyself to the constant exercise of every virtue, and thus add to light, experience, practice, and a great facility in finding many salutary remedies: “A man that hath much experience shall think of many things.”⁴ This, then, is thy armour, an armour, indeed, which is more truly God’s than thine—“The armour of God”—for if thy hand has to put it on, yet it is from God that thou receivest it. And be very careful not to be proud of this

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 14.

² Job xli. 4.

³ Eccclus. xxxvii. 19.

⁴ Eccclus. xxxiv. 9.

armour. Do not the words "put on" show that it is like a garment which He can strip thee of when He pleases? And another reason for calling this practice of every virtue, "armour," is that it is both an ornament and a protection.

IV. Consider fourthly, a little more particularly the characteristics of thy infernal enemies, that so thou mayest the better understand the necessity thou art under of being always on the defensive. In the first place, they are not visible enemies like the Egyptians, the Ammonites, and the Amorrites: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood." These enemies are invisible. Further, they are immaterial spirits, and therefore, as thou knowest, they can penetrate everywhere, into the eyes, the ears, the memory, the imagination, the understanding, the will, and they are continually advancing from all sides to ensnare thee. Next, they are marshalled in very regular bands, and in particular there are two, "Principalities and Powers." For thou shouldst understand that among the rebel angels who fell from Heaven there were some of every choir, and thus they still maintain the same order, hierarchy, and government, only it is all for evil; and why is this? It is because otherwise they would form, not a regular army, but an undisciplined crowd, and so would be ill-fitted to do battle. At the end of the world, when the battle is over, there will be an end of order, and only horror will remain, because in Hell order can only be for awhile, it can never be permanent: "No order, but everlasting horror dwelleth"¹ there. It is true, indeed, that although they retain the order, they do not retain the names of their former choirs, but those only which express good and evil indifferently, such as "Principalities and Powers," and therefore the Apostle only uses these. The Principalities among the devils are those who are foremost in promoting evil, the Powers are those who are most powerful in accomplishing it. The names of Angel and Archangel, indeed, which signify bringers of tidings (the Angel of less, the Archangel of greater tidings), are appropriate to them, but only when prefixed to Satan, or the abyss, or Hell, or darkness. The name "Seraph" expresses a heart on fire with love of God, and is inapplicable to one who hates Him; that of "Cherub" expresses a mind understanding God, and is inapplicable to one who does not see Him. The name "Throne" expresses the seat of God, and cannot be used of one who lies beneath His feet as His footstool: "Until I make thy enemies thy footstool."²

¹ Job x. 22.² Psalm cix. 1.

The name "Virtue" expresses the virtue, the constancy, the strength of God, and is inapplicable to one who is not capable of courage, but only of cunning. There are some who would ascribe to them the name "Domination," but hardly with propriety, for *dominion* implies a certain freedom which cannot belong to those wretched beings, who are slaves condemned to bonds and chains in Hell. And therefore the Apostle prefers rather to call them "rulers of the world," that is, of worldly persons, of those who follow the maxims and tastes of the world. And why are they their rulers? Because they do as they please with them, without contradiction or opposition. Those who resist them manfully are those who have turned their backs on the world. Then, when thou hast considered the variety of the soldiers, look at the weapons they carry. What are they? They are the very refinement of wickedness—"Spirits of wickedness"—by which is meant that quintessence which we commonly call spirit, the most subtle malignity, the most refined malice, such as can hardly be discovered in any criminal contriver. Lastly, consider the vantage-ground on which they fight, how lofty it is—"In the high places"—because they are above thee, and so they see thee everywhere, they besiege thee, they assail thee, so that thou canst not defend thyself from them; thou findest them in meditation, in Confession, in Communion; in short, thou findest them in thy holiest exercises: "In the high places." And this being so, dost thou not see the need there is for being well-armed?

V. Consider fifthly, that all that has been said may perhaps so terrify thee, that thou wilt think thou canst never resist an army of enemies so malignant. But take courage; for not without reason did the Apostle say that their kingdom is all in darkness—"The rulers of the world of this darkness"—no sooner do they come to the light than their kingdom is over. Herein, then, is thy safety, in bringing them all to the light by a thorough manifestation of conscience. Unless thou doest this, alas for thee; thou wilt easily be lost. It is necessary, therefore, as I have already said, to arm thyself with prayer and with the practice of virtue. But of what use will arms be if thou canst not discover the enemy in the darkness, or if thou art deceived by his dress, his voice, and take him for a friend? Dost thou hope that thou wilt ever be able to discover him of thyself, or even by the light which God gives thee in prayer, by the experience and practice which thou acquirest in the exercise of virtue? If so, thou art greatly deceived, for God

will not have thee trust entirely to thyself, however perfect thou mayest be; He will have thee exercise obedience and humility by manifesting thy weakness to another man, even as He actually manifested His to His disciples—so ignorant, too, and inexperienced—when He was not ashamed to say to them in the Garden: “My Soul is sorrowful even unto death.” Dost thou not know that veteran leaders are always ready to hold a council of war, to hear the opinion even of the least experienced, and often to follow it? This is what thou canst do in the present case. Do not say that thy spiritual Father is an ordinary man, for this is just why the devil especially hates thy discovering his tricks and plots and treachery to that man, and therefore he will fly from thee the more quickly. The devil is like the serpent, he loves darkness; if thou wantest to chase him away as quickly as possible, bring him to the light. If thou dost this there will be no need for thee to pursue after him. “If thou discover his secrets, follow no more after him,”¹ for he will be the first to fly from thee.

NINTH DAY.

I say to you, whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God (St. Luke xii. 8).

I. Consider first, the surpassing honour which our Lord here promises to thee, who art a miserable worm of the earth. He promises that He will confess thee before all that multitude of angels who will surround His throne on the Day of Judgment, even as thou hast confessed Him faithfully before men. That thou shouldst confess Him is a thing easy to understand, for He is thy Captain, thy Protector, thy King, thy Master; but that He should confess thee seems not merely strange, but incomprehensible. Great reason indeed was there that He should prepare for this declaration by prefixing to it the form of asseveration, “I say to you.” It would seem that to “confess” Christ means here something more than simply not to be ashamed of Him, which is an expression He makes use of elsewhere. It seems to mean glorying in Him, and in consequence declaring that of free choice we acknowledge Him as the great and good Master, Prince, Protector, and

¹ Eccclus. xxvii. 19.

Captain that He is. And this is what He too will do with regard to thee on the Last Day. He will actually glory in thee, and will declare in the presence of the countless blessed spirits that He acknowledges thee to be worthy of sitting on a glorious throne like theirs as His faithful disciple, subject, follower, and soldier. What possible honour can be greater? "Thou art my servant, Israel ; for in thee will I glory."¹ It is said that "a diligent woman is a crown to her husband ;"² even so shalt thou be a crown radiant with glory to Jesus Christ : "Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord."³ He will bear this crown in His hand when He comes to judgment, bringing with Him an exact account of all thy merits, and thou wilt wear it on thy head when thou enterest Paradise, and that just Judge has given thee a worthy recompense. Thou thinkest it a great matter if a person of distinction glories in thee in this world ; is it nothing to thee that thy God should do so ?

II. Consider secondly, that, as is most just, thou must prepare thyself to receive this honour by first thyself confessing Jesus Christ. And how is this confession to be made? In heart and word and deed : for if thy glorying is only in thy heart, by firmly believing the Christian faith while thou art at the same time ashamed to make open profession of it, and so neither speakest nor actest as a Christian, what honour art thou rendering Him? None at all ; nay, rather thou bringest dishonour upon Him, for it is much more disgraceful that He should not receive service from one of His house than that He should not receive it from a stranger. Therefore He says purposely, "Whosoever shall confess Me before men," not simply, "Whosoever shall confess Me." He adds "before men," to show thee that thou must lay aside all human respect, and make it thy pride to follow Jesus Crucified, not only in the privacy of thy room, but in the world, at court, in church, everywhere, no matter how public the place may be. What contemptible subterfuges thou art guilty of ! Say boldly to thy Jesus : "Let all the earth know that Thou art the Lord our God."⁴ "I will pay my vows to the Lord before all His people."⁵ "I will pay my vows to the Lord in the sight of all His people."⁶ "I will give great thanks to the Lord with my mouth, and in the midst of many I will praise Him."⁷ This is to make a thorough confession of our Lord : "Thou hast

¹ Isaias xlix. 3.² Prov. xii. 4.³ Isaias lxii. 3.⁴ Baruch ii. 15.⁵ Psalm cxv. 14.

Psalm cxv. 18.

⁷ Psalm cviii. 30.

confessed a good confession before many witnesses."¹ But what great value can there be in a confession of which there is no witness? That may be praise, worship, belief which thou renderest to thy God, but it is not confession. The confession which Christ requires here is a deposition, but thou knowest that a deposition without witnesses has no legal value. Our Lord will confess thee before His angels, the multitude of whom is innumerable—"Before the angels of God"—and thou wilt not confess Him before a small number of thy companions and acquaintances: "Before men."

III. Consider thirdly, that after our Lord had said, "Whoever shall confess Me before men," it might have been expected that He would say, "Him will I confess before My angels;" but He did not say this, He said, "Him shall the Son of Man also confess before His angels." He spoke of Himself in the third person, as He usually did, but more particularly when He was about to speak of something very glorious concerning Himself. Nay, not content with this, it was His way on such occasions to humble Himself more than ever by giving Himself a name so lowly, so mean, as this of the Son of Man. See how the prophets combined in making for Him the titles of "the Orient, the Great, the Just, the Mighty, the Most High, the Wonderful, the Saviour, the Gracious;" yet which of all these did he ever use in speaking of Himself? The name He usually called Himself by was, "the Son of Man." There are three other reasons why He so often used this name. First, to show that His flesh was not created afresh like that of Adam (who was therefore a man indeed, but who could not be called the son of man), but that it had been truly formed from a human mother, and so to attest His Incarnation: "God sent His Son made of a woman."² Not merely "born" (as some heretics have artfully pretended the word to be), but more than this, "made." Secondly, to declare by this name the closeness of His kinship with men, as their brother, which He would not be if He were not the Son of Man by deriving His lineage from the first father of us all: "Both He that sanctifieth," that is, Christ, "and they who are sanctified," that is, men, "are all of one," that is, one common father, Adam; "for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy Name to My brethren."³ And therefore thou findest Him often calling men His brethren, never the angels: He will

¹ 1 Timothy vi. 12.

² Galat. iv. 4.

³ Hebrews ii. 11, 12.

“confess him before His angels;” but there He ends. He does not add “His brethren;” whereas, when He is speaking of men He says, “Go to My brethren;”¹ “Tell My brethren.”² Thirdly, to point out that the promises were faithfully fulfilled which had been made of old to the fathers, when it was sworn to them that the future Messiah should certainly descend from their race: “Of the fruit of thy womb I will set upon thy throne.”³ And for this it was necessary that Christ should be not man only, but also the “Son of Man.” These were the main and true reasons for His so often using that title. He loved it because it told of things which were not only a gain, but a glory to thee, and so, in a manner, He really confessed thee before thou didst confess Him. Think, then, how greatly thou art bound to make Him a return. If He chose to humble Himself by constantly giving Himself this name of “Son of Man” for love of thee, do thou extol Him by everywhere hailing Him aloud as the Son of God: “Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, Who camest into the world.”⁴ Oh, what a joy will this confession be to Him! Make it silently when thou receivest Him into thy heart in Holy Communion; make it when thou adorest Him exposed on His throne as at a public audience; make it when thou visitest Him shut up in the tabernacle as at a private audience, and make it, not silently only, but before all who may be present whenever thou namest the Name of Jesus Christ, rejoicing to call Him the Son of God.

TENTH DAY.

The Spirit helpeth our infirmity. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings (Romans viii. 26).

I. Consider first, that man by sinning received at the beginning four most grievous wounds. The first was in the intellectual part of the soul, and this wound remains: (1) In forgetfulness as to the past, so that the benefit we have received from God, His promises to the just, His threats against sinners, and the many acts of ingratitude we have not scrupled to commit from our earliest years, are all effaced from our

¹ St. John xx. 17.

² St. Matt. xxviii. 10.

³ Psalm cxxxi. 11.

⁴ St. John xi. 27.

memory. (2) In inadvertence as to the present, so that we are unable to distinguish truths from falsehood. (3) In imprudence as to the future, which renders us incapable either of foreseeing or of providing against the evil which threatens us. The second wound was in the will, which cannot resolve to embrace the true good which it recognizes, and to reject that which is false. The third wound was in the concupiscent part, which is in perpetual revolt against superior reason, desiring to give itself up to the worst vices. The fourth wound was in the irascible part, which refuses to perform virtuous actions if they are in the least painful or difficult. Now, from these four wounds man has contracted four most grievous diseases, which are called ignorance, malice, concupiscence, and weakness, all of which are terribly aggravated every time that he sins, and are never completely cured, even when he is free from sin. And yet all this is not the worst evil that he suffers from. The worst is that he does not know how to converse with the physician, for only God can heal him, and yet he is ignorant how to converse with God, to have recourse to God, to commend himself to God, in a word, he does not know how to pray. This ignorance, if we consider it aright, is the most lamentable of our infirmities; and it is principally to relieve us from it that the Spirit of the Lord has been given to us, that is, the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Whom the Apostle speaks when he says: "The Spirit helpeth our infirmity." And that we may know that this "infirmity" is nothing else than the deplorable ignorance of which we are speaking, he immediately adds: "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought." God grant that, after having long applied thyself to it, thou mayest have learnt by this time in any degree how to pray. But perhaps this is not so? It is the Holy Ghost, then, Who must help thee: "The Spirit helpeth our infirmity."

II. Consider secondly, in what this ignorance concerning prayer mainly consists. It consists in two things: in not knowing what to ask of God—"What we should pray for"—and in not knowing how to ask for it: "As we ought." For, although we may know this in a general way, we do not know it in particular. We know in general what to ask—"What we should pray for"—because Jesus has taught us in that wonderful prayer, the *Pater noster*; but we do not know it in particular. We know that we ought, before all things, to think of our last end, that is, God, by asking, first of all, that which is for His

good, namely His glory, and afterwards that which is for our good, namely our beatitude. But we do not know this in particular. For, as to His glory, which we ask for in the words, "Hallowed be Thy Name," we do not know what that glory is which He most desires at this particular time. We may think that He desires this glory from others when He desires it rather from us; or we may think that He desires it from us when He rather desires it from others: "Shalt thou build Me a house to dwell in?"¹ And as to our beatitude, which we ask for in the next words, "Thy kingdom come," we do not know when it is best that He should give it to us. We may think that now it would be best to die when it is best to live, or that now it is best to live when it is best to die: "What I shall choose I know not. But I am straitened between two."²

III. Consider thirdly, we know in general that having asked of God that which is our end, it is right to ask of Him the means which contribute to it, either directly by the way of merit, which is the doing His most holy will; or indirectly, by the way of help, which is the procuring what is necessary for the support of both the corporal and spiritual life. But neither do we know this in particular: for, as to the doing His will, "Thy will be done," we do not always exactly know what this will of His is that we are to do. We may think that we ought to ask to follow an active when He chooses us to embrace the contemplative life; or we may think that it is the contemplative for which we should pray, when it is the active which He would have us lead: "There is a way which seemeth just to a man, but the ends thereof lead to death."³ And as to being provided with what is needful for our life—"Give us this day our daily bread"—we do not know the amount of the daily supply proper for us, either for body or soul. Our judgment may lead us to think that poverty is best for us, when in truth abundance is best; or abundance when poverty is best: "What needeth a man to seek things that are above him, whereas he knoweth not what is profitable for him in his life in all the days of his pilgrimage?"⁴

IV. Consider fourthly, we know in general that after asking of God the means which contribute to the attainment of our last end, we should likewise beg Him to remove all the obstacles which hinder our doing so, and which may be reduced to three, sins, temptations, and misfortunes. Sins are directly opposed to the end itself, temptations and mis-

¹ 2 Kings vii. 5. ² Philipp. i. 22, 23. ³ Prov. xiv. 12. ⁴ Eccles. vii. 1.

fortunes to the means to that end, temptations being opposed to the principal, and misfortunes to the lesser means. But we know nothing of all these in particular. As to sins, concerning which we say, "Forgive us our trespasses," it is certainly true that these absolutely deprive us of our God, but we do not know exactly which are the sins which most of all deprive us of Him, for which we should feel the greatest contrition, and which we should be most careful in confessing: "Who can understand sins?"¹ As to temptations, concerning which we say, "And lead us not into temptation," they all, it is true, tend to turn us away from doing the holy will of God; but we do not know which are prejudicial, and which may, on the contrary, be profitable to us: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for power is made perfect in infirmity."² And as to misfortunes, concerning which we say, "Deliver us from evil," it is true that they take from us the goods which are needed for the support of our life, both corporal and spiritual; but we do not know which are those that would really be for our loss, and which for our greater gain: "You thought evil against me, but God turned it into good."³ So that thou seest that although we have been so well instructed how to pray by Christ Himself, yet we do not know in particular what to ask for: "We know not what we should pray for;" scarcely, indeed, do we know this in general, so thick is that darkness of ignorance by which we are encompassed: "To a man whose way is hidden, and God hath surrounded him with darkness."⁴ And what is here said of the matter which we should ask is also to be understood of the manner—"As we ought." For this, too, we know in general, if only from those words of St. James: "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."⁵ But we do not know it in particular, seeing that we cannot certainly know that we have the faith, reverence, or resignation which are requisite, so great is the depravity of our heart: "The heart is perverse above all things, and unsearchable, who can know it?"⁶ Who, then, shall help thy infirmity, that thou mayest ask for what thou oughtest, and as thou oughtest? Thou hast been told already—the Spirit of God: "The Spirit helpeth our infirmity."

V. Consider fifthly, before passing on to this part, why it was that Christ, when He was pleased to leave us so perfect a form of prayer, did not enter into any particular requests, but

¹ Psalm xviii. 13.

⁴ Job iii. 23.

² 2 Cor. xii. 9.

⁵ St. James i. 6.

³ Genesis i. 20.

⁶ Jerem. xvii. 9.

kept, as has been said, to those which are general. It was because He intended to leave us a form of prayer which should be common to all, and this being so, none can be imagined more just as to the petitions, or more accurate as to their arrangement. Further, He Himself declared that after His Ascension to Heaven, One was to come down thence Who should teach all that had yet to be revealed: and that this was to be the Holy Ghost: "These things have I spoken to you, abiding with you: but the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My Name, He will teach you all things."¹ So that this is the chief end for which the Holy Ghost came down to us, to complete the beautiful instructions given to us by Christ. And Christ Himself would have it so, in order to show us that no wisdom, however sublime, is sufficient to help our ignorance of prayer, that grievous infirmity which we labour under: it must be love that helps us: "The Spirit helpeth our infirmity." Christ, then, was given to the world by the Father as the Master Who was to give lessons to all in general: "I have given Him for a Master to the Gentiles;"² and the Holy Ghost was provided for us by Christ to go over and graciously explain those great lessons: "He will teach you all things, whatsoever I shall have said to you."³ And thus it is the office of the Holy Ghost to adapt them not only to individual capacities, but to individual needs. And now, lest thy mind should be burdened with too much matter, it will be well to end the present meditation at this point. It shall be told in the following one, what method the Holy Spirit takes in helping us to pray, and the concluding words of the text shall be explained.

ELEVENTH DAY.

The Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings
(Romans viii. 26).

I. Consider first, to resume the last meditation where it was broken off, what method the Holy Spirit observes in helping us to pray. He helps us by giving us special aids both as to the matter and the manner of our prayer. As to the matter, He does this by giving us certain very powerful

¹ St. John xiv. 25, 26.

² Isaias lv. 4.

³ St. John xiv. 26.

movements to desire those things in particular which are really for our good, and so to express them in our petitions. And as to the manner, He helps us by infusing into us that faith which is required in prayer, together with the reverence, resignation, and other lively affections which are to be felt, but not expressed. Therefore it is said that "the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." "Asketh" has reference to the matter; "with groanings," to the manner. And thou must not be surprised that it is said "asketh," and not rather "causes us to ask." Dost thou not say that the Holy Ghost spoke by prophets, preachers, and martyrs? And why dost thou say so? Because the Holy Ghost made them speak: "It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you:" that is, "Who maketh you speak." As, then, it is said of Him that He speaks because He makes us speak, so, too, is it said that He asks because He makes us ask. Thou must think, therefore, that the same difference that there was between the prophets, when they spoke by themselves and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, exists also between those who pray of themselves and without life, and those who are animated by this Spirit Who "asketh" in them, that is, Who makes them ask "with unspeakable groanings." How great is the fervour, the desire, the ardent longing, the tender affection of these loving souls! If they could be expressed they would not be "unspeakable." Happy art thou if in any degree thou hast felt them. If not, pray to this gracious Spirit to give them to thee, so that thou mayest know something of these complaints of the dove: "I will meditate like a dove."¹

II. Consider secondly, that the Holy Ghost is said to "ask," not only because He makes us ask, but also because He "asks" in His own right, as our Advocate speaking within us by the way of love, as the Spirit Who is "the Paraclete." But how does He speak? In a language which is most mysterious, secret, and unfathomable even by ourselves, and which is therefore described as "unspeakable groanings," because He asks "for us" the contrary of what we ask, without being aware of it, against ourselves through the urging or the deception of our own spirit. Hast thou not found by personal experience that thou often askest for something in particular which thou thinkest great, and thou askest for it in the way thou shouldst, and yet thou dost not

¹ *Isaias xxxviii. 14.*

obtain it, but just the opposite? This is the reason: the Holy Spirit, seeing that the thing thou askest would be bad for thee, changed thy petition, so to speak, by substituting something which He knew to be profitable for thee. If thou wishest to know more particularly when this happens, I will tell thee. It happens that thou sometimes prayest for something very earnestly, but that at the same time thou hast, almost unconsciously, a very good resignation to the Divine will, which makes thee desire whatever God chooses to send thee much more than the thing thou art asking of Him. Now this desire is the secret language of the Holy Ghost speaking in thee, for it is a desire which proceeds entirely from true love; and so when the Divine will, which is contrary to thine own, is more profitable to thee, it is this secret prayer which is granted, not thy openly expressed one.

III. Consider thirdly, the example of Christ, Who, we read, "was heard for His reverence."¹ Most certainly His prayer was always granted, even when He prayed that the bitter chalice of His approaching Passion might pass from Him; for if He was not heard then according to His repugnance, He was heard according to His reverence. For the repugnance which by nature He felt to that chalice was far less strong than the reverence which He felt from love of His Father, and therefore it was fitting in every way that He should rather be heard according to the latter than the former. There was, indeed, this difference in our Lord's case, that He manifested this profound resignation to the will of His Father in express terms: "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."² Whereas thou very often dost not thus manifest it. But do not be troubled; for if only thou hast it in thy heart, the Spirit of God, speaking in thee, does this for thee: He "asketh for" thee "with unspeakable groanings;" and therefore, at such times, thou art often heard, not according to the inferior spirit by which thou makest thy request, but according to that higher Spirit by Whom thou desirest that alone which is best: "He that searcheth the hearts," that is God, "knoweth what the Spirit desireth;" He does that which His Heavenly Spirit, speaking in thee, desires; "because He asketh for the saints according to God:"³ that is, He asks in their favour the contrary of what they sometimes ask themselves to their prejudice. They ask what is according to man, and He asks what is "according to God." If, then, this is so, see how

¹ Hebrews v. 7.

² St. Matt. xxvi. 39.

³ Romans viii. 27.

very important this perfect resignation to the Divine will is, since by virtue of it thou art always heard according to that which is most profitable for thee.

IV. Consider fourthly, that although it is undoubtedly true that our Lord taught this resignation to the Divine will in the *Pater noster*, when He bade us say, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven," yet this was not enough. For there is a great difference between the resignation to God's will, which is based on generalities, and that which goes into particulars. When thou learnest it in a confused way, it is, no doubt, easy to practise it; but when thou learnest it by a particular application, in imprisonment, sickness, disgrace, or beggary, how difficult it is then! Yet it is this which the Holy Spirit would have us exercise, because He would have us filled with a very great love of God. When, therefore, thou art in such a disposition of heart, that even if thou sawest before thee all the misfortunes that have been mentioned, thou wouldst still courageously say, "Thy will be done," thou mayest know that it is the effect not of Divine wisdom only, but of love. Therefore, in dealing with the ordinary run of people, who have not this great love of God, it is not advisable to go into such particulars, because the poor creatures would be frightened; and so Christ only taught the multitudes to say: "Thy will be done." With those who are more perfect it is advisable, and so Christ did not hesitate to say to the Apostles: "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?"³ trying them by proposing what was very painful. And thus too does the Holy Spirit deal with man in prayer, going beyond our Lord's teaching in the *Pater noster*, and enkindling in him so keen and strong a desire of that which is most pleasing to God, that he does not shrink from bringing it before himself in particular ways; not that it is always necessary to do this. How should it be when "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what the Spirit desireth"? It may be that this perfect resignation is sometimes unknown to him who possesses it, but it is not unknown to God, for it is made manifest by the Spirit, Who, as thou hast heard, "asketh for us with unspeakable groanings;" and at such times thou too art favourably heard for thy reverence, not for thy repugnance; thou art heard by receiving the contrary, I will not say of what thou wishest, but of what thou wouldst not wish if it is opposed to the Divine will; that is to say, thou art heard according to that absolute desire

³ St. Matt. xx. 22.

which is called will, not according to that imperfect desire which is called velleity.

V. Consider fifthly, that the Holy Ghost does not act in the manner that has been described in all persons who pray, but only in those who strive, on their part, to do their utmost to pray well. Therefore it is said that He "helpeth our infirmity." If, then, it is His office to "help" thee, it is necessary that thou shouldst do as much as is possible to thy weakness in order to pray well; thou must prepare thyself, retire into solitude, recollect thyself, and apply thy mind diligently to the subject. When thy weakness allows of thy doing no more, then it is that He comes in to thy assistance, "For it belongeth to God to help,"¹ not to do everything. It is true, indeed, that He is always said, and truly said, to do everything; for however much thou mayest do on thy part in order to pray well, it is still nothing in comparison of what the Holy Ghost does in thee. And therefore it is always true that He "Himself asketh;" and thy prayer will be referred and ascribed to Him, so that it will be rightly said that after all it is He Who prays for thee: "The Spirit Himself asketh for us," that is in our stead, "with unspeakable groanings." And what is there to wonder at in this, when, in other cases, effects are always referred to their first cause? For instance, it is said that the captain has saved the ship, although he was not alone in doing so, but was aided by a great number of sailors, who worked very hard to bring about this result. Thou mayest therefore infer what great need thou art in of possessing within thee this Divine Spirit. It is as great as thy need of praying, and of praying well; that is to say, not only a great, but an extreme need. To this end thou shouldst humbly invoke Him whenever thou art about to pray. Frequently recite one of the beautiful hymns addressed to Him, the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, or the *Veni Creator Spiritus*; beg of Him to help thee, to enlighten thee, to enkindle thee, or, better still, beg Him to pray Himself within thee; and, no matter how long thou hast been in the habit of praying, never allow thyself to think that a time will ever come when thou dost not need His help, and His very special help. For it is never said that He takes away our weakness when we pray, but that He helps it. Alas! there will always remain in us those four wounds inflicted on us by sin at the beginning, and so, too, there will always remain in us the ignorance which was the first infirmity

¹ 2 Paral. xxv, 8.

arising from thence, and of all kinds of ignorance that of praying aright is the most injurious, and it is one which, although it can certainly be remedied in some degree, cannot be entirely cured, "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought."

TWELFTH DAY.

The wisdom of the humbled shall exalt his head, and shall make him sit in the midst of great men (Ecclus. xi. 1).

I. Consider first, that there is a difference between being humbled and being humble. There are persons whom God scourges in various ways—by sickness, disgrace, and want, and who nevertheless are not humble, but even while enduring the chastisement are hardened and rebellious as Pharaoh was, to whom God had at last to say, "How long refusest thou to submit to Me?"¹ Such persons never "exalt their heads," because they can never bring themselves to do what God requires of them, namely, to humble themselves when they are humbled, to "submit." If any one would be exalted he must humble himself in his humiliation; man's true wisdom, therefore, consists in humbling himself as much as possible: "Humble thy spirit very much,"² for "the wisdom of the humbled shall exalt his head, and shall make him sit in the midst of great men." It may be that God has more than once sought to humble thee in one way or other, and if so, examine thyself well, and say whether thy pride has thus been brought into subjection to Him.

II. Consider secondly, that although these words undoubtedly convey the meaning which has been given above, yet that they probably contain another which is deeper, more hidden and secret, and which is calculated to inspire thee with great courage in doing well. What is this meaning? It is, that if thou knowest how to conduct thyself wisely after the sins which thou hast hitherto committed, not only will the having committed them not harm thee, but, if it is allowable to say so, it will actually profit thee, and conduce to thy greater good. For when is it that God is most truly said to humble thy heart, which thinks so highly of itself, of its virtue, wisdom, and knowledge? It is when He suffers thee to incur the

¹ Exodus x. 3.

² Ecclus. vii. 19.

disgrace of falling into grievous sins. Then, indeed, mayest thou say, in shame and confusion, "I have been humbled exceedingly,"¹ for thou art like one who has been disgracefully overcome in battle. Would that thou couldst see thyself as thou art! Thou wouldst see that thou art wounded all over by the devils, bruised, beaten, and at the point of death. "Thou hast humbled the proud one, as one that is slain." Oh, happy wilt thou be if thou learnest how to conduct thyself rightly after this humiliation which God has permitted thee to suffer! "The wisdom of the humbled shall exalt his head." Not only wilt thou, by so doing, escape the miserable death with which thou art threatened, but, lifting thy head from the ground, where it lay awaiting the stroke of the axe, thou wilt pass from the condition of a condemned criminal, a rebel, a reprobate, to take thy place on a throne among the greatest saints, as their equal: "It shall make him sit in the midst of great men." But for this, as has been said, it is necessary to know how to act rightly: "The wisdom of the humbled shall exalt his head." There must be "wisdom," for thou seest how great a leap it is from a prison to a throne.

III. Consider thirdly, what this wisdom is with which thou must conduct thyself after having sinned, for this it is which will exalt thee. It is to know how to keep the middle course, which is the right course in all things, that is, it is the path trodden by wisdom. Thou must therefore neither presume by making light of the past, nor ruin thyself by want of confidence in God for the future. If thou regardest thy sins as a light evil thou art lost; thou must consider them as what they really are, an enormous evil, so that thou mayest wonder how it is that the earth, instead of giving thee sustenance, does not open to swallow thee up. On the other hand, at the same time that thou acknowledgest thyself to be utterly unworthy of receiving pardon from God, thou must still hope for it, not from any merit of thine own, but on account of His exceeding mercy, because He is good and gracious, because He died for thee as for a friend most dear to Him. Thus acting thou wilt be wise, for a due estimate of sin will enkindle within thee a true desire of doing penance, and so thou wilt lift up thy head, while a great confidence in God will make thee not satisfied with being a penitent, but will urge thee to aspire to the glory of the just, and so bring thee to a place among those "great" ones, and prevent thy resting in a state of tepidity, such as

¹ Psalm cxviii. 107.

thou didst live in before thy fall. If thou dost this, dost thou not see how greatly thy humiliation will profit thee? "It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me."¹ In this way thou wilt co-operate to the end for which God, as a wise physician, permitted that humiliation, namely, to bring out of the evil which He permitted a good which was even greater than that evil, that is to say, a more spiritual, holy, and fervent life: "The Lord hath not willingly afflicted."² If He has "afflicted" thee it was not "willingly," but for a particular purpose, to teach thee His "justifications."

IV. Consider fourthly, that it is really quite possible that, after having committed very grievous sins, thou mayest come to "sit in the midst of great men," that is, to take thy place among the innocent if thou wishest to do so, for God does not regard past sins when they are truly repented of, but only the justice of thy present state: "I will not remember thy sins."³ And therefore it is useless to inquire whether God loves a penitent or an innocent person most, since He has not a greater love for the innocent because of his innocence, nor for the penitent because of his penitence, but He loves most the one who most loves Him at the present time: "I love them that love Me."⁴ Men cannot look into the heart; they "see those things that appear,"⁵ and therefore what is it that they do? They look at thy past actions, and from these they argue concerning thy future ones, so that they will have more confidence in thee if thou hast always been faithful than if they have once surprised thee in a fault. But it is not so with God. "The Lord beholdeth the heart:"⁶ He sees it with all its secret corners, in which thou wouldst hide thyself. And so, if He sees that thou art truly contrite, truly grieved, truly changed, so that thou sincerely desirest to serve Him in future, He trusts thee at once, He welcomes thee, opens His arms to thee, embraces thee, and puts into thy hands all the treasures of His love, just as though thou hadst never driven Him from thee: "I will have mercy on them, and they shall be as they were when I had not cast them off."⁷ Was not Peter, was not Paul, a penitent? And see how high their thrones are among the "great men." Nay, they are the greatest of them all, greater, perhaps, than those innocent ones who are called great. Never allow thyself to be deceived by the enemy who would fill thee with unreal terrors, to make thee believe that

¹ Psalm cxviii. 71.² Lament. iii. 33.³ Isaias xliiii. 25.⁴ Prov. viii. 17.⁵ 1 Kings xvi. 7.⁶ 1 Kings xvi. 7.⁷ Zach. x. 6.

there is no hope for thee of attaining a high place. If thou hadst to reach it by thine own strength, thine own feeble efforts, then, indeed, he would be right. But it is not so. Thy Lord will carry thee in His arms to the end of thy life: "Even to your old age I am the same, and to your grey hairs I will carry you. I have made you, and I will bear."¹

V. Consider fifthly, that the greatest honour thou canst pay to God in this matter is to believe Him entirely, for He does not say these things to thee without the intention of performing them; on the contrary, He desires it greatly. Would that thou didst know how lovingly He observes thee for this reason. He takes every road, tries every entrance, seeks every pretext to do thee good: "I have found wherein I may be merciful to him."² When, therefore, thou actest as has been here described, and dost put thy whole trust in Him, how greatly will He deem Himself exalted by thee. This, then, is another, and a deeper meaning of the words, "The wisdom of the humbled shall exalt his head," namely, that the wisdom of the man who, after having fallen into sin, knows how to behave in such a manner as to derive from the evil a good which is greater than that evil, shall exalt our Lord Jesus Christ. Is not He the true Head? and He esteems it an exaltation of Himself to have the opportunity of pardoning thee after thy humiliation, of enriching thee, of lavishing His tenderness on thee, so that "where sin abounded, grace should more abound;"³ for He it is of Whom it is plainly written: "He shall be exalted sparing you."⁴ What more couldst thou desire? See what a wonderful thing thou canst even now do by giving thyself wholly to God: thou canst exalt Jesus thy Lord. Oh, how glorious a triumph will His mercy gain over thy utter misery if thou dost but let Him have His way! And canst thou doubt that when He sees Himself exalted by thee in a matter so dear to His Heart, He will grant thee all that thou desirest till He sees thee seated beside the great ones of His kingdom, which is the other blessing which thou wilt gain by resolutely devoting thyself to God's service: "The wisdom of the humbled shall exalt his head," this is the first blessing, namely, the exaltation of Christ; "and shall make him sit in the midst of great men," this is the second, namely, the glory of the humbled.

² Job xxxiii. 24.

¹ Isaias xlv. 4.

³ Romans v. 20.

⁴ Isaias xxx. 18.

THIRTEENTH DAY.

It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this, the Judgment
(Hebrews ix. 27).

I. Consider first, that the law of death for man is called a decree: "It is appointed" (*statutum*), to show that this law is not, in his case, natural, as it is in that of other animals, but positive; because although, being composed of contrary elements, he tended by his mere nature to corruption, and consequently to death, yet, by virtue of the original justice conferred on him by God, he would have been immortal: "God created man indestructible;"¹ and so he would have lived on earth for many ages, always happy, healthy, vigorous, and active; and in that state would have been transported from earth to Heaven. If he has become subject to death, it is because he unhappily lost this great gift by transgressing the express intimation which God gave him when He said: "In what day soever thou shalt eat of it thou shalt surely die."² And therefore this decree passed on to all—"Death passed upon all men"³—just as the loss of the gift passed to all, and thus thou seest how truly it is a decree; a decree that is firm and strong, and most universal, that is to say, a decree which embraces all men: "Who is the man that shall live, and not see death?"⁴ Some will indeed die for a very brief time; this will be the case with those who will be alive when Christ shall suddenly come to Judgment; for it may be that they will die of pure terror, and then immediately rise again, and therefore the Psalmist wisely says: "Who is the man that shall live and not see death?" to show that all must endure death, but not all alike, some will, so to speak, scarcely see it. Moreover, if we must all rise again according to what is written: "We shall all, indeed, rise again;"⁵ how can it be doubted that we must also all first die? "It is appointed unto men once to die."

II. Consider secondly, that this word "once" signifies "at last:" "He that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once."⁶ And hast thou not been told of many—of Lamech who lived seven hundred, of Malaleel who lived more than eight hundred, and of Mathusala more than nine hundred years, how they all "begot sons and daughters," and then "died"? So, too, will it be with thee, only that thy death will be after but a few

¹ Wisdom ii. 23.

² Genesis ii. 17.

³ Romans v. 12.

⁴ Psalm lxxxviii. 49.

⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 51.

⁶ Prov. xxviii. 18.

years: "The days of his time shall be shortened."¹ How, then, canst thou ever go on living attached to this world? Think that thou must leave it, think seriously, think often of this, death must come at last: "It is appointed unto men once to die."

III. Consider thirdly, that the word "once" not only means "at last," but also "only once:" "God hath spoken once."² Take great heed therefore, for if thou but once perform amiss this act of dying, that is, if thou die in sin, all will be lost, there will be no remedy, no help: thou wilt never be able to repair thy error. Dost thou not know that we hurry onward like a stream which never retraces its steps? "We all die, and like waters that return no more, we fall down into the earth."³ Think well, therefore, what course thou wilt take, for if it is a terrible thing to die, it is still more terrible to be able to die but once: "It is appointed unto men once to die." It is true that in this point there have been some exceptions to the universality of this decree: "Jordan was turned back."⁴ And therefore the Apostle says simply, "It is appointed unto men"—not "unto all men"—"once to die." "To all men," certainly, if we take the word "once" in the first sense, that of "at last;" but not "to all men," if we take it in the second sense of "once only." And because here the Apostle intended it rather in the second than in the first sense, as appears from the context, therefore he said "to men" and not "to all men." Lazarus died a second time after being raised to life by Christ; but every one knows that this and similar exceptions to the decree occur from time to time miraculously. I will not suppose thee to be so foolish as even to dream, much less hope for such a thing, since miracles such as these are altogether extraordinary. "In his life he did great wonders,"⁵ said the Preacher speaking of Elias and how he brought the child to life after much difficulty. What art thou about then, that thou dost not seriously set thyself to make sure of making that passage well, which cannot be made more than once? Consider where that passage will take thee: into another world. Why dost thou evade the truth? It will take thee to a house which is called that of eternity: "Man shall go into the house of his eternity."⁶

IV. Consider fourthly, that if life were the end of everything it would not then be the terrible passage that it is. But

¹ Job x. 20.

² Psalm lxi. 12.

³ 2 Kings xiv. 14.

⁴ Psalm cxlii. 5.

⁵ Eccles. xlviii. 15.

⁶ Eccles. xii. 5.

this is the fearful part of it, that it will be immediately followed by the Judgment: "It is appointed to men once to die, and after this, the Judgment," that is, the Judgment which will assign to thee either everlasting reward or everlasting punishment. It is of necessity that this Judgment should be after death—"after this"—because just as there can be no judgment formed of a statue till the sculptor's work is done, nor of a book till it has been read through, so neither can man, who changes every hour, be judged till his thread of life is spun out. But then he can be judged immediately: and so, therefore, will it be: "And after this, the Judgment." Think, then, how it will be with thee, when, in that same place where thou shalt die, thou wilt see set up before thee that terrible tribunal, the distant sight of which made so many of the saints hasten to bury themselves in rocks and caves. There, utterly alone, without relations, servants, companions, or any one to help thee, without even the body which thou lovest so much, thou wilt see thyself, thy separated soul, in the presence of an Omnipotent Judge, Who, without any regard to all thy gifts of birth, learning, rank, or riches, will judge thee according to what He finds thy merits to be at that moment: "I will judge thee according to thy ways."¹ There will be on each side of thee two very different angels: one who did so much to protect thee, the other who did so much to injure thee—the angel of God and the angel of Satan—and each of them is waiting to hear the sentence passed upon thee, whether of reward or of punishment, in order to execute it. What wilt thou do? There will be no longer any hope of appeasing that Judge if He should then turn on thee a face of anger; there will be no entreaties, no excuses, not so much as one short instant in which to cry for mercy; for the moment in which thou drewest thy last breath was that, too, when judgment, without appeal, was formed of thee: "It is appointed to men once to die, and after this, the Judgment."

V. Consider fifthly, how, even after his death, a man continues, as it were, to survive himself in this world, in many ways. He survives in the memory of others, who very often are mistaken, and think him good when he is wicked, or wicked when he is good. He survives in his ashes, which sometimes receive honourable burial when they ought to lie on a dunghill, or which lie on a dunghill when they ought to receive honourable burial. He survives in his literary works

¹ *Ezech. vii. 3.*

which continue producing their different effects, as Calvin's, for instance, still cause such evil, and St. Chrysostom's such holy results. The Judgment, therefore, which is here spoken of, cannot be so full and complete as is necessary; because then a man will only have ceased to live in himself. When he has also ceased to live in all that is outside of himself, then he will be judged a second time: "It is appointed to men once to die, and after this, the Judgment." This Judgment will not be, like the first, particular, but general, and therefore it cannot take place till the end of the world; that is, till every generation of men will have ceased both to live and to survive upon the earth. It will also be a final Judgment in which every one will know all the mistakes he has made in judging others, and all which others have made in judging him when the time for judgment had not yet come. And if this is so, how then canst thou judge before the time? "It is appointed to men once to die, and after this, the Judgment."

FOURTEENTH DAY.

Man, when he was in honour, did not understand, he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them (Psalm xlvi. 13).

I. Consider first, that what the Psalmist here says of Adam, in the first instance, as having been the first man who existed, is equally to be understood of every other man who resembles him in sinning: "When he was in honour he did not understand." What is the honour of man? His understanding: it is this which makes him like God, capable of receiving the gifts of grace and of glory, and which fits him for a participation of all that God possesses in His sublime nature. And yet this man, placed in a state so honourable, did not know it: he "did not understand," or at least he behaved as though he did not know it. He despised those gifts of which he was capable, as being of a spiritual nature, and he preferred to imitate brute beasts in clinging to those which were sensible: "He hath been compared to senseless beasts" in his judgment, and so, too, he "is become like to them" in his actions. This is, perhaps, the severest reproach addressed to man which there is in the whole of the Sacred Scriptures. Yet who considers this? The first man, at least, retained a feeling of

shame after his sin, and so far showed himself unlike the brutes; but his descendants have lost even this—"They know not how to blush," and so they are in all respects like brutes.

II. Consider secondly, what was the reason why man, "when he was in honour, did not understand." The chief reason was just what is here said: because "he was in honour," he had not "attained honour." He found himself placed, without any labour on his part, in a position of great honour, and therefore his appreciation of its greatness was low in proportion: "When he was in honour he did not understand." If, instead of finding himself in honour, he had had to gain it at the cost of labour and blood, can it be doubted that he would have prized it far more highly? He was so fortunate as to have it for nothing, and so he did not value it: he "did not understand." And this, too, is the reason why thou dost not appreciate all the wonderful benefits bestowed upon thee by God, because thou "art in honour," thou hast not "attained" it. But does not this very reason brand thee more deeply with ingratitude?

III. Consider thirdly, that man is said to be "compared to senseless beasts," first, in his understanding, because, unhappily, he did not know or comprehend; but reasoning after the manner of brutes, followed the guidance of his senses rather than of his understanding. And, therefore, he is not even said to be "compared" to any kind of animals, but to "beasts" (*jumentis*), and moreover to "senseless beasts;" because there are some animals which seem to have a nature higher than that of the brute, as halcyons and eagles. But what common beast of burden is there that is not altogether stolid? And yet man was not satisfied with imitating even any kind of these in his way of reasoning; he even lowered himself to the level of the most stupid of them: "He has been compared to senseless beasts." And what is it that thou doest, when thou dost consider it well to prefer a temporal to an eternal good, merely because the former is present and the latter future? Is not this, in reality, to judge like a senseless beast?

IV. Consider fourthly, that when man had placed himself on a level with brute beasts as to his understanding, it is not wonderful that he should do so as to his will; and therefore, in the words immediately following, it is said that he "is become like to them," for nothing else is wanting to complete the resemblance. It is said that he is "become" (*factus*), not "born," like them, for if man resembles brutes, it is not by

birth but by choice, and so he is far worse than they are, because he is not like them by nature, but he chooses to become so, grovelling on the earth, in spite of his having been made to lift his face towards Heaven: "They have set their eyes bowing down to the earth."¹ But in what does this disgraceful resemblance of man to brutes mainly consist? It consists in his following every unbridled passion without exception, as they do; never giving a thought to anything but the indulgence of either the concupiscent or irascible part. And so thou seest some persons furious as serpents, instantly resenting every injury: "Their madness is according to the likeness of a serpent."² Others are bold as lions, others greedy as wolves, others foul as swine, and so of all the rest who are mentioned in great numbers in the Scriptures. Is it not a sad spectacle to see so many men acting constantly like brutes? Nay, their conduct is far worse than theirs, for one animal is subject to one vice, another to another. The lion does not act like the bear, nor the bear like the lion, and so of the rest; but a man too often contains all vices in himself alone: "He is become to me like a bear lying in wait: as a lion in secret places."³

V. Consider fifthly, that all that has been here said may also apply to more than one of those persons who have been exalted to positions of dignity: "When he was in honour he did not understand." Formerly he was courteous, gentle, modest, pure in manners, and afterwards was changed to such a degree, that "he has been compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them." This is the witchcraft of worldly honour, it deprives men's minds of reason till they are scarcely recognizable as human. And what is the magic rod which more than any other effects this hideous transformation? It is flattery: "The sinner is praised in the desires of his soul."⁴ Gradually he ceases to be ashamed of the iniquities which he hears vaunted as fine actions. Well would it be for some of these men if they had any one who would place before them as a mirror, this verse of David, which is so well fitted to make them know the state they are in! But how can this be unless they choose it? For it is the action of a man, not of a brute, to contemplate himself in a mirror.

¹ Psalm xvi. 11.

² Psalm lvii. 5.

³ Lament. iii. 10.

⁴ Psalm ix. (x.) 3.

FIFTEENTH DAY.

But the fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity (Galat. v. 22, 23).

I. Consider first, that fruits have two properties : the first of these is that they are the final result of the force of the tree. It puts forth its branches, leaves, and blossoms ; then, when it has produced fruits it can do no more, and therefore these are the glory of the tree. The second property is that they are sweet, agreeable, and delicious, so that they are exceedingly pleasant to the taste. Thou seest, then, why the works of the Spirit, that is the Christian virtues, are so rightly called fruits. First, because they are the crown of man's attainments. What is it to excel in riding, fencing, dancing, painting? All this is nothing, because these are works which are the result of man's natural powers. It is the works of virtue which are the result, not of his natural, but supernatural powers, that show what he can do, and therefore these are his glory. Then, too, they are full of sweetness, for every one who has experience of them knows what delight, satisfaction, and gladness they cause. Those who have no experience of them are indeed ignorant of this. Therefore the bride says : "His fruit was sweet to my palate,"¹ because it might not always be so to the palate of others. Only, there is this difference between the natural fruits of a tree and these supernatural fruits, that in the former case the fruits are of little use to the tree, because it produces, but does not enjoy them, whereas the latter give greater delight to the man who has produced them than to any one else. Now these fruits thou shouldst ardently long after ; and if thou art attracted by what has been said of their sweetness, do not be alarmed by being told that they are the result of the utmost exertion of thy strength ; for thou art not left to thyself and thy weakness to produce them. The Spirit of God must strengthen thee by His grace. Nay, it is He Who will do the whole work rather than thou thyself ; and so, as thou seest, they are ascribed to Him more than to thee, since they are called the "fruits of the Spirit," not "of the spiritual man."

II. Consider secondly, these fruits one by one, in order to be more enamoured of them. They are twelve in number, and thou wilt see how beautifully they are arranged. In the first place, thou must presuppose that it is by these virtues that thy

¹ Cant. ii. 3.

perfection is wrought. Some do this inwardly, others externally. To begin with what is within thee, Which is the first virtue necessary for thy perfection? It is Charity: for as in all natural things their first movement, inclination, and attraction is to tend to their centre, so in supernatural things the first movement of man's heart is to go to God, in others words, to love its true good, and therefore charity is first on the list: "But above all things have charity,"¹ for this virtue brings all the rest with it, and so, too, it is "the bond of perfection." But which are the first that it will bring with it, as being most closely allied with it? They are Joy and Peace. And the reason is, that he who loves God possesses the object of his love. If thou lovest money, or pleasures, or kindred, thou dost not at once possess what thou lovest. Jacob loved Rachel intensely, yet what labour he went through to obtain her. But if thou lovest God thou dost possess Him immediately, He is all thy own: "He that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him."² And, therefore, thou too dost immediately experience in thyself that joy which results from the possession of the object of thy love. And so it is said: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice."³ But it must not be a joy like the joys of the world, which are deceitful, frivolous, and false, and in which there is no rest. It must be a perfect joy, and therefore the Apostle adds "peace;" for the soul enjoys peace when the good which it possesses has these two conditions, that it is supreme and that it is sure. Now the soul that loves God has both of these: it possesses a good which is supreme, that is to say, amply sufficient to make the joy "full,"⁴ and a good which is sure, for it can never be deprived of it but by its own will: "And your joy no man shall take from you."⁵ And therefore it is that the soul, meditating on these things, says joyfully: "I am become in His presence as one finding peace."⁶ So that joy denotes the fruition, and peace the perfection of charity. It is true, indeed, that as there is not perfect charity on earth, so neither can there be complete peace; and why is this? Because the soul can never be absolutely certain that her enemies will not deprive her of the good that she enjoys. There are so many disturbances, temptations, and conflicts, that she may justly fear being overcome. And therefore, that thou mayest resist all their assaults, there follows Patience, which is the virtue

¹ Coloss. iii. 14.² 1 St. John iv. 16.³ Philipp. iv. 4.⁴ St. John xvi. 24.⁵ St. John xvi. 22.⁶ Cant. viii. 10.

that endures all adversity without giving way. Here, then, is the "perfect work," because patience completes thy assurance of the possession of God. So that thou art amply supplied by these virtues, both as to good and evil: "By the armour of justice on the right hand and on the left."¹ For the first three make thee perfect in regard to that which thou enjoyest, and patience in regard to that which thou endurest: "Patience hath a perfect work."²

III. Consider thirdly, that after those virtues which do the work of perfection within thy soul, come those which do it from without. What, then, are those things which are outside of thee? They are of three kinds: those which are above thee, those which are around thee, and those which are beneath thee. God is above thee, thy neighbours are around thee, thy body, thy senses, thy sensuality are beneath thee; thy "lust shall be under thee."³ God is indeed above thee, but He is outside of thee in such a manner that He is also within thee, and therefore, as we have before spoken of Him as He is within thee, it is superfluous to speak of Him as He is outside of thee. It remains, therefore, to speak of the things which are around and beneath thee. In regard to thy neighbour, who is "around" thee, the first virtue which does the work of thy perfection is Benignity, for it is, first of all, necessary to have a gracious, affable, and courteous bearing, far from all asperity: "Be ye kind one to another."⁴ This quality in a virtuous person has great influence in making others feel kindly towards those who practise this virtue, and therefore "benignity" is here mentioned. But what, after all, is the use of gracious manners without deeds? We must go on to do good to our neighbour by helping, consoling him, and promoting his interests, and therefore the Apostle adds Goodness, which is the virtue that disposes us to do great good to others. "Goodness is the virtue which benefits others," says St. Jerome, and it is also that which more than any other makes man resemble God, of Whom it is written: "What Thou givest to them they shall gather up; when Thou openest Thy hand they shall all be filled with good."⁵ But there are two things which make men, unlike God, slow to do good to others. The first is, the seeing that his neighbour does not profit by the good which is done to him; the scholar, for instance, does not learn, the ungrateful man is insensible

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 7.² St. James i. 4.³ Genesis iv. 7.⁴ Ephes. iv. 32.⁵ Psalm ciii. 28.

to benefits, the sick man does not recover, the sinner is not converted; the second thing is, the seeing that not only he does not profit by the good you do him, but repays you with offences, insults, and perhaps with still more injurious treatment. In the first case, we must arm ourselves with Longanimity, which is that virtue which never loses the hope of obtaining its end, and which therefore is united like a sister to mercy: "Gracious and merciful, longsuffering and full of compassion."¹ In the second case we must arm ourselves with Mildness, which is the virtue that restrains anger: "I was as a meek lamb."² But still, all these virtues are insufficient for the right regulation of your conduct towards your neighbour, unless you add another, which is Fidelity; for it is this which gives men confidence and reliance on you, and prevents any one suspecting you of duplicity, and it is this virtue which is here called "faith:" "A faithful man shall be much praised."³ Last of all, there are the things which are beneath thee, namely, thy body, thy senses, thy sensuality; and the first virtue on the list which must defend thee against these is Modesty, which regulates all thy exterior movements; next, Contineny, which restrains thy senses, sight, hearing, taste, and the rest, from excessive indulgence in even lawful pleasures; lastly, Chastity, which debars thy sensuality from those pleasures which are unlawful: thy "lust shall be under thee," that is, both the sensitive and sensual appetites, "and thou shalt have dominion over it."⁴ Are not all these very beautiful fruits, very noble, very Divine? It rests with thee to conceive an ardent love for them.

IV. Consider fourthly, how St. John saw in Paradise "the Tree of Life, bearing twelve fruits,"⁵ which signifies the just man who, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, produces those twelve fruits which have been here explained. It is true, indeed, that that tree bore one of its fruits every month—"Yielding its fruits every month"⁶—and that thou hast to produce thine every day, since every day occasions of practising these virtues present themselves; but still thou mayest take them one by one, and set thyself to observe one each month in some special way. For the first take Charity, and exercise thyself in making frequent acts of the love of God, and particularly by aspirations and ejaculations to Him Who is thy chief good: "Who shall give Thee to me for my brother?"⁷

¹ 2 Esdras ix. 17.² Jerem. xi. 19.³ Proverbs xxviii. 20.⁴ Genesis iv. 7.⁵ Apoc. xxii. 2.⁶ Apoc. xxii. 2.⁷ Cant. viii. 1.

For the second take Joy, making an exercise of the presence of God by the way of affection, so as not only to enjoy, but almost see thy only good present with thee: "Behold, God is my Saviour, I will deal confidently, and will not fear."¹ In the third thou wilt take Peace, desiring to set thy whole heart on God alone, detaching it from all creatures, one by one, because they have indeed power to disturb thee, but not to give thee rest: "What have I in Heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire on earth?"² For the fourth month take Patience, rising with greater constancy than before above all the exterior and interior troubles which come upon thee: "I suffer, . . . but I am not ashamed."³ In the same way, after going through these virtues, which work out thy perfection within thee, take those which do so from without, choosing for the fifth month Benignity, for the sixth Goodness, for the seventh Longanimity, for the eighth Mildness, for the ninth Faith, for the tenth Modesty, for the eleventh Continency, for the twelfth Chastity. And at the end of the year thou shouldst practise acts of all these virtues more frequently than usual. If thou actest in this way see how deep this tree will send its roots in thy heart! Thou wilt go on acquiring more and more facility in bearing fruit, and this fruit will be the earnest of one which is beyond all—everlasting beatitude. Therefore thou canst not suppose that the Christian virtues are only fruits; they are both fruits and flowers: "My flowers are the fruit of honour and riches,"⁴ for our good works, regarded as being produced by us, are fruits, regarded as a preparation for beatitude, flowers. And just as we can trace a germ of the fruit in the flower, so in these virtues there is the germ of those joys which they promise thee in Heaven. Labour, then, to do virtuous actions, for at the last thou wilt see how true it is that "the fruit of good labours is glorious."⁵

V. Consider fifthly, how much better it is to do works according to the spirit than according to the flesh; for what fruits can the latter produce for thee? None whatever: "What fruits, therefore, had you then in those things of which you are now ashamed?"⁶ The works of the flesh, which are vices, are not fruits; it is virtues which are fruits, and they are the works of the spirit. And the reason is, first that if virtues are the utmost result of man's strength, vices are that of his extreme weakness, neither are they produced

¹ Isaias xii. 2.² Psalm lxxii. 25.³ 2 Timothy i. 12.⁴ Ecclus. xxiv. 23.⁵ Wisdom iii. 15.⁶ Romans vi. 21.

according to his nature, but unnaturally, so that although they are indeed shoots put forth by him, they are irregular, spurious, illegitimate. The second reason is that as virtues are sweet, vices are, on the contrary, exceedingly bitter. And so when the Apostle enumerates those vices which are contrary to the virtues that have been here described, he does not call them the "fruits," but "the *works* of the flesh." And yet how many there are who set themselves to gather fruit by acting according to the flesh rather than the spirit! If thou hast been of this number, humble thyself, and resolve that thou wilt no more gather fruits from such a garden, if, indeed they are fruits at all, and not rather weakness and misery.

SIXTEENTH DAY.

Behold the Lord will ascend upon a swift (levem) cloud, and will enter into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence (Isaias xix. 1).

I. Consider first, that when our Lord, hidden beneath the cloud of the Sacred Humanity which He had assumed (a very light cloud, *nubem levem*, because it was wholly free from the weight of any sin), entered Egypt, all the idols, of which that country was full, were so shaken at His presence, that wherever He passed by they fell to the ground, because no false god can stand before the face of the true God. This event is here foretold by Isaias, and it ought to be repeated whenever thy Lord comes to thee in the Blessed Sacrament: for it seems that His entrance at that time into Egypt was meant to prefigure His entrance now into thy heart.

II. Consider secondly, how rightly thou mayest always regard thy heart as an Egypt, which is interpreted to mean "dark;" because there are reigning in it as many idols as there are vicious affections to which thou payest worship, such as pride, anger, impatience, obstinacy, and countless more like these. Is it not, then, the strangest of marvels that thy Lord deigns notwithstanding to enter such a heart, no longer as a fugitive Infant, but great, glorious, and all-powerful? Moreover, He entered the first Egypt by the express command of His Father; He enters the second of His own free choice. He went into the first once only, He comes into the second

times without number. He went into the first to save His life from the many swords of His enemies who plotted against Him; He comes into the second to save, not His life, but thine. What, then, should be thy confusion on seeing that nevertheless He is pleased to enter thy heart! Well mayest thou, when about to communicate, call on the angels and archangels and all the orders of those glorious spirits, to whom it was never granted to receive their God in this manner, and bid them gaze on that marvel of condescension: "Behold the Lord will descend upon a cloud, and will enter into Egypt."

III. Consider thirdly, what this "light cloud" is, on which He comes. It is the sacred particle which the hand of the priest places upon thy tongue. It is called light, because it consists of mere accidents: it has no substance, it exists by a wonderful miracle, that which the priest wrought at the moment of consecration: and it is called a cloud, because it is prepared in order to hide the Sun of Glory when He comes to thee, lest His excessive splendour should strike thee dead to the earth. Thou knowest that it was necessary to cover those three great disciples of our Lord with a cloud on Tabor that they might not perish in the lustre of that glorious Sun: "And there was a cloud overshadowing them."¹ So, too, is a cloud necessary for thee; but for all that, dost thou not know that under this cloud it is Jesus Christ Whom thou receivest? Think, then, in how deep a spirit of abasement thou oughtest to do so, when thou seest that in His present state of glory He does not disdain such an Egypt as that of thy heart. He enters this Egypt on that cloud, as though borne in some poor carriage which He has entered for the purpose, and therefore it is said that He "ascends" on it: "The Lord will ascend upon a (light) cloud;" if, indeed, it may not rather be said that the word is used to show that our Lord esteems it, so to speak, an exaltation, when He is most abased for love of thee. He makes the "clouds His chariot."² However this may be, it cannot be denied that He comes in this chariot hidden, secretly, and alone; adore Him notwithstanding with the lowliest worship, for the fact of a great sovereign travelling *incognito* ought in no way to diminish the respect paid to him when he is recognized.

IV. Consider fourthly, that if when the Child Jesus entered Egypt all the idols felt the effects of it, and were shaken with exceeding terror, much more ought they to do so now that

¹ St. Mark ix. 6.

² Psalm ciii. 3.

He comes, no longer as a fugitive, but a King. What, therefore, can be more just than that He should be feared? Thou hast heard that these idols are all the vices which He finds in thy heart. And what is the power which should overthrow them? It is the power of "His presence." For how is it possible that any one of these vices should dare to stand, much less to rise in rebellion, when confronted with the Divine example which our Lord gives thee in the Blessed Sacrament? Pride is one of thy great idols, and how can it help falling instantly "at the presence of the Lord"? Behold Him humbled beneath the Host to such a degree that He may truly be said to be annihilated, since under the species He has not even the form of a servant, as He once had when "He debased Himself, taking the form of a servant."¹ Nay, He has not even the form of a man, but only of so mean a thing as food. And dost thou shrink still from humbling thyself? Let "man no more presume to magnify himself upon earth."² Anger, impatience, excessive care for thine own reputation, all these are among the number of thy idols, and shall not they all fall down instantly "at the presence of the Lord," when thou seest the unconquerable patience with which, hidden beneath the Host, He endures the insults He every day receives from Jews, heathens, and heretics, nay, even from too many of His own priests, who do not make any difference between this Heavenly Bread and that which is given to dogs? He might strike all these wretched men dead at a blow; but He does not; nay, in spite of all these horrible profanations, He continues to dwell day after day beneath innumerable particles until the sacramental species are entirely destroyed, so great is His gentleness; and yet how quickly thou art angered! "Remember not any injury done thee by thy neighbour."³ Above all other idols is that of thy intense love of doing thy own will. Shall not this, too, fall in exceeding terror "at the presence of the Lord"? See what obedience that is which He practises every day in so many parts of the world by making Himself present on the altar merely at the bidding, not of His superiors, but His servants; nay, there is not a spot in the world where He would not come at their word, provided only there were matter capable of receiving consecration, and a deliberate intention to consecrate. Yet thou knowest how many there are who consecrate unworthily. How, then, is it possible for

¹ Philipp. ii. 7.² Psalm x. 18.³ Ecclus. x. 6.

this love of thine own will, opinion, taste, and pleasure, which thou showest in acting as thou chooseth, to remain standing "in the presence of the Lord"? "Be ye subject to every human creature for God's sake."¹ The same may be said of many other idols which are within thee, especially unmercifulness to the poor and harshness to thy inferiors, which ought not only to be broken in pieces, but crushed to powder before the gentleness, meekness, charity, and perfect equality of condescension to all, which our Lord shows in the Blessed Sacrament. Is it not right that all of these idols should fall and not one be left standing? "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, and idols shall be utterly destroyed."² This is the triumph which Christ won as a Child in Egypt, even when He did not seek it; and is it possible that He should not win it now that as a Man He desires it? See that it may be truly said of thy heart, that if this triumph is not already won, it is at least near. "Behold, the Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud, and will enter into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence."

V. Consider fifthly, the reason why *Isaias* did not say that these idols were to "fall," but to "be moved" at the sight of the true God, although in truth they did fall. It was, if thou considerest it rightly, to show that they were not to fall like inanimate things, as statues fall when struck by lightning, but like animated creatures, as though they knew and did homage to the Divinity present in the Person of the Redeemer. So, too, must it be with thy idols; they must not wait to be destroyed, as it were, by God's thunder-bolts—they must "be moved," that is to say, they must fall through love, for He does not value homage which is paid by force. If He chose to subject souls in this manner He could do so, but He does not wish to do it. And just as formerly He would have the victims for His sacrifices not dragged, but walking to the altar, so neither does He now accept compulsory, but only voluntary worship in His service: "Give glory to God with a good heart."³ Take heed, then, that thy affections may show their sense of thy Lord's presence, and so may fall to the ground of themselves; otherwise, must it not be said that they are harder and more stubborn than those stones which paid Him the honour that thou refuseth Him?

¹ 1 St. Peter ii. 13.² *Isaias* ii. 17, 18.³ *Eccius*. xxxv. 10.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.

*The rich man, when he shall sleep, shall take away nothing with him ;
he shall open his eyes, and find nothing (Job xxvii. 19).*

I. Consider that, although the rich man here spoken of is a wicked rich man, nevertheless, his death is called "sleep," a title which is given to the death of the just: "Lazarus our friend sleepeth."¹ But look a little closer and thou wilt see that it is not so. So far from the text saying that he will sleep when his death takes place, it says the very reverse: it says that his sleep will then be over. The word used is *dormierit*, not *dormiet*, so that the true meaning is, "When he shall have slept," not, "When he shall sleep." The just, as thou knowest, all watch during their lifetime; this is their especial merit: "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching."² And therefore their death is called sleep, because it is then that they begin to rest from their incessant labours of this watching: "From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours."³ The wicked, on the contrary, sleep all their lifetime. "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?"⁴ In their case, therefore, it is rather death that is called watching, for it is only then that they cease to sleep: "He shall be brought to the graves, and shall watch in the heap of the dead."⁵ And in truth, what a terrible sleep it is which overpowers these wretched men, from which they are not roused by the trumpet of the preacher, nor awakened by the thunder of denunciations; nay, so profound is it that they even remain insensible to the stroke of chastisement! Most truly, then, may it be said that this deep slumber of theirs is like death. And if this is so, what wonder is it if death is changed in their case into a waking which will never be followed by any rest? Oh, how far better is it for thee to watch patiently for a few days than to have to watch with these miserable men in the flames and torments of Hell for all eternity! Ah, then, indeed, sleep will depart for ever from all the wicked: "Sleep is gone from my eyes."⁶

II. Consider secondly, that this rich man, on waking from his lethargic sleep, will take nothing with him of all that he possessed in the world. Why do I say, "He will take nothing"? Not only so, but he will not be able to steal anything by fraud,

³ Apoc. xiv. 13.

¹ St. John xi. 11. ⁴ Proverbs vi. 9.

² St. Luke xii. 37.

⁵ Job xxi. 32. ⁶ 1 Mach. vi. 10.

nor to seize upon it by violence: "The rich man, when he shall have slept, shall take away nothing with him." And this is why the word used is not *afferet*, but *auferet*, to show that any attempt which this miserable man might wrongfully make to carry with him into the next world anything that he enjoys in this, would be useless. A wicked rich man is not satisfied with his own, and therefore he not only puts into his coffers (*affert*) all the wealth which lawfully accrues to him from his sources of income, but also what does not thus accrue to him: for he lends money on usury, he makes unjust bargains and calculations, he sucks the blood of the poor, he does not pay what is due to churches and monasteries, he does not discharge the obligations of piety, and so, he not only puts in (*affert*) what is his own, but he carries off (*aufert*) all that he can either by cheating or oppressing his neighbour. But how long will these robberies of the wretched man last? Till all that he has is confiscated by death. Then all those trickeries in which he now involves his business transactions will no longer serve him: neither violence or cunning will avail him then: strive as he may, he will not be able to carry away a farthing by stealth: "He shall take away nothing with him." It is true that at the hour of death this is common to all, and that the rich just man will be equally unable to take anything with him: but how great a difference there is between the two cases. The rich just man has sent on his money before him to be placed in the bank of Paradise, and therefore he will care nothing that he cannot take it with him when he comes to die. But the wicked rich man has sent nothing there; what then will he say when He finds himself cast into Hell without having the means of obtaining through endless ages so much as a single drop of water? Then he will indeed see how true it is that "he that loveth riches shall reap no fruit from them."¹ For the rich just and the rich wicked men alike abounded in riches, only the latter loved and therefore kept them: the former did not love them, and therefore distributed them among the poor. What was the consequence? That the just man derived great profit from them, and the wicked man none at all. It is for thee to judge which was the wisest: "Blessed is the rich man . . . that hath not gone after gold,"² but who, instead of following it, like a contemptible slave, has sent it before him, like a great noble.

¹ Eccles. v. 9.² Eccclus. xxxi. 8.

III. Consider thirdly, the state of this miserable rich man in Hell, when "he shall open his eyes and find nothing." He will be like one who wakes up and looks about him for those riches which he dreamed that he possessed in such abundance, but cannot find them: they have vanished with the dream. What misery and anguish will he feel! The unhappy man will then curse that sleep which allowed him to think himself rich, because it has but increased his sorrow at finding himself poor: he will curse his folly and madness, and oh, then, how will he wish that he had known how to spend that money well which he did not know how to spend in his lifetime, since he spent it as a man would in his sleep. But of what avail are his wishes? there is no time to spend it now. The miserable man has, indeed, opened his eyes, but not till he is reduced to abject poverty; and therefore it will then be of no use to know how to spend the money well which he no longer has: "He shall open his eyes," but at the same time he shall "find nothing." But do thou take particular notice, for thy own good, where it is that sinners at length open their eyes: it is in Hell. Lazarus was all day at the palace gates of that unhappy glutton in Jerusalem; but he was so overcome with sleep that he did not see him, or at least acted as though he did not see him. What happened afterwards? he was cast into Hell: "The rich man died, and was buried in Hell;" and from the depths of that abyss he could see him in Abraham's bosom, although, as we know, there was all chaos between them: "Lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."¹ Well indeed, then, must his eyes have been opened in the midst of his torments; but happy would he have been if he could have closed them again, not indeed in the sleep of his former life, but in death. Vain hope! for "the rich man, when he shall have slept, shall open his eyes and find nothing," where-with even to pay a cruel executioner to take away his life.

¹ St. Luke xvi. 23.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

Thy arrows are fastened in me, and Thy hand hath been strong upon me
(Psalm xxxvii. 3).

I. Consider first, that when a hunter wishes to capture some flying game, such as a deer or hind, he shoots several arrows, so that some of them may remain in the animal's sides and either make it run less swiftly, or stop altogether; and in this way he overtakes and captures it. Now, it would seem that this is the simile which David makes use of in this verse of his penitential Psalm. For when he was fleeing from God, He stopped him in his flight, first by giving him warning of the arrows of various afflictions, and then by striking him with them, so that He laid hold of him with His Divine hands, made them "strong upon" him, and so won him wholly to Himself. And as God dealt with David, so does He still deal with many a man whom He loves. He sees that it is in vain that He seeks to subject them to Himself by gentle means, because their spirit is so audacious that they "think themselves born free like a wild ass's colt."¹ What, therefore, does He do? He takes in His hand keen and sharp arrows, and when they are running with the utmost freedom, He strikes them. And where does He strike them? Wherever He judges it most fit; for He is so skilful a hunter that He can strike wherever He pleases: "His arrows, like those of a mighty man, a destroyer, shall not return in vain."² He strikes one in the reins with some grievous internal disease, another in the eyes with blindness, another in the ears with deafness, another in the hands with the cruel pain of gout; and so in the end He makes each acknowledge himself conquered. If thou thinkest about it carefully, thou wilt see that there are innumerable persons whom God wins by this way of hunting them with arrows: "Thy arrows are sharp, under Thee shall people fall."³ But let one represent them all to you; namely, that poor Prodigal Son, who chose in his folly to go away from his father—"He went abroad into a far country"⁴—and into whom God shot those arrows which, by the mouth of Ezechiel, He had called grievous, that is, the arrows of famine—"When I shall send upon them the grievous arrows of famine, which shall bring death"⁵—and by their

¹ Job xi. 12.² Jerem. i. 9.³ Psalm xlv. 6.⁴ St. Luke xv. 13.⁵ Ezech. v. 16.

means made him His own. But indeed, those arrows which are the most grievous, poverty, ignominy, desertion, public-disgrace, are, in God's hand, as a rule, the most salutary, because they are the most efficacious in bringing down the pride of those who are in a very prosperous condition. Now apply to thy own benefit what has here been said, and see whether God has shot against thee any of these arrows to conquer thee. If so, give Him thanks, for it is a mark of very great love. If not, pray Him to do so, for it is very possible that thy salvation may depend upon it: "Thy arrows are fastened in me, and Thy hand hath been strong upon me."

II. Consider secondly, that this is precisely why it is said, "Thy hand hath been strong upon me." The word used is not *firmasti*, but one still stronger, *confirmasti*, because when God wins souls to Himself in this way, He generally wins them more firmly, more effectually, so that He does not lose them any more: for, being wounded, they cannot so easily escape Him. And this is why tribulations are considered such sure marks of predestination to glory, because, by means of them, God generally not merely strengthens (*firmat*), but confirms (*confirmat*) His hand upon souls. This way of dealing with them is very often that confirmation in grace which thou hearest of God having granted to many, as He did to every one of His holy Apostles. He gave them a great deal to suffer. Therefore St. Paul wrote: "Gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me;"¹ not that it "may be," in any sort of way, as he might speak of something which was a slight support, but that it "may dwell," as being his sovereign support. Again, when God has won a soul to Himself in this way, it is a sign of His bearing it more than ordinary love, because He has gone in pursuit of it, as He did of St. Paul. For, if He has done so much to win it, it would be difficult to believe that He will lose it after it has been won, and won, too, by means of these arrows. Arrows are only used in hunting animals that run far away from the sportsman: those which are less swift are caught by snares. If, then, God's care for this soul was so great even when it fled from Him so basely, that He had to pierce it with arrows to stop it, there is surely good reason to hope that when His hand has made it prisoner, He will not only strengthen (*firmet*), but confirm (*confirmet*) that hand upon it so that it may never escape again.

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

III. Consider thirdly, that in order that this may be so, it is not enough for the arrows to wound the fugitive slightly; they must go deep, otherwise he will shake them off, and continue his flight. And this is to be seen in the troubles that God sends; if they are slight, so that the wound is only skin-deep, as we say, they do not take effect. It is when they are grievous, nay, even permanent, so that there is no hope of ever being released from them, that they take effect; for then it is that the soul at length gives itself up to God. And this is why David said: "Thy arrows are fastened in me, and Thy hand hath been strong upon me," for it is when the arrows have gone deep, when they are "fastened," that the hunter is sure of his game; when they have not gone deep, he is not sure: and why is this? Because then they do not do the work of conquest. To do this they must drink at least sufficient blood to bring down the spirit of excessive boldness or of exorbitant vanity; and it is to this that holy Job seems to allude when he says: "The arrows of the Lord are in me, the rage whereof drinketh up my spirit."¹ And is not this spirit which they drink, that of which we are speaking; the spirit of boldness, of vanity, of arrogance? Oh, how wonderfully do they "drink up" this audacious spirit! And when, by this means, man has become more humble, he submits to his God more readily, and so is blessed: "Blessed are the poor in spirit."² If, therefore, thou wouldst attain to a blessedness so exalted, that it was placed by Christ first in the list of the beatitudes, beg of Him to use these arrows of His against thee also; beg of Him to fix them in thee till thou humblest thyself in earnest, for although they are the arrows of His indignation, they are also those of His special love. Dost thou suppose that God stands in need of anything thou canst do? If He pursues after thee, it is for thy good, not for any advantage to Himself.

NINETEENTH DAY.

As a flood hath watered the earth, so shall the wrath of the Lord inherit the nations that have not sought after Him (Eccclus. xxxix. 28).

I. Consider first, that although the word here translated "flood" (*cataclysmus*) means any inundation, yet in the Sacred Scriptures it is only used to signify that tremendous one which

¹ Job vi. 4.

² St. Matt. v. 3.

covered the whole world in the universal flood. So it is that when the Wise Man is speaking, in another place, of sinners, he says that "for their sakes came the flood." Now then, think what flood that was, how wide and deep, how much greater than anything of which thou canst form an idea. Not only did the waters rise to the tops of the highest mountains, such as those of Armenia, but they covered the whole of the earth in such a manner that it was utterly overwhelmed by them; they flowed into its depths, they penetrated its inmost recesses, so that there was not left a hand's breadth that was not submerged. Now turn thy thoughts to Hell, and bring before thy mind a flood as vast and penetrating as that which thou hast been contemplating, only of fire instead of water. Thou hast seen how the waters covered every part of the earth; even so does the fire of Hell cover the reprobate, so that it penetrates into their inmost souls, and insinuates itself into every part—their bones and vitals, their veins and marrow, in such a manner that they drink in fire just as the earth did water: "I will pour out my wrath upon them like water."¹ Dost thou imagine that the damned can lift their eyes to Heaven? Alas! they can never do so because of that tremendous fiery flood which is above them, rising far far above those regions of Hell which are the highest. Think, then, what it must be for those who inhabit its lowest depths! With what bitter cries may all there say to God, "I am cast away from before Thy eyes."² All those unhappy beings are steeped in fire, or rather, may it not be said that the fire is within them? And oh, how deeply are they plunged and engulfed in it! Did I say *are*? Alas! far worse than that—they *will be* there for all eternity. This is the meaning of the words: "As a flood hath watered the earth, so shall the wrath of the Lord inherit the nations that have not sought after Him."

II. Consider secondly, that the "wrath" of God is the same thing as His justice. There is no anger in Him but this, His avenging justice: a calm, unexcited, tranquil anger, doubtless, but for that very reason the more terrible, because, being calm while judging—"Thou judgest with tranquillity"³—it is implacable after it has judged. Now, it is this anger, which moves over that fiery flood, as at the beginning the Spirit of God moved over the waters, and gives it its power of producing such terrible results; it is this anger which gives

¹ Osee v. 10.² Psalm xxx. 23.³ Wisdom xii. 18.

it strength and fury, for its action is like that of fire: "His indignation is poured out like fire."¹ Nay, it is far more powerful than fire; for not only will it burn the reprobate, but torture them in all those other ways which belong to a place which is the abode of every imaginable kind of torment—"The place of torment."² Go through all the different torments of Hell, if possible—the sword, furious beasts, the wheel, thirst, madness, melancholy, disgrace, envy, rage, despair, loss; all of these are so many ways in which the anger of God will be wreaked upon the reprobate when at last they have become its "inheritance."

III. Consider thirdly, why it is that the "wrath of the Lord" is not merely said to possess, but to "inherit" the reprobate. There are many reasons for this: first, because it cannot possess them perfectly till after their death. So long as they live it is liable to lose them at any moment, because they only fall to it by right of death (*jure mortis*), in the same way as an inheritance. Secondly, because as soon as they are dead it has no trouble in coming into possession: they belong to it by the most direct of all titles, by its own right (*jure suo*). Thirdly, because when it possesses them no one can ever lay claim to rob it of them; it will possess them for ever, by a perpetual right (*jure perpetuo*). Fourthly and lastly, because as mercy has its inheritance, so too ought the sister of mercy, that is, justice, to have hers. The inheritance of mercy will be the elect, the inheritance of justice will be the reprobate; the former will be the noblest, the latter the largest, and this is why the former is compared to the stars and the latter to the grains of sand: "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of Heaven, and as the sand which is on the seashore."³ The whole of the inheritance will be divided between these two great sisters on the Day of Judgment, by virtue of the solemn sentence passed by Christ, and then, so to speak, the litigation of all ages will be at an end. Now, mercy exerts herself to the utmost to diminish the inheritance of justice, and justice will not suffer mercy to triumph unless every claim of right is satisfied. But on that day, having as it were come to a compromise in Christ, as the supreme Umpire long since chosen by mutual consent of these two, they will both be entirely contented with the portion of the inheritance allotted to each, and so they will embrace each other, and exchange the final kiss of perpetual alliance:

¹ Nahum i. 6.² St. Luke xvi. 28.³ Genesis xxii. 17.

“Justice and peace have kissed,”¹ because henceforward there will be no dispute of any sort. Justice will leave mercy in the fullest possession of all the elect, and mercy will leave justice in undisturbed possession of all the reprobate, and both will possess their share for all eternity. Think, then, for awhile to which of the two thou wilt be allotted. God grant that it may not be to the sister who will receive the larger but not the better portion!

IV. Consider fourthly, who they are of whom it is said that they will constitute the inheritance of justice, that is, of “the wrath of the Lord.” They will be those who have not sincerely sought Him. “The wrath of the Lord shall inherit the nations that have not sought after Him.” What reason there is here for being not only filled but overwhelmed with horror! Observe that it is said, “The nations that have not sought after Him.” If it had been said, those who have cruelly filled the earth with blood, who slew and cut in pieces so many innocent martyrs; if it had been said, those who have lived shamefully like brutes, wallowing in the mire of every kind of impurity and uncleanness—but no; this is not what is said, but those who have not “sought after” God, at least, not with all their hearts. And why is it that this is said? It is to show that God punishes, not sins of commission only, but of omission. Every one knows that idolaters, murderers, assassins, libertines, will be inherited by “the wrath of the Lord;” but if every one knows, every one does not consider that the same will be the lot of those who have not cared to inquire concerning the truth, because they have not cared to know it. And these are the persons who are here said by God to be those “who have not sought after Him.” Here thou shouldst reflect a little on thy own case, and examine whether thou art in the habit of regarding thy sins of omission as seriously as thou ought. How many of these do all, in every state, commit, but especially how many do those continually commit who have the charge of others, such as princes, prelates, parish priests, and heads of families: “Who can understand sins?”² And these, according to St. Thomas, are precisely what are meant, namely, serious omissions in the law. Do thou think on thy own sins of this kind, and consider whether thou hast taken pains to learn what God requires of thee in thy state of life, and whether, when thou hast learnt it, thou doest it, thus seeking Him and not thyself, thy own

¹ Psalm lxxiv. 11.

² Psalm xviii. 13.

glory, caprice, convenience, or interest. Observe that the flood is here said to "water the dry land" (*aridam*). It is true indeed that this word (*arida*) in the Sacred Scriptures generally signifies the whole earth: "God called the dry land, earth;"¹ but it is also true that it particularly signifies that which is sandy, dry, and barren: "And that which was dry land shall become a pool."² And to this kind of earth those persons are here compared by God who "have not sought after Him," in order that it may be known that He punishes in everlasting fire not those alone who are guilty of flagrant sins of commission, and who are like a soil that is entirely uncultivated, which produces thistles, thorns, brambles, and poisonous plants, but those also whose sins are those of omission, who are like a sandy soil which produces no harvest at the proper season: "As a flood hath watered the earth, so shall the wrath of the Lord inherit the nations that have not sought after Him."

TWENTIETH DAY.

ST. BERNARDINE OF SIENA.

Labour as a good soldier of Christ Jesus (2 Timothy ii. 3).

I. Consider first, that a man may be called a soldier of Christ in three senses. (1) When he fights against tyrants; and in this sense every one of the martyrs was His soldier, and one of His bravest soldiers. He "gave him a strong conflict that he might overcome."³ (2) When he fights against error; and in this sense doctors, prelates, preachers, and the like are His soldiers, always on the watch to shoot at those monsters, as soon as they are born, which are continually rising up in the Church against the faith: "Fight the good fight of faith."⁴ (3) When he fights against his own appetites, and consequently against those which so diligently excite them, namely, the world, the flesh, and the devil; and in this sense every Christian is a soldier of Christ: "Let us run . . . to the fight proposed to us, looking on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, Who, having set joy before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame."⁵ Thou thinkest,

¹ Genesis i. 10. ² Isaias xxxv. 7.

³ Wisdom x. 12.

⁴ 1 Timothy vi. 12.

⁵ Hebrews xii. 1, 2.

perhaps, that only the last of these three kinds of warfare concerns thee, which is the one generally said to be common to all. But this is not so: all the three kinds belong to every one, although every one has not the opportunity of being present at all these three sorts of battle. Therefore this saying, "Labour as a good soldier of Christ," is a very comprehensive one. A man who was a good soldier in one kind and not in another, would not deserve to be called absolutely "a good soldier."

II. Consider secondly, that the Apostle does not here say, "Fight as a good soldier of Christ," but "labour;" because there is not always an opportunity of engaging in each kind of warfare, but there is always the necessity of working so as to be able to do it. Good commanders never allow their soldiers to be idle, but even in time of peace train them to war. So too does Christ: He would have thee, even when thou art not fighting against all the three kinds of enemies which have been mentioned, at least always in training for it. I know that it is not now against tyrants that thou hast to show thy prowess by fighting "the good fight of faith;" yet still, if thou art a real Christian, thou oughtest to imitate the martyrs, if not by doing battle, as they did, at least by jousting. Therefore, thou must accustom thyself to keep thy faith clear and strong, as though thou hadst to defend it bravely before a public tribunal. Thou must accustom thyself to despise thy life, as though thou hadst to give it bravely for Christ. Thou must accustom thyself to hate thy body, to use it hardly, to mortify and afflict it, as though thou hadst to expose it naked to the most savage executioners. Oh, what glorious lists are these, where, if the martyr's crown is not gained, it is at least aimed at! But if, on the contrary, thou art wrapt up in thy own comforts, canst thou boast that thou art in any sense a soldier of Christ? By profession thou mayest be, but not by deeds: "Labour as a good soldier of Christ."

III. Consider thirdly, that although it may not be thy office to fight against error, because thou art neither doctor, prelate, preacher, nor anything of the sort, whose part it is to overcome monsters by fighting "the fight of faith," yet, if thou art a real Christian, thou oughtest to imitate these valiant men by training thyself to be able to refute at least the many odious objections which are continually raised against the practical truths of the Gospel. Dost thou not see the sort of maxims which nowadays prevail even among Christian

nations? That it is disgraceful to pardon an enemy, to take a low place, to restrain one's self, to humble one's self, to practise Confession and Communion frequently, to visit private oratories for penitential exercises, as though nobility of birth were disgraced by the Christian profession. And how canst thou excuse thyself, if thou art not able and ready to refute, at least in such matters: "Every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God?"¹ Is not the practical knowledge of the Gospel the knowledge of Jesus Christ as well as that which is contained in the Creed, and which concerns dogma? How then, if thou art a soldier, canst thou endure that it should be so boldly and continually condemned by such numbers in their mad gatherings? If thou dost not know how to answer their errors, thou mayest easily learn how to do so: "Labour as a good soldier of Christ."

IV. Consider fourthly, that although the world, the flesh, and the devil, are such troublesome enemies, that, as thou knowest, they give thee no time of lasting peace, yet they sometimes grant thee a short truce, but is this a reason for not having thy arms always ready, like a true soldier, for "the fight proposed" to thee? Nay, these cunning adversaries grant thee this truce at times for the very purpose of lulling thee into security, so that if thou dost not throw down thy arms, at least thou mayest let them fall from thy hands. And so, if there is a time when thou shouldst be more on thy guard than another, it is that when, perhaps, thou thinkest thyself safest, for then it is that God allows them to assail thee more violently, in order to punish thy negligence. "Arise, and go up to a nation that is at ease, and that dwelleth securely, saith the Lord: they have neither gates nor bars, they dwell alone."² The true military rule, then, is to guard the fortress as though the enemy were already at the gates, even at the time when it is known that they are not even in the field: "Labour as a good soldier of Christ." No soldier is always fighting, but every soldier is always hard at work.

V. Consider fifthly, in the last place, that, in order to be a good soldier of Christ, thou must not only faithfully do all that has here been described, but do it moreover entirely out of love to Him: thou must be a volunteer, not a mercenary. The latter does not fight so much for his King as for himself, because all that he does is with a view to pay. The former fights for his King only. And so, if thou fightest as the

¹ 2 Cor. x. 5.² Jerem. xlix. 31.

martyrs did, "labour as a good soldier of Christ." Look to Him alone; do not afflict thy body so much for the sake of satisfying in this life for the far more grievous penalties merited in the next, as for the sake of avenging the injury done to Him: "Spare not arrows, because she hath sinned against the Lord."¹ This is the motive: "Shout against her, . . . for it is the vengeance of the Lord. Take vengeance upon her: as she hath done, so do to her."² It is "the vengeance of the Lord" when thy desire is to do away with the sin; it is rather thy own vengeance than the Lord's when thou desirest to do away with the penalty, because it is a vengeance with a view to thy own advantage. Therefore, if thou art teaching, lecturing, preaching, or in any way making war upon error, or preparing to do so, "labour as a good soldier of Christ;" do it out of zeal: do not do it, at least not mainly, for the recompense which goes with this kind of warfare: "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who shall not seek silver, nor desire gold, but with their arrows they shall kill their children."³ Those are good soldiers who do not consider the booty, "who do not seek silver nor desire gold," because these are they who give no quarter—they are implacable; they are not continually entering houses to look for money under cover of searching for concealed enemies. Their weapons are arrows: "They kill the children with arrows," that is to say, they fight at a distance. So must thou do if thou wouldst conquer thy sins: "Labour as a good soldier of Christ." Do not look even to the glories of Paradise: thy object must be to please Him Who is looking down from Heaven to see how thou bearest thyself in the fray. Mark that brave soldier who charges under the eye of his King. He thinks as little of his life as of his pay. He may be wounded, crushed, cut to pieces—it matters not. And why is this? "That he may please him to whom he hath engaged himself."⁴ And this must be thy object. If in any one of these three kinds of warfare thou thinkest of thyself, then thou art fighting for thyself, not for Jesus Christ. "Labour as a good soldier of Christ," in imitation of the glorious St. Bernardine, who in all three laboured as so incomparable a soldier.

¹ Jerem. l. 14.

² Jerem. l. 15.

³ Isaias xlii. 17, 18.

⁴ 2 Timothy ii. 4.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains
(Isaia's xii. 3).

I. Consider first, how very great must have been the joy of the children of Israel when, after having so long journeyed in the desert without finding any water, they came at length to a spot called Elim, where there was plenty for every one to drink, bathe in, and refresh himself to his heart's content. And yet, what are the fountains of Elim in comparison with those of Calvary? Climb that hill where streams of grace are ever flowing from the Five Wounds of Jesus Crucified, and thou wilt see how much greater reason thou hast for rejoicing. These are the fountains which should be thy only delight in the desert of this miserable world. Here, then, remain; bathe in them, drink of them, take thy fill of them, for never canst thou hope to find such another spot in all the desert. Especially shouldst thou strive to draw from these fountains as much as possible of the water flowing from them, for there is none that can be compared to Divine grace. This is the water which they send forth; it is so called in numberless passages of the Sacred Scriptures, in order to express not only the abundance, the freedom, the readiness with which it is given, but still more the wonderful benefits which it confers. The three most beneficial qualities belonging to water which we get from a fountain are its power of cleansing, fertilizing, and quenching thirst. And the same are the three most magnificent blessings of grace. Try to enter into their meaning, and thou wilt see how rightly it is said that thou shouldst "draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains."

II. Consider secondly, that the first beneficial property of fountains is that of cleansing; their water is able to do away with stains. And this is the first work of grace—it washes away the stains of the soul: "I will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness."¹ But how much more effectual is the cleansing of grace than that of water! The water in which thou washest does, indeed, take away all the stains which are upon thy flesh, but it does not make it cleaner than it was before it was so stained, it leaves it merely in its natural condition, which is one of defilement; whereas grace not only restores to thee that cleanness which

¹ *Ezech. xxxvi. 25.*

thou wouldst have possessed in thy original nature before sinning, but it increases it by imparting a purity of another kind, that is to say, a purity resembling that of the Divine Nature, which was not due to thee: "Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow."¹ Secondly, water does, it is true, do away with thy stains when thou washest in it, but this does not bestow upon thee any sort of beauty. If thou art ugly, it leaves thee so; if beautiful, it does not add to thy beauty; but grace enhances the beauty which belongs to the soul by its natural qualities, by the addition of another and far superior beauty, a beauty of which God is so enamoured that He follows after the soul like a most passionate lover, telling her and repeating to her how fair she is: "Behold thou art fair, O My love, behold thou art fair."² Thirdly, if thou bathest too long in the water, it weakens and relaxes thee, so that if thou wert to remain continually in a bath thy strength would be greatly enfeebled. The effect which the cleansing of grace has upon the soul is to strengthen it, and the more frequent the cleansing the greater the increase of strength: "Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in grace."³ Fourthly, water cleanses thee indeed when thou washest in it, but it does not remain, it passes from thee together with the stains that it removes. When grace cleanses thee it remains dwelling in thy soul, and dwelling in such a manner that, whatever good thou doest, thy thoughts, words, and works are attributed to grace as well as to thee; nay, still more to grace than to thee, so perfect is the union: "Not I, but the grace of God with me."⁴ And if this is so, dost thou not see how much the cleansing of grace is superior to that produced by the purest water of all the fountains of Elim? Can there, then, be a doubt that your joy should be greater in drawing from the fountains of the Saviour? "You shall draw water with joy out of the Saviour's fountains."

III. Consider thirdly, that the second beneficial property of fountains is to fertilize, for their streams water plants. This is the second work of grace—it fertilizes souls, so that they may produce abundance of good works, like a garden that is plentifully supplied with water: "Their soul shall be as a watered garden."⁵ And how much better is this also done by grace than by water! Water fertilizes plants merely by nourishing their vital power, but not by either imparting that

¹ Psalm l. 9.

² Cant. i. 14.

³ 2 Timothy ii. 1.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 10.

⁵ Jerem. xxxi. 12.

power to those that are barren, or by restoring it to those that are dry; whereas grace gives life to all those souls that are not capable of producing fruit, and restores it when lost: "He saved us by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Ghost, Whom He hath poured forth upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."¹ Secondly, water, although it fertilizes plants, does not change them from bad to good, from wild to cultivated, from poisonous to wholesome; but grace produces Divine fruits in the soul which hitherto had yielded fruits of perdition, and effects an instantaneous and wonderful change, turning a Saul into a Paul, so that those who before brought forth "fruit unto death," "bring forth fruit unto God."² Thirdly, when water fertilizes plants, it is within the limits of their natural species: it does not, for instance, enable an orange-tree to bear pomegranates, nor a pomegranate-tree to bear oranges; but when grace fertilizes a soul, it imparts to it the power of producing fruits far superior to any which it was naturally capable of bearing: "You have your fruit unto sanctification."³ Fourthly, water, when it fertilizes plants, does not endow each one with the power of producing all the fruits of every other kind, as though they were all grafted on it, oranges, pomegranates, peaches, lemons, quinces, and those of all the other trees growing near it in the same garden. Grace gives such unlimited power that it admits of no exception, "being fruitful in every good work,"⁴ so that there is no single good work of any kind which thou canst not, by the virtue of grace, make sure of producing, as much as any other: "I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me."⁵ If this is so, does it not show thee how much better is the fertility of grace than anything that could be produced by the most abundant streams of Elim, and oughtest thou not to draw from the fountains of the Saviour with far greater joy? "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains."

IV. Consider fourthly, that the third beneficial property of fountains is that of quenching thirst. And this, also, is the third work of grace. But here it must be remarked that the soul may languish from two kinds of thirst, a bad and a good kind. The bad kind has its origin in disorder, and so is not only injurious and pestilent, but exceedingly painful; of this sort is the thirst of the lascivious, the covetous, the ambitious, the revengeful, and such-like workers of iniquity, who long to

¹ Titus iii. 5, 6.² Romans vii. 4.³ Romans vi. 22.⁴ Coloss. i. 10.⁵ Philipp. iv. 13.

satisfy their irregular desires: "The soul of the wicked desireth evil."¹ The good kind has its origin in a healthy condition of soul, and therefore is not only harmless but pleasant, so that it causes no pain, or, if it does, it is so sweet a pain that the soul which experiences it would not exchange it for any earthly joy. This is the thirst of those holy souls which long after their Chief Good: "For Thee my soul hath thirsted."² Now the effect of grace is to quench the bad and to increase the good kind of thirst. It quenches the former by either destroying not only all evil but all superfluous desires, or at least repressing them so that they give no disturbance: "The things that were gain to me, the same I have counted loss for Christ."³ It increases the latter, by continually imparting to the soul a greater desire of seeing, loving, glorifying, and possessing God, and of being for ever united with Him: "They that drink Me shall yet thirst."⁴ Can any other water be found possessing such virtue? The thirst that can be quenched by ordinary water is never good (and therefore, so far, the comparison fails), it is always bad; although natural thirst is the least bad, that which arises from indigestion is worse, and the worst of all is that which comes from serious illness. But whatever this thirst may proceed from, thou seest that, although water quenches it, it is but for a short time: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again."⁵ Nay, sometimes, it becomes more violent after drinking, as when a sick person drinks in the height of fever. But it is not so with grace; it so completely quenches the bad kind of thirst that it will never again trouble thee, at least not to any serious extent: "He that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst for ever." Neither is this to be wondered at, for the water which thou drinkest when thou art thirsty quickly vanishes, whereas grace continues in thee with its fountain: "The water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting." And what thirst can he suffer who has in himself the source of water, and, moreover, the water of Paradise? I say of Paradise, because if it rises so high that it attains "to life everlasting," it must necessarily have descended from the same height, for this is a property of water, that it can only rise to its own level. See, then, how much greater is the power of grace to quench thirst, than that of the freshest water of all the fountains of Elim, and therefore

¹ Prov. xxi. 10.² Psalm lxii. 2.³ Philipp. iii. 7.⁴ Ecclus. xxiv. 29.⁵ St. John iv. 13.

with how much greater joy thou shouldst draw from the fountains of the Saviour, for this reason also: "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains."

V. Consider fifthly, after having heard the wonderful qualities of a water so perfect as grace is, thou too oughtest at once to exclaim with the Samaritan woman, "Lord, give me this water."¹ But indeed thou hast no reason to say so; for if thou dost not already possess this water in abundance, thou hast only thyself to complain of. Hast thou not been told that it flows from fountains, and from fountains that are open and free to all?—"A fountain open to the house of David."² What excuse hast thou, then, when thou hast not to go through even as much trouble in procuring it as there would be in drawing it from a well? Think, therefore, that it is also said: "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains," because the waters which are drawn out of wells are rather drawn with labour, weariness, and exhaustion than "with joy:" those which are drawn with joy are those which flow readily from the source, because no trouble, no exertion is required: the weakest woman is able to draw them in abundance. But what fountains are there like these fountains of the Saviour? Dost thou know what thou hast to do in order to obtain water from them in abundance? Thou hast but to ask: "If thou didst know the gift of God, and Who is He that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."³ Alas! these fountains thirst for thee more than thou dost for them: there is, therefore, no fear of their refusing thee their water, if thou dost but ask for it with all thy heart. The fear is, that thou art not disposed to ask, which is the reason why Christ did not say to the Samaritan woman, "Thou wouldst have asked, and perhaps He would have given," but "Thou, perhaps, wouldst have asked, and He would have given," because the only doubt is on the side of those who go to draw the water: there is none whatever on the side of the fountains. Nay, so full a stream do they pour forth, that they seem to be continually inviting thee to approach: "He that will, let him take the water of life gratis."⁴ Seeing, then, that these are fountains of such exceeding virtue, resolve that thou wilt always abide near them. Never depart from Jesus, Who was crucified for thee; call upon Him, adore Him, cling to Him, embrace Him as often and as lovingly as possible, for it is from Him that every

¹ St. John iv. 15. ² Zach. xiii. 1. ³ St. John iv. 10. ⁴ Apoc. xxii. 17.

good must come to thee. If thou actest wisely, all the good that thou canst desire in the world can be reduced to three things: forsaking sin, acquiring virtue, and determining to have nothing on earth but God alone. And all these the Wounds of thy Saviour will give thee. By cleansing thee, they will enable thee to get rid of thy sins; by making thee fruitful, to acquire virtues; by quenching the bad and increasing the good thirst, to desire nothing but God alone. Ask the first grace, therefore, from the Wounds of His Sacred Feet, beseeching them to cleanse thee; ask the second from the Wounds of His Sacred Hands, beseeching them to make thee fruitful; and ask the third from the Wound of His Sacred Side, begging it to quench in thee all earthly affections; and do not doubt that thou wilt obtain all the three if thou askest for them constantly, because this has been promised to thee: "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains."

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

The manna ceased after they ate of the corn of the land, neither did the children of Israel use that food any more (Josue v. 12).

I. Consider first, that there is the same difference between heavenly consolations and earthly pleasures that there was between the manna of heaven and the corn of the earth. The manna was so noble a food that it was called the bread of angels: "Thou dost feed thy children with the food of angels;"¹ and such are heavenly consolations. Grain is a food which is also common to brutes, and such are earthly pleasures. The manna was a food which not only had the power of sustaining man, but of preserving him from sickness; so that as long as the Hebrews lived upon it there was not one sick person in the whole nation: "There was not among their tribes one that was feeble;"² and such are heavenly consolations. Grain not only admits of sickness attacking those who feed upon it, but often causes sickness, as when it is blighted; and such are earthly pleasures. The manna certainly had its own natural savour, but that alone was equal to innumerable others, nay, to all—"Having in it all that is delicious"—and nobody, provided only, as was just, he were

¹ Wisdom xvi. 20.

² Psalm civ. 37.

worthy of tasting it, needed to seek for anything else. That one good, "serving every man's will, was turned to what every man liked;"¹ and so it is with heavenly consolations. Different kinds of grain have different tastes, but all these combined are so little able to satisfy the palate, that people find it necessary to plan new ways of dressing them every day; and so it is with earthly pleasures. But the chief of all these many points of resemblance seems to be this, that as the manna was only given as a substitute, though a most advantageous one, for the grain of which the children of Israel were entirely deprived through following their God in the desert, even so is it with heavenly consolations: they are granted instead of those earthly pleasures of which a man voluntarily deprives himself for the sake of serving God. Whoever has the latter must never expect any of the former. Wouldst thou see this plainly? Observe that no sooner did the children of Israel, after leaving the desert, eat what they found growing in the land, than the manna ceased—"They ate on the next day of the corn of the land"—and what followed? "And the manna ceased after they ate of the corn of the land; neither did the children of Israel use that food any more."

II. Consider secondly, that it is not said that "they ate of the corn of the land after the manna ceased," but that "the manna ceased after they ate of the corn of the land." For, as a rule, God does not withdraw heavenly consolations from the soul till after she has begun to render herself unworthy of them by going after the vain pleasures of the world. Sometimes, indeed, He does withdraw them when this is not the case, merely as a trial, thus leaving the soul, as it were, entirely without food; which she neither has, one may say, from Heaven nor from earth, but only from the ocean of her tribulation: "He hath filled me with bitterness."² But this is not generally a state that lasts long; for God well knows that no one can live without some support; and when it does last long in the case of some very pure and perfect souls, God supplies their interior want by a sustenance such as Elias received in the desert—not a very pleasant one, certainly, for it was bread baked on ashes; but for all that it was very nourishing, since the Prophet "walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto the mount of God, Horeb."³ He did not walk in sweetness, but what matter? He "walked in strength." Nay, even in respect of sweetness,

¹ Wisdom xvi. 21.² Lament. iii. 15.³ 3 Kings xix. 8.

this dry food is better than all the delights of the world ; and if such souls were asked whether they would exchange their bitterness for sweetness, thou wouldst hear them answer with one voice that they would not ; for they know well how precious a bitterness it is within their hearts : “The heart that knoweth the bitterness of his own soul, in his joy the stranger shall not intermeddle.”¹ But, setting aside these extraordinary cases, God treats His servants, even when He does so in an insensible manner, much more liberally than any earthly master does. If they will only be contented with the one kind of nourishment which He will give them, without seeking to provide themselves with any other, they will see how nobly He will deal with them. But if they seek for other kinds, then indeed they will lose that which comes from Him : “The manna ceased after they ate of the corn of the land.” Wouldst thou understand how sensitive our Lord is in this matter ? He takes the manna away from thee directly that thou, I do not say fillest thyself with, but merely tastest of earthly pleasures. And therefore it is not said, “The manna ceased after they ate the corn,” but “of the corn.” And He has good reason to act in this way, for His are royal dainties. And wouldst thou turn away from them for the sake of the gratification which thou canst gain from thy sensual appetites ? Oh, how thou slightest God ! Dost thou not know that the difference between earthly and heavenly joys, between “manna” and the “corn of the land,” is nothing less than the difference between Heaven and earth ?

III. Consider thirdly, that when once the children of Israel had lost the manna, it was never given to them again : “Neither did the children of Israel use that food any more ;” for alas ! how easily it may happen that when, through thy own fault, thou hast once lost Divine consolation, thou wilt not be able to regain it, although thou shouldst impose great mortifications on thyself in order to do so. Take great care, therefore, not to lose it ; otherwise there will come a time when all that will remain to thee of that consolation will be a mere memory, more calculated to produce regret than comfort. So it was with the children of Israel, who had left to them a vessel of manna which was kept for a long time in the ark ; but it was not for use, but for remembrance, and therefore it may be said in the text, “Neither did the children of Israel use that food any more,” to signify that if they had a

¹ Prov. xiv. 10.

small portion which they kept in the manner described, they never used it. It may be said that a person keeps the vessel of manna in the ark, who has in his mind a very vivid image of the consolation which he experienced when he truly gave himself to the service of God and was blessedly detached from all the world. But what does this avail him, when it cannot enable him again to "use that food"? There is nothing, then, for that poor soul to do but, like Job, to remember past days, so full of consolation, and to say with him: "Who will grant me that I might be according to the months past, according to the days in which God kept me? . . . when I washed my feet with butter, and the rock poured out rivers of oil?"¹ Take heed, then, not to bring thyself into such a state, and not to despise the manna whilst thou yet hast it. Leave earthly pleasures to those who are willing to enjoy them; do thou desire heavenly ones only; unless, indeed, thou hast a heart generous enough to sacrifice even these to thy Lord, and to beg Him to give thee in this world only what is enough to support thy life, not to fill thee with sweetness: "Give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only the necessaries of life."²

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

The wages of sin is death: but the grace of God life everlasting
(Romans vi. 23).

I. Consider first, that there are two very powerful Beings, God and the devil, each of them ardently desires that thou shouldst fight under his standard, and each of whom, therefore, declares himself to be very willing to repay thy service, for "who serveth as a soldier, at any time, at his own charges?"³ God is ready to give thee wages for good, and the devil for evil, works; but how different these wages are! Endeavour to understand thoroughly what they are in the first place, that thou mayest not make a wrong choice.

II. Consider secondly, that if thou engagest in the service of the devil, and offerest thy members to him as so many weapons of iniquity—thy tongue for detraction, thy eyes for lawless glances, thy ears for vanity, thy hands for heaping up

¹ Job xxix. 2, 6.

² Prov. xxx. 8.

³ 1 Cor. ix. 7.

gains—the wages he will have to pay thee will be nothing but death: “The wages of sin is death.” I admit that the devil delights in liberal payment, temporal and eternal. For every sin that thou dost commit he will give thee double pay, but it will all be death. And this, perhaps, is the reason why the Apostle said not *stipendium*, in the singular, but *stipendia*, in the plural. Fatal liberality! alas for thee if thou thinkest of accepting it.

III. Consider thirdly, how it is that sin causes the death of thy body. First because it was sin that brought it into the world: “By sin, death.”¹ Next, because, as sin brought it into the world, so, too, has it ever since retained the terrible power of hastening and anticipating it, of causing it to come much before its time: “Be not overmuch wicked, lest thou die before thy time.”² “The wicked were taken away before their time.”³ “Before his days be full he shall perish.”⁴ “The years of the wicked shall be shortened.”⁵ And there are many other texts to the same effect. It is true that the Sacred Scriptures also tell thee that the just man is sometimes taken away before his time, that is, before the time at which he would otherwise have died according to his natural bodily constitution; but listen to the reason why they say so: it is lest he should fall into sin by continuing to live: “He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding.”⁶ So that it is always true that whenever the coming of death is hastened, it is to sin that this should be ascribed, in some cases to sin which has been committed, in others to sin which would have been committed; only this hastening is for the punishment of the former and for the perseverance of the latter. See, now, what is the fruit of sin; it is death—“The wages of sin is death”—and it is called its “wages,” because it is not due to it simply by way of gift, but of real merit. All right reason requires that sin shall be requited by death in every instance, because it is an act of rebellion: “In what day soever thou shalt eat of it thou shalt die the death.”⁷ If, in many cases, it is not thus required, it is all of pure mercy; and how often has this mercy been exercised towards thee? We may, indeed, assign another reason, namely, that death is also called the “wages” of sin, to show that sin is a work of very great labour: “They have laboured to commit iniquity.”⁸

¹ Romans v. 12.² Eccles. vii. 18.³ Job xxii. 16.⁴ Job xv. 32.⁵ Prov. x. 27.⁶ Wisdom iv. 11.⁷ Genesis ii. 17.⁸ Jerem. ix. 5.

Who can enumerate the anxieties, the exertions, the sufferings, the maladies to which sinners are generally subject? And after enduring all these things, what is it that they gain? A premature death. It is no wonder, then, if death is said to be their "wages." Are such wages really worthy of so much labour? Art thou really willing to endure that labour? "Seek not death in the error of your life, neither procure ye destruction by the works of your hands."¹

IV. Consider fourthly, that sin causes the death not only of body, but of soul. For what is it to die? It is to lose life; as, then, it is said that the body dies when it loses the soul, because the soul is the life of the body, so, too, it is said that the soul dies when it loses God, because much more is God the life of the soul: "I am the life." This, therefore, is what sin does, it makes thee lose God. What a terrible loss! "The death of the wicked is very evil,"² because no death can be worse than that which is the loss of a life which is the best of lives. And this death also is called "wages," because it is given as a right. What can be more just than that the soul which despises its God should lose Him? I will leave it to thee to consider the consequences of this loss. I will say this only: that as, when the body is separated from the soul, it becomes intolerable even to the nearest relations, putrid and offensive, and there is nothing to be done but to have it borne to the grave as quickly as possible; so, too, is it with the soul when it is separated from God, it is right that all creatures should abhor and detest it, and long for the time when they shall see it thrown into Hell, the grave which it deserves. See, then, the excess of mercy which God has shown thee in suffering thy soul to remain on the earth so long after it was dead, to see whether it would come to life again after a time. Might He not by right have, over and over again, buried it in that abyss which is the grave of souls separated from God? "The rich man died and was buried in Hell."³ This, too, ought to have been thine.

V. Consider fifthly, on the other hand, what different wages God gives thee if thou dost fight in His service; He gives thee life, and life everlasting: "The wages of sin is death, but the grace of God life everlasting." But if He gives thee this life, what is it that He gives but Himself, Who is the life of thy soul? "For He is thy life, and the length of

¹ Wisdom i. 12.

² Psalm xxxiii. 22.

³ St. Luke xvi. 22.

thy days.”¹ He will give Himself to thee to possess in a two-fold manner, because thy life is two-fold (just as the death of one who serves His enemy is two-fold), on earth by grace, in Heaven in glory; and both of these lives will equally be eternal, because there is no fear, even on earth, of God departing from thee unless thou drivest Him away; He will remain with thee always: “He does not forsake unless He is forsaken.” Dost thou know what it is to possess God, not only on earth by grace, but in Heaven in glory? I have no hope of being able to explain it to thee. I would only have thee observe that the Apostle might have called eternal beatitude by innumerable names, such as joy, riches, gladness, pleasure, victory, triumph, kingdom, and yet he chose to call it nothing but “life,” both in order to contrast it with the death which the devil gives, and because life, if it is perfect, is, after all, the source of every good. Thou livest in this world, but it is a kind of death in life; only in Heaven wilt thou live a real life. There all the faculties of thy soul will live in a sublime manner; thy memory will live, so that it will never forget anything for all eternity; thy imagination will live, so that it will never be clouded; thy understanding will live, so that it will never be wearied; thy will will live, so as never to cease longing after its Supreme Good, even though it is in the full enjoyment of It; thy eyes and ears, and all the senses of thy body will live, so that they will never become insensible to any single pleasure, although in Heaven all pleasures are everlasting. And can there be a doubt whether it is better to choose such a life as this rather than death? Most miserable are the wicked, of whom it is written that “death shall be chosen” by them “rather than life.”²

VI. Consider sixthly, that after having said that death is the wages of sin, that is, of the works done by the sinner, it would seem that the Apostle should have said, on the other hand, that life everlasting is the wages of good works, that is, of the works done by the just man; but he does not say so; he says, not that it is “wages” (*stipendia*), but “grace” (*gratia Dei*). And why is this? Is it that he considered that life everlasting is not due as a reward to those who do well? This cannot be so, for he himself acknowledges, in another place, that it is awarded by justice, “which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day.”³ He said it because either by “life everlasting” thou understandest that life which God

¹ Deut. xxx. 20.² Jerem. viii. 3.³ 2 Timothy iv. 8.

gives to the soul on earth—and if this is a life of grace, how could he describe it more correctly than by calling it grace?—or thou understandest that life which God gives in Heaven, that is, the life of glory; and although it is true that this is due to thee as the recompense of good works, still, if thou considerest it aright, it is of grace that thou art made capable of such a recompense. Just as it is a grace, and an exceedingly great grace, that a peasant should be adopted by a king as his son, and thereby made capable of receiving homage and reverence from his people, although, presupposing this adoption, all these things are justly his due. And if all thy good works, thy alms and disciplines, and fasts, and devotions are made worthy of so immense a blessing, what cause is that for glorying? If they are worthy of it, it is because God has graciously raised thee to the dignity of His adopted son. And therefore it is much more correct to say that Paradise is given by grace than by justice, since, if we observe rightly, this very justice is in its origin pure grace. Besides, those very good works by which thou meritest Paradise are a sovereign grace bestowed on thee by God, since, of thyself, thou art capable of nothing but sinning, and so of meriting death. If thou meritest life by thy good works, thou shouldst esteem it a pure grace from God, Who helps, strengthens, succours, and concurs with thee in doing them, although He does this in the way which is right, that is to say, freely: “The grace of God, life everlasting.” And thus thou shouldst represent God to thyself as doing with thee like a king, according to His good pleasure, that thou of thy free choice buy one of His fiefs from Him, but that He gives thee the purchase-money: “The Lord will give grace and glory.”

VII. Consider seventhly, that whereas sin, as thou hast seen, causes the death of the body as well as of the soul, so piety, on the other hand, gives thee the life of both: “Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”¹ Nevertheless, the Apostle did not mean in this passage to allude to that poor life of the body, that life “that now is,” which lasts so short a time, which is counted by minutes, and the value of which is in proportion to its brevity, because it is not this, but “life everlasting” which is the principal “wages” which God gives thee. Therefore the Wise Man said: “The fear of the Lord shall prolong days,”² to show that the days of this life, which

¹ 1 Timothy iv. 8.

² Prov. x. 27.

are so short, are, as it were, given in, over and above (*apponuntur*), whereas the life of eternity is given as a right. Our God is not a master to give as payment such paltry goods as are common to brutes, He rather adds them as a small present: "Seek first the Kingdom of God . . . and all these things shall be added unto you."¹ Life everlasting, then, is the main thing, temporal life is a mere accessory. But if this is so, how is it that while thou takest so much trouble about the latter thou dost not concern thyself far more about the former? I am very sure that if God had promised thee in payment a life of ten centuries in this world thou wouldst have hastened eagerly to His standard; canst thou hesitate in doing so, then, when it is so far better a life, "life everlasting," which is promised thee?

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

God, Who is rich in mercy, for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ (Ephes. ii. 4, 5).

I. Consider first, that by reason of the sins thou hadst committed thou wert dead, so that there was nothing to be done but to bury thee, that is, to cast thee into Hell. God has, I take for granted, raised thee from this state, and recalled thee to life. Dost thou then, understand, as thou oughtest, the benefit He has conferred on thee? If thou didst, thou wouldst be in an ecstasy of wonder, thou wouldst be bewildered, stupefied, far more so than Lazarus was when he first walked on this earth after being brought back to life, but a life much less noble than that which has been restored to thee. Had God any need of thee? Was He not already as great and glorious as possible? What was wanting to His beatitude? How hast thou in any way increased it? And yet, when thou wert "dead in sins" He "quickened" thee "in Christ." He would not leave thee in that state of death in which thou deservedst to remain for ever on account of thy unfaithfulness and ingratitude, because thy death was caused by thy own choice; but He recalled thee to a life of union with Christ; and therefore the Apostle does not merely say that He "quickened us in Christ," but adds "together" (*convivificavit*).

¹ St. Matt. vi. 33.

And in what manner did He recall thee to a life such as this? Was it, as in the case of Lazarus, by a word of command? No; of entreaty: "I am weary of entreating thee;"¹ for He has had to allure thee in a thousand ways to return to Him, to make use of aspirations, of invitations, and to behave in so humble a manner, in order not to infringe thy liberty, that He may truly be said to have "entreated" thee. O infinite, incomprehensible charity! is it not most justly that the Apostle exclaims that it is beyond measure? "For His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us."

II. Entreaty secondly, that no other reason can be given for this charity which God has shown towards thee but that He is "rich in mercy." It is not said "rich in justice," for if He had acted according to that, alas for thee! but "rich in mercy." And in doing His utmost in the way of mercy, He has done according to His riches, He has given gifts measured not by the receiver, but the donor of those gifts. And therefore, although His charity is, I grant it, excessive in regard to thee, it is not so in regard to Himself. And why? because He loves us not out of justice, but out of mercy; and one who loves out of mercy does not find merit, but bestows it. This is precisely what God has done towards thee: "He hath given them according to His kindness." "In His mercy He redeemed them."² Therefore it is that the Apostle here assigns God's mercy as the origin of that love which makes Him desire our justification. He does not say, "God, Who is rich in charity, for His exceeding mercy hath quickened us," but "God, Who is rich in mercy, for His exceeding charity hath quickened us." It is mercy which causes God to conceive love for us, and it is love which then causes Him to exercise mercy towards us. It is, therefore, first to mercy and then to charity that thou owest it that thou hast been made alive. Justice had no part in the work, except, indeed, by requiring that thou shouldst thyself co-operate in some measure in order to be made alive. Otherwise it does not interpose, or act, or have any hand in the bringing of a soul out of sin; it is simply neutral. Dost thou ever find it said in the Sacred Scriptures that God is called rich in justice? Nowhere. The riches of His longanimity, the riches of His grace, the riches of His glory, the riches of His infinite wisdom; all these are celebrated, but there is not one word said of the riches of His justice. If they exist, we know nothing of them: for the justice in

¹ Jerem. xv. 6.² Isaias lxiii. 7—9.

question must be exercised either in punishing or in rewarding ; and He is not rich in justice as to the latter, because the reward is beyond all merit ; neither is He rich in justice as to the former, because He gives less than is deserved. Is it possible that thou dost not yet feel a true and fervent love for a God Who desires nothing more than to bestow graces on thee ?

III. Consider thirdly, why this glorious title of being, not merciful only, but "rich in mercy," is ascribed to God. It is to mark the difference between Him and men, to whom this title can never be given. It may, indeed, be said of them that they are merciful, because they give ; but not that they are "rich in mercy," for, dost thou not see how limited their power of giving is ? "According to thy ability be merciful," said Tobias to his son.¹ If they give too much to one, they can give nothing to another. It is God alone Who can give to all, and give as if He had never before given to any other : He is "rich to all who call upon Him." This is really to be rich in giving, never to be less rich however much is given. Again, if men give very abundantly to thee, they are, indeed, rich, but not "rich in mercy," because they have always some obligation to give, at least one of charity ; and so, although they give, it is scarcely a free gift. God alone has no obligation, because He is above every law : "Who can say to Him, Why dost Thou so ?"² Besides, even when men are under no obligation to give, they always gain more than they bestow, because they give, for instance, money, thrones, crowns, and sceptres, and they gain the act of virtue which they perform in giving, which is worth more than all that they give ; wherefore our Lord said of them that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," because it is not receiving from other men but giving to them, that is the blessedness. But God does not gain even this act, for His virtue is the same whether He gives or does not give. What, then, does He gain ? Thou wilt say, perhaps, adoration and praise. But that is a glory outside of Himself, which does not make God any richer. Besides, there can be no doubt that all the praise, applause, and adoration of the world are valuable exactly so far as they are justly signs of merit in the person who is their object. But God merits no less praise when He does not than when He does exercise mercy. Wouldst thou see one more proof of how rich He is in mercy ? See from how great a distance He pours His

¹ Tobias iv. 8.

² Job ix. 12.

treasures upon this earth. Men can only do this when they are very near, for it is upon their neighbours that they always pour them. God has no neighbour, and so, when He pours out His treasures, it can only be on creatures, who are at an infinite distance from Him. And if this is so, dost thou not think that the Apostle spoke truly when he said that God "is rich in mercy"? And yet, in my opinion, these are not the principal reasons for his saying so. The principle reason was to show, that for the work of thy justification, which is the one in question, an ordinary mercy is not sufficient, it must be superabundant; because, when thou wert dead, by reason of thy sins—"dead in sins"—not only hadst thou no merit, either of condignity or congruity, to cause God to give thee this renewal of life, but thou hadst the greatest possible demerit: so that, in consequence of this unutterable disproportion, God does more when He restores grace to a sinner than when He bestows glory on a saint. And yet thou dost not understand the height of the favour which thou hast received.

IV. Consider fourthly, that thou mayest perhaps have a less esteem for this mercy which God has exercised towards thee for this very reason, because He is rich, and so it cost Him nothing to exercise it: "Thy power is at hand when Thou wilt."¹ But dost thou ever measure a benefit merely by what it costs the person who does it thee? In that case thou wouldst be more obliged to a labourer who works hard with his spade in thy vineyard, than to a prince who bestowed knighthood on thee, or to thy doctor, thy teacher, or even thy father. I know that, other circumstances being equal, thou oughtest more greatly to esteem the man who takes the bread out of his own mouth to give it to thee, as Tobias did to the poor. But why is this? Only because it is a proof of so much greater love. But supposing any one gave thee a kingdom with the same love with which the other gave thee the bread out of his mouth, shouldst thou not have greater reason to be obliged? This, then, is our case. Moreover, that thou mayest not have to use such disrespectful terms to God, He has chosen that it should cost Him very dear indeed to bring thee back from death. For listen to the Apostle's words: he says not only that He has "quicken'd us," but "quicken'd us in Christ." See to what length thy God has gone in saving thee, "He spared not His only Son:"² and in

¹ Wisdom xii. 18.² Romans viii. 32.

not sparing His Son, it may be said that He spared not Himself. Canst thou say now that it cost Him nothing to save thee? Look on that face covered with bruises, those dim eyes, those wounded shoulders, that side pierced by the cruel lance, those hands, those feet, that breast, that head crowned with thorns, and then say, if thou canst, that it cost Him nothing to save thee, because He is rich. Yes; He is "rich in mercy." In order that thou mightest never have reason to say such things again, He Who "was rich became poor for us."¹ And yet, in truth, never did He more plainly show how rich He is in mercy than when He became so poor for love of thee, as even to die, stripped of everything, upon the Cross between two thieves. And so thou canst again draw the conclusion that the charity which God has shown thee has been a charity beyond measure, "exceeding," and that, not only with respect to thee, but to Himself. For may it not be said that he loves beyond all measure who does more than is necessary to obtain the benefit which he desires for the object of his love? This, then, is what God has done. He might simply have restored thee to life, yet, nevertheless, He chose to do this "in Christ," and moreover, by allowing Him to be so ill-treated, so cruelly abused. Great was His charity in creating thee, greater still in exalting thee to a state of grace, greatest of all in restoring thee after thou hadst fallen from it. What must we say, then, when He has done this by a charity so far beyond what was necessary? Must we not say that it has been "exceeding"? It almost seems as though He had loved thee more than Himself, since He "delivered Himself up" for thee.² Can there be a doubt that He has done more than He needed to do? Think well, therefore, on the Apostle's words: "For His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us." It was not enough to say: "For *the* exceeding charity," but He added the word "His," in order that thou mayest know that, at the very least, God has loved thee with the same love with which He loves Himself, since it almost seems as though He had loved thee more than Himself.

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

² Ephes. v. 25.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

ST. MARY MAGDALENE DEI PAZZI.

*Let this be my comfort, that afflicting me with sorrow He spare not,
nor I contradict the words of the Holy One (Job vi. 10).*

I. Consider first, that when a person asks for comfort, it is a sign that he has been afflicted; because joy does not necessarily presuppose any antecedent affliction, but comfort does. See, therefore, how strange a comfort it is that holy Job asks of God in this supplication; afflictions greater than he has already endured, and which shall follow each other without respite: "Let this be my comfort, that afflicting me with sorrow He spare not." It is true that he asks for patience together with affliction, that he may not "contradict the words of the Holy One;" he does not ask only that he may not do this, nor only that the Holy One may not spare him, but both together. To be conformed to the will of God when He prospers, instead of troubling thee, is but a small consolation, because it is very easy; and therefore thou art not to say only: "Let this be my comfort, not to contradict the words of the Holy One." To experience great consolation when He tries thee by severe troubles is not possible without a high degree of conformity to Him, and therefore thou art not to say only: "Let this be my comfort, that afflicting me with sorrow He spare not." It is the combination of the two which produces that perfect consolation of the Christian in his continual troubles. Happy art thou if thou hast reached this sublime state of begging for a fresh affliction merely to comfort thee for that which has preceded it! Thou shouldst be very anxious to do so, for we are not in this miserable world to enjoy ourselves, but to suffer; and therefore it will never be well with thee until thou comest to place all thy consolation in suffering.

II. Consider secondly, that this desire which holy Job had to suffer made him ask, not for some trouble in a general way, but specially for sorrow (*dolor*), "afflicting me with sorrow." And the reason is, that this is the sharpest of afflictions. Other ills, whether bodily or mental, are more endurable, but real sorrow is in its nature full of torment. Therefore it is written: "Sorrow shall consume them before they die."¹ For

¹ Ecclus. xxvii. 32.

such sorrow slays thee, as it were, before thy death. And yet this holy man not only asked of God a sorrow that might consume him, but that might consume by "afflicting" him. The word, indeed, is not nearly forcible enough, as rendered in our language, but if thou readest it in the original, in which he spoke, thou wilt see how severe a suffering it implies, for it means not merely to "afflict," but to "burn:" as though he had said, "That burning me with sorrow, He spare not." We all know how terrible a thing sorrow is when it is so grievous as to burn like fire: but when, in addition, it is lasting, incessant, growing keener and stronger with time, who can express the sad condition to which it brings the stoutest heart? In other troubles, the sense of them is dulled by long continuance; but not so with sorrow, least of all a sorrow the pain of which is like fire: it is always growing more acute. Yet, in spite of this, see to what a mortal man, like thyself, may attain; even to the asking of his God, as a supreme grace, a pain so grievous "that burning with sorrow He spare not." To such a degree as this is it possible for the strength of the spirit to help the infirmity of the flesh: "Thou, Lord, Who hast all holy knowledge, Thou knowest well what severe bodily pains I endure; yet for the fear of Thee I suffer them willingly, as to my soul." What a beautiful prayer would this be if thou didst know how to use it in thy sufferings!

III. Consider thirdly, that when holy Job asks for sorrows, he, at the same time, asks not to struggle against them when they come, but to accept them with entire resignation; so little does he trust even to that desire of suffering which he knows to be in him. This is a characteristic of those who are humble. But what is, perhaps, most worthy of observation here, is his manner of expressing this, which seems rather strange. He says: "That I may not contradict the words of the Holy One." It might seem that he should have asked not to contradict the will of God, the order of His providence, His decrees; but no, he does not say this, he asks not to contradict His "words." And he does so, because he meant to show that the heavy afflictions which God sends are the language by which He makes Himself heard by the most obstinate sinners. Therefore thou wilt find that they are called "rebukes—reprehensions." "He rebuketh also by pain in the bed."¹ "They were not amended by reprehensions."² "He heareth not reprehension."³ "The strength of Thy hand hath

¹ Job xxxiii. 19.

² Wisdom xii. 26.

³ Prov. xiii. 8.

made me faint in rebukes."¹ For when God sends thee troubles, He is rebuking thee for leading either a careless or an indifferent life. What oughtest thou to do when He thus rebukes thee? Do not excuse thyself as though thou didst not deserve them. Sometimes thou acceptest the trials which God sends thee, but at the same time thou excusest thyself, and thinkest them greater than thy faults, too heavy, disproportionate. This is not the perfect conformity which thou oughtest to have to the Divine will; if thou hast it, thou wilt think these rebukes much less than thy due; thou wilt think them so exactly suited to thy case that they fall in with every particular, whether of time, or office, or occupation, or strength; because they are all measured by thy needs. This is the conformity desired by that great Saint who said in words few indeed, but full of meaning: "That I may not contradict the words of the Holy One."

IV. Consider fourthly, that when he had to speak of God in this passage, he chooses among all His titles that one which has been so often mentioned: "The Holy One." And why is this? Not only because it is the title so dear to Him that even in Heaven the Seraphim praise Him by it rather than any other, when in full choir they incessantly repeat, "Holy, holy, holy;" but because this title makes us accept with greater willingness the trials which He sends us. These trials, as has been said, are His rebukes—"The rebuke of the Lord"²—and we all know that rebukes are never taken so patiently as from the lips of a holy man, because it seems that he has a good right to reprove us who is himself free from those faults with which he charges us. Take care, then, to get into the habit of often saying to thyself that He Who afflicts thee is the God Who is holier than thou canst conceive, and that therefore when, by sending thee troubles, He rebukes the life thou art leading, He has good right to do so, because it is so opposed to all that thou seest in Him. Art thou not His subject, His servant, nay, His child, and as such bound by every title to imitate Him? "Be ye holy, because I am holy."³ And has He not, therefore, a good right to rebuke thee by all kinds of grievous chastisement when thou takest so little trouble to become like Him?

V. Consider fifthly, that these words of holy Job on which thou art meditating were always on the lips of the seraphic virgin whose feast thou art keeping to-day, St. Mary Magdalene

¹ Psalm xxxviii. 12.² 2 Kings xxii. 16.³ Leviticus xi. 44.

dei Pazzi. For she made this wonderful agreement with her Spouse, that she would live with Him in a condition not merely of prolonged, not merely of perpetual, but of unmingled suffering; and therefore when she perceived ever so faintly that He, moved by pity for her, was fain to solace her from time to time by a sweet and loving visit, she cried out that this was to break the agreement; and by a refusal which would have been most heartless, if it had not proceeded from love, obliged Him to depart from her: "Flee away, my Beloved,"¹ leaving her alone among those cruel lions which seemed to vie with each other in tearing her vitals. What then was the practice of this innocent virgin in her unmingled bitterness of sorrow? It was that she, too, encouraged herself by saying: "Let this be my comfort, that afflicting me with sorrow He spare not, nor I contradict the words of the Holy One."

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

ST. PHILIP NERI.

Let no man deceive himself: if any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God (1 Cor. iii. 18).

I. Consider first, what a perverted idea the world, even the Christian, even the Catholic world, has of true wisdom. True wisdom is that which Jesus Christ brought down from Heaven; this is most certain, because He is "full of wisdom."² Nay, He it is Who imparts it, Who is its source: "The Word of God is the fountain of wisdom."³ Yet the world esteems it wisdom to do the opposite of what Christ taught. Christ taught men to love suffering, and the world teaches them to fly from it, and rather to indulge in amusements, even such as are unlawful; Christ teaches us to love poverty, the world teaches us to shun it, and rather to seek after even a superfluity of riches. Christ taught us to love to be despised, and the world teaches us to hold it in the utmost abhorrence, and rather to court honours, applause, and popularity, and to revenge every little offence that is done to us. So that Christ's maxims or those of the world must be mistaken. But Christ cannot be

¹ Cant. viii. 14.

² St. Luke ii. 40.

³ Ecclus. i. 5.

mistaken, since He is "the fountain of wisdom." It follows, then, that the world must be grievously mistaken, since it proudly refuses to drink of this pure fountain: "Thou hast forsaken the fountain of wisdom."¹ To every Christian this argument is unanswerable. Go, then, attach thyself to wisdom which is so clearly convicted of falsehood; study it, follow it, imbue thyself with it as much as possible, and what wilt thou after all have gained? A doctrine which is directly opposed to that of Christ, that is to say, to the truth. Poor children of Agar, who take so much trouble to learn so false a science! "The children of Agar that search after the wisdom that is of the earth."² It will be no wonder if one day these unhappy persons are banished from the Father's house with Ismael, their elder brother, and if, having contented themselves with such gifts as the wretched goods of this world, they are incapable of claiming their inheritance. Dost thou know what God thinks of the wisdom of all such persons who are not wise, but consider themselves so? It is folly: "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

II. Consider secondly, why the wisdom of this world is called "foolishness with God," and not ignorance, imprudence, or wickedness. It is in order to put it to greater shame; because it is full of pride in itself; it considers itself very clever and far-sighted, when in truth it is exceedingly foolish, because it always acts in the way which is most opposed to what it desires. For who are those who are to be considered foolish? Those who propose to attain a certain end, and who, notwithstanding, employ such means as are opposed to it: "Fools covet those things which are hurtful to themselves."³ A man is foolish who desires a fruitful crop and who sows on stones; or who desires a solid edifice and who builds on sand. This is what the world does: it desires to attain its end, which is happiness, and it employs means which are not only useless and unfit for the purpose, but positively injurious to it.

For it is beyond a doubt that happiness can only be found in God, in knowing, loving, and serving God; in a life of constant union with God, that is, with our Chief Good; and the world follows after those things which entirely turn it away from God, such as pleasures, money, and glory. Pleasures prevent it from knowing God, because they make it dull and sluggish, money prevents it from knowing Him, because it keeps it always surrounded by the vapours of ambition. And

¹ Baruch iii. 12.² Baruch iii. 23.³ Prov. i. 22.

if the world does not know its God, how can it love, serve, and seek to be united with Him, and so to be happy? If, then, we consider it aright, the wisdom of the world is merely a solemn folly, since it has, on the one hand, an ardent thirst for happiness, and on the other, it turns its back on the fountain of happiness, and goes after streams—nay, rather cisterns, and what sort of cisterns? Ruined, spoilt, even broken cisterns, which cannot hold any water, but only mire: "They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."¹

III. Consider thirdly, that if this is so, we must lay aside this worldly wisdom, which is so proud in its folly, and give ourselves entirely to that of Christ, although it is in appearance so lowly, because in truth, "where humility is, there also is wisdom."² Dost thou say that the world will consider thee foolish if thou dost so? Then the world will be foolish for considering thee so; and what matter is it if a fool thinks thee foolish? Far better so, than that the world should praise and applaud thee; for "the promotion of fools is disgrace."³ It is enough that thou art considered wise in God's sight. But if thou wouldst arrive at so great a blessedness, thou must—there is no avoiding it—thou must humble thy pride, thou must be abased, degraded; thou must be willing to appear a fool to the world. Do not be any longer deceived—"Let no man deceive himself"—do not hope that thou mayest please both God and the world, as those do who "swear by the Lord and swear by Melchom."⁴ It is impossible: if thou wouldst become wise in God's sight, thou must become a fool in that of the world: "If any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise;" that is, "Let him become a fool" in the sight of the world, "that he may be wise" in the sight of God. For this is the true and short rule for acquiring holiness: to act in opposition to all the maxims of the world, to love what it hates, and to hate what it loves.

IV. Consider fourthly, that the world does not at once set thee down as a fool every time that thou actest in opposition to its maxims; but when thou dost so very thoroughly, when thou courtest suffering, poverty, and shame to the utmost of thy power, for then it is true that thou canst no longer conceal thy sentiments, and that thou not only "dost something foolishly," but "becomest a fool;" then, indeed, does the

¹ Jerem. ii. 13.² Prov. xi. 2.³ Prov. iii. 35.⁴ Sophonias i. 5.

world laugh at thee, scorn thee, despise thee, because it sees so plainly that thou art using those means which it believes to be directly opposed to gaining happiness. But thou shouldst in return laugh at the world: "Answer a fool according to his folly."¹ For the means thou adoptest are only seemingly opposed to it, and therefore it is not only said that thou "becomest" or "makest" thyself a fool, but that in reality thou art wise—"Let him become a fool that he may be wise"—whereas the means which the world adopts are really opposed to happiness, and therefore it is said positively that its wisdom is folly: "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." I know that thou canst not attain to this high state of glorious folly without great help from God. I will tell thee who did attain to it, the great Saint whose feast we are celebrating to-day, St. Philip Neri, "the man who, being strengthened by God abiding in him, said: I am the most foolish of men, and the wisdom of men is not with me."²

V. Consider fifthly, how this great Saint only sought to be really considered by the world as a fool. Thou knowest how he turned away from pleasures, refused money, and went so far as to dance, and stop to drink, and do other ridiculous actions in the most frequented streets of Rome, in order to put himself to greater shame. Well might he have said: "I am the most foolish of men, and the wisdom of men is not with me," for he set himself in a superhuman manner to imitate those sublime and glorious saints who most of all studied how to despise the world, nay, even to despise the being despised by it. And if thou dost ask how he was able to attain so high a state, it was by the strength of God, Who was always with him: "Being strengthened by God abiding with him, he said," &c. "He lived in the closest familiarity with God; he was always thinking of God, speaking of God, working for God; and so it is no wonder that he was powerfully strengthened by God. It is easy for one who is always in union with the Truth to despise falsehood. At all events, do thou take this great Saint as thy advocate to obtain for thee a little of this contempt of the world, which is so necessary to holiness, in which consists true wisdom. It has been told thee already, if thou wouldst become wise in God's sight there is no other way but to become foolish in that of the world. Do I say "become"? Thou must "make" thyself so (*fias*) by treating thyself as a fool, even if the world

¹ Prov. xxvi. 5.

² Prov. xxx. 1, 2.

should not do so. This was what that great Saint did. The world itself could not help acknowledging, admiring, and applauding his extraordinary virtue, it could not help following after him; and yet in spite of all the world, which actually combined together to treat him as a wise man, his only aim was to make himself a fool; and so doing he was truly wise.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ
(Galat. vi. 2).

I. Consider first, that this is one of the most necessary commandments in the world, one of the most useful, one of the most reasonable, mutually to bear with each other; and yet it is very seldom fulfilled. But this is not to be wondered at; it requires a good deal of strength to carry burdens, particularly when they are rather heavy, and most persons lack this strength. There are very few in the world who are strong in perfection: the greater number, on the contrary, are of a feeble and effeminate spirit, and therefore they soon give in: "They remove their backs from the burdens."¹ If, then, thou wouldst know what is thy present degree of strength, observe what is thy power of bearing the burdens of others. If thou bearest them well thou art strong, if thou dost not, then thou art not strong. And in this latter case dost thou not see what a vast store of merit thou art continually losing? "The strong shall have riches."²

II. Consider secondly, what those burdens of others are, which thou art bound to bear. There are three kinds, their defects, their necessities, and their penalties. First, thou shouldst bear the natural defects of others, such as low spirits, habits of disorder or uncleanness, infirmities, and the like; still more their moral defects, such as rudeness, ingratitude, temper, a haughty way of speaking, contradictions, or captious disposition. All these are no doubt a very heavy burden; till thou hast to bear it—and how? By compassionating these defects of thy neighbour. In the second place thou hast to bear his necessities, whether spiritual, as by putting thyself to inconvenience to hear the confession of a person

¹ Psalm lxxx. 7.

² Prov. xi. 16.

who begs thee to do so, to counsel a person in doubt, to succour one who is tempted, to console one who is afflicted; or temporal, such as relieving a person who is in poverty. Thirdly, thou hast also to bear his penalties, that is, the penalties which await him for his sins, by praying, fasting, taking the discipline for him, and performing thyself a part of those penances which he performs ill, because he is laden with sins. These are the three kinds of burdens; with regard to the first of which thou hast, as I have said, to compassionate, in the second to succour, and in the third to relieve, thy neighbour. The first is, indeed, the chief of these, and it is of this that the Apostle principally intended to speak when he said, "Bear ye one another's burdens," and all the more because thou mayest often find good reasons for evading the other two kinds; but thou canst never justly evade the first. Thou hast but to consider thy own defects, and this will give thee strength to bear those of others. Dost thou not like others to compassionate thee? How then canst thou be so hard upon them? "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven."¹

III. Consider thirdly, why this mutual bearing with each other is said to be the way to fulfil the law of Christ. It is because the whole of that law has its foundation in charity; and not in any kind of charity, but a sublime, a sovereign charity; such a charity as Christ exercised towards us: "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."² And the charity He exercised towards us was this: He compassionated our defects, although He was Himself free from any, He relieved our necessities, He paid our penalties. Only it is here to be observed, that the Apostle chose to call that a law which Christ had called a commandment. And why was this? It was, if I am not mistaken, to show that this is a commandment which binds us in such a manner that we are utterly unable ever to escape from it. It is a commandment as regards its binding force, and a law as to its perpetuity. And therefore thou findest it written in another place, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another."³ Because one may obtain release from other debts. If thou owest a servant his wages, a workman his pay, no sooner hast thou given them the money than thou art free. But no length of time can ever release thee from this debt of loving thy neighbour; for even when thou hast no longer the power of loving him in act, thou must at least love him in will,

¹ St. Luke vi. 37.² St. John xv. 12.³ Romans xiii. 8.

by wishing him the good which thou art unable to do him. And so for all ages the law of charity is immortal: "Charity never falleth away."¹

IV. Consider fourthly, that although the law of Christ is wholly founded on charity, yet the offences which are continually committed against charity, even by Christians, are infinite. There are very few who courageously bear the burdens of their neighbour; nay, the greater number purposely distress, torture, and oppress him very cruelly: "You load men with burdens which they cannot bear, and you yourselves touch not the pack with one of your fingers."² Yet this very fact should supply thee with a motive for performing acts of charity as frequently as possible; for so thou wilt fulfil the law of Christ. And what does fulfilling the law of Christ mean? It means to re-establish, to restore it, to supply for what it ought to receive from so many: "To fill up those things that are wanting."³ And this, perhaps, is another reason why the Apostle said, "You shall fulfil," and was not satisfied with merely saying, "You shall keep . . . the law of Christ," a word which he did use elsewhere, speaking of something else: "That thou keep the commandment."⁴ I know indeed that he had also good reason for using the word "fulfil," because he who loves his neighbour with the love of charity, that is, because God would have him do so, at the same time loves God also, and consequently "fulfils the law," because he has thus satisfied the whole of the law, which hangs on these two hinges: "On these two commandments dependeth the whole law."⁵ But nevertheless he also had good grounds for saying it for the reason first assigned, and in this sense it has been explained by many of the saints. Dost thou not see how greatly thou wilt please Jesus Christ if, with all possible care, thou dost endeavour to make up for the offences committed against a law which He shows His love for by calling His, and which nevertheless is so grievously broken, insulted, and mocked by so many persons? Besides, look at it in this way: Are not the defects of thy neighbour the heaviest burden thou hast to bear? And are not the most grievous of these defects those failings in charity which he commits against thee by speaking haughtily, by contradicting thee, cavilling at thy words, and other things of the same sort, which are very offensive to thee? If, therefore, when this is the case, thou

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

² St. Luke xi. 46.

³ Coloss. i. 24.

⁴ 1 Timothy vi. 14.

⁵ St. Matt. xxii. 40.

answerest him in the same way, alas for the law of charity! It is almost torn in two by thee and by him, who are cruelly of one mind in this point. Whereas, if thou dost pass over the offence, if thou art silent or answerest gently, thou on thy side healest the wounds which the law has received from the other, and so thou gainest the love of Christ with double force, because by so acting thou not only observest in any way the law which is so dear to Him, but thou fulfillest it by at once making up for the injuries that it suffers; and this is the meaning of the words, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ."

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

All the days in which I am now in warfare I expect, until my change come
(Job xiv. 14).

I. Consider first, that thou shouldst regard thyself as a soldier who has come into this world to fight, and therefore thou shouldst often remind thyself of it and say to thyself that this is a time of warfare: "I am now in warfare." This war is made upon three enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is true that these enemies do not always assail thee with equal force. Sometimes, by God's providence, they allow thee to enjoy a little peace in His service; and therefore it is not said that man's life on earth is a battle, but a "warfare," because in time of war there are periods of truce, but not in a battle. It must, however, be acknowledged that such periods are brief, for the enemies of man are bitter, cunning, and artful, and when they seem to have given thee a little respite they attack thee more furiously than ever, so that thou must always be under arms, as though the battle were always imminent, although it is true that perchance thou mayest not be obliged to fight every day. But what does that matter? Thou art obliged to be in a state of warfare every day: "All the days in which I am now in warfare."

II. Consider secondly, what a great cause of encouragement it is that the question is one merely of days. It is said "all the days," not "all the ages," or even "all the years." Perhaps this warfare seems very grievous to thee, because, like the generality of men, thou imaginest that thou hast a long time

yet to live. Do not think so; but rather always think the contrary, as thou seest holy Job did, who for all that was so courageous a soldier. And not only here, but in almost every circumstance, he called to mind the shortness of his life, comparing it sometimes to the rapid pace of a swift messenger, sometimes to a leaf, to a flower, or the wind, and asking himself: "Shall not the fewness of my days be ended shortly?"¹ For this is the practice which every one who is in the midst of troubles should adopt, to encourage himself to bear them with more victorious patience: to think that the warfare will soon be over. It may be that thou doest the contrary, and therefore thou art more alarmed than thou shouldst be. How much shorter will thy life perhaps be than thou thinkest: "Behold, I come quickly, hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."²

III. Consider thirdly, that the encouragement will be still more efficacious, if thou dost remember that there will, at last, be a total change of condition, and that we shall pass from this state of warfare to the kingdom, throne, and sceptre which have been won by that warfare; and this is the meaning of the words: "All the days which I am now in warfare, I expect until my change come," because a change is the reverse of the state which existed before the change; and, therefore, if the state was one of labour, fear, weariness, and subjection, as that of warfare is, it follows that the change must be to a state of rest, security, joy, and even of rule, such as the glory of Paradise will be. At all events, it is certain that this word "change," whenever it is used in speaking of the life to come, is always taken in the sense of happiness; and therefore the Apostle said: "We shall all indeed rise again, but we shall not all be changed,"³ because to pass from bad to worse, which the reprobate will do when they reassume their bodies, which were before subject to grievous ills, will not be, strictly speaking, a change, but a deterioration of state, by the addition of far more grievous ills: the only change of state will be the passing from suffering to joy, as the blessed will do. For this reason, the change which will take place at the general resurrection of the just is always described by such comparisons as show the transition to be a desirable one; it is compared to the grain of wheat, which passes from a state of decay to one of vigorous, flourishing verdure; it is compared to plants, to meadows, to the earth which languishes, as

¹ Job x. 20.² Apoc. iii. 11.

1 Cor. xv. 51.

though dead, in the winter, and in spring lives again in renewed gladness; to the caterpillar, which is changed from an ugly worm into a butterfly gay with a thousand tints; lastly, to the phoenix, which rises glorious from its ashes. The thought of this change should be thy encouragement: for thou, like Job, mayest hope for it, if thou bearest thyself as valiantly as he did. And in order to perceive still more clearly how desirable a change it will be, observe that the words translated in our version, "I expect until my change come," are, in the Septuagint: "I will endure until I am made anew;" because it will be a change so great as to be a renewal, a new creation, or rather a return to the state—only unspeakably better—in which God placed man when He created the earthly paradise; a state of incorruption, of immortality, of impassibility, but as much more glorious as the empyrean Paradise is more glorious than that which Adam enjoyed for a few days. Dost thou not think that it would be possible to spend, not days only, but whole ages in warfare in order to attain to such a state?

IV. Consider fourthly, that though thou perceivest the happiness of this blessed state, thou dost not see the hour of its arrival. What must thou do? Thou must wait for it patiently, as holy Job did: "I expect until my change come." Thou canst do nothing to hasten it; it must come of itself—"till it come"—thou hast only to wait for its coming. But this very waiting is a great consolation: "Expectation is the gladness of the just." Alas for those who cannot expect it, because they do not live in such a way as to merit it. How good a life thou must lead every day to be able to say, "I expect"—"All the days"—because death may come any day to call thee suddenly. And how will it be with thee, if on that day thou art not living so as to be able to say with truth that thou art expecting thy change? In such a case, thou wilt not obtain it, for it is to him who expects it that it is given: "He shall appear . . . to them that expect Him,"¹ that is, to those who are expecting Him in a state of preparation from hour to hour. Think awhile on thy present way of life, and that will show thee whether thou canst truly say, with Job, these wonderful words: "All the days in which I am now in warfare I expect until my change come."

¹ Hebrews ix. 28.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

The god of this world hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the Image of God, should not shine unto them (2 Cor. iv. 4).

I. Consider first, that by a "god" is meant a supreme good, which, as such, has a right to be our last end, an end amply sufficient to satisfy all our desires. And thus, everything which a man sets before him as his last end, so as to rest in it, is called his "god." Dost thou ask, then, what is, in reality, the "god of this world" here spoken of? It is that which the world makes its god—money, pleasure, glory. This is its last end, in which it rests; and its god, a god which is, also, in a certain sense, three and one. It is one, because it has, in substance, one and the same end, namely, to gratify the irregular concupiscence; and it is three, because it is divided into three goods, of such a uniform value, that it is impossible to say which stands highest in the world's judgment, so greatly does it esteem all. Now it is this false god, "the god of this world," which so cruelly "blinded the minds of unbelievers," that they did not see a light which yet was so very clear as the truth of the Gospel is in itself. And how did it blind them? By throwing in their eyes whatever it could find most fit for the purpose; dust for the avaricious, mire for the sensual, smoke for the proud. For if thou examinest closely, thou wilt see that all the unbelievers who have denied the doctrine of the Gospel have done so, not on account of the sublimity of the mysteries that it teaches, for they believed things which were not sublime only, like those of our faith, but absurd; but because the doctrine of the Gospel would overthrow that monstrous idol, "the god of this world," by detaching them from their sordid interests, their loves, and ambitions: "For this purpose the Son of God appeared, that He might destroy the works of the devil."¹ Is not the world greatly to be pitied, since it is going to destruction for the sake of this accursed idol? Why, then, dost thou not exert thyself to help it, not only with thy labour, but even with thy blood?

II. Consider secondly, that thou needest not make a voyage to the Indies to find these unbelievers. They are to be found, not in secret either, but only too openly and publicly, in the centre of Christendom; for they are those of the faithful

¹ St. John iii. 8.

whose faith is unaccompanied by works. Such persons are attached to the sublimity of the articles of faith revealed by the Gospel, but not to the holiness of its maxims ; nay, they are so bold as often to deny them, not only in deed, which is a kind of mute speech, but even in words ; for thou mayest often hear them say that those are the happiest who take their pleasure, make most money, amuse and indulge themselves in every way, and push their family interests ; and all this is, in plain language, giving our Lord the lie to His face. Now, how is it that these unbelievers of Christendom, and others like them, who “profess that they know God, but in their works deny Him,”¹ cannot perceive so bright a light as that of the Gospel truth, although it is not far off, as is the case with so many heathens, but actually present with them all day? It is because they are blinded by the god of this world. They are so attached to their sordid gains, their low gratifications, their idle vanities, that rather than follow the counsels given by Christ, they will call those of their acquaintances foolish, who do follow them gladly : “The word of the Cross to them indeed that perish is foolishness.”² If thou art not moved by pity to succour these unhappy persons, thou shouldst, at least, be moved by indignation when thou seest that “the god of this world” has so much more power than Christ over multitudes of souls not only in the Indies, but in lands where He has set up His Kingdom.

III. Consider thirdly, how it is that we see that these unhappy believers of whom we are speaking have not been lulled to sleep, but “blinded” by “the god of this world ;” we see it from the fact of their resisting so enlightening a force as that which shines forth in the Gospel. For thou must know that when the Apostle speaks of “the Gospel of the glory of Christ,” he means the declaration of the Divinity of Christ, which is the glory, or, as we may say, the brightness, which He has as Son of God : “The Image of God.” For God, as thou knowest, is the Source of all light : “God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness,”³ and from this original Light proceeds an Image of that Light so exact that it is His own Son, and is called the Eternal Word. Now this Word came in Person, from Heaven to earth, for the purpose of giving light to these unhappy men ; and although He was clothed in human flesh, to temper the blaze of His glory in some degree, yet He did not so conceal it as not to suffer it to shine brightly

¹ Titus i. 16.² 1 Cor. i. 18.³ 1 St. John i. 5.

through that veil in countless wonderful acts of wisdom and holiness and miraculous power ; but, above all, He suffered it to shine forth in His Gospel, and, therefore, it is especially called "the knowledge of the glory of Christ," and, as such, thou knowest how, beyond everything else, it has the power of imparting light, for no one who studies it attentively can fail to perceive so brilliant a light as that of the glory of Christ the Son of God, a glory which is veiled, indeed, but not hidden. And yet—can it be believed?—this power of enlightening, mighty as it is, which is in the Gospel, "the light of the Gospel," has not prevailed on these miserable men to embrace its precepts, to love and value them so as to prefer them to their own insane opinions ; and so, for them, this light does not "shine ;" and if this is the case when, all the while, it strikes full on their eyes, must we not say that they are, not asleep, but blinded? A person whose eyes are closed in the deepest sleep, cannot but open them if a very strong light is flashed upon them ; but, if they are closed in blindness, he could not open them though the sun itself were to come down from heaven to visit him. It would require nothing short of God's working a direct miracle by His omnipotence to open them. So, too, thou mayest be certain that it would also require a miracle to make those persons believe the Gospel whose eyes have been closed by "the god of this world," for it is not mere slumber, but blindness which has overcome them : "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the Image of God, should not shine unto them."

IV. Consider fourthly, why the Son of God is particularly called His "Image." It is because He has all the qualities of a most perfect image. Indeed, there is no perfect image anywhere to be found but this alone. The first quality is His likeness to the Father, the second is His generation by Him, the third His equality with Him. The representation of the king on a coin is not his true image, because it has nothing of him but likeness. His true image is the royal son whom he has begotten, because he has the quality of generation from him as well as of likeness to him. Nevertheless, although this son is the true, he is not the perfect image of the king, because his generation from his father is not of such a nature as to make him in every way equal to him. The only Son Who is equal in every way to His Father is the Son of God, and therefore He is the only perfect Image : "the Image of God." And it

is to His Image that thou art bound to be conformed, otherwise thou canst not hope to be the son of God by grace, as He is by nature. Those whom the Father has predestinated to the glory of Paradise are so predestinated by Him with this special condition, that they are to be conformed to the image of His Beloved Son: "Whom He predestinated to be made conformable to the Image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren."¹ How, then, canst thou hope that thou art predestinated if thou neither possess this conformity, nor even strive to acquire it? What is this conformity? It is to aim at resembling thy Heavenly Father in all His perfections, even as the Son resembles Him: "Be you therefore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect."² It is true that thou canst not resemble Him in equality, for in that case thou wouldst be His son by nature, but thou mayest resemble Him in thy measure, so as to be able, in some degree, to verify the word "as" in that passage. But how, if thou dost not resemble Him in any way, but art hard-hearted to the poor, unjust, wicked, revengeful, sensual, proud, and given up to vanity? In that case how canst thou trust that thou art predestinated? Alas! rather hast thou cause to fear that thou wilt have no other happiness than that which can be given thee by the god of this world, whom thou resemblest far more than the true God; such a happiness as is only enjoyed by the blind.

THIRTIETH DAY.

I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us (Romans viii. 18).

I. Consider first, how modestly the Apostle speaks, saying, "I reckon," of a thing concerning which he might so justly have said, "I know." Had he not gazed in the third Heaven on that glory of which he spoke? And yet, for all that, he said, "I reckon," to show thee that, even if the excellence and sublimity of the glory which he had beheld were nothing more than a probable opinion, thou oughtest still to do thy utmost to attain it. Dost thou not see how those persons act who are bent on seeking treasures? It may very often happen that,

¹ Romans viii. 29.

² St. Matt. v. 48.

instead of gold, they will find only lumps of yellow clay; yet they toil and labour and condemn themselves to live in caves, nay, even to die there, merely because they think there is a good chance of finding gold. Do not imagine, however, that when the Apostle here says, "I reckon," he has the slightest doubt of what he says. He rather uses the word in order to ridicule thee for seeming to doubt a thing which is so certain. It is less positive, but more significant than if he had said, "I know."

II. Consider secondly, that, after all, the coin with which the glory of Paradise is purchased, is nothing but the sufferings of this life—"the sufferings of this time"—poverty, disgrace, sickness, persecutions, labours, hardships, all the tribulations which God sends thee. So that when thou complainest of these tribulations, thou art complaining of the money which God gives to thee, as to a poor beggar, in order that thou mayest gain so much by it. When a prince, on some great day of rejoicing, throws money among his poor subjects, didst thou ever know them fail to run after it eagerly, striving, struggling, and vying with each other? And yet thou wilt not take a single step to receive the tribulation which God sends merely to make thee rich: "They have refused to receive correction."¹

III. Consider thirdly, that although these sufferings which thou endurest for the love of God are indeed so much money with which thou purchasest that great glory of Heaven, they are not money proportionate to it: "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come which shall be revealed in us." Because although they are proportionate in some way as to value, they are not so as to matter. And even if they are in any way proportionate in value, this must be ascribed to the glory which gives it to them; for, regarded in themselves, they are absolutely valueless. Dost thou think, then, that all thy sufferings can be in the slightest degree compared to Paradise? If there were nothing else to be said, all thy sufferings are limited to time—"the sufferings of this time"—and the "glory to come" will be when time is ended; and we know that then nothing remains but eternity. What comparison, then, can there possibly be between time and eternity? The same that there is between a point and the circumference, that is, none at all: "In a moment of indignation have I hid My face a little while

¹ Jerem. v. 3.

from thee, but with everlasting kindness have I had mercy on thee."¹

IV. Consider fourthly, that if it still seems hard to thee to suffer for the sake of so great a glory, it is because it is hidden from thee. But do not fear, it will soon appear, it "shall be revealed." Oh, if God did but lift a corner of the veil which hides it, and allowed thee but a glimpse of it, how happy wouldst thou be! Thou wouldst not be able to help exclaiming: "Let us suffer, let us toil, let us be afflicted, let us even die, for the sake of so great a gain." "We have seen a land exceeding rich and fruitful, neglect not, lose no time."² But, after all, although I grant that this glory may be revealed to thee in this world, it cannot be revealed *in* thee. Thou must wait for that till the present time is past, for it is a "glory to come." And the reason why the Apostle especially says that this glory "shall be revealed in us," is to show us the difference between the earthly glory which thou so greatly admirest, and that of Heaven. Earthly glory is all outside of thee. Honours, fame, applause, bring thee glory certainly. But dost thou not see what sort of glory it is, after all? It is a glory which surrounds thee, but does not reside in thee: and therefore when thou diest thou must leave it: "Nor shall his glory descend with him."³ But the glory of Heaven will be all within thee—"The Kingdom of God is within you"⁴—and therefore it will endure as long as thyself, that is, for ever.

THIRTY-FIRST DAY.

When you see the multitude, behind and before, adoring, say you in your heart, Thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord (Baruch vi. 5, 6).

I. Consider first, that when God suffered His people to go to Babylon in a state of slavery, He was at the same time moved to pity for them because of the dangers which they might encounter there to lead them into transgression; and therefore He sent after them a letter, in which is found the excellent admonition which I have proposed for thy consideration. Thou wilt enter a city, so God said, which is given up to idolatry. Thou wilt find there every kind of false gods;

² Judges xviii. 9.

¹ Isaias liv. 8.

³ Psalm xlvi. 18.

⁴ St. Luke xvii. 21.

gods of wood, of metal, of marble, of common clay. Yet, false as they are, thou wilt see them borne along the streets in triumph by the besotted people. Take heed, therefore, not to let thyself be drawn aside by any evil example to honour them; but, turning thy thoughts instantly to Me, Who am the True God, say, while thou payest Me due homage in thy heart, that I only am to be adored. "When you see the multitude behind and before, adoring, say you in your hearts, Thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord." This practice is not only one of the noblest, but one of the most necessary in the spiritual life. For what is the chief difficulty which is experienced, especially by those who are obliged by charity or by their position to have intercourse with the world? It is to hold firmly the maxims of the faith in the sight of so many persons who speak or act in opposition to them by giving themselves to vanity. One worships pleasure, another money, another glory. What, then, must thou do to remain unshaken whenever thou meetest these dangerous spectacles? Thou must correct their deception interiorly by saying to thyself that all these persons are wrong, and that thou alone art right if thou adore Christ, and embrace Him stripped of everything upon the Cross for thee, in the deepest suffering, the deepest poverty, the deepest shame. Whenever thou failest to do this, thou art very near falling; for the opinion of the world is a tremendous lure, which will very soon pervert thy understanding, unless thou hast the preservative ready at hand. "The bewitching of vanity obscureth good things,"¹ for it represents as contemptible those eternal goods which are the only ones that can really be called goods.

II. Consider secondly, that if those who worship vanity in this miserable world were few in number thou wouldst not incur so great a risk in beholding them; the great evil is that they are so numerous: "When you see the multitude." The first thing, therefore, that thou hast to do is to despise numbers: "Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil."² If the number of those who act in opposition to the dictates of the Gospel were, not great only, but innumerable, nay even infinite; if every person in the world but thyself were of that number, still thou alone wouldst be bound to oppose the universal error: "When all"—see how brave this good Tobias was, even in the land of captivity and when he was but a youth—not "most persons," nor "many persons," but "all"—

¹ Wisdom iv. 12.

² Exodus xxiii. 2.

“When all went to the golden calves which Jeroboam, King of Israel, had made, he alone fled the company of all, and went to Jerusalem, to the Temple of the Lord.”¹ What is it to thee that those who err are many in number? So are those who will be lost; and they will be lost for this very reason, that one follows the other without consideration: “They are laid in Hell like sheep.”²

III. Consider thirdly, that thou must despise not the numbers only, but also the authority of those who thus commit idolatry, since thou wilt often find among them not only those who remain “behind” thee, but those who go “before” thee. And it is, I know, easy enough to care nothing for the opinion of the former, that is, of thy inferiors in age, position, office, or credit; but it is by no means easy to do so in the case of the latter. Indeed, it is extremely probable that thou wilt allow thyself to be deceived by them, because they are thy superiors. Do not let it be so, but “when you see the multitude, behind and before”—not only “behind” but “before” also—“adoring, say you in your hearts, Thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord.” Alas, it will too often be the case, that the very persons who ought to restrain thee from evil doing will urge thee to it: “My people hath been a lost flock;” and what is the cause of this ruin? “Their shepherds have caused them to go astray:”³ not “wolves,” but “their shepherds.” As a rule, the greatest evil which happens to so many Catholic flocks is not caused by wolves, but by those shepherds who give bad example, because they easily flee from the wolves, but they are led by their shepherds to the precipice. But, shepherds though they be, ought thou to be led astray by them? I answer, No. “Though we,” that is, we Apostles, “or an angel from Heaven preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema.”⁴ You must, therefore, despise all those who follow after vanity, no matter, whether they are behind or before, for they are all alike a multitude, and a contemptible one: “When you see the multitude behind and before.”

IV. Consider fourthly, in what way thou must put in practice this useful admonition which God has given thee. Must thou attack those wicked persons who act so differently from what they are bound to do? must thou blame and reprove them, and make, as it were, a profession of faith, and a public protest against all these idolaters? Certainly not; this was

¹ Tobias i. 5. 6.

² Psalm xlviii. 15.

³ Jerem. l. 6.

⁴ Galat. i. 8.

not required by God even of His people in Babylon, where the idolatry was so shocking. All that thou hast to do is to enter into thyself, and cast a loving glance upon God, and silently renew the fealty which thou hast already sworn to Him: "When you see the multitude, behind and before, adoring, say you in your hearts, Thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord." Dost thou observe the prudence of those words, "in your hearts"? They give thee the rule; it would be a task of too much difficulty to attack a multitude of persons among whom are thy superiors as well as thy inferiors. It is enough for thee to do what thou canst, that is, to contradict them interiorly in thy mind, and to compassionate them. But take notice, that this is not a thing to be done once only, but as often as thou seest or hearest anything which may draw thee to vanity. Here lies all the advantage of the practice; for so great is the power of public opinion over our minds, that if we are not always ready, weapon in hand, to reject and repel it, it makes itself master of them very easily. And once in possession, who is able to drive it out? Very few indeed. Therefore, when thou goest through the streets, and seest there all the luxury which is opposed to Christian simplicity, all the profanity and show, say within thyself, "Thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord." If thou art obliged to attend some court, and there witness all the pleasures in which the time is passed, the attendants, the suite, the pomp, say within thyself, "Thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord." When thou art engaged in familiar conversation, and hearest an acquaintance vaunted because he has been raised higher even than his deserts, because he is in favour with great people, or lauded by the populace, because the renown of his name is sure to obliterate all remembrance of thee, say within thyself once more, "Thou oughtest to be adored, O Lord." How profitable to thee will it be if thou keepest this thought ready for a thousand similar occurrences. It will be enough to preserve thee from that evil desire, which may possibly waken in thy heart also, of abandoning the True God for an idol. And it is no wonder that it should be so, for God Himself has recommended this practice to thee with His own mouth. What doubt can there be, then, that He is bound in an especial manner to assist those who adopt it?

JUNE.

FIRST DAY.

My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work
(St. John iv. 34).

I. Consider first, what this will and this work are, which Christ here calls His Father's. The "work" was the salvation of the whole human race: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."¹ The "will" was, in addition, all those means which Christ had to make use of for that salvation—the journeys, the preachings, the sufferings even unto death, and that the death of the Cross: "In the head of the book it is written of Me that I should do Thy will; O My God, I have desired it."² He calls the accomplishment of this will His "meat;" not that He did not use bodily food, as being a true Man, but because this latter was nothing to Him in comparison of the former: "I have meat to eat which you know not."³ If thou rightly understandest all that was intended by Christ, when He called the fulfilment of His Father's will His "meat," although it was in itself so hard and difficult, what reason thou hast for shame!

II. Consider secondly, that the accomplishment of the holy will of God may be called the food of every just man: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting."⁴ For just as food supports the life of the body, so does the accomplishment of that will support the life of the soul, that is, grace. Nay, it supports it in a far more effectual way; for in the end, in spite of all the food thou takest, thy body must die; whereas, on the other hand, if thou always do the will of God, thy soul can never die: "Hear, and your soul shall live."⁵ In this sense, however, Christ could not say that it was His meat to do His Father's will, because all the pure and perfect actions which

¹ St. John xvii. 4.

² Psalm xxxix. 8, 9.

³ St. John iv. 32.

⁴ St. John vi. 27.

⁵ Isaias lv. 3.

He performed had no share at all in maintaining grace in Him. And the reason is, that grace, in His case, did not depend on works, but on the Hypostatic Union, by which alone He was impeccable. And therefore although, being what He was, He could not fail always to act with the most perfect holiness, still it was not the holiness of action which maintained the life of the soul in Him, as it does in the just; but rather the life of the soul which maintained the holiness of action. In this sense, therefore, He could not say, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work."

III. Consider thirdly, that it is also said to be the food of every just man to accomplish the Divine will, because, as bodily food not only supports the body, but strengthens it when it is weak, invigorates it, gives it new life and power, so, too, does spiritual food with regard to the soul. But there is this difference, that bodily food sometimes destroys instead of increasing the strength, as is the case with those who are in the habit of taking a great deal: "In many meats there be sickness."¹ But this is not so with spiritual food. The more good actions thou doest, the stronger wilt thou always become. In this sense also it was impossible for Christ to say that it was His meat to do His Father's will, because His Soul was not strengthened by doing good actions, as all of ours are. His Soul was strong from the first; and the strength which He had when He so courageously mounted the Cross, as it were a lofty palm-tree—"I will go up into the palm-tree and take hold of the fruit thereof"—that very same strength He had from the first moment when He was conceived, a tender Infant, in His Mother's womb; it was never increased by any food, and therefore neither in this sense could He say, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work."

IV. Consider fourthly, that it is also said to be the food of every just man to accomplish the Divine will, because, as bodily food not only strengthens the body, but increases, makes it grow, and brings it to the appointed stature which it would not attain if its food were stinted; so, too, does spiritual food act on the soul. The soul, too, has its stature, towards which it should gradually advance, passing from the condition of a beginner to that of greater progress, and finally to that of perfection. Now to this growth good works conduce wonderfully, only there is this difference, that after thou hast reached

¹ Eccclus. xxxvii. 33.

a certain age, called the age of manhood, thy body ceases growing, no matter how much thou eatest; but the growth of the soul never ceases: "He that is holy, let him be sanctified still."¹ Neither in this sense could Christ say that it was His "meat" to do His Father's will, because He never grew. He grew, indeed, as men thought, who every day saw more and more of the marvellous science, wisdom, and grace which abode in His Heart; but in reality it was only His Body that grew. His Soul was always equally gigantic, and although the merits which He went on acquiring by the excellence of His actions were continually increasing, yet His holiness did not increase: He grew in merits, but not in stature. Neither in this sense, then, could He say, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work."

V. Consider fifthly, what was the sense in which He could rightly say it. It was in a sense signifying that His delight was in this. You know that it is the property of bodily food to excite the appetite when absent, to appease it when present, and by appeasing to refresh, restore, and give it pleasure. So, too, does spiritual food act upon the soul, only it has this advantage over bodily food, that the latter, when it has been taken plentifully, is no longer desired, but rather unwelcome, whereas the more we have of the former, the more we desire it, for it satisfies, but never cloy: "They that eat Me shall yet hunger."² This, then, was what Christ meant when He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work." He meant that this was His greatest delight. How is it that this thought does not melt thy heart? Dost thou know what a "work" of pain that was that is here spoken of? It was the redemption of the world. And yet it was in this that Christ took delight; this was His pleasure, His joy, His refreshment, to such an extent that it often made Him neglect giving His Body its needful food, and the only time when He desired to do so was because it was to be the last food He was to take in His life. "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you;"³ not any Pasch, but "this," because He was to pass from it to the Cross. Does not this move thee at least to confusion, to compunction, to a sense of loving gratitude? What art thou, that Christ should forget Himself for thy salvation? And yet He often took no thought for His own nourishment, in order to occupy Himself with thee, His meanest servant. How often hast thou, for His

¹ Apoc. xxii. 11.² Eccclus. xxiv. 29.³ St. Luke xxii. 15.

service, neglected, I do not say to take necessary food, but even to eat for thy pleasure?

VI. Consider sixthly, that He said that He had "to do the will of Him that sent Him, that He might perfect His work." The "will" of the Father was that Christ should suffer with great severity all that was needful for the salvation of the world; and the "work" was the salvation itself. As regards the will of the Father, it belonged to Christ to do it all, and therefore He said, "to do His will;" as regards the work, it did not belong to Him to do it all, but only to perfect it, and therefore He said, "That I may perfect it." It belonged to Christ to do all the will of the Father, because the Father had no share in the suffering: "I have trodden the wine-press alone."¹ But it did not belong to Christ in the same way to do all the work, for that was common to the Father also. The Father had decreed the salvation of the world: "God will have all men to be saved,"² and, in fact, He did save it, and therefore to Christ, as Man, it only remained to perfect that salvation. And since He was here speaking as Man, which is shown by His saying that He was sent, therefore, I say, He used these words: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work." If He had only said, "To do His will," He would not have expressed that His suffering was efficacious for the saving of the world. If He had only said, "That I may perfect His work," He would not have expressed that His suffering to save the world was the decree of His Father, and therefore He united the two. Besides, it is most evident that these two things are distinct; for did not the Apostles, with all their successors who were sent by God for the benefit of the human race, do the will of Him Who sent them most perfectly? Most surely they did. They did the will of God, but they did not do His work—nay, they did not even help Him to do it, for no other "hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth"³ save Jesus Christ, thy Saviour. And so in this sense also did He truly say, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there is not a man with Me;" because, although the Apostles did indeed declare His salvation to the world—"These men are the servants of the most high God, who preach unto you the way of salvation"⁴—they did not do the work of that salvation. What did they do, at most? They exhorted men to profit in time by it, and it is in this sense that they said of

¹ Isaias lxiii. 3. ² 1 Timothy ii. 4. ³ Psalm lxxiii. 12. ⁴ Acts xvi. 17.

themselves that they helped their God: "For we are God's coadjutors."¹ Just as, if thou paid the whole sum which was required to set free all the Christians groaning in chains and captivity in Algiers, thou alone wouldst in truth effect their ransom. All the servants who might go there in thy name to console those slaves, and enable them to accept that ransom, would not really accomplish the work of ransoming them, but only that of causing the ransom to be accepted. Our case is the same. The redemption of the world has been perfected because Christ has paid the full price, not only sufficiently, but copiously: "With Him there is plentiful redemption."² All that remains to be done is to exhort men to embrace it; to teach, help, encourage, and sometimes force them, like madmen, not to prefer slavery to freedom. What canst thou say to our Lord? Art thou not equally bound to Him, whether thou art saved or not? He has entirely perfected the work: "That I may perfect His work." If, after all, thou art not saved, the fault is thy own.

VII. Consider seventhly, that it was with marvellous wisdom that Christ said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." He might have said, "My meat is to suffer hardship, to make weary journeys, to preach, to suffer for men," since that will, the doing of which was so sweet to Him, did, in substance, consist in these things. Yet He said only, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me," because this it is which so wonderfully sweetens a food which is, in itself, so bitter as suffering. Dost thou desire to suffer gladly? Do not think of it as suffering. Think of it only as doing the will of thy Father in Heaven—"that I may do His will"—and this will make it so sweet, that thou wilt never have enough of it.

SECOND DAY.

Where are the princes of the nations, and they that rule over the beasts that are upon the earth? that take their diversion with the birds of the air. That hoard up silver and gold, wherein men trust, and there is no end of their getting? who work in silver, and are solicitous, and their works are unsearchable? They are cut off and are gone down to Hell, and others are risen up in their place (Baruch iii. 16—19).

I. Consider first, seriously, how great the vanity of this mortal life is, and say within thyself, "Where are the princes

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 9.

² Psalm cxxix. 7.

of the nations?" Where are now all the princes of the earth, such as Augustus, Tiberius, Trajan, and Caligula, and all the other royal Cæsars? "They are all cut off." Not only are they no longer in our world, but they are "cut off," so that not even their ashes are to be found. Go to their tombs, seek them, call upon them; thou wilt not find one to answer thee. How truly indeed are they cut off? They have lost relations, friends, flatterers, palaces, thrones, sceptres, posterity; in a word, they have lost all that they possessed in the world. It is indeed, a cutting off, an utter ending. And yet there are men who value a greatness, a glory which vanishes like smoke before the wind! How foolish thou art if thou carest for it.

II. Consider secondly, that it was not without reason that I said that all these persons are no longer in this world; for it is but too certain that they are in the next? And where are they—unhappy that they are? In Hell: "They are cut off and are gone down to Hell." "Cut off," as to the body; and "gone down to Hell," as to the soul. And why are they said to be cut off (*exterminati*)? It is because they have been driven out of their bounds (*termini*). Their bounds in this world were to be continually in the midst of splendour and amusement; they were unable to go even a step beyond these things. And now they have so gone out of them, that it is not possible for them to go farther: "They are gone down to Hell:" that is, to the land which is truly a "land of destruction."¹ Far beyond the destruction of Egypt. Alas for thee who readest these words if ever thou incurrest the risk of being exiled to that fatal country! There is no returning thence: "He that shall go down to Hell shall not come up, nor shall he return any more into his house."² For this is yet a further meaning of this terrible word (*exterminium*) which is here translated "cutting off," it denotes an evil which is fatal, irreparable, irremediable. Such is the evil which these princes now suffer in Hell.

III. Consider thirdly, more particularly, the very great contrast between the state which these persons enjoyed on earth and that which is now their lot in Hell, that you may perceive more clearly how utter was the destruction that fell upon them when they "went down to Hell." Here it was their delight to "rule over the beasts that are upon the earth," by their continual hunting of wild animals, and keeping dogs and horses. And now, in Hell, not only do they no longer

¹ Wisdom xviii. 15.

² Job vii. 9, 10.

rule over those beasts which live on the earth, but they are ruled over by those which lurk beneath it, for they are the prey of disgusting worms, of scorpions, and serpents which devour them: "I will send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the fury of creatures that trail upon the ground, and of serpents."¹ Here they delighted in amusing themselves with the birds of the air; and in Hell they have become the sport of demons who are like ferocious birds, and whom they see surrounding them like so many harpies: "Birds shall devour them with a most bitter bite."² Here they took pleasure not only in becoming rich, but were insatiable in heaping up wealth: "They hoard up silver and gold, wherein men trust, and there is no end of their getting." Keeping their money lying idle by them rather than bestow it on their subjects, their servants, and those in need, and now nothing remains of all their treasures but a heap of rust kindled to burn them alive: "Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall eat your flesh like fire."³ And oh, what poverty is theirs! The miserable glutton begged in vain for one drop of water. And yet what relief would it have afforded him in those raging flames? None whatever. Nay, rather it would have rendered them fiercer, like a little water sprinkled on red-hot iron. Here it was their delight to have all kinds of splendid vessels, caskets, statues, and the like made, so that every material was exhausted in their manufacture: "They work in silver, and are solicitous, and their works are unsearchable." In Hell there is no more need of their solicitude. Every day new furies rise up, without any labour of seeking for them, terribly ingenious in finding out more and more fearful ways of torture, so that there is no end to it, but pain succeeds pain through all eternity. "There is success in evil things to a man without discipline, and there is a finding that turneth to loss."⁴ See, then, what a contrast is here. Well may it be said that these unhappy men have been driven beyond the bounds (*exterminati*) of the state which was theirs in the world, since they have passed into one which is its opposite. But what need is there to say more? "They are gone down to Hell." That is enough to show thee that they are subject to every sort of evil. And canst thou be so foolish as to envy their past happiness, and not to dread their present misery? See, by the example of these men, how easy it is to be lost for ever. It is not said

¹ Deut. xxxii. 24.² Deut. xxxii. 24.³ St. James v. 3.⁴ Ecclus. xx. 9.

that they indulged in irregular excesses, that they were assassins, that they shed streams of innocent blood in revenge. It is merely said that they were addicted to excessive amusement and show, a thing about which hardly any one in their position has a scruple. And yet how full of danger is this state! "Woe to you that are wealthy in Sion."¹

IV. Consider fourthly, what is the most astonishing thing of all. It is to see that after these persons have been cast down from their thrones into the depths of Hell, others are to be found willing to take their place. One would think that rather than do this, they would all hasten to bury themselves in woods, caverns, and tombs. But no: on the contrary, the men of this world every day vie with each other in striving to attain these thrones: "They are cut off, and are gone down to Hell, and others are risen up in their place." This is so startling a marvel, that it is enough to astonish and bewilder a man for a whole day. And these words may also plainly show thee the utter emptiness of temporal goods of which I told thee at the beginning, when thou seest that these great and envied rulers succeed one another and vanish like the waves of the sea. Hardly has one mounted his throne than he sees his successor ready to push him from it as quickly as possible. Such is human greatness; it has no solidity: "Samaria hath made her King to pass as froth upon the face of the water."² And does not this serve to make the fact I am speaking of still more extraordinary? For if human greatness is so transitory, how is it possible that any one should seek after it so eagerly? Yet so it is: "They are cut off, and are gone down to Hell, and others are risen up in their place."

THIRD DAY.

We ought more diligently to observe the things which we have heard, lest perhaps we should slip (Hebrews ii. 1).

I. Consider first, that these words regard in the first place all Christians of every rank, however mean, amongst whom the Apostle in his humility counts himself, saying, "We." All of these are bound to keep the law given to them in the Gospel far more strictly and perfectly than the Jews of old were bound

¹ Amos vi. 1.

² Osee x. 7.

to keep theirs. If they do not, they will undoubtedly incur a more irreparable destruction: (1) because the latter was revealed by the mouth of an angel only—"I will send an angel before thee"¹—and the former by the mouth of Christ Himself: "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him."² (2) Because the latter pointed to the attainment of mere earthly goods as the reward of keeping it: "If you be willing, and will hearken unto Me, you shall eat the good things of the land."³ The former leads to the attainment of heavenly goods: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."⁴ (3) Because the latter, in comparison of the former, was a weight not to be borne by the strongest shoulders, both because of the far greater number of its precepts and the far scantier aids of grace: "A yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear;"⁵ whereas the former, compared with the latter, is a burden which can be borne by the weakest: "My yoke is sweet and my burden light."⁶ Thou seest, therefore, what good reason the Apostle has to say: "We ought more diligently to observe the things which we have heard" from so great, so gracious, so wise a Lawgiver, "lest perhaps we should slip." What is the meaning of the word "slip"? It means to be lost. For the word here translated "slip" is *perefluere*. It may be said that when a man dies a temporal death he passes away (*fluit*): "We all die, and like waters that return no more, we fall down into the earth."⁷ Of one who dies eternally, it may be said that he passes away in a stronger sense (*effluit*); but if thou, who art a Christian, dost not observe thy law more perfectly than the Jews observed theirs, the word describing thy fall must be stronger still: not merely *efflues*, which may be applied to them, but *perefflues*, because thy damnation will exceed theirs as much as thy sin is greater than theirs.

II. Consider secondly, that, in the second place, this passage regards those more perfect Christians who have risen above the ordinary crowd—nay, who have quite separated themselves from it, in order to listen in solitude to the voice of God by the practice of contemplation, amongst whom the Apostle most justly places himself, by saying "we;" for while engaged in this exercise he was "rapt even to the third Heaven," where he "heard secret words which it is not granted

¹ Exodus xxxiii. 2.

² St. Matt. xvii. 5.

³ Isaias i. 19.

⁴ St. John vi. 69.

⁵ Acts xv. 10.

⁶ St. Matt. xi. 30.

⁷ 2 Kings xiv. 14.

to man to utter.”¹ All such persons are bound to observe with greater perfection what they have heard in those secret colloquies with their Lord: they “ought more diligently to observe the things” they “have heard;” for if not they lose everything: “lest perhaps” they “should slip.” This would indeed be *pereffluere*, to be a damaged vessel, full of holes, no more capable of holding water; for God pours on thy soul the gifts thou receivest in prayer, lights and inspirations and beautiful affections, because He would have thee become perfect; but if thou neglectest them, not only will He not grant thee any more of these affections, but He will deprive thee of those which He has already given thee, and will leave thee desolate: “Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest My soul depart from thee.”² Dost thou think that all that is required of thee is an ordinary virtue, such as may suffice for the generality of Christians who are not admitted to intercourse as frequent or as intimate with their Lord? If so, thou art greatly deceived; for thou art always at school, and so all the more bound to profit by the lessons thou receivest. Take notice too that the Apostle does not say, “We ought to observe,” that is, to keep “the things which we have heard, lest perhaps they should slip,” but “lest perhaps we should slip;” because the consequence of thy losing the graces which God in His love now bestows upon thee may be nothing short of thy being lost thyself. Would not this be to lose both the water and the vessel that holds it? “It shall be broken small as the potter’s vessel is broken all to pieces with mighty breaking, and there shall not be found a shard of the pieces thereof . . . wherein a little water may be drawn out of the pit.”³

III. Consider thirdly, that, in the last place, these words regard the highest class of Christians, those who, not contented with taking care of their own souls by the practice of contemplation, to which they return from time to time, endeavour to help their neighbour also by active works, by preaching, hearing confessions, counselling, and teaching; among whom the Apostle, the Preacher of the Gentiles and great Doctor of the Church, so justly places himself by saying “we.” They are those who have “heard in the ear” the teaching of their Lord, and then “preach it upon the house-tops.”⁴ They ought therefore to be very careful to observe what they have heard more perfectly than others—“We ought more diligently to observe the things which we have heard”—otherwise they are

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 4.² Jerem. vi. 8.³ Isaias xxx. 14.⁴ St. Matt. x. 27.

in danger of being lost themselves whilst they are seeking others, "lest they should slip"—*ne forte pereffluant*. For if thou art in the number of these benevolent persons, thou oughtest to be careful that in pouring forth for the benefit of others the gifts which God has bestowed upon thee, thou reservest a large share for thine own good. *Fluere* may be said of those who are not satisfied with living for themselves only, but who give themselves charitably to the service of their neighbour; *effluere* of those who do this in very abundant measure; *pereffluere* of those who thus give themselves entirely. But if thou dost this, what will remain for thyself? "A fool uttereth all his mind," and thereby shows that he is a fool, because he thinks about others, and not about himself; "a wise man deferreth, and keepeth it till afterwards,"¹ and thereby shows his wisdom, for he acts like those virgins who kept oil enough for their own lamps, so that they were not left in the dark. Dost thou not see that even corporal almsgiving has to be measured by thy state of life? Much more that which is spiritual; for with regard to the good things of the body thou mayest rightly love thy neighbour more than thyself in many cases, but this is never lawful in spiritual things: as to these thou must love him as thyself, but not more than thyself. What, then, oughtest thou to do if thou art so happy as to be in the number of those concerning whom the word *fluere*, or even *effluere*, may be used with regard to thy service of thy neighbour? Thou must take example from the rivers, which, when they have run a certain course, return to the sea "to flow again."² Thou must retire within thyself from time to time, and think of thyself; for what will it profit thee to gain the whole universe if thou lovest thy soul as the price of that gain? "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?"³

FOURTH DAY.

I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones (St. Matt. xi. 25).

I. Consider first, that it is the will of God that the sacrifices offered to Him with our lips should be as numerous as those

¹ Prov. xxix. 11.

² Eccles. i. 7.

³ St. Matt. xvi. 26

which were offered to Him with the victims of old ; the latter, indeed, could only be rendered at comparatively rare intervals, whereas the former can be rendered every moment : "Take with you words, and return to the Lord and say to Him, . . . We will render the calves of our lips."¹ Now there were four kinds of sacrifices, as there were four ends for which they might be offered, protestation, expiation, praise, and gratitude. And this one word, "I confess" (*confiteor*), is used for the offering of all these with the lips ; so that we need only "take with us" one word, instead of "words." Now this word *confiteor* has four meanings in the Sacred Scriptures, and we find examples of each in the Psalms of David alone, who so frequently used it. The first meaning is that of a declaration of his faith in God : "Thou art my God, and I will acknowledge (*confitebor*) Thee."² The second meaning is that of accusing himself of his sins to God : "I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord."³ The third is that of praising God : "I will praise (*confitebor*) Thee, for thou art fearfully magnified."⁴ The last is that of thanksgiving : "I will give glory (*confitebor*) to Thee, because Thou hast heard me."⁵ Our Blessed Lord, when He was upon earth, was not a pilgrim, but a possessor ; He did not believe, but He saw ; and therefore He could not say "I confess" in the sense of a declaration of faith. He was not a sinner, but the Destroyer of sin, and therefore He could not say "I confess" as an acknowledgment of guilt. He must then have used this word in the two remaining senses only, that is, to pay to God, as Man, the sacrifice of praise and gratitude. And it is precisely in these two senses that we ought to believe that He used it in this passage, when addressing Himself to His beloved Father, He said : "I confess to Thee, O Father," &c. As regards thyself, it is certain that the word is suitable to thee in all four senses, and thou shouldst therefore delight in always having on thy lips a word so rich in merit, since thou canst by it offer as many kinds of sacrifice as it contains meanings, and thus thou "wilt render the calves of thy lips."

II. Consider secondly, the matter of this confession made by our Lord to His Father. It was that He had hidden from the proud the wonderful truths of the faith, and displayed them to the humble : "Because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones."

Osee xiv. 3.

² Psalm cxvii. 28.

³ Psalm xxxi. 5.

⁴ Psalm cxxxviii. 14.

⁵ Psalm cxvii. 21.

Now, thou knowest well that a part of these truths belong to speculative and a part to practical doctrine. To the former belong all those ineffable mysteries which God has revealed to us: "No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."¹ To the latter belong all the instructions which Christ has left to the world, instructions as salutary as they were new. Now the proud and wise of this world haughtily despised the truths which concerned the understanding, because they were above their capacity. The prudent and arrogant audaciously derided the instructions which concerned the will, because they were directly contrary to their own maxims; whereas the humble readily embraced both. For this Christ offers to God a two-fold sacrifice, that of praise for the darkness by which all these proud men were surrounded, that of thanksgiving as well as of praise for the light which shone so brightly before the eyes of the humble. See, then, how advantageous humility is, how detrimental pride is, in the school of Christ. It is little ones who learn most in this school; not that men of the highest capacity, acuteness, prudence, and learning have not become distinguished scholars in it, for no other school in the world can boast of such men as an Augustine, an Albert, a Thomas, and others like them, but that these great men made themselves little, and by doing so became the greatest of their race. These are those little ones whom Christ loves: "Suffer the little children to come to Me;" not little ones without sense, but those who are devoid of malice: "Do not become children in sense, but in malice be children, and in sense be perfect."² This is true wisdom, true prudence, to attain to Christian humility. And so it will be seen in Heaven that many a pious old Catholic woman knew far more than Aristotle in speculation, more than Tacitus in practical doctrine, because she knew her Last End, and the means of attaining it. But we must observe that by this simplicity of a true scholar of Christ is not here meant that which is opposed to wisdom of any kind, but only that which is opposed to that vain esteem of self, which implies the most foolish and fatal ignorance. The man who is free from this is called a little one in the school of Christ: "Thou hast revealed them to little ones."

III. Consider thirdly, how truly it is said that the Father has hidden these doctrines from the proud, and revealed them to the humble. When thou understandest the manner of His

¹ St. John i. 18.

² 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

revealing them to the humble thou wilt understand how He has hidden them from the proud. He has revealed them to the humble by giving them supernatural light to know them by, and it is by refusing this light to the proud that He has hidden these things from them. This is the only way in which God hides them. He does not place a veil before thy eyes, there is no need of that : He merely leaves thee in blindness. It is true indeed that even to these proud persons He gave a sufficient amount of supernatural light to enable them to see these things if only they had got rid of the vapours which surrounded them, and had chosen to make use of greater application, care, and study ; for otherwise they would not be called inexcusable, as the Apostle says they are : "So that they are inexcusable."¹ But still He did not give them as much light as He gave to the humble. The greater amount which He gave to these latter was of grace ; the lesser amount, which He gave to the former, was justice. And therefore it was with good reason that Christ praised His Father for having hidden His truths from the proud, because justice merits praise ; but He not only praised, but thanked Him for having revealed them to the humble, for mercy merits not praise only, but thanksgiving. See now how easy it is for God to punish thee by merely leaving thee in the state which thou art placed in by thy own free-will. When we hear it said that God hardens any one's heart as He hardened that of Pharaoh, that He stops up his ears and blinds his eyes, we take fright at these expressions, because we fancy, in our pride, that our hearts are capable of being touched, that we have heard and seen, and that God by a positive act has prevented us from making use of what was in our power. But this is not the case. Of ourselves we are incapable of doing a single thing that can be of use to us, either of being touched in our hearts, of hearing, or of seeing, and therefore, when He would punish us, God has only to leave us in our miserable condition. And therefore these expressions of hardening, of making deaf and blind, when used concerning God, are not to be taken in the positive sense in which we use them in speaking of ourselves, but in one which is negative, that is, they imply merely the withholding of a favour. With regard to other men, we are capable of being touched, we hear and see, and therefore when used of ourselves and those like us they have a positive meaning. But with regard to God, we are capable of nothing : "All

¹ Romans i. 20.

nations are before Him as if they had no being at all ;¹ and therefore when used of Him and us, they have not and cannot have such a meaning strictly speaking, because if we say that a person positively hardens, deafens, or blinds another, this implies tenderness, hearing, and sight in that other ; and there is no single atom of good that can be implied in us wretched creatures as regards Him Who is the Giver of all the good that we have : "My substance is as nothing before thee."² Oh, how humbly we should bear ourselves if we really understood our own nothingness !

IV. Consider fourthly, how in this confession which Christ made to the Father, He called Him, not Father only, but also Lord, and Lord of all : "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth," because He had shown Himself to be a Father in the mercy He exercised towards "little ones," and a Lord in the justice He exercised towards the proud. As God He called Him Father ; as Man He called Him Lord ; and thou too shouldst constantly address Him by both these titles, in order to excite in thyself both confidence and fear towards God, although in praying to Him thou art more used to call Him Father than Lord, because thou hast greater need of confidence. And therefore thou seest that although Christ here uses also the title of Lord, yet when He prayed to God in the Cenacle, in the Garden, on the Cross, He called Him Father only ; when He taught us how to pray to Him in the *Pater noster*, He bade us do so only addressing Him by this name of Father, to show us that we ought to go to Him in prayer with the same confidence with which children turn to a beloved father. Besides, the name of Father renders more honour to our God, and is therefore more pleasing to Him than that of Lord. He began to be Lord only at the creation of the world, but He was Father from all eternity, and consequently He might be what He is, that is to say, perfectly blessed without ever being Lord, but not without being Father, that is, without having a comprehension of Himself so express, so perfect, so exact as to be an Image equal to Himself. Hence it follows that in calling Him Father we make an act of faith, which is still more meritorious than when we call Him Lord. That He is Lord, is a thing so well known that it was revealed to all even in the Old Covenant ; but it was not in the same way revealed to all that He is Father, as it is revealed to us. And therefore we may hope, that when we give Him this

¹ Isaiah xl. 17.

² Psalm xxxviii. 6.

name with a due sentiment of faith, we pay Him an act of homage which is calculated beyond all things to win for us His grace. Nevertheless, if thou shouldst remember that He is a Father, in order to excite confidence, thou must also remember that He is a Lord, and the Lord of all, in order to excite fear—"Lord of Heaven and earth"—and that therefore He does in all things according to His pleasure: "Whatsoever the Lord pleased He hath done in Heaven and earth."¹ As "Lord of Heaven," dost thou not see what He did there to the angels? He drove away the proud, and chose the humble: "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble." And as "Lord of earth," dost thou not see what He has done with regard to men? He has revealed to the humble the things which He has hidden from the proud, thus choosing the one and rejecting the other. If then thou art unable to love Him as a Father, wilt thou not, at least, reverence Him as a Lord?

FIFTH DAY.

The patient man is better than the valiant: and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities (Prov. xvi. 32).

I. Consider first, that speaking in the fullest sense the patient man is valiant, and the valiant is patient. But speaking in a more restricted sense, the patient man is one who bears some great evil virtuously, and the valiant man is one who goes forward to encounter it. Now, at first sight, thou mayest think that the latter is a greater action than the former. But it is not so: "The patient man is better than the valiant." And the reason is, first, because when thou bearest an evil it is something which attacks thee, and which therefore thou regardest as superior to thee; when thou encounterest it, it is thou who attackest it, and therefore thou regardest it as thy inferior, and it is far more difficult to do battle with one whom thou considerest thy superior in strength than with one whom thou believest to be thy inferior, and therefore to bear evil is still more difficult than to encounter it. Secondly, because when thou bearest it the evil is present; when thou goest to meet it it is future. To bear it then is more difficult than to

¹ Psalm cxxxiv. 6.

attack it; because when the evil is present thou actually experiencest it, when it is future thou dost not experience, thou apprehendest it. Thirdly, because to bear it implies in the nature of the thing a prolonged act, which is habitual, and to encounter it refers to a single act, which is sometimes unpremeditated. For this reason too it is more difficult to bear than to encounter an evil, because it requires greater virtue to stand unshaken for a length of time in arduous circumstances than to go forward to meet them; and so it is that in time of war there are plenty of soldiers eager to engage the enemy, but few who stand firm to the end: "The sons of Ephraim, who bend and shoot with the bow, have turned back in the day of battle."¹ So that thou seest with what good reason the Wise Man said: "The patient man is better than the valiant;" because solid virtue is more shown in patience than in valour, that is, in bearing than in encountering misfortunes. But this doctrine is not very pleasant to thee; and why? Because thou art willing to suffer, but according to thy fancy: "In the day of your fast your own will is found."² Thou wilt sometimes fast on bread and water, thou wilt chastise thyself with hair-shirts and chains, thou wilt take the discipline even to blood, and then if God sends thee some slight contradiction thou immediately resentest it. If this is so, thou mayest perhaps be valiant, but thou art not patient, and therefore thou art possessed of much less virtue than thou supposest, because thou art better able to encounter than to endure evil. Now, thou must clearly understand that it is by patience, not valour, that thou wilt gain Heaven: "In your patience you shall possess your souls,"³ said our Lord; not "in your valour." It will very seldom happen that thou art bound to encounter evils, but thou art always most strictly bound to bear them with perfect resignation to the Divine will, and therefore it is more necessary to accustom thyself to the latter than to the former act, to embrace willingly those occasions of suffering which present themselves to thee in daily life, rather than to go in search of them. Consider the examples of the saints: they rejoiced innumerable times in enduring the evils sent them by God, but hardly ever in going forward to encounter them, and therefore the Apostle said: "I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ."⁴ And why did he

² Isaias lviii. 3.¹ Psalm lxxvii. 9.³ St. Luke xxi. 19.⁴ 2 Cor. xii. 10.

say, "I please myself"? Because all these were evils which were sent to him; if he had chosen them of himself, his taking pleasure in them would have been a very doubtful merit. And yet thou art more apt to take pleasure in the latter than in the former. And how greatly art thou deceived! "The patient man is better than the valiant."

II. Consider secondly, that in the second clause of the verse the Wise Man explains exactly what he means by "patient" and by "valiant," when he makes the former answer to him "that ruleth his spirit," and the latter to him "that taketh cities;" and therefore it is evident that by "patient" is meant the man who is not conquered by attacks, and by "valiant," the man who makes them. If, then, thou desirest to attain this patience, this is what thou hast to do—to rule thyself. Happy wilt thou be if thou gainest this dominion! In that case thou needest not envy even the conqueror of cities; for "the patient man is better than the valiant, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities." Who are the men who take cities? Are they not those who fight valiantly against them, and put them to fire and sword? It is easy to come to the conclusion that he who conquers his own passions is superior to them. Who can doubt that the young David was more admirable when it was in his power to kill King Saul in the cave, and he restrained himself, than when he slew Goliath, or when he triumphed over Syria and all the strongholds, over the Ammonite, the Amalekite, and the Moabite? And I would have thee see a more hidden meaning in these takers of cities, as representing those fervent preachers who subdue men so gloriously to Christ, move them to tears, cause them to put ropes round their necks, in token of their being conquered, to cry for mercy. Even of such takers of cities as these (if they have not also overcome their passions, such as vanity, self-interest, anger, envy, detraction), I say that some poor simple friar, however ignorant, who has overcome these, is far greater than they: "The patient man is better than the valiant, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities." Neither ought this to surprise thee, for it requires far more to conquer one vice in thyself than many in another. When thou attackest those of another, what is it that thou doest? Thou settest thyself wholly and pitilessly against one who is outside of thee, and so it is not wonderful if thou often come off victorious. But when thou withstandest thy own, thou canst never do so with the whole of thyself.

Half of thee attacks, and the other half is attacked. Thou pitiest thyself, thou flatterest thyself, thou art tender with thyself, thou lovest thyself; and in the very act of resisting thy vices when they assail thee, thou hast a thousand excuses with which thou defendest them. How, then, can it be doubted, that if, notwithstanding this, thou conquerest them, there is the greater glory? For, in the first instance, thou conquerest another by exerting the whole of thyself; and in the second, thou conquerest one half of thyself by the other. It is true that thou oftener thinkest thou hast conquered thy own vices than those do who are employed in overcoming those of others, and this will be untrue. If thou thinkest so, it is because thy opportunities of falling into various faults are less frequent than theirs who, in consequence of their continual intercourse with men, cannot fail sometimes to let it be seen that they, too, are human. Remember, too, that the same writer who has said, "The patient man is better than the valiant, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities," has said also, "Better is the iniquity of a man than a woman doing a good turn."¹ I know that in their simple sense these words mean that it is better for thee that a man should do thee an injury than that a woman should do thee a kindness; because when a man injures thee he estranges thee from him, and when a woman shows thee kindness, she attracts thee to her; and it is better for thee to be at a distance from a man than intimate with a woman; but I know, too, that many of the saints take these words as applying to the case in point, and explain the "man" as one who goes into battle, and the "woman" as one who remains at home. If the man who has gone out to fight for Christ comes back from the field in the evening covered and soiled with dust, wouldst thou, because of that, think less of him than of the man who is free from such stains because he has remained at home? If so, thou art very hard upon him: all the more so because he can get rid of the dust when all is over, and is rich in glorious palms, whereas the other, if he is without the stains, is without the palms too. But, to return to our point, every one ought to acquire that firm rule over himself which is, after all, equally necessary for both the patient and the valiant man; for when once this is secured, it will be easy for the patient man to be valiant, and for the valiant man to be patient; whereas, without this, it cannot be denied, speaking absolutely, that "the patient

¹ Ecclus. xlii. 14.

man is better than the valiant, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities."

III. Consider thirdly, how strange a thing it seems that it should be thought much of to rule what is thy own, as thy soul is. Surely it ought to be a very easy matter: and yet every day's experience teaches thee that it is exceedingly difficult. This is because thy appetite is rebellious: "Thy lust shall be under thee and thou shalt have dominion over it."¹ This is that soul which thou hast to rule. And if thou wouldst rule it, thou must treat it as that which it is, a rebel. Is it possible, that knowing all this, thou canst leave it in peace? What is there that a sovereign will not do to reduce his rebellious subjects to obedience? He does not hesitate to use fire and sword, he will exhaust his treasury in making war upon them. And wouldst thou act so differently? But, since the appetite is so obstinate a rebel that it can never be altogether subdued, it is requisite to weaken its power by gaining frequent victories over it. This is the only way to gain "dominion" over it: "Conquer thyself;" if thou neglectest this, all else is in vain.

SIXTH DAY.

Three things are hard to me, and the fourth I am utterly ignorant of. The way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man in youth. Such is also the way of an adulterous woman, who eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith: I have done no evil (Prov. xxx. 18—20).

I. Consider first, that the food which should be most dear to thy soul in meditation is that of the acts of our Lord Jesus Christ, which are so deep and so wonderful that they are called mysteries, and therefore thou mayest plunge into them, as into a sea, with the certainty of never touching the ground if thou support thyself. And here thou mayest find Solomon embracing in one short verse the whole of the life of Christ, and dividing it into four mysteries. Do not doubt that he alludes to these mysteries, in the spirit of prophecy, in a direct, though allegorical sense, just as Christ Himself spoke of thorns when He meant by the word to signify riches. This is the opinion of the most sublime interpreters of the Scriptures,

¹ Genesis. iv. 7.

and it is greatly strengthened by the way in which Solomon at once begins by saying that these things were very difficult to be understood, not only by the rest of the world, but by himself: "Three things are hard to me, and the fourth I am utterly ignorant of." How could he have said this with truth, if he had been speaking of things which were not beyond the order of nature? Was he not, in all these matters, so wise a man, that no question was ever proposed to him so difficult and entangled that he did not immediately solve it? "There was not any word that the King was ignorant of,"¹ or, more literally, "which could be hidden from the King" (*posset latere*), so is it said of him in the Sacred Scriptures, not "which was hidden," but "which could be hidden," in order to show us that he was able to answer more than others were able to ask him. How, then, could he be doubtful about these four secrets, nay, even confess that he was ignorant of them, if they did not contain a supernatural meaning? And surely, if these things, when seen by Solomon afar off, had power to arouse in him so keen a desire of understanding them fully, of entering into them, much more ought they to excite confusion in thee, who livest in days when they have all been made clear. Here is, indeed, an accomplishment of those words of our Lord: "I say to you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them."² Solomon was, certainly, both a Prophet and a King, the greatest in the world, and yet he was not favoured as thou art.

II. Consider secondly, the first of these mysteries which are here spoken of: "The way of an eagle in the air." Certainly this is a difficult way, because the flight of the eagle is very uncertain, and leaves no trace in the air through which it has passed. But if the Wise Man had no further meaning, he would merely have spoken of what is common to herons, vultures, and many other birds which fly high. The eagle here spoken of is Jesus Christ: "A large eagle with great wings,"³ Whose glorious Ascension into Heaven was a flight never before seen, nor even thought possible. Elias did indeed go up to Heaven, but it was in a chariot drawn by four horses of fire, that is, he was borne thither by the power of another, not his own. Christ needed no chariot when He ascended. Gaze, then, upon that lofty flight of His, but at the same time

¹ 3 Kings x. 3.² St. Luke x. 24.³ Ezech. xvii. 3.

let thy heart be inflamed with the desire of imitating Him, for He is thy most loving Lord, Who is "as the eagle enticing her young to fly."¹ Why is He gone to Paradise but that thou mayest follow Him thither? "I go to prepare a place for you."² And thou canst not now say that this way is, as it was once, difficult to know, since Christ has so plainly shown it to thee: "Whither I go you know, and the way you know."³ Follow Christ's example, suffer, obey, humble thyself like Him, and then be very sure that thou wilt reach Paradise, and so find "the way of the eagle in the air."

III. Consider thirdly, the second of these four mysteries: "The way of a serpent upon a rock." This, too, is a difficult way, for the serpent makes very unexpected movements of which he leaves no trace upon the rock over which he has glided. But if the Wise Man had meant no more than this, he would have but spoken of what the serpent had in common with many other reptiles. This mysterious serpent is Jesus Christ: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up;"⁴ Who after being taken down from the Cross and buried, clad Himself in a still fairer form than before, and came forth from the sepulchre at His Resurrection, leaving untouched the stone which closed it. And this was a wonderful act, till then unknown in the world; for, although some persons had been before awakened from the sleep of death, yet it was at the voice of another; never had any one arisen from it by his own power. Contemplate this mystical Serpent, Who, after dying to give life to all, came back to life that thou mightest not fear to die. And thou must know that only those can rise with Christ who have first chosen to die with Him. "A faithful saying: for if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him."⁵ Give thanks to Him, therefore, that He has been pleased to show thee the way by which thou, too, mayest rise again to a better life.⁶ This way is to die to thyself. If thou dost this, thou mayest rest assured that the day will come when thou, too, wilt rise gloriously from the tomb, to follow the steps of thy Lord, and so thou wilt see "the way of the serpent on the rock."

IV. Consider fourthly, the third mystery: "The way of a ship in the midst of the sea." This also is difficult to know, for the ship's course is exceedingly swift, and she leaves no

¹ Deut. xxxii. 11.
⁴ St. John iii. 14.

² St. John xiv. 2.
⁵ 2 Timothy ii. 11, 12.

³ St. John xiv. 4.
⁶ Psalm xv. 11.

trace in the waves through which she ploughs her way. But if the Wise Man meant nothing more than this, he would only have spoken of what is common to the fish which dart in every direction through the waves of the sea. This glorious ship is Jesus Christ: "The merchant's ship, that bringeth bread from far;"¹ that ship which, setting sail from so distant a country, bore the Godhead from Heaven to earth, in order to take back humanity from earth to Heaven. Who can describe the wonderful way of that mighty Ship through all the waves through which it passed? Countless and contrary were the events of our Lord's earthly life amidst them: now He was exalted, now cast down, by turns commended and derided, loved and hated. Of no man can it be said as truly as of Him, that He was "tempted in all things." See how this Ship was tossed about till at last having come to the deep sea of His bitter Passion, He was overwhelmed by its waves; and resolve not to act like His disciples, who parted from Him, like frail boats, when this storm rose high: "Leaving Him, they all fled away."² Do thou stand firm, for this is the test of fidelity. Follow the example of Christ, Who, for the salvation of His brethren, willingly exposed Himself to every change of fortune, good or bad: and so thou wilt know the way of that Ship in the midst of that troubled sea.

V. Consider fifthly, that the fourth of these mysteries is "the way of a man in youth." This it is of which Solomon said he knew nothing whatever: "The fourth I am utterly ignorant of;" but how so, when he had so repeatedly described the conduct of the young? Is it not probable, then, that he alluded to the secret way which Christ followed in His Hidden Life? It was truly "the way of a man in youth," for Christ was "a man," not only in His youth, but in His infancy: "A woman shall compass a man."³ It is true that Solomon does not say, "The way of a man in his youth," but "in youth," and therefore the word "youth" may refer not only to the youth of our Lord, but to that of His Mother also. And if thou thus understandest it, contemplate the sublime mystery of the Incarnation of Christ in the pure womb of Mary: a sense which is the more allowable because where the Latin text has *in adolescentia*, the Hebrew has *in alma*, that is, "in a virgin" (*adolescentula*) and "a virgin shut up," a "virgin guarded." I certainly think it better to keep to the ordinary version, which has "in youth" (*adolescentia*): but this is in no

¹ Prov. xxxi. 14.² St. Mark xiv. 50.³ Jerem. xxxi. 22.

way contrary to our interpretation ; for it is not an unknown, indeed it is a frequent thing in the Scriptures to find the abstract used for the concrete. "Thou hast despised the wife of thy youth :"¹ in this instance, if thou takest "youth" in the abstract, what meaning is there in "wife"? Thou must, therefore, take it in the concrete, and then the meaning is plain ; that a man who is old should not despise, as though weary of her, the wife whom he married in his youth. In the same way, it was very possible for Solomon to declare that he was "utterly ignorant" of "the way of a man," that is, a perfect man, the Infant Jesus, "in youth," that is, in a young maiden so pure and immaculate as our Blessed Lady. Well might he say that he was "utterly ignorant" of it ; for the mystery of the Incarnation is so sublime that it far transcends all created intelligence : "The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth."² At all events, see that thou makest the chosen food of thy meditation all that long way which Christ travelled by from His first coming down from Heaven till the end of His youth, that is, nearly thirty years. Well will it be for thee if thou dost profit by it ! Especially shouldst thou admire the obedience of which it may be said that it was the whole of His "way" during all that time. Oh, how did He not only run but rejoice in it, at once a child and a giant ! "He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way."³ Doubt not, that if thou settest thyself to imitate Him, thou wilt know the way of being great by being little : "The way of a man in youth."

VI. Consider sixthly, that Solomon, when he thus comprised in a single verse the whole Life of our Lord Jesus Christ, followed what is called a retrograde order ; for, instead of rising from the Incarnation to the Ascension, He descended from the Ascension to the Incarnation. And this should not surprise thee, because he did so in order to preserve the gradation of difficulty which He recognized in these wonderful mysteries. The Ascension of Christ into Heaven is difficult to understand, the Resurrection is more difficult, the Passion still more so, but the greatest difficulty of all is the Incarnation : "The mystery which hath been hidden from ages."⁴ Once admit this mystery, and all the rest become gradually more easily understood, as thou mayest perceive for thyself. We find the same order of difficulties in the allegories of the text,

¹ Malach. ii. 14.² Jerem. xxxi. 22.³ Psalm xviii. 6.⁴ Coloss. i. 26.

for it is wonderful to see the eagle flying, and borne up by her wings, so that there is no fear of her falling; it is more wonderful to see a mighty ship, which not only is without wings and feet, but without life, flying over the waters, and at the same time shaping her course so well, that she can even make contrary winds serve her. But far the most wonderful is it to see a young man so govern himself in the flower of his age as to be at the same time youthful and mature. For if the former instances are miracles of nature, this is a surpassing miracle of grace. The ordinary rule is that every one advances gradually in the way of perfection, not that he attains it instantaneously: "The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day."¹ Nevertheless, dost thou not perceive that these things were not in themselves so inscrutable as to alarm so lofty an intelligence as Solomon's, if, under the veil of magnificent allegories, he had not discerned those sublimest of all mysteries concerning Christ, which we have spoken of? Observe, then, the candour with which, before entering into the subject, he was not ashamed to declare his ignorance of it: "Three things are hard," or as it is in the Hebrew, "hidden," "to me, and the fourth I am utterly ignorant of." Dost thou, on thy part, the more thou seest of the incomprehensibility of these mysteries, the more acknowledge them to be worthy of the God Who wrought them? Is it a thing to wonder at, that God should do what thy mind is unable to conceive? "Behold, God is great, exceeding our knowledge."²

VII. Consider seventhly, that the same difficulty, which Solomon acknowledged in the subjects of which we have been treating, was found by him on beholding an adulteress, who, weary of the impure and shameful banquet secretly given to her by her lover, washes her face afterwards so carefully that she makes people think that she has fasted: "Such is the way of an adulterous woman, who eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith: I have done no evil." If thou look merely at the external sense, this wickedness does not appear to be so great a prodigy, but it is a prodigy beyond all conception if thou pass on to the prophetic sense, of which the external one is but the husk, and find the kernel. This shameful adulteress is the Synagogue who repudiated Christ, her lawful Husband, before Pilate, to follow wicked men, murderers, and false prophets; and then after slaying Him as readily as a wolf

¹ Prov. iv. 18. ² Job xxxvi. 26.

devours a lamb, the hardened wretch would play the part of one who is innocent, and thus, corrupting the Sacred Scriptures, perjuring herself, imposing upon and deceiving the simple people who are within her, she does all she can to cleanse her lips so there may be seen no stain of the horrible murder she committed in killing a God made Man. And this is her crowning guilt, for if the traitress bewailed her sin she might win mercy; but because she would actually justify it, she is unpardonable: "Though thou wash thyself with nitre, and multiply to thyself the herb borith, thou art stained in thy iniquity before Me, saith the Lord God. How canst thou say: I am not polluted?"¹ Oh, never was there seen, never will there be seen in the world such excess of audacity combined with such ingratitude, injustice, barbarity, and ferocity; and therefore it is beyond the capacity of any human intelligence to enter into it. Take good heed that this accursed adulteress does not stain thy soul, which after so often turning away from Christ, has sought to hide its sin in confession: "Behold, I will contend with thee in judgment," says God, "because thou hast said, I have not sinned."²

SEVENTH DAY.

Tarry not in the error of the ungodly: give glory before death
(Ecclus. xvii. 26).

I. Consider first what this error is, which, by the figure known as *antonomasia*, is called "the error of the ungodly." It is that of putting off repentance till the hour of death. There is no sinner so wicked, so desperate, as to resolve that he will go to Hell. Every one says: I will enter into myself; I will repent; I will confess. But when? Do not ask the question, for he will not be ashamed to answer plainly. In words, he says that he means to do so at the next great feast; but in his heart he says, on his death-bed. It may be that he does intend going to confession at the next great feast; but he does not intend doing so in earnest. He intends doing it in a superficial manner, just to deceive himself, and imagine that he has made his confession. As to undoing the difficult knots, disentangling the confused skeins, settling the difficulties; for

¹ Jerem. ii. 22, 23.

² Jerem. ii. 35.

all this he means to wait for a better time. Oh, what deliberate madness is this! Do not imitate it. "Tarry not in the error of the ungodly: give glory before death." Such, in the opinion of St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, and of many later interpreters, is the sense of this passage, in which the word translated "give glory" is "confess" (*confitere*); and by the confession spoken of by the Wise Man they understand our sacramental confession, of which there existed but the figure under the Old Law; and yet in another place the preacher says: "Be not ashamed to confess thy sins."¹ I know that in the language of the Sacred Scriptures this word confession means praising God; but the first act of praise due from every man to God is to accuse himself; otherwise, what sort of praise would he render? It would be polluted and unacceptable: "Praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner."²

II. Consider secondly, that it is not said that thou art not to fall into this "error of the ungodly," but not to "tarry" in it; because the evil does not consist in falling into it, but in remaining in it. If thou fallest into this error of thinking that thou wilt be able to settle thy affairs satisfactorily, to reflect, repent, feel compunction as thou wishest at the hour of thy death, but yet do not consent to the error, and consequently do not continue in it, thou art not in any way sinning, because, so far, the error is entirely one of the understanding. The sin is in continuing in it; for then thou consentest to the error, and by so doing thou allowest the error to pass from the understanding to the will. It is true indeed that, generally speaking, to fall into this error and to continue in it is the same thing. For when the sinner has once begun to think that he can attend to his soul sufficiently at the time of his death, he cannot make up his mind to face the difficulty involved in doing this sooner; he goes on putting off from day to day, and so remains whole years in this grievous error. For, as a rule, this is not one of those errors that come to an end; it is permanent, perpetual, remaining in some persons as long as they live, and they only recognize it to be an error when it is no longer the time to correct it, but to suffer for it: "When he shall repay, then shall he know."³ It is in Hell that they will know their error. If, then, thou hast been unfortunate enough to fall into this error, through human frailty, or ignorance, or want of thought, take care at least not to "tarry" in it, as "the ungodly" do, but shake it off, drive it away,

¹ Eccclus. iv. 31.² Eccclus. xv. 9.³ Job xxi. 19.

acknowledge it to be an error, for that is the first step which it is necessary to take in order to get free from it.

III. Consider thirdly, that this error, like all others, is founded on falsehood. Every sinner who puts off making a good confession till the time of his death takes for granted three things which are false and fallacious. The first is, that he will have it in his power to make his confession; the second, that the confession he makes will be a good one; the third, that when he has made a good confession he is sure to be saved. But what a tissue of error all this is! No wonder that the devil keeps some sinners so tightly bound by it that he never loses his hold over them: "A three-fold cord is not easily broken."¹ As to the first supposition, who can give thee the assurance that thou wilt be able to make thy confession? Is it not possible that thou mayest lose thy life by some accident, such as a fall, a blow, or by fire, or a stroke of apoplexy, so that it is taken from thee as though by the attack of a robber? "Behold, I come as a thief."² And even if thou die in thy bed, thou dost not know what sickness thou wilt die of: "Man knoweth not his own end."³ It may be a lethargy which completely stupefies thee, or a suffocation of breath, or an oppression of the heart, or a fever so violent as to deprive thee of thy senses. Thou art acting as Amasa did, who had no fear of Joab, because he thought that he was unarmed: "But Amasa did not take notice of the sword which Joab had."⁴ Draw aside the mantle of this last enemy of thine, and thou wilt see how many weapons he may have hid beneath it which thou hast never noticed, because thou wilt not use thy eyes.

IV. Consider fourthly, that the second supposition on which this "error of the ungodly" is founded is that, if it be granted that they will be able to make their confession at their death, it is sure to be a good one. But what can be more unlikely? In order to make a good confession it is necessary to make a very careful examination: and if thou find this so difficult now that thou art well, what will it be when thou art sick? "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, his sin is hidden."⁵ Thy iniquities, that is, thy offences against thy neighbour, are thickly bound up, that is, weighted with the heavy load of restitution, either of reputation or property, attached to them: "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up."

¹ Eccles. iv. 12.

² Apoc. xvi. 15.

³ Eccles. ix. 12.

⁴ 2 Kings xx. 10.

⁵ Osee xiii. 12.

Thy sins, that is, those offences which concern thyself, lie very deep because of the many times thou hast wickedly consented to evil, and never afterwards given it a thought: "His sin is hidden." How will it, then, be possible for thee, when thou art feeble with sickness, to uncover the iniquities thus "bound up," to perceive those thus deeply "hidden"? And yet, if the difficulty ended here, it would be comparatively nothing: the worst of it is that a good examination is not sufficient for a good confession; there must be contrition, there must be purpose of amendment, that is to say, there must be that thorough change of heart which does not depend entirely on thyself, but on thyself and God. And on both His side and thine this will be very difficult; for, as regards thyself, will not sin be more entirely master of thy heart than it is now? Will it not be stronger, more deeply rooted? How, then, canst thou expect that thou wilt be able to conquer it at such a time better than now? Thou art like a traveller, who, seeing a torrent in the beginning of its course, is afraid of passing it, and saying to himself from time to time, I will cross further on; and when at length he does cross it, it has swollen so high, that he cannot keep his footing, and is swept away by it—"Our soul hath passed through a torrent"¹—when it was anxious and troubled, it is true: but what then? Shall we, for that reason, wait till "perhaps our soul had passed through a water insupportable?"² How great reason there is to doubt whether it will, then, pass through! Wouldst thou trust thy salvation to so slight a thread? If so, it is beyond an error: it is madness. And, with regard to God, how canst thou hope that He will be propitious to thee, when thou hast done so much to move Him to anger? I know that He is most merciful; but in spite of that, does not He daily allow numbers of souls to be lost for ever—Turks, Jews, Pagans, heretics, and bad Catholics of all sorts? And He may leave thy soul amongst these, by refusing to it the efficacious grace which is requisite for a perfect confession, in order to conceive true contrition, to make a true purpose of amendment, that is to say, to do what is not very easily done by one who has for many years made light of sinning. Yes, He is a merciful, but He is also a just God: "The Lord is sweet and righteous."³ If, therefore, during the day He exercised mercy towards thee so long, and thou abusedst it by wasting the best hours of thy life in vanity, remember that the night awaits thee, when He will

¹ Psalm cxxiii. 5.² Psalm cxxiii. 5.³ Psalm xxiv. 8.

exercise justice upon thee: "To show forth Thy mercy in the morning, and thy truth in the night."¹

V. Consider fifthly, that the third and last supposition on which "the error of the ungodly" is founded, is that, even granting this confession at the last hour to be well made, thou art sure of being saved in consequence. But this, too, is very uncertain, for, in order to be certain of this, thou wouldst have to die immediately after thy confession: if thou livest only a few minutes later, is it not very likely that the devils will renew those terrible assaults which they are allowed to make in that last passage, and that they may gain thy soul? "There are spirits that are created for vengeance, and . . . in the time of destruction they shall pour out their force."² Thou knowest that it is in the final struggle that all soldiers make their most desperate efforts—"pour out their force"—because everything is at stake. If the battle is lost, there is no more hope of gaining another; if it is gained, there is no fear of losing it. It is no wonder, then, if the devils are so furious at the hour of death: "The devil is come down upon you, having great wrath." And why? "Knowing that he hath but a short time."³ Not that thou must think, however, that they will have to make any extraordinary efforts to win back a soul which has been their own for so long: they know it, they understand it, they are well acquainted with all its weak points. What great exertion, then, will be necessary to make thee, in thy folly, once more return to thy love for that sin which thou hast indeed begun to hate, but only for so short a time? There is plenty of fuel ready to burst into flames at the touch of the old fire; and therefore the devils will then have nothing to do but to throw "the firebrand amongst the hay,"⁴ and there leave it to do its work. See, then, how frail a foundation there is for all the three suppositions on which rests this "error of the ungodly," in putting off confession till the hour of death. Do not let the enemies of thy soul delude thee with vain promises, for this is that "evil suretiship" of which the Preacher says that "it hath undone many of good estate."⁵ The devils never ask thee to give thy soul to them now: they only ask thee to leave it in pledge with them till thou hast to go into the next world. But if thou trust to them, thou wilt see that giving it as a pledge to them is the same thing as making a gift of it: alas! it is leaving the lamb in the wolf's jaws; and they are "evening

¹ Psalm xci. 3.

² Eccclus. xxxix. 33, 34.

³ Apoc. xii. 12.

⁴ Zach. xii. 6.

⁵ Eccclus. xxix. 23.

wolves—they leave nothing for the morning.”¹ Where, then, is the true wisdom? It is to go at once and make the confession which thou hopest so much to be able to make at thy death. Whilst thou art alive and in health, thou shalt confess” (*confiteberis*).² Not only “alive,” for that may be said of a dying man, but “in health.” This is the meaning of these words: “Tarry not in the error of the ungodly: give glory before death;” for, as thou dost not know when thou art to die, thou canst, if thou wouldst, make sure of confessing before thy death: do so as quickly as possible.

EIGHTH DAY.

When Thou art angry, Thou wilt remember mercy (Habacuc iii. 2).

I. Consider the first meaning of these words, which is that even in the height of His wrath, “when Thou art angry,” God remembers that He is merciful: “Thou wilt remember mercy,” and so He is appeased. For it is this that He has been pleased to make His glory. He has made it His glory, not that He is just, but that He is merciful. “He loveth mercy and justice,” indeed, that is certain; nevertheless, what follows? “The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord,”³ not of judgment, but of mercy. Hence the Fathers of old, when they desired to appease Him, always reminded Him of this mercy of His in which He so delighted. If, indeed, this word “mercy” did not formerly contain a somewhat more hidden meaning, in which it was used by some of those loftier, more sublime spirits, intending thereby to describe the Messiah Who was to come, and Who was the great Mercy of God promised by Him to mankind, it is certain that when David said to God: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy,” he meant by this mercy our Lord Jesus Christ, since by it he begged the pardon of his sin. And we may be sure that in several passages of the Old Testament this is the meaning of the word “mercy.” This was the sense of rejoicing in the mercy of the Lord, hoping in it, longing for it, entreating it with such ardent desire: “Show us, O Lord, Thy mercy, and grant us Thy salvation.”⁴ And this was, doubtless, the

¹ Sophonias iii. 3.

² Ecclus. xvii. 27.

³ Psalm xxxii. 5.

⁴ Psalm lxxxiv. 8.

sense in which God Himself said, speaking of David, that, in spite of the sins which His children were to commit, He had not taken from him the mercy He had promised: "I will visit their iniquities with a rod, and their sins with stripes: but My mercy I will not take away from him."¹ This, too, was what the Prophet referred to when he said: "When Thou art angry, Thou wilt remember mercy." He said to God, that in the height of His wrath He would remember Jesus Christ, Who was so dear to Him, and that as soon as He did so He would be obliged to be appeased. Oh, how quickly does the thought of Jesus Christ appease God! It is the rainbow on seeing which He bids the flood to cease with which in all justice He might every day drown the world. This, then, is what thou shouldst do if thou wouldst appease His anger at thy sins—continually remind Him of Jesus Christ, Who was given to thee that thou mightest make use of Him as thy Saviour. Formerly this mercy was altogether in the bosom of the Father: "With the Lord there is mercy."² Now it is in thine also. For as often as thou communicatest, this mercy is with thee, not with God only.

II. Consider the second meaning of these words, which is, that God is so disposed to show mercy, that even when He acts with the greatest severity He remembers to show it: "When Thou art angry, Thou wilt remember mercy." No doubt He generally does far more than remember it; but in any case He does so remember it. And thus, even in Hell, where He punishes the reprobate so severely, He still punishes them less than they deserve. But in this world He usually remembers it to such an extent that it seems even an excess of mercy, because there are so many who are thereby emboldened to outrage it still more: "Thou hast been favourable to the nation, O Lord, Thou hast been favourable to the nation: art Thou glorified? Thou hast removed all the ends of the earth afar off."³ It is mercy which everywhere has the predominance: "His tender mercies are over all His works."⁴ For mercy is so mingled even with the acts of justice, that it never, so to speak, suffers it to do anything of itself alone; it goes before, it accompanies, it follows justice, as though jealous lest it should go too far, if left to itself. I say that mercy goes before justice, because even in Hell God punishes no one to whom He has not formerly

¹ Psalm lxxxviii. 33, 34.

² Psalm cxxix. 7.

³ Isaias xxvi. 15.

⁴ Psalm cxliv. 9.

shown infinite tenderness, nay, to whom He has not imparted a special grace by which he might have refrained from the very sins for which He was hereafter to punish him, and so have repented. Mercy accompanies justice, because, in the very act of punishment, God always uses milder measures than He might use; the difference being that in Hell there is a larger proportion of justice than of mercy, and therefore we say that He is severe; while on earth there is a larger proportion of mercy than of justice, and therefore we say that He is gracious. And mercy follows justice, because He never punishes any one merely for the sake of punishing him, but at least to be of use to some one else, that he may learn a lesson from the punishment; so that, even in Hell, He punishes the reprobate, whose case is already hopeless, in order to profit the elect. Thou seest, then, with how much truth it may be said of God that even "when angry," to the greatest degree, He "remembers mercy." Thou must observe, however, that He does not cease from exercising His justice because He remembers mercy, only He does so with less severity. How, then, canst thou expect God ever to show unmixed mercy to thee? Thou hearest it said that He is full of mercy, kind, gracious, and ever ready to save all men, and this emboldened thee to go on offending Him. Thou sayest to thyself: "When He is angry, He remembers mercy." Do not say that, for by such words thou showest that thou dost not thoroughly understand the meaning of the text. All that is necessary for the truth of what thou sayest is that He should show pity while punishing thee. But this He does even when punishing the damned. He "remembers mercy," yet that does not prevent His acting as one who is angry: "For mercy and wrath are with Him,"¹ and neither is wrath contrary to mercy, nor does mercy banish wrath. It is one thing to go before, to accompany, to follow it, and another to do away with it altogether.

III. Consider the third meaning of these words, which is, that when God is angry, He remembers His infinite mercy, and, in consequence, His anger is the more severe. When will this be? At the Last Judgment. Strictly speaking, it can never be said, as to the present time, that He is angry: "He doth not now bring on His fury."² It is then that He will be really angry: "He made a way for a path to His anger,"³ giving free course to the wrath which He now so

¹ Ecclus. xvi. 12.² Job xxxv. 15.³ Psalm lxxvii. 50.

restrains. Indeed, that name is by antonomasia, called in the Scripture, "The day of the Lord's indignation."¹ And therefore it was with good reason that the Prophet here said: "When Thou art angry," because then God will, so to speak, show Himself angry for the first time. Thou knowest that in thy own case, supposing it to happen that when thou art very angry with some one, thou suddenly rememberest the kindnesses thou hast done him, this at once increases thy anger to the highest pitch. So will it be with God on that terrible day. He will remember that excess of mercy which He so often showed thee—"He will remember mercy"—and this will render Him implacable. Imagine thyself, for a moment, standing before His judgment-seat, and seeing Him, hearing Him, when at length He "speaks in His anger,"² and go through all that He will specially remember with regard to thee. He will remember that, without having any need of thee, He so graciously brought thee out of nothing to admit thee to a share in His glory, that He preserved thee, guarded thee, provided thee with constant sustenance, gave thee an angel to be thy glorious protector at every step thou shouldst take. He will remember that He showed thee the signal favour of letting thee be born in the heart of Christendom, in a civilized country, of good parents, and at a time favoured with so much light for finding the way to Heaven which thou hast neglected. He will remember how constantly He followed after thee, as though He feared, in losing thee, to lose a portion of His beatitude. He will remember how often He called thee, invited thee, drew thee to Himself, and the many aids of grace He gave thee, by which thou didst not profit. He will remember the many times He fed thee with Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, nourishing thee from His Heart, giving thee to drink from His veins. He will remember all the other innumerable benefits He bestowed on thee, which are now known to thyself alone, nay, not even to thyself, either because thou dost not recognize or dost not think about them. And above all, He will remember that He died for thee on the Cross between two thieves, naked, deserted, insulted, covered with wounds. And who can say how greatly His anger will be inflamed by a remembrance so terrible? His "zeal shall be kindled as a fire."³ And therefore it will be that anger before which the reprobate, in a bewilderment of terror, will ask the mountains to fall upon them, wild beasts to devour them, the

¹ Sophonias ii. 2.² Psalm ii. 5.³ Psalm lxxviii. 5.

fire to destroy them, Hell itself to make haste to swallow them up: "For the great day of their wrath is come." And when we think of that, well may we add, "Who shall be able to stand?" It was to point out and to declare the cause of this great anger that the Prophet, speaking to his God, said, "When Thou art angry, Thou wilt remember mercy." That mercy will cause justice to be executed far more rigorously on all the wicked; and then too will it be known how true are the words of St. James: "Mercy exalteth itself above judgment."¹ For because of mercy justice will go far beyond those limits within which it might be confined if it were by itself alone. Thou seest, therefore, how it is, that the very mercy which is now thy greatest protection, will, on that day, be far more hostile to thee than justice itself. Oh, how terribly art thou deceived when, notwithstanding all this, thou every day abusest that mercy so audaciously!

NINTH DAY.

How great is he that findeth wisdom and knowledge! but there is none above him that feareth the Lord (Ecclus. xxv. 13).

I. Consider first, that "wisdom," in this passage, means that deep acquaintance with Divine truths which is possessed by theologians, and "knowledge," that deep acquaintance with human truths which is possessed by natural philosophers, mathematicians, moralists, politicians, and the rest, as St. Augustine says, "Wisdom is referred to Divine, science to human things."² Now these two things, wisdom and knowledge, are two treasures surpassing all others which are contained in the bowels of the earth; because the greatest good which thou canst derive from all the others is, by their help, to obtain these two, wisdom and knowledge. If, for instance, in spite of all thy riches, thou art not learned, of what use are they to thee? "What doth it avail a fool to have riches, seeing he cannot buy wisdom?"³ It follows that a poor man who has learning is greater than thee; since, after all, it is the learned man who has the pre-eminence in the world: "He that understandeth shall possess governments."⁴ Imagine a great

¹ St. James ii. 13.

² St. Augustine, *De Trin.*

³ Prov. xvii. 16.

⁴ Prov. i. 5.

sovereign who is ignorant : if he wants to fight, he must obey a well-trained soldier ; if he wants to govern, he must obey a wise minister ; if he desires to heal diseases, he must obey a learned physician ; if he wishes to build, he must obey an experienced architect, and so on : "The fool shall serve the wise."¹ Whereas a learned man, no matter how poor, has that in his possession which is able to make him rule even over kings, and live at their cost : "They that are free shall serve a servant that is wise."² Well, therefore, does the Preacher here exclaim, "How great is he that findeth wisdom and knowledge!" because the learned man is superior to the great man who is not learned. And yet this very man who is so exalted by his learning as to be compelled to exclaim, in wonder at himself, "How great is he!" has to give place to another. And who is that other? It is he who lives in the holy fear of God : "How great is he that findeth wisdom and knowledge! but there is none above him that feareth the Lord." And the reason is that learning makes thee great in the sight of men, and virtue in the sight of God ; so that if thou leadest a good life, thou wilt soar even to Heaven, although thou mayest be exceedingly ignorant, whereas if thou dost not lead a good life thou wilt not go there, although thou shouldst be a perfect Solomon, but wilt be cast down to Hell with all thy grand speculations. And what will all thy learning then avail thee, if thou hast not been able to reach thy last end?

II. Consider secondly, that the Preacher does not by these words condemn wisdom and knowledge, which are two very valuable treasures ; but he places them lower than the fear of the Lord, that is to say, the keeping of His holy law, in order that all may understand that the fear of the Lord is not to be used as a means of obtaining wisdom and knowledge, but that wisdom and knowledge are to be used for the attaining the fear of the Lord as their end : "The fear of the Lord is . . . a crown."³ If thou keepest to the resolution of devoting thyself chiefly to the service of God, thou art acting most reasonably, because thou art making the means subservient to the end. But if thou neglectest His service for the sake of thy studies, thou art very foolish, because thou art putting the means above the end ; and thou art acting as a man would do who threw away his crown in order to fit himself for gaining it. In such a case, it must certainly be said of thee that thou

¹ Prov. xi. 29.² Ecclus. x. 28.³ Ecclus. i. 11.

art living in a delusion: "Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, this hath deceived thee."¹

III. Consider thirdly, that it is plain, from these words, that the fear of the Lord ought to rule over wisdom and knowledge, and that they, on the other hand, ought to obey it. This is why the Preacher adds: "There is none above him that feareth the Lord," or more literally, "The fear of the Lord is above all things," because it is this which has the pre-eminence. Imagine, then, that learning is a magnificent carriage on which thou mayest seat the glory of Christ in triumph amidst His people, but it must be the fear of the Lord which guides it with all care, otherwise thou mayest easily be carried over a precipice in the very act of bearing Christ in triumph. Or, imagine learning as a gallant ship on which thou mayest carry the glory of Christ from a Christian to a heathen world, as has been done by so many generous missionaries. But this ship must have, as her watchful pilot, the fear of the Lord; otherwise thou mayest go to pieces on a thousand rocks in the very act of speeding on to spread the faith of Christ. Or, imagine learning as a strong fortress in which thou wouldst keep the glory of Christ safe from the attacks of its enemy—heresy, as is done by so many learned controversialists. But here, too, there is need of the fear of the Lord as a careful sentinel, otherwise the fortress, which is so good a defence for the glory of Christ, will not be a defence to thee. And what is the reason of all these misfortunes? It is this: that if thou possessest wisdom and knowledge without leading a good life, they will make others virtuous, but not thyself; nay, they will only make thee worse: "To him who knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin."²

IV. Consider fourthly, in what ought especially to consist this superintendence which the fear of the Lord should always have over wisdom and knowledge. It should consist in preserving them from, or ridding them of, the vices to which they are subject; so that it may be like a king seated on his throne, who disperses all evil-doers with a glance: "The King that sitteth on the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with a look."³ These vices are seven in number—vainglory, presumption, obstinacy, envy, deceit, the love of money, haughtiness. And if thou art learned thou must keep all of these far from thee by the fear of the Lord. The effect of vainglory

¹ *Isaias* xlvii. 10.² *St. James* iv. 17.³ *Prov.* xx. 8.

is to puff thee up with a foolish interior pride in thy wisdom. "Knowledge puffeth up,"¹ and the fear of the Lord must overrule this by humility, which will cast down vainglory by reminding thee that if thou possessest any talent whatever, it is all of God: "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding."² Presumption causes thee to desire more knowledge than belongs to thy state; and this the fear of the Lord must overrule by sobriety, which requires us, as to learning, "Not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety." Obstinacy makes thee inclined to be too much attached to thy own opinion; and this the fear of the Lord must overrule by docility, which in regard of the understanding says, "Be not wise in thy own conceit."³ Emulation makes thee wish to overpower thy greatest rivals, and the fear of the Lord must overrule this by charity, which is of more value than all possible triumphs: "If I should have all knowledge, and have not charity, I am nothing."⁴ Deceit makes thee take advantage of thy knowledge to entrap the simple, and the fear of the Lord must overrule this by the sincerity which it requires thee to use in thy speech: "Return a true answer with wisdom."⁵ Love of money causes thee to make use of thy knowledge for the sake of gain, and the fear of the Lord should overrule this by that liberality which moves thee to impart thy own knowledge: "I will bring the knowledge of her to light"⁶ Haughtiness makes thee show contempt of thy neighbour in thy intercourse with him, producing in thee the same disease which was seen in the Egyptians, who are in this a figure of the learned men of the world, I mean "swelling blains."⁷ This the fear of the Lord must overrule by modesty, which teaches thee how to behave to all men: "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show by a good conversation his work in the meekness of wisdom."⁸ When the fear of the Lord has sway over these vices, to which men of learning are extremely liable, it may be said to have it over all, because these seven are, at all events, their principal vices, under one or other of which all the rest may be classed; and then it will be true that "the fear of the Lord has set itself over all things." For the words of the Vulgate are *se superposuit*, not *super positus est*,

¹ 1 Cor. viii. 1.² Job xxxii. 8.³ Prov. iii. 7.⁴ 1 Cor. xiii. 2.⁵ Eccclus. v. 13.⁶ Wisdom vi. 24.⁷ Exodus ix. 10.⁸ St. James iii. 13.

that is, "it has set itself," not "it is set, over all things," because it is a king, by natural, not elective right, and therefore it is said to take its seat on the throne, not to have to wait for any one else to place it there by his authority.

TENTH DAY.

Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith (1 St. John v. 4).

I. Consider first, that when the Apostle here says, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world," he does not mean by "whatsoever" every one of the faithful, but every kind or class of men. He says "whatsoever" (*omne*), not "whosoever" (*omnis*), for that would not be true. Infants, as soon as they receive Baptism, are God's children, and if they die they go straight to Heaven to enjoy the inheritance of children, but yet they do not overcome the world, neither are they in a condition to be capable of overcoming it, since they are not capable of fighting. Therefore the Apostle does not say, "Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world," as in two other passages he says, "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not,"¹ but "whatsoever," which we see is most true. Take whatever class of the faithful thou pleasest, even the lowest, and thou wilt see that it can and does overcome the world. Priests and laymen, learned and ignorant, princes and subjects, labourers, servants, soldiers, courtiers, virgins, widows, married persons; do they not all of them overcome the world? All the individuals contained in these classes—*omnes homines horum generum*—do not, indeed, conquer it; but all the classes containing those individuals—*omne genus horum hominum*—do, for there is no single condition in which there are not many persons who have even attained sanctity by gloriously putting the world under their feet, and trampling on it. What excuse is there, then, for thee if thou art not holy? Dost thou lay the blame on thy state of life? Lay it rather on thyself, for it was for this reason that God commanded Noe to collect in the Ark at the cost of very great labour, every kind of animal, though more of one and fewer

¹ 1 St. John iii. 9; v. 18.

of another kind, in order to show that no class of men are excluded from salvation, though there are more who attain it in one class than in another.

II. Consider secondly, the reason why every class of Christian men has overcome and still does most gloriously overcome the world. The reason is that that which overcomes the world is common to all—it is faith: “And this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith.” The word “and” is in this passage equivalent to “because,” as is the case in many other texts which we find in the Sacred Scriptures. The meaning of the verse, then, is: “Every class of men which is born of God overcometh the world, because this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith.” It is not sex which overcomes the world, nor natural disposition, nor inclination, nor wisdom, nor courage, nor knowledge; it is faith; and every one may arm himself with that. Now the faithful overcome the world by this faith in two ways. Some do so by subjecting it: “Tread thou, my soul, upon the strong ones.”¹ This is a victory which all are alike bound to gain, because all must make the world subject to the glory of God. No matter what is at stake, whenever it is a question of any offence against God, we must make no account of the whole world, but trample it at once under foot. Others overcome it by renouncing it to follow their Lord, Who calls them to a higher life: “I will lift thee up above the high places of the earth.”² And this way is not binding on all, for it is the victory of perfect souls, and so it is not a victory only, but a triumph. In what way art thou overcoming it? God grant that thou mayest not rather be allowing thyself to be shamefully overcome by it.

III. Consider thirdly, what this world is which so many overcome by means of faith. It is the combination of the three famous evils which have such power over the human heart, the love of pleasure, the love of money, and the love of false glory: “All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.”³ He who overcomes these three has truly overcome the world, and it is faith which overcomes them. See what multitudes there are in every class of Christian men who have gained over them victories which are not only great, but stupendous. What state is more unlikely to overcome the love of pleasure than that of marriage? And yet how many

¹ Judges v. 21.

² Isaiah lviii. 14.

³ 1 St. John ii. 16.

married persons there are, who have surpassed the very angels in purity, for the angels "neither marry nor are married,"¹ and these persons although married were angels. What state is more unlikely to overcome the love of money than that of the rich? And yet there have been many rich men who, as Isaias foretold, lived like beggars: "The lion shall eat straw like the ox;"² and this, not for the sake of hoarding, as misers do, but in order to give more abundant alms. What more unlikely to overcome the pride of life than the state of learned men? And yet there have been many such who, when they were placed "upon a candlestick," left that position, and, of their own choice, hid themselves "under a bushel." Now how were all these wonders done? By faith. Faith teaches that what we see are all false goods, and that the true goods are those which are not seen: "For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."³ And so, despising what they saw, and aspiring to what they did not see, they overcame all those three appetites, which belong to things appreciable by the senses. Dost thou, too, desire to overcome them? Then thou, too, must arm thyself with faith: "Resist ye, strong in faith."⁴ Otherwise how easily wilt thou, on the contrary, be overcome by them, and fall. These three desires are the three lances with which a more implacable Joab pierces the heart of every heedless Absalom. If thou wouldst escape them, see that thou always go armed, and never lay aside thy breast-plate. And what is it? It is faith: "Having on the breast-plate of faith."⁵

IV. Consider fourthly, that it is not any sort of faith which is sufficient to gain the victory here spoken of by the Apostle, but only such a faith as he had—"our faith"—that is, a true and living faith. Heretics all boast that they have faith; but what kind of faith is it? It is a faith which does not remove infidelity, but only conceals it, and therefore it is not true faith. Such a faith will certainly not overcome. Did heresy ever gain any triumphs over the unbelieving world? Never. On the contrary, it was always triumphed over by the world. And if thou considerest attentively there has never been a heresy which did not have its origin in one of the three appetites which we are speaking of; sometimes, and this is still more monstrous, in all three together. Such, in our own times, was that of Henry VIII., King of England, in whose

¹ St. Matt. xxii. 30. ² Isaias xi. 7. ³ 2 Cor. iv. 18.

⁴ 1 St. Peter v. 9. ⁵ 1 Thess. v. 8.

case we see them all combined to triumph over one royal heart : there was the concupiscence of the flesh in the unlawful marriage which he was not afraid to solemnize with his mistress ; there was the concupiscence of the eyes in his robbery of abbeys, churches, monasteries, and sacred altars ; there was the pride of life in the primacy which he arrogated over the Holy See. Can such a faith as this be said to overcome the world ? It can never do so, because it is not true faith : "This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith." But even when it is true, it cannot overcome it, unless it is also a living, that is, an active faith. And so, it can never exist without both hope and charity. For the order is this : faith makes us know that God is our only good ; hope makes us raise our hearts to Him ; and charity makes us embrace Him. And when once we have embraced our true good, how is it possible to give a thought to that which is false ? It is necessary, then, that all these three virtues should combine to overcome the three base desires above-mentioned ; but nevertheless the victory is ascribed to faith—"This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith"—because faith is, as it were, the leader, who makes the others follow him to battle. Faith begets hope, and hope charity : "Abraham begot Isaac, and Isaac begot Jacob."¹ Abraham, as we all know, typifies faith, Isaac hope, and Jacob charity, because he wrestled with his Lord, and prevailed over Him, so closely was he united with Him. It is true, indeed, that Jacob also begot the other lesser Patriarchs in great number, as charity produces the other virtues which are of a lower order than those known as theological. Yet all these virtues are also principally attributed to faith, just as all those Patriarchs who were Jacob's offspring were spoken of as children of Abraham ; and so he, not Jacob, was called the "father of many nations." In the same manner shouldst thou think that every virtue thou possessest, whether of a higher or lower kind, must spring from faith, and therefore thou must endeavour to plant it deeply in thy heart, because faith will give thee hope, hope will give thee charity, and charity will give thee all other virtues that thou canst desire, and with such a host to fight for thee, what canst thou fear ? Canst thou doubt that thou wilt be victorious over the whole world ? In this sense also, therefore, it is most true that "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world," because, if thou considerest attentively, every Christian virtue

¹ St. Matt. i. 2.

overcomes the world, and nevertheless, "this is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith," because it is to faith that this victory is principally attributed.

ELEVENTH DAY.

Forget not the kindness of thy surety, for He hath given His life for thee
(Ecclus. xxix. 19).

I. Consider first, that by common consent of all the most devout and learned commentators, this loving surety here spoken of is no other but thy Lord Jesus. Where wouldst thou now be but for Him? Thou wouldst be lost for ever. He saw that thou wert utterly unable to pay, as strict justice required, the heavy debts which thou owedst to God, and so He graciously came between thee and Him to pay them; and to pay them, as thou knowest, by so great an expenditure of humiliations, sweat, and blood. If, therefore, thou hast any human feeling in thy heart, if thou art not a savage beast, a fury, one of those monsters whom Satan sometimes sends upon the earth in human form, do not, I beseech thee, be ungrateful to Him. Dost thou understand the greatness of the kindness He has done thee? If all the hosts of angels, the principalities, the powers, the most glorious seraphim had come down upon the earth to take human flesh, to suffer, to be tortured, to die for thee, they could not have made condign satisfaction for what thou didst owe, because all the worship, honour, and homage which they could offer to God would be less by very many degrees than one, even the very least, of all the offences committed against Him by thee, a miserable worm of the earth. This condign satisfaction required a far greater person, a person of dignity equal to His own, as was Jesus Christ. Therefore He presented Himself before His beloved Father, and vouchsafed to become surety for thee, and so to take thy debt upon Himself, till, when the fulness of time had come, which was, so to say, the utmost limit fixed by God for payment, He should come forward to discharge it for thee. The Apostle spoke of Him as surety for our debt when he said: "Jesus is made a surety of a better testament;"¹ and

¹ Hebrews vii. 22.

David spoke of Him as actually paying it, when he said: "All nations shall serve Him, for He shall deliver the poor from the mighty, and the needy that had no helper."¹

II. Consider secondly, that God was in no way bound to so magnificent a benefit as this which He has been pleased to bestow on thee. "He was offered because it was His own will," says Isaias, and therefore this benefit is called a grace, because it was a benefit which was all of grace, wholly gratuitous, as every surety is by its nature: "Forget not the kindness (*gratiam*) of thy surety." When was there ever any one in the world who was such a surety as Christ? No doubt when Juda desired to take Benjamin with him into Egypt, he made himself surety to Jacob his father that he would bring him back and restore him to him, saying very confidently: "I take the boy upon me, require him at my hand: unless I bring him again, and restore him to thee, I will be guilty of sin against thee for ever."² But why did he do this? Because he felt sure of not incurring those fatal imprecations which he uttered against himself in case of not fulfilling his engagement. And so it is with all persons who make themselves sureties for a friend, they expect him to exert himself to the utmost to pay as much as he possibly can; and at any rate they hope that everything will be made good in the end, so that, after all, they may rather be said to lend than to pay. If, on becoming surety, they were certain that they would have to pay the debt, they would not make the engagement. But Christ, when He took thy debt upon Himself, knew with absolute certainty that He would have to discharge it, for He made Himself answerable for a debtor who was destitute, sick, helpless, incapable of ever indemnifying Him for anything He suffered; and yet He did not hesitate to take the debt upon Himself—"He was made surety"—not only for one who was poor, but also ungrateful. Was not this pure grace? How, then, is it possible for thee to forget it? "Forget not the kindness of thy surety."

III. Consider thirdly, that as there never was in the world such a surety as Christ, still less was there ever one who paid a debt as He did. For when did you hear of any one who, when compelled to pay a debt for which he had become surety, gave more than he was obliged to pay? On the contrary, every one tries to pay as little as possible—"he will scarce pay one half"³—whereas Christ paid with infinite super-

¹ Psalm lxxi. 11, 12.

² Genesis xliii. 9.

³ Ecclus. xxix. 7.

abundance : "With Him is plenteous redemption." Thou well knowest that He could have satisfied the strict claims of justice by presenting a petition, by breathing one sigh for thee, so surpassing was the worth of His least action. And yet, that He might win for thee more of His Father's love, that He might give thee a lesson, that He might encourage thee, that He might make the way of salvation easier for thee, He paid the debt with such an excess of liberality that it merits the name, not of generosity, but prodigality : "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound."¹ Art thou not bound then to make a worthy return to Him Who thus paid thy debt? Surely thou art, unless thou considerest thyself less obliged because He has done for thee what so far surpasses all obligation : but what a pitch of ingratitude would this be!

IV. Consider fourthly, how thou shouldst act in order to make a return to Him, to Whom thou art so greatly bound. Thou shouldst do what every poor debtor should, when some rich friend has not only made himself his surety, but has also paid his debt. Thou must first acknowledge the benefit, think of it, speak of it, return fervent thanks for it; and next, thou must endeavour to extract out of thy nothingness, if I may use the expression, some amount of interest which thou mayest offer to Christ in return for the immense capital which He paid for thee in the same kind; so that if He shed for thee an ocean of tears, of sweat, and of blood, thou mayest at least be willing to shed a drop for Him; if He endured wrongs so terrible, thou mayest at least be willing to bear a slight loss; if He endured outrages so shameful, thou mayest at least be willing to bear a little contempt; if He went so far as to die upon the Cross for thee, thou mayest be willing, I do not say to die for Him, thou art not worthy to do so, but at least to live for Him. To live to please Him; to live to give glory to Him; to live so as to strive, in that paltry measure which is possible to thy poverty, not to appear ungrateful to Him. Can it be that thou ever grudgest Him so trifling an interest as this? Nay, God grant that thou mayest not even be in the number of those who turn their backs upon Him altogether. For so, alas! it is: "The sinner and the unclean fleeth from His surety."² "The sinner," that is, the man who is laden with spiritual sins, such as envy, ambition, avarice, presumption; and "the unclean," that is, the man laden with carnal sins; both these "flee from their surety:" they hate to

¹ Romans v. 20.² Ecclus. xxix. 20.

TWELFTH DAY.

Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not upon thy prudence. In all thy ways think on Him, and He will direct thy steps (Prov. iii. 5, 6).

I. Consider first, that when the Wise Man tells thee to have confidence in God with all thy heart, he does not mean that thou shouldst not make use also of the prudence which God has bestowed on thee; he does not say "use not," but only "lean not upon thy own prudence;" indeed, by bidding thee not to lean upon it, he takes for granted that thou art to make some use of it; otherwise, thou wouldst display not confidence, but rashness; and both those who are rash and those who are over-prudent are equally displeasing to God; the former, because they act as though they would oblige Him, the latter, because they act as though they scorned to be obliged to Him. Therefore St. Peter said, "Be prudent," but added immediately, "and watch in prayers."¹ It might seem as though there were no connection between these two things, prudence and prayer, yet they are to be always united. If thou act with prudence, foreseeing and preparing for everything as far as is in thy power, thou showest that thou hast no idea of obliging God to work miracles, as is the case with the rash man when, for example, he "goes out unadvisedly to fight."² And if, at the same time, thou art diligent in invoking Him, thou showest that thou art not too proud to be indebted to Him, as the over-prudent man is, who thinks that he has need of no one but himself: "Our hand hath done all these things."³

II. Consider secondly, why it is that thou shouldst not rely upon thy prudence: "Lean not upon thy own prudence." For the very reason that it is thy own, and consequently fallacious—"The staff of a reed"—for thou canst not foresee everything that will happen, and even if thou couldst foresee, thou canst not alter it. What, then, must thou do? Thou must form a resolution according to what prudence dictates, that is, right reason; but having done this, thou canst not rest in it, but have recourse to God, and place in Him all thy confidence as to success: "Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart." This is to act wisely, not to trust to ourselves,

¹ 1 St. Peter iv. 7.

² 1 Mach. v. 67.

³ Deut. xxxii. 27.

to our own wisdom, reason, or courage, but to trust in God alone: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord."¹

III. Consider thirdly, that the Wise Man does not think it enough that thou shouldst hope in God, but he requires also that thou shouldst trust in Him. Therefore he says "have confidence," not "have hope in the Lord." All confidence is hope, but all hope is not confidence. Hope admits of there being in the heart some fear of the contrary of that which it hopes for; confidence does not. And therefore confidence is indeed hope, but a firm and strong hope such as was in Christ, according to those words, "I will put My trust in Him,"² for hope, strictly speaking, was not in Christ. It is this confidence which the Wise Man desires in thee. He would have thee trust in God, and moderate that excessive solicitude into which prudence is sometimes apt to degenerate: "Set bounds to thy prudence."³ Dost thou fear that He will not give success to thy affairs if it is for thy good? What is it that thou fearest? "Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart"—yes, "with all thy heart." Let hope so fill thy heart that there may be no room left for fear, and thus thy hope will become confidence.

IV. Consider fourthly, that in order that God should protect thee in this manner, there is one thing that He requires. It is, that thou shouldst always keep Him clearly before thy mind: "In all thy ways think on Him." Thou must think that He loves thee, that He helps thee, that He watches thee; but above all thou canst, in every action of the day, renew the pure intention of pleasing Him alone in it, so that He alone may be the end for which thou doest it. For the words which are translated "think of Him," are *cogita illum*, not *de illo*, to show that thou must set God before thee as the object of thy action, and so keep thy eyes constantly fixed on Him. When thou dost this "in all thy ways," thinking of Him in this sense, *cogitare illum*, then thou needest fear nothing, because He will be bound to direct every step thou takest: "He will direct thy steps." Dost thou know what these daily actions of thine are? It is an awful thought. They are so many paths, which may gradually lead thee either to Heaven or Hell: "The way of life and the way of death."⁴ How great, then, is thy need that the Lord should "direct thy steps," lest, without thinking, thou shouldst be travelling, not to Heaven, but to Hell! And this is the only way of being

¹ Jerem. xvii. 7.

² Hebrews ii. 13.

³ Prov. xxiii. 4.

⁴ Jerem. xxi. 18.

safe in so great a danger, to be continually renewing thy intention, turning to God, commending thyself to God, keeping Him ever before thee, "thinking of Him." Do this, and thou art sure not to be lost.

V. Consider fifthly, that it seems to thee a matter of great difficulty to do this constantly "in all thy ways." And I admit that it is difficult. But why? Because thou dost not "have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart." I mean, that thou mayest "have confidence in the Lord," that is, thou mayest put thy trust in Him, but not "with all thy heart," that is, thou dost not trust *only* in Him, thou trustest in thyself too; thou "leanest upon thy own prudence." If thou didst understand this great truth, that of thyself thou canst do nothing, but that at every moment of thy life, in spite of all thy prudence, thou art lost unless God takes thee by the hand and guides thee, dost thou think that thou wouldst find it so difficult to think of Him even at every moment? If thou walkest at night in a strange road, in imminent danger of falling over a precipice at every step, dost thou find the slightest difficulty in thinking at every step of the guide who conducts thee and who knows the road? So far from it, it would be difficult for thee not to think of Him even if thou hadst to travel all night. And so it will be when thou art thoroughly imbued with the need thou hast of God in all thy ways, that is to say, in every action, which may easily lead thee to perdition if thou leavest off thinking of Him. But thou art not thus imbued with this need of Him, because thou still trustest a little to thyself: "Thou leanest upon thy own prudence." Thou knowest that thou hast acquired a certain habit of doing right, and so thou trustest to thyself; but what arrogance this is! This habit, however long thou mayest have formed it, with all thy virtues whether infused or acquired, does not obviate thy need of fresh grace for every fresh action that thou performest, especially if it be one of some consequence. Thou needest God's concurrence to strengthen thy will by a fresh supply of actual grace; for thou art like a little child who, because he has had the support of his mother's hand one hour, does not need it less during the next, for, if left to himself, he is sure to fall. So, if thou understandest that thou art every instant so greatly in need of God, how is it possible that thou art satisfied with merely praying to Him at the beginning of the day, as though to do so more frequently were too difficult for thee? Do, then, as I advise: "Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart."

place all thy confidence in God alone, and understand clearly that, left to thyself, thou wilt infallibly be lost. "Lean not upon thy prudence," and then I promise thee that thou wilt no longer find it so difficult to think of Him, and that too "in all thy ways."

THIRTEENTH DAY.

ST. ANTONY OF PADUA.

He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water (St. John vii. 38).

I. Consider first, that it is a characteristic of the spirit of Christ's faithful servants not to be satisfied with being good themselves, but to exert themselves also for the good of others. And so they shall indeed receive from Heaven rivers of living, that is of pure and wholesome water, which will flood their souls, but they will not keep them within themselves, they will let them stream forth for the good of their neighbour: "He that believeth in Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." These words our Lord uttered with His own lips, and in order that it might be clearly understood that He intended by them precisely what I have said, namely, that this should be the spirit of His servants, the Evangelist adds: "Now this He said of the Spirit, which they should receive who believe in Him." I know, indeed, that the word "Spirit" here means the Holy Ghost, but then this very Spirit of which we are speaking is the Holy Ghost, a Spirit most ready to impart Himself: "The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world,"¹ because He is all goodness, kindness, and charity; and this is the spirit of those who are the true faithful of Christ. They, too, desire to do good to the whole world. Happy art thou if thou possessest this spirit! more miserable if thou dost not! For in that case thou lackest the fairest quality of a Christian. Take this opportunity of endeavouring to enkindle in thy heart the desire of acquiring it, for this it is which thy Lord desires of thee in these words: not to think of thyself alone.

II. Consider secondly, that the "rivers of living water" here spoken of are the gifts of the Holy Ghost. He is the

¹ Wisdom i. 7.

water, His gifts are the rivers. And if thou ask why they are called rivers instead of rivulets or mere streams, there are three reasons for it, namely, to show their abundance, their force, and their inexhaustibility. The first quality of these rivers is abundance, for they are poured upon the faithful without limit or stint, they flow down in a full stream: "For God doth not give the Spirit by measure."¹ The second quality is the force of their current: "Living waters which run with a strong stream from Libanus,"² so that there is no barrier strong or high enough to resist them. Dost thou not remember that all the assembled Jews of Jerusalem could not resist one Stephen? "They were not able to resist . . . the Spirit that spoke."³ The third quality is their inexhaustibility, for they do not flow like a torrent, which is indeed violent, but soon ceases; they go on increasing in volume and in strength; and therefore they are said to be "rivers of living water," because they are not waters that fail: they "shall be like a fountain of water, whose waters shall not fail."⁴ All those Christians who have these rivers within themselves have them for this reason, because they have also within themselves the source whence they flow, that is, the Holy Spirit, of Whom it is written that He "shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."⁵ And so long as they have this Fountain in themselves, they can never fear that the water will fail. Where are any other rivers such as these to be found? They are able to bear you by their virtue even to Paradise, "to everlasting life." All other rivers flow downwards: these flow both downwards and upwards; downwards, to find by active works those who dwell on earth, and upwards, to find by contemplation those whose abode is in Heaven. But they all spring from the same fountain, because both the gifts which regard the active and those which regard the contemplative life proceed from the same Spirit, Who distributes them as He pleases: "All these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as He will."⁶

III. Consider thirdly, that none of these rivers, so strong, so fertilizing, so exhaustless, are given to thee by the Holy Spirit to be confined within thy own heart. He gives them to thee that thou mayest transmit them to thy neighbour for his good. Therefore it is not the influx of the grace of the Holy Spirit by means of these rivers which is made the mark

¹ St. John iii. 34.

² Cant. iv. 15.

³ Acts vi. 10.

⁴ Isaias lviii. 11.

⁵ St. John iv. 14.

⁶ 1 Cor. xii. 11.

of a true follower of Christ, but the transmission of that grace by their means : it is not said "into," but "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Thou must not, then, be satisfied with merely being good for thy own advantage, but thou must also aim at helping others, not only by good example, which is a thing necessarily understood, but also by thy words, exhorting them to do well, strengthening, advising, and admonishing them ; and, if thou hast the ability, by thy pen also, so that the contemplation in which thou art engaged ought to help thee to action : "Let thy fountains be conveyed abroad, and in the streets divide thy waters."¹ And it seems likely that this is the passage to which our Lord referred, without further specifying it : "He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Some have thought that the words, "as the Scripture saith," have reference to those immediately preceding them, "He that believeth in Me," and that our Lord's meaning was, "He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith that he ought to believe ;" but this interpretation is very unsatisfactory, and the true one is, doubtless, that the words refer to those immediately following, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." And if this is so, there is not in all the Sacred Scriptures a more suitable testimony to our Lord's meaning than this beautiful passage from the Proverbs. This is what He desires of thee, what He commands thee, to let the gifts which thou hast received from Heaven flow forth from thee for the benefit of others. He would have thee comply with the Wise Man's injunction, when he says : "Let thy fountains be conveyed abroad, and in the streets divide thy waters." See what numbers of people there are in the public places of the city in extreme want of every kind of spiritual help : children who know nothing, usurers, revengeful and dissipated persons, and women of the world ! Do not fail, then, to assist every one to the extent of thy power, dividing the waters, in imitation of the Apostles, with reference to each man's necessity : "Distribution was made to every one according as he had need."² And if thou art bound to let these waters flow even "in the streets," that is, for the good of persons who are in no way connected with thee, how much more shouldst thou do so in thy own home, to its inmates, to thy children, thy brothers, thy servants—in a word, to all those of whom thou art bound to have a special care. And yet, if

¹ Prov. v. 16.² Acts iv. 35.

thou examinest thyself well, thou wilt see how little attention thou payest to this matter.

IV. Consider fourthly, that our Lord says that these rivers, which flow for the good of others, should come from the heart: "Out of his belly shall flow living waters." He does not say from the mouth, but from the heart, for what comes from the mouth is worth little if it has not its rise in the heart. There are some persons who not only employ themselves in exhorting, consoling, and advising others in private, but even in preaching publicly, and yet who hardly do any good to others. And why? Because the gifts which they exercise in preaching are not the rivers we have been speaking of, for they lack all the three qualities of rivers. They do not flow over the heart with the abundance of grace, but leave it as dry and barren as before. They lack force, for they are unable to move, they do not overthrow, nor terrify, nor rob vice of its power. And lastly, they are very soon dried up, because they do not flow by a spontaneous motion of their own, but merely by an impulse of ostentation, or interest, or some other human motive. The fountain, then, must be in the heart, and then the streams which flow from the mouth will be rivers, otherwise they are stagnant waters: "A drought upon her waters, and they shall be dried up."¹

V. Consider fifthly, what thou must do in order to have this fountain in thy heart. Thou must prepare thyself for its reception. And therefore the Evangelist says: "Now this He said of the Spirit which they should receive who believed in Him." The Spirit of God was never given forcibly to any man. Thou must desire it: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."² But how canst thou think that thou desirest to receive Him if thou makest none of the preparations necessary for doing so? And what are these preparations? Precisely those which the holy Apostles made: they desired, they prayed for Him, they retired from intercourse with those human creatures which so occupy the heart as to leave no room for the Spirit of God, Who certainly will not come into it in all His fulness, unless He has it altogether. The Spirit of the Lord "filled the whole house where they were sitting."³ And dost thou ask why thou dost not receive this Spirit within thyself? It is because thou dost not like to be employed in the service of others. Try to devote thyself wholly to the good of thy neighbour, like the great St. Antony of Padua, who deserved

¹ Jerem. i. 38.

² St. John xx. 22.

³ Acts ii. 2.

so well of all men, and thou wilt see how abundantly these rivers will descend into thee also, of which thou scarcely knowest the meaning, and the efficacy of which he knew so well by experience. How abundant, how powerful, how exhaustless were his gifts! How thoroughly was he imbued with the grace of the Spirit of God! For that great Saint did not think that he was born for himself only, but for the whole world, to which he still continues to do benefits.

FOURTEENTH DAY.

If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from Heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him? (St. Luke xi. 13).

I. Consider first, that thou canst not wrong God more grievously than by complaining that He does not hear thy prayers, because His desire to give is far greater than thine to receive, provided only that thou wishest what is for thy good: "Wisdom preventeth them that covet her."¹ And see how far this God of infinite majesty condescends, in order to repel so shameful a calumny! He is contented to place Himself at thy tribunal, and only asks thee to judge of His Heart by thy own. Couldst thou be so cruel as to refuse thy child what he asks of thee, if thou knewest that it is for his good? How, then, canst thou suspect God of so dealing with thee? This is an argument of tremendous force, being *ad hominem*; and therefore our Lord says, "If you." He desires no judge but thyself. And oh! how ought this argument to clear thy mind of all clouds of pusillanimity, doubt, and mistrust, if thou dost but examine it closely, so full is every word of force to strengthen more and more the argument "from the less to the greater," that is, from an earthly to the Heavenly Father. "If you, . . . how much more your Father from Heaven?"

II. Consider secondly, that our Lord says, "You, being evil," that is, disposed to evil, inclined to refuse, inclined to injure; and therefore He says, "You, being" such, taking this for granted to be true, not proving it, because He is speaking of inclination. Evil is not to be assumed in any

¹ Wisdom vi. 14.

particular person, but the inclination to evil may be assumed in all. And therefore, as to this point, Christ said, "Be ye wise as serpents, and simple as doves."¹ He would have us resemble doves in judging favourably of every one, but serpents in defending ourselves from them. "Beware of men:"² not only of bad men, but of all men; because, being men, they are all in consequence inclined to evil, which is enough to make it necessary to be on our guard with them. If, then, this is true, and it is but too true, we begin to see how forcible our Lord's argument is in regard to this matter. For, if even one who is naturally inclined to evil, as thou art, restrains this inclination, when his children are concerned, suppresses and overcomes it, so that he not only does not do them harm, but does them good, how will it be with God, Who, being what He is, can have no inclination but that of benefiting all men? Here, then, thou hast the certainty that God desires to do thee good.

III. Consider thirdly, that He adds, not that "you give," but that you "know how to give," because no one does good to his children by chance, but intentionally. Indeed, this is so natural, that it is not necessary to learn it; it is known by every one. Dost thou not see how even the brutes do this? Look at eagles, doves, dogs, nay, even tigers; what is there that they will not do for their young? and why? Because to do good to one's offspring is a universal knowledge; it is not learnt, it is not acquired, it is a knowledge born by instinct, implanted by nature in the heart of every man. If, then, a man, even if he is as stolid as a brute in all besides, knows how to do good to his children, simply because God has given him an interior instinct to do so; how much more will God, Who gave the instinct, do good to men? Thou seest, therefore, that it is certain, not only that God desires to do thee good, but that He knows how to do it.

IV. Consider fourthly, it is said "to give good gifts;" not "goods" (*bona*) absolutely, but "good gifts," goods received from others, because man is destitute; he has nothing of his own; all that he has is from God; he is obliged to procure whatever he desires with extreme thought, extreme exertion, and extreme labour—"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"—and yet he will often take the bread out of his own mouth to give it to his children. What, then, will God not do, Who has all things, and of Whom it cannot be said, when

¹ St. Matt. x. 16.

² St. Matt. x. 17.

He gives, that He gives "gifts," but that which is His own? He possesses in Himself the source of all that He gives; and so, however much He gives, He loses nothing: He is "rich in mercy." And here thou seest still further that it is certain, not only that God desires to give, and knows how to give, but also that He is able to give with the utmost ease: and this being so, what dost thou fear? One who is able to do good, who knows how to do good, and who wishes to do good, has everything that can be desired to constitute a benefactor.

V. Consider fifthly, that it is said, "To your children:" not merely "to children," but "your children;" and here the adjective (*vestris*) is used in a depreciatory sense, because the children of men are far less theirs than God's. Consider, in order to see this clearly, what that being is which a man gives to his children: it is the material, that is, the inferior part of their being: he gives them flesh, muscles, membranes, bones, all that goes to form the body; but he does not give the soul; that comes straight from God, and therefore He is far more their Father: "Call none your father on earth, for One is your Father, Who is in Heaven."¹ But if He is more their Father, how can He love them less? Their earthly father is father only of a part of them; and so, if he does not love them perfectly, it is not to be wondered at: their Heavenly Father is altogether their Father: "Your Father," because He gives the soul as the total cause, and He gives the body also as the primary cause. The Heavenly Father must, then, love more than the earthly father. Besides, the earthly is the natural father only; the Heavenly is both the natural and the supernatural Father, because He is Father both in the order of nature and in the order of grace: how much more, then, must He love them whom He has raised to a sonship so glorious, so magnificent, so sublime? And if He loves more, how can it be supposed that He is less loving in listening to their requests.

VI. Consider sixthly, that our Lord says, "Your Father from Heaven," because He is not only a Father "in," but "from" Heaven: "God the Father in Heaven," and "God the Father from Heaven." He is called "Father in Heaven" with reference to the beatitude which He there gives to those whom He has called to His Heavenly Kingdom: and He is called "Father from Heaven" with reference to the good things which He sends thence to those who are still here

¹ St. Matt. xxiii. 9.

below. Therefore, whether thou considerest Him "in" or "from" Heaven, thou wilt see Him to be far more liberal in doing good than any earthly father. For He Who possesses beatitude can delight in nothing more than in imparting it to others. He is like the Nile when it is full—He must of necessity overflow; while, on the contrary, one who not only does not possess beatitude, but is miserable and poor, prefers, like some little streamlet, to keep for his own benefit what small amount of good he has, rather than give it to others. Yet an earthly father does not thus withhold it, but gladly gives it to his children: what, then, will our Heavenly Father do?

VII. Consider seventhly, that He says, "To them that ask Him;" because, if an earthly father's feeling for his children is such that he does them good, even when they do not ask him, discovering their wants, providing for them, forestalling them, canst thou believe that thy Heavenly Father will not do so, even when thou prayest to Him? No tongue of man is able to enumerate the benefits which God bestows on men, even when they do not notice that they are receiving them, when they offend, insult, and wrong Him—a thing which is done by no earthly father: "He maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad.¹ Think, then, whether it is possible that He can refuse to do good to those who come before Him as suppliants: "Who hath called upon Him and He despised him?"²

VIII. Consider eighthly, that for all these reasons, thou utterest a calumny against God when thou complainest that He does not hear thee; for it is impossible that the fault can be His: it is thine. Instead, therefore, of complaining of Him, thou shouldst accuse thyself of not asking of God what is for thy good—"the good Spirit." This only is God bound, as a loving Father, to give thee: if He gave thee anything else, He would not be thy Father. And what is this good Spirit? Thou knowest well what it is: it is the spirit which will bear thee with a fair wind to the harbour of Paradise with thy consent. It is the spirit of charity, of humility, of obedience, of piety; and so thou mayest go through the other similar virtues: in a word, it must be a spirit like that of thy Heavenly Father, Who is "one" (*unicus*) and "manifold" (*multiplex*), one in substance, manifold in attributes. If thou askest Him for this only, do not doubt that He will give it thee. If thou askest Him for anything else, such as those goods which are

¹ St. Matt. v. 45.

² Eccclus. ii. 12.

corporeal, not spiritual, He will give them to thee, but only that they may help thee towards the acquirement of this Spirit. I say, He will give, because He has said so with His own lips: "How much more will your Father from Heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him?" He does not say "does He give," but "will He give," implying that if thou dost not at once receive what thou prayest for, thou shouldst not think thyself neglected, for God would have thee go on praying; He would have thee persevere, persist in thy prayer: "Be instant in prayer."¹ He alone knows the right time for inspiring thee with this good Spirit; but thou mayest be certain: that if He does not yet give, He "will give" at last; that thou wilt not die without receiving that good Spirit which thou askest for constantly. Indeed, it is possible that thou mayest have already received it without being aware of it. And why? For this very reason, that it is a spirit. Dost thou not know that a spirit is something secret, invisible, imperceptible? "Thou knowest not whence He cometh, nor whither He goeth."² If it allows itself to be known, thou knowest it; if it evades thy recognition, thou wilt not overtake it, pursue it as much as thou wilt. How often may it happen that thou hast been heard when thou art not aware of it! However this may be, trust in God, for if He is a Father, and such a Father as thou hast here seen, it is not possible that thou canst pray to Him in vain: and therefore Christ did not say of Him that He "knows how to give," as He said of men, but that "He will give;" because with men it is one thing to know that they should give, and quite another to give. Times without number they know that they ought to give, and do not give: but with God these two things are the same.

FIFTEENTH DAY.

Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content; for they that will become rich fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition (1 Timothy vi. 8, 9).

I. Consider first, that human happiness, rightly considered, consists in knowing how to live perfectly satisfied with that which is only necessary for subsistence; for he who lives

¹ Coloss. iv. 2.

² St. John iii. 8.

according to necessity is always rich, and he who lives according to pleasure is always a beggar. This is so manifest a happiness that it was known, lauded, exalted, desired, even by the heathen, but it was not therefore attained. Their appetites were too irregular; and therefore, although they perceived what was best, that is, to live according to necessity, they chose what was worst, and so lived according to their pleasure. It belonged to Christ to bring into the world every kind of happiness, whether human or Divine. And therefore thou seest that since His coming there have been countless multitudes who, after His example, live, not only according to necessity, but according to mortification, and are satisfied with what may rather be said to keep them from dying than to preserve them in life. If, then, thou canst not be of the number of these perfect ones, at least be amongst those who live according to necessity, not according to pleasure, and that embrace the teaching here set before thee by the Apostle, when he says, "Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content." Two sorts of things are necessary for the life of man: the one to preserve him from what can hurt him inwardly, namely, "food;" the other to preserve him from what can hurt him externally, namely, that "wherewith to be covered," that is, covered either as clothes or dwellings cover us, which is shown by the word used by the Apostle, which is not *induemur*, or "to be clothed," because that is not enough, but *tegamur*, "to be covered." "Having," then, "food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content;" for if we are satisfied with these we shall be happy, or at least, we shall be free from all those evils to which those persons are subject who, because they choose to live according to their appetites, are never rich enough, and therefore always "will become rich," because they always need to become so.

II. Consider secondly, that thou art free from the evil to which those are subject "who will become rich," thou art free from the greatest evil in the world, because thou art free from what places thee in evident danger of damnation. This danger comes from two sources, thy exterior and thy interior enemy. The former is the devil, the latter is thy own concupiscence. Now, if thou settest thyself to become rich, each of these enemies will acquire a terrible power over thee. For, with regard to the devil, it will, in the first place, be exceedingly easy for him to take possession of thee, and then, having once taken possession, it will also be very easy for him never to

loose his hold of thee; and these two things make up the worst that can happen to thee, as to the devil. It will be very easy for him to take possession of thee, for he will put in thy way a thousand opportunities of making unlawful gains, with which he will tempt thee as a bird is tempted by the lure, and it will be easy for him to keep possession of thee, because when once thou art caught in the snare there will be no need for him to take any trouble to keep thee, as there is in the case of the bird. Thou wilt no longer desire to leave him, because thou wilt not wish to make due restitution. And therefore it is that the Apostle says, "They that will become rich fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil;" not "into temptations," but "into temptation," because there is only one thing to which the devil has to tempt such persons, namely, to take those ill-gotten gains, he has no need to tempt them to keep them. The money, which at first was as a bait, "temptation," by its power of alluring to evil, becomes as a snare, *laqueus*, by its power of retaining. And if this is so, dost thou not see that, as regards the devil, thou art lost? And then as to concupiscence, which we said was the second, that is the interior enemy, it is equally easy for it to enslave thee rapidly, for it has as many arms to seize thee with as the desires, not merely vain but hurtful, into which it branches out: "They that will become rich fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires." There are then, in these desires, three very mischievous qualities; they are "many," they are "unprofitable," and they are "hurtful." They are many, because a man who has money is attracted by a thousand things, and this is a very bad effect of it; for the perfection of the heart consists in its tending to one only good, which comprises all others: "One thing have I asked of the Lord, this will I seek after."¹ The heart of one who is attached to many goods, all different one from the other, is divided, dissipated, torn to pieces, and therefore thou seest the state it is in: "Their heart is divided, now they shall perish."² These desires are unprofitable, because they do not lead to the end they profess to lead to, which is happiness: "The desire of the wicked shall perish."³ They lead neither to eternal nor to temporal happiness. Not to eternal happiness, because they are desires, not of heavenly, but of earthly goods; not to temporal happiness, because there are no earthly goods which will ever satisfy them: "You

¹ Psalm xxvi. 4.² Osee x. 2.³ Psalm cxi. 10.

have eaten, but have not had enough; you have drunk, but have not been filled."¹ And so they are unprofitable in both respects. Lastly, they are not merely unprofitable, but hurtful; for all the harvest thou wilt reap from them is anxiety, either about what thou wishest to gain, or about what, when thou hast gained it, thou fearest to lose: "The labour of fools shall afflict them."² When, therefore, thy concupiscence keeps thee a prisoner by all these arms which have been spoken of, what wilt thou do? Thou wilt indeed groan under its slavery, but thou wilt not be able to escape from it. And if thou dost not escape from it, dost thou not see that thou art lost for ever? This is the goal to which the excessive desire of riches will lead thee—Hell. "They that will become rich fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition." "Into destruction," by the everlasting death of guilt, which they bring upon them;" "into perdition," by the everlasting death of punishment, which is called not "destruction" only, but "perdition;" because although the death of guilt is in its nature also everlasting, yet there are many who, by the Divine mercy, often rise again from it; whereas from the death of punishment none ever rise again. This it is which is really perdition—damnation: "Broad is the way which leadeth"³ to it.

III. Consider thirdly, that the difficulty of avoiding this danger of damnation, which is hanging over all those "who will become rich," is so great, that the Apostle speaks of that danger as a thing not probable only, but certain. And therefore he says not that they "will fall into temptation," as though speaking of a future thing, which is often doubtful, but that they "fall" into it, as speaking of a present thing, concerning which there can be no doubt. Do not answer, then, that thou wilt walk so cautiously, so prudently, that thou wilt be able to avoid this danger; for by saying "they fall," the Apostle has cut off this way of escape from thee. For to fall is a thing which may happen to the careful as well as to the careless: "I shall one day or other fall into the hands of Saul," said David,⁴ and yet he was exceedingly careful to avoid doing so. And so, too, the greatest care thou mayest take is not enough to ensure thee against falling into this grievous peril of damnation of which we have been speaking. Thou wilt fall into it in spite of thy resolving not to do so. There are so

¹ Aggeus i. 6. ² Ecclus. x. 15. ³ St. Matt. vii. 13. ⁴ 1 Kings xxvii. 1.

many occasions of transgressing for the man who determines that he "will become rich," that he has no need to seek them out, he will meet them at every step. And if they are so numerous, how can he possibly avoid them all? The wise resolution, therefore, is to do as the Apostle says, that is, to be satisfied with living according to necessity, not according to pleasure: "Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content." And if even this counsel seem too severe for thee, although many who live according to mortification find it too easy, then at least act in this manner: Be satisfied with the state God has placed thee in; do not desire to make it greater or higher; for it is in this that the chief danger lies. And this may be the reason why the Apostle said, "They that will become rich," not "They that are rich;" for the greatest peril is, not in being rich (although that is dangerous enough: "If thou be rich thou shalt not be free from sin"¹), it is in the desire to become rich. Therefore be entirely satisfied with what God has given thee: "Let your manners be without covetousness, contented with such things as you have,"² which is the same thing as being contented with thy own state of life. Thinkest thou that if a more brilliant, a more opulent position were expedient for thee, God could not have given it to thee? It is a doctrine which has much probability, that God gives His elect that amount of wealth which is profitable for their salvation. Therefore it is written: "The rich," that is, those rich persons of whom the Apostle is speaking in our text, "have wanted and have suffered hunger:" they "have wanted," because they never think themselves rich, and they "have suffered hunger," because they are continually desiring to become so; "but they that seek the Lord," that is, the elect, "shall not be deprived of any good."³ He does not say "of any thing," but "of any good," for God gives them that amount of riches which is for their good, that is, as much as He sees will help them to find the God Whom they seek, to obtain His grace, His glory, and their everlasting beatitude. This portion of riches is a real good to them, not, indeed, as an end, but a means, and therefore God gives it to them. More than this He does not give, because it would no longer be a good but an evil, and a very serious one. Leave it, then, to God to do with thee as He pleases, for by so doing thou wilt seek Him rather than thyself, and consequently thou wilt be perfectly certain of never being without anything which is

¹ *Eccles.* xi. 10.² *Hebrews* xiii. 5.³ *Psalms* xxxiii. 11.

really thy good : thou " shalt not be deprived of any good." Is it not, to say the least, much more likely, according even to all human rules, that the position in which God has placed thee is better for thee than that which thou art striving to raise thyself to by thy own judgment ?

SIXTEENTH DAY.

Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin (St. John viii. 34).

I. Consider first, that the word "sin" has a double signification in the Sacred Scriptures ; sometimes it means the sinful act which is committed, sometimes the force which is in opposition to reason, and which causes the act, that is to say, concupiscence ; and it is in this latter sense that the Apostle spoke when he said, " If, then, I do that which I will not, . . . it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."¹ With very good reason, then, did Christ say, that "whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin," because the man who sins makes himself a servant instead of a freeman, by obeying his own concupiscence, that is, by obeying that part of him which ought itself to obey : he "is the servant of sin." Is not this a wonderful disorder ? It is that which the Apostle hoped to do away with when he so earnestly exclaimed, " Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body ;"² but how few did as he bade them. And yet he did not say, " Let not sin be in your mortal body," but, " Let not sin reign ;" for he well knew that so long as our body is mortal we cannot banish concupiscence so that it shall not dwell there ; but if we cannot banish it, at least we can prevent it from reigning, and we ought to do so, because this is the first of those disorders by which the Wise Man said that the whole earth would be disturbed : " By a slave when he reigneth."³

II. Consider secondly, that whoever sins, not only obeys his own concupiscence by so doing, but makes himself its servant, and moreover remains its servant, as the vanquished remains perpetually the servant of the conqueror. And therefore Christ is not contented with saying that " whoever committeth sin serves sin," but He says that such a man " is the servant of sin ;" because this is the rule : " By whom

¹ Romans vii. 16, 17.

² Romans vi. 12.

³ Prov. xxx. 22.

a man is overcome," says St. Peter on this very subject, "of the same also he is the slave." It is not possible for thee by any exertion of thy own to shake off the yoke of this wretched servitude; it can only be done by Divine grace, and what grace? that which God is in no way bound to give thee; namely, efficacious grace: "I am the Lord your God, Who have broken the chains of your necks, that you might go upright."¹ And if this is so, canst thou say that being in such a condition thou art not most truly a slave?

III. Consider thirdly, that not only is it impossible for thee, of thyself, to get free from this terrible servitude, but that it necessarily becomes more and more grievous. For this is the characteristic of the sinner's state, that if he does not receive immediate assistance from grace, he cannot, of himself, help daily adding sin to sin: "The sinner will add sin to sin."² What happens, then? That at last servitude becomes slavery. Have you not heard it said of many that "they were sold to do evil?"³ And of whom is this said? Of those with whom evil has become a practice, a habit. They are those who have given themselves up to their concupiscence in such a manner that they have lost the power of resistance. Nay, when it ceases to excite them, these unhappy persons labour to excite it: "They coveted their desire;"⁴ they arouse, they stimulate, they pursue it: "They have gone after the perverseness of their own heart,"⁵ for they tempt themselves to sin even when they cannot do so: "They have laboured to commit iniquity."⁶ Oh, then, how truly did our Lord say that "whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin!" since the sinner makes himself, not the servant only, but the slave of his irregular concupiscence: he is "carnal, sold under sin,"⁷ and so must necessarily go from bad to worse.

IV. Consider fourthly, how unhappy he is who is reduced to this condition. It is enough simply to say that he is a slave, and, as such, is destitute of every kind of good, honourable, useful, or pleasant. He is destitute of all that is honourable, because slavery is the most ignoble thing in the world. "See, O Lord, and consider, for I am become vile,"⁸ is the cry of desolate Jerusalem in her slavery. He is destitute of all that is useful, because a slave, in the nature of things, has nothing of his own, not even himself, and so is

¹ Leviticus xxvi. 13.² Ecclus. iii. 29.³ 1 Mach. i. 16.⁴ Psalm cv. 14.⁵ Jerem. ix. 14.⁶ Jerem. ix. 5.⁷ Romans vii. 14.⁸ Lament. i. 11.

obliged to labour with no profit: "Thou shalt serve thy enemy in want of all things."¹ And he is destitute of all that is pleasurable, because his whole life consists in labouring and being scourged like the children of Israel under Pharaoh: "They were scourged by Pharaoh's taskmasters, saying, Why have you not made up the task of bricks, both yesterday and to-day, as before?"² Now, consider attentively, and thou wilt see that this, and far worse than this, is the state of the sinner. First, because the slave is ignoble in proportion as his master is so; but what master can a man have more ignoble than his own concupiscence? He is the servant of a brute, that is, of that part of him which is common to the brutes, "carnal desires."³ Secondly, because a slave may hope, by faithfully serving his lord, to obtain his freedom, as was the case with Joseph, Esdras, and Daniel. But the more faithfully the sinner serves his own concupiscence, the more certain is he to continue its slave, and so he can gain nothing but chains to oppress him more grievously: "Thou shalt serve thy enemy in want of all things," as has been already quoted; and yet this is but little, for what will this enemy do then? "He shall put an iron yoke upon thy neck till he consume thee."⁴ Thirdly, because while the slave suffers in the body, he may yet enjoy happiness in his heart by virtue, which is not subject to slavery. But the sinner suffers still more in heart than in body, since his conscience incessantly gives him reproaches, rebukes, and lashes: "Thy own wickedness shall reprove thee, and thy apostasy shall rebuke thee."⁵ In every sin there are two things, repugnance to good and adhesion to evil; and both of them are two cruel furies, which vie with each other in scourging the sinner. See, therefore, how true it is that every one who sins is a slave: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin," and not only is he a slave, but the most wretched slave in the world, a slave not in body only but in soul: "Their soul (*anima eorum*) shall go into captivity."⁶

¹ Deut. xxviii. 48.⁴ Deut. xxviii. 48.² Exodus v. 14.⁵ Jerem. ii. 19.³ I St. Peter ii. 11.⁶ Isaias xlvi. 2.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to that doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but sick about questions and strifes of words (1 Timothy vi. 3, 4).

I. Consider first, who the persons are of whom it may be truly said that they "consent not to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to that doctrine which is according to godliness." Are they unbelievers? No; for they not only do not "consent" to what Christ taught, but they openly oppose it. They who, properly speaking, do not "consent" are those among the faithful whom we call men of the world; and in an especial manner, if thou considerest attentively, such men as, when they are injured, never think their honour entirely repaired unless they avenge themselves. There is no single thing in which thou wilt find the faithful of our time less ready to "consent" to what He taught than in this matter of forgiveness; because, although it is quite true that there are many other points as to which they dissent from His teaching, yet it is with the will, not with the understanding, that they dissent; and so they do "consent" with the will to Christ's teaching, because they think it hard; but they do "consent" to it with the understanding, because, notwithstanding, they think it admirable. But as to the point of honour above mentioned, they consent neither with the will nor the understanding. And so, speaking absolutely, they do not "consent," because they think it not only hard, but disgraceful, to obey Christ. They cannot excuse themselves by saying that in thinking this disgraceful they are following the opinion of the world; for what is the world of which we speak? It is either the world of the faithful or of unbelievers; if it is the former, it cannot hold such an opinion, because this would be contrary to Christ's judgment, and, by holding it, it would make itself unbelieving. Every one who believes in Christ must also believe that to forgive is an honourable act. For has not He said that to do so is to become a child of God? "Love ye your enemies, and you shall be the sons of the Highest."¹ He has, therefore, said that to forgive is a most glorious act. If, on the other hand, the world they speak of is the unbelieving world, what force has its opinion to excuse them?

¹ St. Luke vi. 35.

They can neither follow nor appear to follow it. For what would they do by so acting? They would commit an express act of unbelief, for every one who believes is charged with this indispensable obligation; he is free neither to hold an opinion contrary to the judgment of Christ, nor to make a pretence of holding it. Yet the persons of whom we are speaking not only make a pretence, but an open profession of holding it. See, therefore, to what a miserable condition those men of the world are reduced, who consider a man disgraced by not revenging an insult. They "consent not to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to that doctrine which is according to godliness." If they are not actually unbelievers, they are not far short of being so. And so you see that the Apostle joins together those who "do not consent," and those who "teach otherwise," because the difference between them, if any, is so slight that it can hardly be regarded as a difference at all: "It is like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey."¹ But, indeed, these men do actually "teach otherwise," since they are continually declaring with their lips the error of their minds, maintaining it by their writings, their publications—nay, even at the point of the sword. Read their challenges, and thou wilt see what their opinions are. Is not this going further even than those who "do not consent"? Surely it is not only to incur the suspicion, but to stand convicted of unbelief.

II. Consider secondly, that this unbelief is the more odious because of the beauty of the doctrine which they deny. For what a godlike doctrine it is! If there is one doctrine of Christ's which can be said to be in every respect "according to godliness," it is this of the duty of forgiveness. "Godliness," or piety, has two aspects: first, as regards God, and secondly our neighbour. God as our Father, our neighbour as our brother. The duty which it inculcates towards God is worship, towards our neighbour charity. And the doctrine we are considering fulfils both most strikingly. In the first place, it guards the rights of God, by leaving it to Him, as a Father, to punish His erring children: "Revenge is Mine, and I will repay them in due time."² And, in the second place, it practises the greatest act of charity which can be exercised towards a brother, namely, to render him good for evil. It is clear, therefore, that if every doctrine of Christ is full of piety, this may truly be said to overflow with it. But further still, in

¹ 1 Kings xv. 23.

² Deut. xxxii. 35.

what part of the Gospel do we find our Lord teaching this doctrine? In the Sermon on the Mount, that admirable sublime sermon; but above all, that sermon so full of "sound," or healing words (*sanis sermonibus*), for its chief object was to heal the wounds received by human nature in the irascible and concupiscible parts, and therefore it contains the most salutary maxims which were ever uttered by the lips of Christ, so that "when Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration at His doctrine."¹ And this is the doctrine of Christ, so full of piety, these are the words so full of healing, to which the men who so audaciously reject the law of forgiveness "do not consent." Is there greater "godliness" in the doctrine of vengeance, a doctrine so impious as regards God, so pitiless as regards our neighbour? Or are the words of those who teach that doctrine more "sound" in other matters? On the contrary, how utterly insane they are, since their aim is to reduce man to act like brutes! It is the words of our Lord Jesus Christ that are "sound:" "All My words are just: there is nothing wicked nor perverse in them: they are right to them that understand, and just to them that find knowledge."² Happy art thou if thou lovest those words. Never wilt thou find others more fitted to regulate thy life by the justice thou owest to God, the rectitude thou owest to thyself, the equity thou owest to thy neighbour.

III. Consider thirdly, that no more terrible reproach can be uttered against all those persons who do not "consent" to this holy doctrine of forgiveness than was expressed by the Apostle in the words that such a man "is proud, knowing nothing." And, indeed, must not that man be proud who insists on knowing more concerning points of honour than was known by the Son of God and all the great doctors, princes, and illustrious sovereigns who have been His followers? Must not he be of very weak understanding who does not comprehend truths so clear, so forcible, so palpable, as those which concern the glory of forgiveness, a glory which was known to so many even among the heathen? But this is the thing which is the root of all error in men: an excessive esteem of themselves, especially when it is combined with weakness of understanding. An excessive esteem of self makes a man fall into error for two reasons: first, because it emboldens him to judge of a thing which he does not know himself, and next, because it makes him who does not know a

¹ St. Matt. vii. 28.

² Prov. viii. 8, 9.

thing disdain to submit to the decision of those who do know it. Therefore it is written that "where humility is, there also is wisdom."¹ And weakness of understanding greatly facilitates this fall into error; for just as a person who is weak from sickness falls at every push—"They have been weakened and have fallen"²—so is it with persons of feeble understanding; they are ready to fall into error at the slightest urging of their passions. And here, perhaps, you may wish to know what this weakness of understanding is, so as to be on your guard against it. It is the not knowing how to judge of things according to truth, that is, according to what they really are, but to judge of them by appearances. What is it that causes bodily infirmity? It is the inequality of humours, for when these are in due proportion the body is in perfect health. Infirmity in the understanding, in the same way, is the disparity between what things really are in themselves and the judgment which is formed of them by the understanding; and therefore soundness of understanding is, in a word, the truth, which consists in the adjustment which has been spoken of between things and our judgment of them. If, then, thou showest me a man who is of himself incapable of this adjustment, he is exceedingly weak, "knowing nothing;" for how can he know anything who does not know what things are in themselves? And if pride is added to this weakness, so that not only he "knows nothing," but "is proud," imagine what serious falls he will suffer. Such are the falls of every one who "consents not to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to that doctrine which is according to godliness;" they are the falls of the proud, of one who "knows nothing." And it may be added that the man who is ignorant of all things which concern the attainment of his last end, although he should know everything besides, yet knows nothing: "I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."³ This, then, is the state of these unhappy persons: they are ignorant of the only thing necessary to be known; what, therefore, do they know?

IV. Consider fourthly, how rightly the Apostle concluded that every one of the persons of whom we have been speaking "is proud, knowing nothing, but sick about questions and strifes of words," because if he is so weak of understanding as we have said, he must indeed be sick: "A weak man, and of short time, and falling short of the understanding of judgment

¹ Prov. xi. 2.

² Psalm xxvi. 2.

³ 1 Cor. ii. 2.

and laws.”¹ But the wonderful part of it is to see what it is that these “weak men” destroy themselves for: “Questions and strifes of words.” These “questions” are the arguments which they carry on about various matters, which may be classed under two heads, reputation and property; and the “strifes of words” are quarrels about trifles. See for what trifles they are so “sick” in understanding as even to kill one another. These things are the occasions of their challenges, their quarrels, their duels. Observe, therefore, how well the former are called *questiones*, which properly signifies “searchings;” for what are they doing in all their disputes about property or reputation? They are seeking after happiness, but their search is continual, because its object is never attained: “They seek and find not,” which is precisely what happens to the man who is continually inquiring into matters of science, and never coming to a conclusion: “Ever learning, and never attaining to the knowledge of the truth.”² The latter are called “strifes of words,” for in truth they are mere disputes about the name of a thing, and therefore are rather to be called contests than questions. They would, if necessary, compromise a whole kingdom for the sake of an empty title. And what is it that they gain by gaining these titles? A mere nothing: “He that followeth after words only shall have nothing.”³ Is not this a sickness of understanding beyond the power of expression? I have spoken to thee of these unhappy persons in order that thou mayest, if thou art unfortunately of the number, set thyself to repent and no longer to follow after empty worldly punctilios. Thou art a gentleman, but a Christian gentleman, and therefore if thou receivest a challenge do not hesitate to reply as those of thy condition who are wise men do: “I offend no one, but I know how to defend myself. I always have my sword at my side, and if any one attacks me I can keep him at a distance.” Such an answer as this is not contrary to the doctrine of Christ, and on the other hand, it amply saves all personal honour: “It is an honour for a man to separate himself from quarrels.”⁴ If thou art not one of these persons, I speak to thee of them, that thou mayest not envy them, as perhaps thou sometimes dost, but rather compassionate them when thou reflectest how unhappy those are who choose to serve the world. Pray to God fervently to enlighten them. For consider to what a condition

¹ Wisdom ix. 5.² 2 Timothy iii. 7.³ Prov. xix. 7.⁴ Prov. xx. 3.

they are reduced! They are Christians, and yet they "consent not to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to that doctrine which is according to godliness"—nay, they sometimes even "teach otherwise" in a way that our Lord's enemies would scarcely do. Who can say, then, how terrible a punishment hangs over them? "To them that are contentious," as these men are who are so eager to dispute, "and who obey not the truth," that is, Christ's doctrine, "wrath and indignation;"¹ "wrath" from God, Who will condemn them for ever; "indignation" from themselves, who, when they are condemned, will conceive more implacable fury against themselves than they ever did against any of their enemies.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

Whose fan is in His hand, and He will purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire (St. Luke iii. 17).

I Consider first, that it is none other but our Lord Jesus Christ, in the character of Judge, Whom thou seest here represented in so strange a manner. The "fan" which He holds is, in truth, a mean utensil, being, in fact, that which is used for winnowing the wheat on the barn floor. And yet it has a very deep meaning; for it signifies His judicial authority in separating the elect from the reprobate, and therefore it is more powerful than any royal sceptre. Therefore in all humility adore thy Lord Who appears before thee in such a guise, because if ever there is a time when the sight of Him should inspire thee, not with reverence only, but terror, it is when He stands before thee as Judge: "Who shall be able to think of the day of His coming?"²

II. Consider secondly, why it is said that the "fan is in His hand." It is to signify that this judicial authority belongs to Him, and becomes Him: "The Father . . . hath given all judgment to the Son."³ It belongs to Him as God, and it becomes Him as Man. It belongs to Him as God by His own attribute of wisdom. Because, although to constitute a perfect judge, power also is requisite (for this is necessary to make criminals subject, to try, and to punish them), and

¹ Romans ii. 8.

² Malach. iii. 2.

³ St. John v. 22.

goodness, to secure them against partiality, bitterness, hatred, and injustice; yet both these qualities are rather to be presupposed in the judge antecedently to the act of judgment. It is wisdom which especially characterizes that act, and gives it, in a certain manner, its final form: "A wise judge shall judge his people."¹ And it becomes Him as Man, or, to speak more correctly, as the Chief of men, on three grounds: first, on account of His kinship with those who are to be judged; for it would seem that the judgment would be more welcome and endurable to men which should come from a man like themselves, and therefore more inclined to show mercy when it was possible to show it; secondly, because at the General Judgment the general resurrection of the bodies of men will take place, and this is reserved to Him as Man, because as the Father, by means of Christ, as God, every day raises souls to life by grace; so, too, by means of Christ, as Man, will He on the last day also raise their bodies to life; thirdly, because it seems right that all who are to be judged should see their Judge; but the greater part of these will not be capable of seeing Him as God, because they are the wicked; they must, therefore, see Him as Man. And this is what Christ Himself meant, when He said that "the Father . . . hath given Him power to do judgment, because He is the Son of Man."² We may add that, although this "power was His by so many other titles, nevertheless He merited it, as though it had not been His; and especially when He suffered Himself with such humility to be treated in this world as a criminal. Therefore it is just that that great Lord should be seen by all men seated in glory on the sovereign tribunal of the universe, Who was once so shamefully dragged before the lowest, and condemned by the most wicked tribunals. Rejoice with Him in the great glory which He will gain on that last day; and since it will then be in vain to fall before His throne and humbly beg for mercy, learn to do so now, while He is not yet a Judge, but an advocate. Delay no longer, for dost thou not see that His fan is even now in His hand? Does not this show that very soon He will use it? "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to His works."³

III. Consider thirdly, the purpose for which our Lord already has the fan in His hand: it is to cleanse the floor: "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will purge His floor."

¹ Ecclus. x. 1.

² St. John v. 27.

³ Apoc. xxii. 12.

This "floor" is His Church ; a "floor," because in it the good are mingled with the bad, as on the barn floor the wheat and the chaff lie together ; and "His," because thou well knowest how dear it cost Him. It cost Him all His Blood : "Which He hath purchased by His own Blood."¹ Do not think, therefore, because thou hearest it spoken of as a floor, that this Church is a small thing. On the contrary, it is very large indeed, and will be still larger at the end of the world, because it will have spread through the universe. Not that it will therefore embrace all men, but only those who shall by that time have professed the true faith, that is, the faith of Christ. Idolaters, Tartars, Turks, and obdurate Jews do not belong to the "floor," and so, strictly speaking, it cannot be said that the "fan" is for them. Therefore, though it is true that all men will alike appear before the Judge—"All nations shall be gathered together before Him,"²—yet they will not all be judged alike by Him. They will all alike appear before the Judge, because, as He shed His Blood for all, it is just that He should be seen by all, and acknowledged, revered, and adored, even in spite of themselves : "All nations shall come and shall adore in Thy sight, because Thy judgments are manifest."³ But they will not all be judged alike, because He will deal with infidels, who are those who do not belong to the floor, in a summary manner, as is done by the laws of war with declared enemies, not entering into particulars in their sentence of death, because it is a thing well known to all, but simply uttering it : "He that doth not believe is already judged."⁴ On the other hand, there will be a full, strict, and regular trial for those who belong to the "floor." "He will purge His floor." And this will be the winnowing of the chaff ; for unbelievers are not, strictly speaking, chaff, but rather brambles of the wood which are condemned at once to the flames : "As a dry tree in the wilderness."⁵ But of what avail will it be to thee not to be a bramble if thou art chaff? In either case thou wilt be welcome food to the fire.

IV. Consider fourthly, why it is that Christ compares good Christians to the wheat and bad ones to the chaff. The good are compared to the wheat because of the manifold fruits which they produce, sometimes even multiplying them by the hundred, because of their substance, their solidity, their wholesomeness, and because, if we consider the matter care-

¹ Acts xx. 28.² St. Matt. xxv. 32.³ Apoc. xv. 4.⁴ St. John iii. 18.⁵ Ecclus. vi. 3.

fully, it is on them that the whole subsistence of the universe depends. Bad Christians are compared to chaff on account of the deadly pallor caused by envy, the dryness caused by avarice, the sterility by sloth, as well as their inconstant levity which makes them the sport of every breath. Both these are for the present mingled together. God might have so ordered things that the wheat should spring from the earth without any chaff; but this was not His will. He, the Author of all things, chose rather to bring good out of evil than not to permit the latter. And dost thou not think that the wicked are of great use to the good even through the very means by which they desire to do them harm. They are exceedingly useful to them, if only by giving them occasion to be more humble, mortified, and modest, just as the chaff, which seems troublesome to the wheat, is really useful to it. But when this state of things is over, then how will the wicked be cut off, dispersed, and driven away! "I will scatter them with a fan in the gates of the land."¹ What a terrible separation will be made by Christ when by this great winnowing He will send the wicked far away from the good, just as the chaff is driven far away from the wheat when a strong wind blows it out of the floor! This will be the lot of every bad Christian who at that great separation will be cast away, together with the unbelievers, to be consumed in the same fire with them: "He shall separate him, and shall appoint him his portion with unbelievers."² Oh, how fierce a whirlwind will that winnowing be! And wilt thou not think on thy own fate, if thou, too, shouldst be thus driven before the wind? Examine thy present state: if thou art among the chaff, what reason thou hast for fear, because in that case it is for thee, as though thou alone wert concerned, that Christ holds the fan, to drive thee far from Him, even into the depths of Hell: "Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them."³

V. Consider fifthly, that immediately after this fatal winnowing, which will follow the sentence that the wheat is to be separated from the chaff, our Lord will command the angels to "gather the wheat into His barn." And what is this barn, this place of honour? It is Paradise, and the name here given to it describes the state which the blessed will there enjoy. They will be, like the wheat in the barn, safe, secure, and no longer exposed to injury from any weather. There will be an

¹ Jerem. xv. 7.² St. Luke xii. 46.³ Isaias xli. 16.

end of rain and frost and cold ; storms will be over, and the time be come for everlasting rest. And yet, more than all besides, this thought will fill the elect with joy : that they will be all together, no longer obliged to dwell among the wicked whose evil deeds so greatly afflicted them: "Who from day to day vexed the just soul with unjust works."¹ There is no more chaff there ; all who are in Heaven are pure wheat ; they all praise and love and adore and bless God ; and there is no one to do them any wrong, as was the case on earth. And this, I think, our Lord desired to point out by that sweet word, *congregabit*. Now, for the greater glory of God, the just are obliged to be separated from each other : one is labouring in the north, another in the east, another in the west, another among those southern barbarians who are the most savage of all ; but on that great day our Lord will unite them all at last : "He will gather together the dispersed of Israel,"² for He will bring out of Purgatory those who have so long been punished for their past errors. Who, then, can express the joy of the elect when they find themselves united from all these different parts, never again to cease from praising God? Oh, how ready should we be to pay any price in order to attain Heaven, if there were no other happiness to be found there but this noble company of all the just, that is, of persons possessing every quality of knowledge, graciousness, loveliness, and beauty, so that every one of them far surpasses Solomon seated on his throne of splendour ! Think what it will be to be banished from it ! Think of the lamentation, tears, and crying which will be thy portion ! "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."³

VI. Consider sixthly, what a contrast to the state of the wheat will be that of the chaff, who will be bound together, as it were, in a great bundle, and cast into the fire : "But the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." Thou seest at once, by the word "chaff," how readily they will burn : they are dry and withered, without one drop of sap or moisture which could in the slightest degree resist the action of the fire ; how fiercely, therefore, will they burn ! But perhaps thou thinkest that for this reason they will be the more quickly reduced to ashes? Do not be led away by so false a belief, for our Lord purposely chooses the word which He here makes

¹ 2 St. Peter ii. 8.² Psalm cxlvi. 2.³ St. Luke xiii. 28.

use of, that no one may think, when He hears that it is "chaff" which is burnt, that after all it is a blaze and then that all is over. Alas! it will never be over, it will endure for ever, and so the word is *comburet*, not *consumet*; for this is the terrible property of that fire, which has its parallel nowhere on earth! It has the evil quality of fire, that of torturing, but not the good one of destroying the person tortured: "A fire that is not kindled shall devour him."¹ And why is it "not kindled," but because it never lacks fuel, because it devours and does not destroy? Hast thou ever seriously set thyself to consider the meaning of being condemned to such a fire as this? Even though it were no hotter, keener, fiercer, or more penetrating than earthly fire, it would be enough that it is "unquenchable." Observe, also, that our Lord called the place where the wheat is to be gathered in, "His barn," but He did not call the fire in which the chaff is to be burnt His, because He is the Author of the salvation, not the perdition of men: "Destruction is thy own, O Israel; thy help is only in Me."²

NINETEENTH DAY.

He shall entertain and feed and give drink to the unthankful, and moreover He shall hear bitter words (Ecclus. xxix. 31).

I. Consider first, that by the host who is here spoken of thou mayest very well understand our Lord Jesus Christ when He comes to thee in the Blessed Sacrament: "I was a stranger and you took Me in."³ The word here translated "stranger" is *hospes*, or "guest;" and then in an especial manner He is the Guest of thy soul. But how different a Guest from all others! When other guests enter thy house, they come, not to feed thee, but to be fed by thee, and so thou seest that when Abraham received the three angelic travellers, who were three heavenly guests sent to visit him, he understood immediately that it was not their place to entertain him, but his to entertain them, and therefore he hastened to his herd, "and took from thence a calf very tender."⁴ For this is the rule of hospitality among men, the meat is given by the host, not by the guest. But your Lord is a Guest Who acts quite differently,

¹ Job xx. 26.

² Osee xiii. 9.

³ St. Matt. xxv. 35.

⁴ Genesis xviii. 7.

intended to betray him, and that Christ does it to one who is also to betray Him afterwards: "He that eateth bread with Me shall lift up his heel against Me"¹—not only "has lifted up," but "shall lift up."

V. Consider fifthly, as the climax of these wonders, that after our Lord has dealt thus lovingly with men, He is obliged to hear them say such things as fill Him with bitterness: "Moreover He shall hear bitter words." What are these things which He hears? They are the complaints which men make of Him, as though He had loved them but little: "I have loved you, saith the Lord, and you have said, Wherein hast Thou loved us?"² These complaints are of old date, it is true, but if they were always intolerable, they are not intolerable only, but utterly inexcusable ever since our Lord has so lovingly given Himself to us in the Blessed Sacrament. For what further proof of love can He possibly give us after having actually made Himself our food: so intense was His desire of dwelling in us, of penetrating into our inmost heart, of making Himself one with us! What canst thou suppose that He will not give thee when He has given thee Himself? No matter what else He may give thee, it is a less magnificent gift than this. Has He not good reason then to be filled with bitterness when He sees that thou hast doubts of obtaining from Him what is less, provided only that thou preparest thyself aright to receive it, when He has most lovingly given thee what is far greater? "Let Samaria perish because she hath stirred up her God to bitterness."³

TWENTIETH DAY.

We know that to them that love God all things work unto good, to such as, according to His purpose, are called to be saints (Romans viii. 28).

I. Consider first, the happy lot of those who truly give themselves to the love of God: "To them that love God, all things work unto good." This is the principle on which the whole of the universe is established, that the baser portions of it should serve the nobler: "The fool shall serve the wise."⁴ And therefore, in the end, everything must turn to the service:

¹ St. John xiii. 18.

² Malach. i. 2.

³ Osee xiv. 1.

⁴ Prov. xi. 29.

of those happy persons who truly apply themselves to love God, those persons, that is, who are the truly noble, great, and glorious in the world, those who are predestinated to everlasting blessedness: "Who are, according to His purpose, called to be saints." And what is it which is, beyond a doubt, their predestination? Is it anything short of the absolute will of God to save them? Surely not. St. Augustine repeatedly calls it His "purpose of showing mercy" (*propositum miserendi*). His will therefore must be accomplished: "All My will shall be done."¹ For this is the meaning of a "purpose:" it is a firm, strong, resolute will, and in order that it may be accomplished God has a special care of His elect: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just."² He guides, directs, and defends them, so that everything that befalls them may work to their good, that is to say, to the salvation of their souls: "To them that love God all things work unto good."

II. Consider secondly, that "all things," that is, all the events to which men are subject, are reduced to two sorts, good and evil. And as to the former, it is easy to understand how these are profitable to the elect: they "work unto good," by making the elect more ready to bless God, Who shows them such favour, more full of fervent thankfulness, adoration, and love of Him: "I will sing to the Lord, Who giveth me good things."³ It is not so easy to understand this of the latter sort, and yet it is quite certain, because all evils are either tribulations, temptations, or sins: and all of these "work unto good" to the elect. Tribulations "work" in this way, because they open to the elect a very wide field for the exercise of virtues: of patience in sickness, of meekness in persecution, of modesty in poverty, of humility in adversity, and in all these together, of perfect resignation to the Divine will: "It is the Lord, let Him do what is good in His sight."⁴ Temptations "work" to their good, because they are a school in which they are trained to fight against their infernal enemies, to overcome their force, to despise their artifice, and so to give continual victories: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved he shall receive the crown of life."⁵ And lastly, even sins "work" to good; for they furnish them with abundant matter for tears, compunction, and shame; and, above all, they make them lead a more careful life in future, not presuming on their own strength:

¹ Isaias xlvi. 10. ² Psalm xxxiii. 16.

³ Psalm xii. 6.

⁴ 1 Kings iii. 18.

⁵ St. James i. 12.

"I am the man that see my poverty by the rod of His indignation."¹ There are three rods with which God chastises the elect: the rod of correction, the rod of probation, and the rod of indignation. Tribulations are the first, temptations the second, and the permission of sin the third. Certainly every one of these rods teaches a man to know his own nothingness, and to humble himself; but there is none which teaches this better than the last, namely, the terrible rod of indignation: "I am the man that see my poverty by the rod of His indignation." There is, I know, a fourth rod, which is called the rod of fury, and which is the abandonment by God of a soul after sin; but this rod is not of the elect, and therefore I have made no particular mention of it in this place. And now consider awhile how true it is that "to them that love God all things work unto good," because there is no man who can hurt one who is of this number: "Who is he that can hurt you if you be zealous of good?"² The reverse is the case of the wicked; for if to the just even evil is turned to good, to the wicked even good is turned to evil, for they go so far as to abuse God's mercy by making it an occasion of sinning more audaciously: "I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me?"³ Of which class art thou? Dost thou get evil from good, or good from evil? This is one of the clearest marks by which thou mayest know whether thou art of the number of the predestinate or of the reprobate; for it is a law that even evil shall turn to good for the former: "To them that love God all things work unto good, to such as, according to His purpose, are called to be saints."

III. Consider thirdly, that it is possible that this law may be in some degree a stumbling-block to thee, and that thou mayest say that if thou art one of the elect thou wilt be saved without taking any trouble about it, as, in the end, all things, even those which are hurtful in themselves, are to do thee good. But dost thou not see the error? I grant that all things, even those which are hurtful in themselves, will do thee good, but under what conditions? That thou exertest thyself that they may do thee good. Listen to the words of the Apostle: "To them that love God all things work unto good." Now the word translated "work" is not *operantur*, but *cooperantur*, that is to say, "work together." If, then, these evils are to work for thee this good, by being combined with thy efforts (which is the co-operation here spoken of) it

¹ Lament. iii. 1.² 1 St. Peter iii. 13.³ Eccles. v. 4.

is impossible but that thou too shouldst work. If thou dost not work, neither will they do so, for all that they do is to work together (*cooperare*). Then, too, why dost thou suppose that the Apostle so expressly says: "To them that love God"? He might have said, "To them that are loved by God;" but he did not say so; he purposely said, "To them that love God," in order that thou mightest not commit the error of thinking that the love which God bears thee is sufficient for thy salvation: there must in addition be the love which thou bearest to God: "I love them that love Me." If God has elected thee to glory, He has so elected thee that thou mayest be saved by corresponding with Him; if thou dost not correspond with Him, it is a sign that He has not elected thee. Dost thou suppose that He will save thee by force? The elect are those who, "according to His purpose are called to be saints," that is, "who are called that they may be among the saints." If, then, thou art elect, thou art "called:" for "whom He predestinated, them He also called." And if thou art called, thou art called in order that thou mayest answer. What follows, then, from this? It follows that it rests with thee to answer or not to answer. What sort of calls would those be which forced thee? They would not be calls at all, but violent shocks. When God calls the elect to holiness, as He undoubtedly does, He does not call them in order to drag them after Him, like senseless brutes; He calls them that they may follow Him like subjects and disciples: "He hath called him to follow Him."¹ If, therefore, thou wouldst be one of the elect, take care to co-operate; for otherwise be assured that thou wilt not be of the number of the elect, that is, of those who "according to His purpose, are called to be saints."

IV. Consider fourthly, that if thou dost not see how what has here been said can be reconciled with the immutability of that Divine decree which, on account of its exceeding strength and stability, is called a purpose (*propositum miserendi*), all that thou hast to do is to submit thy proud intellect to the teaching of faith, by confirming thyself in the truth of these simple axioms: that thou wilt be saved if thou dost well, that thou wilt not be saved if thou dost not do well. By so acting thou wilt show that thou art of the number of the elect; because thy very ignorance and incapacity will thus co-operate for thy greater good: it will "work unto good." Oh, how great is the merit of the man who, being by an impediment

¹ *Isaias* xli. 2.

of any kind, deprived of great knowledge, is content to serve God in holy simplicity, leaving to those whom it concerns to speculate on and to explain deep mysteries. All that God requires of us is that we should love Him: it is "to them that love God," not to them that contemplate or celebrate or preach about Him, that "all things work unto good:" for every one can love Him. Why, then, seek further? Study to love God, that is to say, to serve Him faithfully according to thy state of life, to do what He commands, to choose what He counsels; and if thou dost nothing more than this, it is no matter. Thou wilt not be able to say with the Apostle: "We know (*scimus*) that to them that love God all things work unto good, to such as, according to His purpose, are called to be saints;" but thou wilt be able to say: "We know by experience" (*experimur*), because thou wilt understand by practice the truth of that which thou canst not fathom by science, if, indeed, there can be any truer science than practical science. This is the science of the saints—*et dedit illi scientiam sanctorum*¹—because they understand by practice what many another does not understand by study.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

ST. ALOYSIUS.

My eyes are ever towards the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the snare (Psalm xxiv. 15).

I. Consider first, that this world is so full of snares set by the devils of Hell, that the glorious St. Antony was filled with terror at the sight. Go where thou wilt, thou "art going in the midst of snares."² What then must thou do in order to avoid falling into them? Must thou look at thy feet? Quite the contrary: thou must instead lift thy eyes, and fix them on thy Lord: "The light of my countenance fell not on the earth."³ This is the surest way of walking safely, for if thou thinkest of Him, He, on His part, will make it His business to think of thee: "Turn ye to Me, and I will turn to you;"⁴ and if He thinks of thee thou art safe. It is this which the

¹ Wisdom x. 10.

² Eccclus. ix. 20.

³ Job xxix. 24.

⁴ Zach. i. 3.

holy King David so confidently looked for when he said: "My eyes are ever towards the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the snare." And thou, too, mayest look for it with the same confidence if thou wilt make trial of this way. But observe, that it is not enough to turn thy eyes towards God from time to time, thou must keep them fixed upon Him: "My eyes are ever towards the Lord;" so that thou canst have them always turned towards Him as servants turn theirs on their masters, for it is with good reason that it is here said, "towards the Lord." If thou dost this, do not fear that thou wilt ever fall into the snares; for although it is here said: "He shall pluck my feet out of the snare," thou art not to suppose that God will first let thee fall into it and then take thee out of it: this is not so; He will prevent thee from falling into it. It is said, "He shall pluck my feet out," to show that the snares are so many, so close, and so entangled, that it requires as great an exercise of power to keep thee safe in the midst of them as to deliver thee from them.

II. Consider secondly, that servants keep their eyes fixed on their master: in the first place, in order to execute his orders quickly; for, if they are good servants, they do not wait for him to speak, a mere sign is enough. And this is what thou shouldst do also, keeping thy eyes "ever towards the Lord," to watch for any sign that He may give thee: "The mind of the just studieth obedience."¹ If thou waitest for an express order thou practisest obedience certainly, but dost not "study" it; thou "studiest" obedience when thou divinest thy Lord's wishes, obeying the mere expression of the pleasure anything gives Him, rather than the command to do it: "Thou hast commanded Thy commandments to be kept most diligently."²

III. Consider thirdly, that servants keep their eyes fixed on their master, in the second place, in order to follow him wherever he goes; for, when they are not serving him in other ways, it is their business to accompany him. And this, too, thou must do with regard to God: thou must keep thy eyes "ever towards the Lord," in order to follow continually in His footsteps: "My foot hath followed His way," this is thy duty. But how canst thou fulfil it perfectly unless thou keepest thine eyes always turned upon Him, and thinkest within thyself how He behaved in similar circumstances when He was a wayfarer in human flesh upon the earth? Dost thou not know that

¹ Prov. xv. 28.

² Psalm cxviii. 4.

the greatest height of glory to which thou canst ever attain is to follow Him? "It is great glory to follow the Lord."¹

IV. Consider fourthly, that servants keep their eyes fixed on their master, in the third place, to crave either pardon, if they are chastised for idleness, or relief, if they are poor, or protection, if they are in danger, or advancement, if they have a chance of rising, in his court, to better fortune. And this it is, in the last place, which thou must do with regard to thy God, keeping thy eyes "ever towards the Lord." Thou art guilty, thou art poor, thou art in danger, thou art capable of gaining the great glory of Paradise. How, then, is it possible for thee ever to turn away thy eyes from those hands in which lies all the good that thou canst possibly hope for? "As the eyes of servants are on their masters, as the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of her mistress, so are our eyes unto the Lord our God, until He have mercy on us."² Dost thou not see that servants are never weary of turning suppliant looks on their master "until he have mercy"? How is it, then, that thou art so soon tired of looking towards God? Thou must keep looking up to Him "until He have mercy," as they do; and not only so, but also after He has had mercy, a thing which many ungrateful servants do not do. This is the way above all others, to be heard quickly; otherwise God will delay, even if He does not altogether refuse His graces. And why? because when thou hast received them, thou leavest off looking towards Him: "They were filled . . . and they lifted up their heart, and have forgotten Me."³

V. Consider fifthly, that if thou keepest thy eyes, in the manner here described, fixed always on God, thou wilt be safe from snares: "My eyes are ever towards the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the snare." For thou hast seen that for three reasons thou oughtest always, as a servant, to look with unwearied eyes towards thy Master, that is, in order to obey His signs, to follow Him, and to entreat Him. If thou obeyest Him in the manner described, be very sure that He will save thee from snares: "He shall pluck thy feet out of the snare," because he who obeys with exact submission not only is in no danger of falling, but not even of stumbling. This is the happy privilege of obedience, to be able to walk safely where another would be lost: "He that keepeth the commandment shall find no evil."⁴ If thou lookest upon

¹ Eccles. xxiii. 38.

² Psalm cxxii. 2.

³ Osee xiii. 6.

⁴ Eccles. viii. 5.

Him in order to imitate Him, thou mayest also be sure that He will deliver thee from snares: "He shall pluck thy feet out of the snare;" for if any man on earth is certain never to make a false step, it is he who, in every action that he has to perform, in every business, every undertaking, every practice, considers how Christ behaved on such occasions: "Whosoever shall follow this rule, peace on them."¹ And the rule is this: the imitation of Christ. The man who follows this rule has peace, because He is certain of pleasing Him in his actions. If, lastly, thou keepest thy eyes fixed on Him in order to entreat Him, then, most of all, art thou safe from snares: "He shall pluck your foot out of the snare," because by obeying our Lord in order to do His will, by imitating Him in order to be conformed to His life, thou wilt indeed become holy, but thou wilt not be sure of continuing so. Complete security will be thine by continually imploring His aid, as though thou wert doing no good thing: "Watch and pray."² Whenever thou ceasest to ask His help, then it will not be long before thou ceasest both to do His will and to conform thy life to His. Therefore thou must always go on asking for it even when thou hast obtained it; for, as thou hast obtained it, so, too, mayest thou lose it: "My eyes are always towards the Lord." Yet how many persons are there who will let whole days pass without ever raising their eyes to Heaven? "The eyes of fools are in the ends of the earth."³ Such men rob God of what He justly claims on so many titles, if we are His servants, namely, to be the Master of our eyes: "The eye of man is the Lord's."⁴ Far different was the conduct of that blessed youth whose feast you are this day keeping, St. Aloysius. Go through his life, and thou wilt see how, in all the three ways which thou hast been considering, he perfectly consecrated his eyes to God. What wonder is it, then, if he, in return, was preserved by God from all those snares from the midst of which he came forth a conqueror?

¹ Galat. vi. 16.² St. Mark xiii. 33.³ Prov. xvii. 24.⁴ Zach. ix. 1.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

Say not I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me? for the Most High is a patient rewarder (Ecclus. v. 4).

I. Consider first, the reason why so many persons become bolder every day in sinning. It is because God is slow to punish. If every time that a man uttered a blasphemous word he felt his tongue suddenly torn by cruel vermin, if his hands were withered as soon as he committed a theft, if whenever he was guilty of deception his intellect were clouded, if when any one falls into some shameful act of sensuality he were instantly covered with a disgusting leprosy, thinkest thou that there would be so many blasphemers, thieves, cheats, and dissolute persons in the world? It is because God is so slow to punish, because He is so longsuffering and silent, because He seems to take no notice, that men become so audacious: "Because sentence is not speedily pronounced against the evil, the children of men commit evils without any fear."¹ What monstrous wickedness; such persons are, indeed, "children of men," and not of God. To sin deliberately because God is good! It is easy to see that such children cannot belong to God, since they are so entirely different from Him. They are children of perdition, for this is the meaning of the expression "children of men." "The Son of Man" is always used in the best sense in the Sacred Scriptures; but "children" or "sons of men," always, or nearly always, in a bad sense. "O ye sons of men, how long will ye be dull of heart?"² "The children of men have spoken vain things."³ Thou seest, therefore, that to abuse God's mercy by sinning the more shamelessly, is to be in the number of the reprobate.

II. Consider secondly, what would become of thee, if ever thou wert to allow thyself to be led away to so great a pitch of wickedness. Oh, do not say, "I have sinned," I have given myself up to sin for a long time, and notwithstanding "no harm hath befallen me," no misfortune of any kind: I am in strong health; I have children, and they prosper; I have riches, and they increase; I have as many friends as I desire, and they are all attached to me; if I have any enemies, they fear me, at all events. Do not speak in this way, unhappy man; for such language is very odious, nay, it is intolerable to God: "This is not a word that may draw down mercy, but

¹ Ecclus. viii. 11.

² Psalm iv. 3.

³ Psalm xi. 3.

rather that may stir up wrath"¹ when it is kept in the heart, "and enkindle indignation" when it dares to pass the lips. What canst thou think, when thou speakest in such a manner? That there is not a God in the world, or that if there is, He is dull and insensible, and unaware of sin? Oh, how impious a word is this, "hath befallen!" for it implies that thou supposest God to have abandoned all providence and to act at random. How greatly art thou deceived, "for the Most High is a patient rewarder." He often delays, it is true, but He never fails to come. He often delays, because He is "patient;" but He always comes in the end, because He is a "rewarder." And if so, how is it possible that He can act at random? That may be the case with one who is not bound to give more to one than to another; but never with one who rewards.

III. Consider thirdly, the particular reason which makes the Wise Man here call God by the name of "the Most High." It is to remind thee that, as God is good, bearing with strange patience all the evil that thou dost, so too He is wise and powerful,—wise to perceive it, and powerful to punish it. Is He not the Most High? Then, He sees all that thou doest on earth, because His dwelling is on high, higher than the sun. Is He not the Most High? Then, He can always strike thee whenever He chooses, because He is always above thee. And yet thou dost not fear Him, nay, thou canst venture to utter such sacrilegious words as these: "I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me?" "Speak not anything rashly. . . . For God is in Heaven, and thou upon earth."² This, therefore, is the reason why God is here called "the Most High," that thou mayest begin to fear Him, notwithstanding His goodness: "Give place to the fear of the Most High."³

IV. Consider fourthly, that thou wilt fear God much more if thou rememberest that He is also "a patient rewarder." It is true that, at first sight, these words seem scarcely appropriate, for patience seems rather to belong to the one who receives payment than to the one who has to make it, and so the debtor in the parable said to the fellow-servant who was his creditor: "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all."⁴ It might seem, then, either that the Wise Man, instead of saying "rewarder," should have said "avenger," a noun to which the adjective "patient" is well suited; or that, instead of saying "patient," he should have said "faithful," an adjective

¹ Judith viii. 12.

² Eccles. v. 1.

³ Eccles. xix. 18.

⁴ St. Matt. xviii. 26.

which may very well precede the noun "rewarder." But if thou enterest into the sense of the passage, thou wilt see the force of the Wise Man's meaning. He meant to show that since God punishes not in anger, but in justice, He is not in haste to punish any one. How has He shown this? He has not chosen to say that God is an "avenger," because that word expresses anger: he has chosen to say simply that He is a "rewarder," a word which may equally refer to recompense and punishment. Now, it is true that, in the case of a recompense which is delayed, the patience is on the side of the one who receives it; but not so in the case of punishment: then the patience is on the side of the one who inflicts it. And as, in the text, the latter is in question, thou needest not wonder that the Wise Man says that God is "a patient rewarder."

V. Consider fifthly, that God is called a "rewarder" when He punishes, because He not only renders to the sinner the punishment which he has merited by his sins, but likewise restores to Himself the glory of which He was robbed. Indeed this is the primary end which God must have, and which He has, in punishing any one; and therefore when He spoke of visiting wicked Sidon with war and pestilence, He said: "Behold, I come against thee, Sidon, and I will be glorified in the midst of thee."¹ And therefore, strictly speaking, the title of "rewarder" is always more applicable to God than that of "avenger," because it better expresses the end which He has in punishing, and which is not thy punishment, but His glory. And if this is so, dost thou not see why, in inflicting this punishment, He is spoken of as a "patient," rather than a faithful "rewarder"? He is not called faithful, because He does not act with the utmost rigour by restoring to Himself the full amount of glory. If thou repentest, He remits a great deal—sometimes even the whole. But He is called "patient," on the contrary, because, ordinarily, He is in no haste to restore His glory to Himself, even when thou dost not repent: He proceeds deliberately, calmly; He finds no difficulty in waiting even a long time. Whenever, therefore, thou seest that He does not punish thee, even when thou art hardened in evil, do not say that God is not a "rewarder," as perhaps thou imaginest; but say that He is "a patient rewarder."

¹ Ezech. xxviii. 22.

VI. Consider sixthly, why it is that God finds no difficulty in waiting, even a long time, before restoring to Himself the glory so justly due to Him, no matter how rebellious thou mayest be. There are three reasons for this: First, because without this glory He has sufficient: "All the earth is full of His glory."¹ Secondly, because He is sure of being able to restore to Himself this glory, whenever He pleases, without reference to any one: "Vengeance is Mine, and I will repay;"² neither is there any danger, meanwhile, of thy eluding, or escaping Him. Thirdly, because the longer He delays in restoring this glory to Himself, the greater will it be: and therefore He does as the olive-tree does, which does not care to bear fruit every year, in order that it may be finer: "His glory shall be as the olive-tree."³ If He delays in restoring to Himself His glory, He will increase it, both by the unwearied patience He has shown in bearing with thee, and also because the longer thy punishment is in coming, the heavier it will be. He can well afford then to delay long. Dost thou not know, too, that when what is owing to a person is increased by delay, as in the case with interest on money, he shows the greatest patience in waiting for it? This is the case with God: and if so, thou knowest how rightly He is called "a patient rewarder," when the question is of punishment. I will tell thee when He is not so "patient" a "rewarder:" it is when the question is of reward, for He is in great haste to bestow benefits on thee. He sends thee evil by that necessity of restoring to Himself the glory thou hast robbed Him of, and so He does it slowly: "Ah, I will comfort Myself over My adversaries;"⁴ but He does thee good from His desire of doing it, with pleasure, from inclination, and so He is far quicker in doing it. And thou must know that the slower evil is in coming, the more grievous it is: when, therefore, the Wise Man in this passage says that "God will surely take revenge,"⁵ why does he say so? Thou canst not suppose it is a mere phrase. He says so because, in "avenging" thy past sins of commission, He "will avenge" also the sins of omission of which thou art now guilty by misusing the time which He gives thee for doing penance.

¹ Isaias vi. 3.² Deut. xxxii. 35.³ Osee xiv. 7.⁴ Isaias i. 24.⁵ Ecclus. v. 3.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

The founder hath melted in vain: for their wicked deeds are not consumed. Call them reprobate silver, for the Lord hath rejected them (Jerem. vi. 29, 30).

I. Consider first, that the "founder" here spoken of is God, Who is mentioned in several passages of the Sacred Scriptures under this similitude, in order to show that the labour, care, and anxiety He employs in cleansing men from their sins is like that which the chemist employs to purify silver in his crucible: "I will turn My hand to thee, and I will clean purge away thy dross."¹ And if thou askest what that crucible is which He principally makes use of, it is tribulation: "The furnace of humiliation."² For there is nothing which is better adapted for reforming the most depraved morals: "When thou shalt do Thy judgments on the earth the inhabitants of the world shall learn justice."³ When even this fails, all is over. And therefore it is this which God complains of in this passage in such terrible words, that He has vainly exhausted His utmost efforts on behalf of the reprobate: "The founder hath melted in vain;" for not even the heat of the fire, the most powerful means of all, has availed in their case: "I have spent all My strength in vain."⁴ Oh, what great cause hast thou for fear, if it so happens that thou knowest thyself to be in the number of those who are hardened in their iniquity, instead of being made better by the chastisements, such as disgrace, sickness, or misfortune, which God sends them for their sins! It is too likely a sign that thy case is desperate, since God has expended all His strength in thy behalf, and all in vain: "The founder hath melted in vain."

II. Consider secondly, that this is a marvellous prodigy, that, if we may so speak, God's strength in smiting man is sooner exhausted than man's malice, which is smitten by Him. Yet so it is: "Their wicked deeds are not consumed." And this shows the strength of thy free-will, since it is in thy power, as it were, to tire out God, Who is so earnestly bent on purging out the dross which debases thee. And therefore note well the expression of the Prophet. He says: "Their wicked deeds are not consumed," nor "their rust;" for although this is a great disfigurement to silver, yet it is entirely external, and therefore it can at length be removed, so that the silver remains

¹ Isaias i. 25.

² Eccclus. ii. 5.

³ Isaias xxvi. 9.

⁴ Isaias xlix. 4.

perfectly pure: "Take away the rust from silver, and there shall come forth a most pure vessel."¹ But it is not so with malice. Malice is an intrinsic defect in the substance of the silver, and such a defect cannot be removed, because it has its cause in the nature of the silver, which is not merely rusty, but bad. So must thou think it is in thy case. If thy sin may be said to have its source from without, from the force of external seduction, from bad company, bad conversation, from the evil suggestions of the enemy, then it is like a rust which affects thee, but which is, as it were, something that clings to thee, and there is hope of removing it, although sometimes this rust may be so great that it is impossible to do so: "Great pains have been taken, and the great rust thereof is not gone out, not even by fire."² But such a case is very rare; as a rule rust yields to the action of fire, and so when God puts thee, like silver, into the crucible of very great tribulation, He will purify thee. Not so when thy sin has its source in the depths of thy heart, that is, when thou sinnest from the evil disposition of thy will, because sin is a pleasure to thee, an enjoyment, a delight, because it is so dear to thee, that if an occasion of ill-doing is not presented to thee thou wilt go in search of one. Then, in thy case, sin is not merely like rust, it is malice, it comes from the inward parts: "Their iniquity hath come forth, as it were, from fatness."³ Therefore it is very difficult to purify thee as rusty silver is purified, because the fault lies in the inclination of thy free-will to evil, and we all know that "the perverse are hard to be corrected."⁴ Thou shouldst, therefore, begin without delay to lay aside that perverse inclination to evil, to hate and abhor it; then there will, even for thee, be hope of salvation; otherwise, oh, how hard will it be for thee to amend even in the midst of the Divine chastisements: "Thou hast struck them, and they have not grieved; Thou hast bruised them, and they have refused to receive correction."⁵ Dost thou mark that terrible word "refused"? It shows the force of thy free-will, which has the power of resisting even the severest chastisements which God sends thee: "Their wicked deeds are not consumed."

III. Consider thirdly, that in proof of this the Prophet gives public sentence of everlasting condemnation against those hardened sinners in the concluding words: "Call them reprobate silver, for the Lord hath rejected them"—reprobate

¹ Prov. xxv. 4.² Ezech. xxiv. 12.³ Psalm lxxii. 7.⁴ Eccles. i. 15.⁵ Jerem. v. 3.

silver, silver which cannot be purified, not even by fire. And this is why God ceases to send tribulations to these wicked men, who are not made better by disgrace, sickness, or misfortunes such as would be enough to humble any one short of a Pharaoh. He ceases to send them tribulations, because He sees that fire is of no avail in the case of that worthless silver. This is the meaning of the words. "The Lord hath rejected them;" He will no longer take that care, that thought of them, which He took when He punished every sin they committed without delay. On the contrary, He lets them go as they please: "I let them go according to the desires of their heart."¹ See, then, how needful it is for thee to value the tribulations which God sends thee, and to make use of them for thy amendment, otherwise He will leave off sending them: "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest My soul depart from thee."² Oh, how terrible a chastisement it is to be without chastisements! it is the greatest that God can send down upon any sinner in the world, the most severe, the most tremendous, because it is the clearest sign that "the Lord hath rejected" him, cast him off: "My jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will cease and be angry no more."³ So long as God chastises thee He is jealous of thee; that is, He takes care and trouble about thee, and consequently He shows that He expects to win thee to Himself. But when, on the contrary, He ceases to chastise thee, although thou hast not ceased to sin, then He is "angry no more;" and this is a sign that He reserves for thee a more terrible fire, even that of Hell, into which the "reprobate silver" is cast, not as silver which is to be purified, but as dross which is to be consumed: "I have refined thee, but not as silver."⁴ These words, "hath rejected," may very well be taken, in the prophetic sense, as standing for "will reject," for the prophets very commonly use the past for the future tense, in order to express more vividly the certainty of their predictions. And, if this is so, these words are tantamount to saying that in the Day of Judgment God will cast away from Him these miserable men. He "will reject them" by addressing them thus: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," for the fire which is "everlasting" is that which is kindled for the purpose of burning only, not of cleansing.

¹ Psalm lxxx. 13. ² Jerem. vi. 8. ³ Ezech. xvi. 42. ⁴ Isaias xlvi. 10.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace in all things (Ecclus. iii. 20).

I. Consider first, that there are three sorts of great men : those who are great in their own eyes, those who are great in those of men, and those who are great in the sight of God. Of the first sort are those who consider themselves great, those who are ambitious and haughty. But, in truth, they only think themselves great, they are not really so ; theirs is a would-be greatness, and the higher they fancy themselves to have attained, the lower they are in reality : "Thou sayest : I am rich . . . and knowest not that thou art miserable."¹ Those are great in men's eyes who are valued, loved, and honoured by every one on account of their qualities. But neither are they, speaking strictly, truly great, because their greatness is not absolute, it is only relatively so with regard to those who consider them great, but not with regard to those who do not consider them so. And so this greatness is valueless for three reasons : First, because men often place greatness in what is unsubstantial, such as vanities, thrones, sceptres, and crowns, and this is not solid greatness. Again, even when they take that to constitute greatness which is truly such, as holiness and wisdom, they do not always give their esteem to him who merits it, for very often they consider a man to be holy and wise who is not so. And, lastly, even when they do esteem one who merits it, they are not able to observe due proportion in this matter, but bestow more praise on one who merits less, and less on one who merits more : "The children of men are deceitful in their balances."² The truly great are those who are great in God's sight, because God Who considers them great makes them so. How different is His verdict from that of men ! Their presupposes merit in the persons praised, but His gives it : "He spoke, and they were made."³ Now, of these three kinds of greatness, which is thine ? God grant that, at all events, it may not be the first, *entirely* in thy own conceit : "Thou art exceeding contemptible ; the pride of thy heart hath lifted thee up ;" thou "who dwellest"—where ? in the third Heaven ? Not so : "in the clefts of the rocks."⁴

¹ Apoc. iii. 17.

² Psalm lxi. 10.

³ Psalm cxlviii. 5.

⁴ Abdias i. 2, 3.

II. Consider secondly, that the Wise Man is not here speaking to those great ones of the first kind, for he says, "The greater thou art," and they are not great; they are exceedingly small. And neither is it possible that he is speaking to those of the second kind, for he says, "The greater thou art," and they are not great, they are only thought to be so. Therefore he must be speaking to the third class, who are really great. And if thou art fortunate enough to be of that number, hast thou any reason for self-complacency? Quite the reverse: if thou art really great, so much the more art thou bidden to be humble: "The greater thou art," not "that thou art thought to be," "the more humble thyself in all things." And this for two reasons: first, because so much the more just it is, and, secondly, the more necessary, for thee to humble thyself. The more just, because the more exalted the qualities are which belong to thee, the more certain it is that they are not thine: "What hast thou that thou hast not received?"¹ If thy virtue were merely of an ordinary kind there would be more excuse for thy self-complacency, but if it is at all exalted and extraordinary thou art proud in ascribing it in any degree to thyself. It is, in the next place, the more necessary; for dost thou not perceive that thy care to prevent God from being angry with thee should be in proportion to the greatness of the gifts which He may deprive thee of in His anger? And if there is a thing likely to excite His anger it is thy vainly glorying in what thou mayest so easily perceive to be altogether His. Suppose that some beggar whom thou hadst out of compassion dressed well were to give himself airs, and assume authority amongst other poor men, wouldst thou not strip him of those clothes in thy anger? In the same way is it with God; when He gives thee a garment of virtue, it cannot be denied that it embellishes and adorns thee, that it imparts dignity to thee, but it is, after all, a garment which He has given thee: "Stay in the city," He said to the Apostles, "till you be endued with power from on high."² Therefore, as He has clothed thee, so, too, can He strip thee of this garment. And the richer it is, so much the more reason hast thou to fear. If thou desirest not to lose it thou must humble thyself: "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things." Besides, it is certain that the more numerous the gifts are which any one has received, the more heavy will be the account he must give of them: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required."³

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 7.² St. Luke xxiv. 49.³ St. Luke xii. 48.

Dost thou know how thou correspondest with what is given to thee? Thou canst discern the gifts that God bestows on thee according to these words: "We have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that are given us from God;"¹ but thou canst not know what correspondence thou makest with them. Thou mayest say, "I am not conscious to myself of anything," but at the same time thou art obliged to add: "Yet am I not hereby justified."²

III. Consider thirdly, that as it is not enough for a man to humble himself with regard to one gift only, but he must humble himself "in all things," so, too, neither is it enough to humble himself in one way. See how many sorts of humiliation there are, and believe that all of them are enjoined on thee by these words: "In all things." Thou must humble thyself in thy thoughts, words, and actions. As to thoughts, endeavour to be penetrated as deeply as possible with the knowledge of thy own nothingness, for this is true humility. And if at any time there should arise vain thoughts in thy mind, chase them away, despise them, or, at all events, do not consent to listen to them, so that if any one asks thee concerning vainglory, thou mayest be able to reply at once, in the words of St. Vincent Ferrer: "It is a bad visitor that comes and goes, but does not stay." "The perverse heart did not cleave to me."³ As to words, be careful to avoid false humility, not doing as some do, who anxiously repel the praise which is given to them, in order that it may return to them, as a ball rebounds with greater force after being thrown back; but at the same time always cherish true humility, allowing praise to fall to the ground and there to die a natural death, as the ball remains motionless when untouched. Be ready to praise those who deserve it, and readier still to listen to their praises, for pride may sometimes make a man speak in praise of others, but it can never make him take pleasure in hearing them praised. Speak of thyself as little as possible, for treasures that are revealed are almost lost: "Through this are the treasures opened, and the clouds fly out like birds."⁴ And even when it is right to speak of thyself, let thy language be of the sort held by the saints of old, such as the world of our day has forgotten; they did not ascribe things directly to themselves and indirectly to God, but directly to God and indirectly to themselves. Do not say: "By the grace of God

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 12² 1 Cor. iv. 4.³ Psalm c. 4.⁴ Eccclus. xliii. 15.

I have succeeded in gaining this soul," but say, "God has gained it;" as Joseph said: "They are my sons whom God hath given me;"¹ and Jacob: "The children which God hath given to me;"² and as David answered Abigail when she was anxious about Nabal: "The Lord God of Israel hath withholden me from doing thee any harm."³ And endless similar passages of Holy Scripture might be quoted, so common then was this manner of speaking, which is now obsolete. Do thou, however, use it, for it is the language of true humility. Then, as to actions, endeavour every day to perform some act of humiliation, however slight, in order to call to mind thy vileness. Thou knowest that the way to humility is by humiliation; but this is not all that humiliation can do, for when it is said, "Humble thyself in all things," there is no more to be said. If thou embracest every kind of humility wilt thou not have fulfilled every kind of justice? This is the opinion of a learned man, who teaches that when Christ said to His forerunner: "Suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice,"⁴ He meant to imply: "It becometh us to fulfil all humility." Pride contains every kind of injustice against God: "The proud did iniquitously altogether,"⁵ and humility, on the other hand, contains every kind of justice.

IV. Consider fourthly, how great a reward is promised thee if thou dost after this manner: "Thou shalt find grace before God!" And what is this grace? Surely that which so many have lost through pride; that which was lost by Adam, by Saul, by Solomon, by Lucifer himself—the highest grace. Do not fear that thou wilt not find it, the promise is sure, and therefore the word translated "find" is not *reperies*, but *invenies*. And why not *reperies*? because the finding it will not be due to chance, but to the merit of having sought for it. This is not to be wondered at; it is to the humble that God delights in giving His grace, because it is the humble who are faithful servants, that is to say, they do not rob Him. And dost thou not know that it is to the care of faithful servants that the richest treasures, the most secret documents are entrusted? This is how God deals with the humble. It is for this reason that Moses was honoured by God beyond all the saints of the Old Testament with the highest authority, the greatest miracles, because he was so faithful a servant: "Moses is

¹ Genesis xlviii. 9.² Genesis xxxiii. 5.³ 1 Kings xxv. 34.⁴ St. Matt. iii. 15.⁵ Psalm cxviii. 51.

most faithful in all My house."¹ And wherein does his faithfulness consist? In never claiming for himself any portion of this authority, of this working of miracles; nay, not even of that great familiarity with which God conversed with him, face to face, but ascribing everything to God: "The Lord alone was his leader."² He said that it was God only Who had been the captain of the people whom he had ruled with so much labour; he never mentions himself. If, then, thou desirest that God should bestow on thee greater grace than He has yet done, do thou be more faithful.

V. Consider fifthly, that, especially on this day, there is no need to turn to the Old Testament in order to find a faithful servant by whom thou mayest take pattern, thou hast one set before thee in the New Testament. As God said of Moses, he is "most faithful in all My house," so also could our Lord say of John, for what faithfulness, in other words, what humility, was ever greater than his? Doubtless he was very great in God's sight: "He shall be great before the Lord,"³ were the words of the Angel to Zachary concerning him. And he was equally great, too, in the sight of men, and that, too, even when confronted with Christ. So that, in this sense also, the prediction was verified. Thou knowest in what universal esteem he was. Although it was known that he was not of the tribe of Juda, yet the people would have him to be the true Messiah; although he never gave sight to the blind or hearing to the deaf, they were more inclined to believe in his sanctity without miracles than in that of Christ Who raised the dead from their graves. And how bright a light must that have been which shone, and shone with so dazzling a lustre, even before the true Sun: "before the Lord!" Yet so it was: "He was a burning and a shining light."⁴ And, notwithstanding, with what unspeakable faithfulness he acted with regard to his Master's interests! He scorned offers of homage, he despised honours, he denied that he was the Messiah, and gave himself no title but that of the "Voice." He might well have said that he was the Angel prophesied by Malachias: "Behold, I send My Angel, and he shall prepare the way before My face,"⁵ for, though not an angel by nature, he was one by office: he was God's messenger. He was an angel because he was born, though not created, with the use of reason; an angel, because he led a life on

¹ Numbers xii. 7.² Deut. xxxii. 12.³ St. Luke i. 15.⁴ St. John v. 35.⁵ Malach. iii. 1.

earth which was almost angelic, without food or raiment; an angel, because he never lost, but continually added to that first grace which he had received; an angel in his surpassing vigilance, an angel in his spotless virginity, an angel who always beheld the face of his God, never losing, even in the midst of crowds, that lofty gift of contemplation which he enjoyed in solitude. Yet he passed over these glorious testimonies to his dignity, and only mentioned that of Isaias: "The voice of one crying,"¹ to show that he desired to perform no other office in the world but that of a voice. And most fully did he obtain his desire, for as the voice is most faithful in making known to all the idea which is in the mind, but does not claim any share in the beauty, the goodness, or the glory of that idea, so was it with John with regard to Christ; that is, with regard to that Word of which he was the voice. He was only a voice to declare Him: a clear, loud, and mighty voice indeed, such as was required by the deafness of the people who heard him—"The voice of one crying"—but, after all, only the voice of a herald: "The voice of one crying, . . . Prepare ye the way of the Lord;" that is to say, he claimed the title of that voice which is the most laborious and the least in honour. Yet blessed indeed was he! The more he humbled himself the more grace he found in being exalted by Christ: "There hath not risen among them that are born of woman a greater than John the Baptist."² And, indeed, is not "grace" the meaning of the name John? Therefore he always found more and more of that which he already possessed. Do thou set this great Saint before thee as an example, if not in his greatness, in his humility, and so wilt thou too, in thy measure, find that grace which he found: "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God."

VI. Consider sixthly, why it is said, not, *quanto major es*, but *quanto magnus* (for thus it is in the Vulgate, though our translation has "greater"). Does it seem to thee that *quanto major* would be better? It is not so, and for this reason, that thou oughtest to esteem thyself just as God esteems thee, for this is real greatness; and God does not judge of thee by comparing thee with this or that person, He judges thee only by what thou art in thyself. This is what thou, too, must do. If thou comparest thyself, particularly with those who are less than thyself, thou doest what is both unjust and useless;

¹ Isaias xl. 3.² St. Matt. xi. 11.

useless, because the most that thou canst do is what the Apostles did when they disputed among themselves "which of them should seem to be the greatest,"¹ not "which was the greatest;" and unjust, because thou canst not prefer thyself to another for what is not thy own. If thou dost, God grant that thou mayest not become even less than those to whom thou preferrest thyself, as was the case with the Pharisee, who at once was shown to be less than the Publican whom he considered so far beneath him.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

Be glad in that day, and rejoice: for behold your reward is great in Heaven (St. Luke vi. 23).

I. Consider first, that all exultation proceeds from gladness; but that all gladness does not produce exultation. It is produced only by a very intense degree of gladness, which, not being able to be restrained within the bounds of the mind, breaks forth even into bodily manifestation: "A glad heart maketh a cheerful countenance."² As, therefore, gladness is a mental, so exultation is a bodily affection. See, then, to what an extent Christ would have thee rejoice, even at the very time when thou art hated, despised, mocked, and persecuted for His sake: "In that day." He would have thee rejoice in such a manner that thy gladness is made manifest, so that it may be not only internal, but external, for such a gladness has very great power to bring credit on His service, to encourage His followers, and to confound His enemies. What, then, canst thou say for thyself, when, at such a time, thou art not even able to feel gladness in thy heart, far less to show exultation by thy countenance? Consider that it is not without reason that thy Lord desires thee not only to be glad, but even to exult, in the midst of thy sufferings for Him, because He promises thee on account of them so great a glory in Heaven. Therefore, this glory is called by three names in the New Testament; a reward, a crown, a prize and an inheritance: and all these names are very appropriate. It is necessary to endure great labour to obtain it, and so it is called a reward, because a reward is due to labourers: "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."³

¹ St. Luke xxii. 24.

² Prov. xv. 13.

³ 1 Cor. iii. 8.

It is also necessary, in order to obtain it, to resist those enemies who strive so earnestly to prevent our doing so, the flesh, the world, and the devil, and so it is called a crown, for a crown belongs to the warrior: "He that striveth is not crowned, except he strive lawfully."¹ It is necessary to outstrip all those competitors who are called, but not elected to the same glory; and so it is called a prize, for the prize is due to the winners of the race: "They that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize."² And it is necessary, in order to obtain it, to be in a state of grace, that is, of sonship with God; and so, in the last place, it is called an inheritance, which is most justly the portion of sons: "If sons, heirs also."³ But although all these names are so suitable to the glory of Heaven, yet our Lord Jesus Christ has especially chosen to employ the first, namely, that of a reward, in His Gospel—"Your reward is great in Heaven."⁴ "He shall receive the reward of a prophet. . . . He shall receive the reward of a just man. . . . He shall not lose his reward."⁵ "Call the labourers, and pay them their hire" (*mercedem*)⁶—in order to show the certainty of receiving it. There is no acknowledgment which thou canst promise thyself with such certainty as that which is due to thee as a reward; for if men are sometimes so cruel as to refuse it to thee, do not fear that God will do so: "God, Who lieth not, hath promised."⁷ It would, indeed, have been enough to say, "God hath promised," for who can doubt that if God is truth itself, a lie must be directly opposed to Him? And yet the Apostle chose to add in express terms, "Who lieth not," in order that thou mayest be confounded, who, from being accustomed to have to do with men, art often obliged to be reminded that God is not like them, that is, a liar: "God is not as a man, that He should lie."⁸ Hear, therefore, how God tells thee that this reward is already thine, although it is not yet in thy possession: "For behold, your reward is great in Heaven." He does not even say "shall be," but "is," so certain would He have thee be of this reward.

II. Consider secondly, with what great reason this reward is called great, since it greatly exceeds the labour thou hast to endure to obtain it. The reward which thou receivest from men is generally a poor and scant reward; but this is super-

¹ 2 Timothy ii. 5.
St. Luke vi. 23.

² 1 Cor. ix. 24.
⁵ St. Matt. x. 42.

³ Romans viii. 17.
⁶ St. Matt. xx. 8.

⁷ Titus i. 2.

⁸ Numbers xxiii. 19.

abundant, for it is nothing short of God Himself: "I am thy reward, exceeding great."¹ Neither is it to be wondered at that the greatness of this reward is expressed by two words, *multa* and *magna*—the latter signifying the greatness of the goods which it contains, and the former their multiplicity; for what good thing will there be left for thee to desire when thou shalt possess Him in Whom all good is contained? "I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear."² Never wilt thou find anything on earth the contemplation of which can satisfy thee; on the contrary, it will but make thee hunger all the more. But no sooner will God show Himself to thee than He will both fill thee with the desire of Himself, and satisfy thy desire; and yet thy desire will always continue.

III. Consider thirdly, that this great reward is in Heaven: "Your reward is great in Heaven." Even when thou receivest an ample reward here below for the labours thou endurest for men, where, after all, dost thou receive it? On earth—that is, in a place where it may very easily be either spoiled or lost. Far otherwise is it in Heaven, the blessed country, "where neither rust nor moth doth consume,"³ where, therefore, the reward cannot be spoiled by corruption of substance, either external, which is signified by the rust, or internal, by the moth; and "where thieves do not break through nor steal"—where, therefore, the reward cannot be lost by the cunning of evil-doers. Besides, what good canst thou enjoy on earth which is genuine? All the good which thou receivest here for a reward is mingled with dross; all laughter with tears; only in Heaven is unmixed good. And, therefore, when Christ tells thee that thy reward is in Heaven, thou knowest that it is at once solid, certain, and perfect.

IV. Consider fourthly, that in these words Christ requires three things—that we should "be glad" (*gaudere*); that we should "rejoice" (*exultare*); and that we should do so at the very time when we are suffering for His sake: "In that day." And, therefore, answering to three requirements which seem so difficult, are these three qualities of the reward which have been spoken of—there is the certainty of their recompense, because it is a "reward" (*merces*), and this corresponds with the gladness; there is its fulness, because it is surpassingly great (*multa*); and lastly, eternity is opposed to time, for the reward is "in Heaven." It is true that here thou hast some considerable sufferings to endure for Christ, but how long

¹ Genesis xv. 1.² Psalm xvi. 15.³ St. Matt. vi. 20.

mode of expression which is frequent with the Apostle, who was fond of using the abstract for the concrete, as when he said "the circumcision," instead of "the circumcised," "the flesh," instead of "the carnal," and the like. This speech, which is called "good to the edification of the faith," should flow joyfully from thy lips, "proceed." Not that thy consent should not be given to its utterance, but that it should come forth naturally, in order to show that when thou wouldst speak, at a fitting time, of spiritual things, there should be nothing forced or laboured in thy way of doing so, but that it should insinuate itself, by its own nature as it were, in the conversations at which thou art present, so as to interrupt them when they are wanting in piety. "If any man speak, let him speak as the words of God,"¹ which search the depths of the soul indeed, but with the utmost sweetness. And this means: "Let that which is good" proceed "to the edification of faith," let it go forward, "proceed," to take its right place in a proper manner, not forcing its way violently, but "proceeding" calmly and naturally. Thou wilt say, perhaps, that thou art afraid to mix with spiritual persons, and to introduce holy subjects, however gently. But why art thou afraid? Is it because thou art ashamed of them? or because thou darest vainglory? If the former is the case, there is no need to hesitate, for this shame is a sign that thou art so far from being truly spiritual, that no one is likely to think thee so on such slight grounds as speaking of what ought to be a common subject of conversation with every Christian. Dost thou not claim to be a citizen of Paradise, even though thou art at present obliged to dwell as an exile in this miserable world? And art thou ashamed of speaking the language of Palestine because thou art in Babylon? If the fear of vainglory prevents thy speaking it, take courage, for it is a vain fear. Purify thy intention, and then do not heed anything that may be suggested to the contrary by a scrupulous or distorted imagination. Dost thou not think that, for the sake of doing good to others, it is often right to let others see thee do many good actions which otherwise thou wouldst prefer to conceal? Thus, Booz gave orders to his reapers to let fall purposely from time to time some of the ears of corn, which they would otherwise have bound in their sheaves, so that Ruth, who was watching them from a distance, might glean them without fear of observation: "Let fall some of your handfuls of purpose, that she may

¹ 1 St. Peter iv. 11.

gather them without shame.”¹ If thou art always occupied with escaping observation, how wilt thou be able to be useful to thy neighbour in any kind of good? It is enough to take care that in speaking of spiritual things thy intention is not a vain, but a charitable one. And such an intention is that of being useful to those who hear thee, so far as thy weakness allows; and this is exactly what the Apostle enjoins when he says: “Let no evil speech proceed from your mouth, but that which is good to the edification of faith;” he intends us to understand, let “that which is good” proceed, “that it may administer grace to the hearers.”

III. Consider, thirdly, what sort of grace it is which thy words will impart to thy hearers if they “proceed” in the manner that has been described. It is every kind of grace, exciting, assisting, and crowning grace, or by whatever other name thou mayest call it: “Good instruction shall give grace.”² For those who hear thee are either in the state of beginning to practise virtue, and to such persons spiritual discourses give the grace of compunction—that is, a grace which wonderfully stirs their hearts according to their various needs; or else they are in the state of progress, and then the grace given is that which confirms or advances them in the virtue which they are practising, and this is the grace which assists them to do it. Or, lastly, they are in the state of perfection, and then the grace they receive is that of praising God for what they hear of Him, and of rejoicing in it, which is the grace that is the completion and the crown of all their good works: “A garland of joy.”³ And it seems that all this was intended by the Apostle when he says in another place: “He that prophesieth” (that is, speaks of holy things) “speaketh to men unto edification and exhortation and comfort;”⁴ that is, to the “edification of beginners who have yet to build the spiritual edifice; to the “exhortation” of the more advanced, who are building it; and to the “comfort” of the perfect, who have built it. The good that is done to all sorts of persons by such discourses cannot be imagined. They cannot, indeed, do more than dispose souls for the reception of the grace which, after all, is entirely the gift of God; and, nevertheless, the Apostle speaks of them as gaining it: “That it may administer grace to the hearers.” Because such is their force, that in a certain sense they may

¹ Ruth ii. 16.² Prov. xiii. 15.³ Isaias xxviii. 5.⁴ I Cor. xiv. 3.

be said to bestow it, as the words of the priest do when by the sublime authority which is his, he absolves his penitents. Therefore, seek such conversations as much as possible, all the more, because thou canst not do good by them to those who listen to them, without receiving good thyself from those who answer thee: "He that inebriateth shall be inebriated also himself"¹—that is to say, supposing that you speak of spiritual things with those who take pleasure in doing so. And therefore the Apostle concludes, "That it may administer grace to the hearers," not "to the scorers;" for if any one scorns such subjects, there is no doubt that you ought not to expose them to open contempt. "There is one that holdeth his peace because he knoweth not what to say"—and this is the conduct of a coward; "and there is another that holdeth his peace, knowing the proper time"²—and this is the conduct of a wise man.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

When I go into my house I shall repose myself with her; for her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness (Wisdom viii. 16).

I. Consider first, that the Person here spoken of is Divine Wisdom, the Spouse Whom you should resolve to choose, conversing and keeping company with Him so as to find in Him the deepest repose by the practice of prayer, and that not only daily but continual; for this is the meaning of "conversation" and "company." "Company," that is, living together (*convictus*), implies conversation, unless this latter is accidentally interrupted. "Conversation" does not imply living together. Persons who inhabit the same city converse together; persons who dwell in the same house live together. Conversation, therefore, is occasional; and living together is continual intercourse. Now just so is it with regard to God. There are some who speak to Him every morning, during a certain period of devout prayer; and then, for the rest of the day, hardly ever think of Him; and such persons may be said to converse with Him. Others speak to Him, not only in the morning, but all day long, by the practice of the Divine Presence, with which they are familiar; and these not merely

¹ Prov. xi. 25.

² Ecclus. xx. 6.

converse, but live with Him. Of which number art thou? Art thou contented with conversing with thy Lord, or dost thou also live with Him? God grant that thou mayest, at all events, do the first.

II. Consider secondly, that conversing and living with men and with God are very different things. Conversing with men brings "bitterness," because they are by nature proud, difficult to please, quarrelsome; and so they soon annoy thee in some way. Living with them causes "tediousness," because, even when they are not men of this character, they are, after all, but men, and, therefore, in the long run, it is impossible not to tire of them. But with God it is different: "Her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness." No bitterness can be feared in conversing with God, for His nature is full of sweetness: "My spirit is sweet above honey."¹ Neither is there any fear of tediousness in His company, for He says these words of Himself, to show that His is not a cloying sweetness like that of honey. No matter how sweet, kind, and gentle may be the disposition of those with whom thou hast to do, thou wilt surely in the end find them wanting in some quality thou desirest, and this is enough to cause tediousness. But what quality that thou canst desire is wanting in God? The more thou art with Him, the more perfect wilt thou see Him to be, and so the farther thou wilt be from any danger of wearying of Him. And so, as time goes on, not only wilt thou find no "bitterness" in His "conversation," no "tediousness" in His "company," but the fulness of "joy" in the one and of "gladness" in the other.

III. Consider thirdly, that although joy and gladness are constantly confounded, yet, strictly speaking, they are different; joy concerns a good that is present, gladness one that is future: "The expectation of the just is joy."² When thou hearest of the near approach of a friend whose return from a distant country thou hast been impatiently expecting, thou art conscious of an interior sensation of delight which urges thee to go to meet him; but so far it is, properly speaking, gladness rather than joy that thou feelest. It is joy that thou feelest when thou art in his presence, greeting and embracing him, and knowing surely that thou possessest the good for which thou hast been hoping. So is it in the case we are considering. The mere conversation that thou hast with God,

¹ Ecclus. xxiv. 27.

² Prov. x. 28.

which has no existence before ; the former is to draw a thing forth from the substance of that which has the power of generating it ; and therefore these works are not now like those which required, so to speak, an effort of Omnipotence ; they are works which, by comparison with these last, may be called "rest ;" and so it is rightly said that the Divine Wisdom "rested on the seventh day from all the works which He had done." Think, then, that in a certain way this is what the soul does in that sublime prayer of quiet which is its Sabbath of delight. She rests, indeed, but how? does she not act? Yes ; but not as at first, when she began to meditate. Then the works that she did were all laborious (*patrabat*) ; for she had, as it were, to create the pictures, the matter for the understanding, the affections with which she was engaged, and consequently there was a great effort of her faculties to be made ; but now it is not so. Now she does all these things with so much ease that it is as though she were not acting ; it is production, not creation ; and so she is said to rest. She sees, indeed, that all the laborious works which she once did in her meditation were good to do ; "they were very good," because in substance they contained these other more delightful works ; nevertheless, she does not rest "in them," because she no longer has need of them ; on the contrary, she rests "from them," since she does works which are productions rather than creations, and so she "rests from all the works which" she "had done." Dost thou, too, not feel the desire of entering this blessed land of rest, where all working days are over for ever, and where every day is a Sabbath? How wonderfully the Apostle understood this when he said, "There remaineth, therefore, a day of rest for the people of God, for he that is entered into his rest"—that is, into the land we are speaking of—"the same also hath rested from his works, as God did from His."¹ But if thou longest after this Sabbath, remember that many days of labour must come first : "On the seventh day is the Sabbath."²

VI. Consider sixthly, that it is possible thou mayest think this land of rest is very far off, and that thou hast to cross seas and mountains to reach it, as the children of Israel did in their journey from Egypt to Palestine. Not so ; it is within thee. Listen to the words of the Wise Man : "When I go into my house I shall repose myself with her." Thou hast not to go to the house of thy Spouse ; only be wise and loving

¹ Hebrews iv. 9, 10.

² Exodus xvi. 26.

as thou oughtest to be, and the Spouse will come to thy house. Thou hast but to call Him: "I called, . . . and the Spirit of Wisdom came."¹ The important thing is to enter thoroughly into thyself; for as long as thou art wandering about at the gates of the senses, thou art doing nothing. Retire from intercourse with creatures. What is the use of seeing, hearing, talking of all sorts of things? So long as thou doest this thou art outside, not in thy house; and outside, Wisdom invites indeed, warns, upbraids, corrects, but does not embrace: "Wisdom preacheth abroad, she uttereth her voice in the streets," but she does not give her kisses; "at the head of multitudes she crieth out, Turn you at my reproof." If thou wouldst enjoy the heavenly delights, the embraces, the caresses, the love of Wisdom, leave the public places. What do I mean by this? That it is by retiring from creatures that thou wilt really espouse Wisdom in thy prayer, enjoy His conversation, His company, and taste in intercourse with Him that rest which is so full of blessedness. So long as thou chooseth to delight in creatures, thou wilt never be able to delight in Him Who made them. Be no longer anxious to converse with them, except for the purpose of bringing them to know the One True Good Whom thou knowest: "He that heareth, let him say, Come."² For besides, thou seest well what their conversation and company are. The one is full of bitterness, and the other of tediousness. Dost thou not yet believe this? It is a sign that thou hast not yet experienced what it is either to converse or to live with God.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

Be not afraid to be justified, even to death; for the reward of God continueth for ever (Eccclus. xviii. 22).

I. Consider first, that even if the reward which God has in store in Paradise for His servants were an ordinary reward, there ought not to be a man in the world who would not be most ready to expend all his exertions and labour in gaining it, because it is eternal. How much more, when it is so great that it is called "the reward of God"? Dost thou think that the reward to be hoped for from a Lord of such majesty can fail

¹ Wisdom vii. 7.

² Apoc. xxii. 17.

to be very great, nay, the very greatest? It is enough that the reward He will give thee will be all the good that He possesses in Himself: "I am thy protector and thy reward exceeding great." How, then, is it possible that for so unspeakable a reward thou art not ready to toil, to labour, to endure any trouble, however great, to the last moment of thy life? "Be not afraid to be justified, even to death; for the reward of God continueth for ever." It would be no more than reasonable if an eternal reward were preceded by a labour which were, if not eternal—for that would be impossible—at least many centuries in duration. Yet see how short it is, especially in our time; scarcely thirty years in the case of most men; if it continues sixty or seventy years, we think it very long indeed. Art thou not willing to labour, even for so short a period, in order to gain an eternity of enjoyment? God, in His infinite pity, is always shortening men's lives, that they may have the less cause to complain of Him if they are not saved.

II. Consider secondly, that some persons are so far from being willing to endure this labour to gain Paradise, that they are even ashamed to do so; for this is implied in the word translated "to be afraid" (*vereri*). They are ashamed of praying much, of going often to Confession and Communion, of practising a degree of diligence which may seem like anxiety; they are ashamed "to be justified, even to death." Is not this almost like thinking that one can do too much to ensure salvation? If, on the contrary, thou didst think (as indeed thou shouldst think) that thy labour is very little, thou wouldst not be ashamed that every one should see thee striving earnestly to gain salvation. When the reward is trifling, it is a thing to be ashamed of to spend much toil and exertion in gaining it; for that is acting like the spider, which spins its own entrails, to gain nothing after all its labour but some miserable flies; but when the reward is very great, who is there who would be ashamed of being seen, not only to toil, but even to die to gain it? Yet many Christians are senseless to this degree. They are not ashamed of being seen hastening to the Indies, braving tempests and battles, exposing their lives to a thousand dangers, because they know that if they are fortunate enough to return home, they will do so laden with gold. And yet they are ashamed of being seen to fast, to go to Confession and Communion a little oftener, in order to gain the Kingdom of Heaven. Does not this show that they have

formed a very low estimate of that Kingdom? "Be not afraid to be justified, even to death, for the reward of God continueth for ever."

III. Consider thirdly, how well it is said, "Be not afraid to be justified, even to death," because thou oughtest not to be ashamed of acting, to the end of thy life, as though every day were that on which thou hadst begun to live justly. Yet this is the very thing of which persons are most ashamed in the service of God, as time goes on, namely, of acting like beginners, of showing the same alacrity and diligence which they practised at first. Is not this a most serious error? "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended,"¹ said the Apostle who was so advanced in the path of perfection, and therefore, "forgetting the things that are behind," as though, in a certain way, I felt shame in remembering them, "and stretching forth myself to those that are before," by urging, and spurring myself on afresh, "I press towards the mark," just as if I were beginning the race over again. And is it possible that thou art ashamed to do so, thou who art so far less perfect than the Apostle? If thou art near the goal, all the more reason is there to run as eagerly as on leaving the starting-post, and not to be ashamed: "Be not afraid to be justified, even to death." And is it not true that thou hast need of justification every day? Oh, how many imperfections do we continually commit! If, then, this be so, what reason is there to be ashamed of considering thyself every day, not a beginner only, but a sinner? Thou art bound, as such, to be always doing as much to add to thy justice as people do at the beginning to acquire it: "He that is holy, let him be sanctified still."¹ Thou wilt not have perfectly fulfilled this commandment of God till thou hast come to regard every day as that on which thou hast to begin the work of thy justification.

¹ Philipp. iii. 13.

² Apoc. xxii. 14.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

FEAST OF THE HOLY APOSTLES, SS. PETER AND PAUL.

Now, therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and the domestics of God, built upon the foundations of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone (Ephesians ii. 19).

I. Consider first, that the assembly of the faithful, that is, the Church, is often called in the Scriptures by two names, a city and a house. A city is governed by public, a house by private laws; and therefore persons living in the same city have intercourse with each other in public actions only; those who inhabit the same house in private ones also. The ruler of the city is called a prince, the ruler of the house is called a father. But he who is a father in regard to his house, ought also to be a good prince in regard to his city, and he who is a good prince in regard to his city, ought also to be a father in regard to his house. Now, if you consider it rightly, you will see that the community of the faithful partakes of both characters, because, as to the majority, who are only bound to observe the precepts, it is like a city; and as to the lesser number, who are bound to observe, not the precepts only, but the counsels, it is like a house; and therefore it is written, "All her domestics are clothed with double garments," that is, the precepts and the counsels. Our Lord Jesus Christ is equally the Head of both, of the simple citizens and of those who are compared to domestics: "He is the Head of the Body, the Church."¹ Although, indeed, He rather represents the prince than the father, as to the former, whom He governs only by the general laws of the precepts; and rather the father than the prince as to the latter, whom He governs not only by the general laws of the precepts, but also by the particular laws of the counsels. Still He is, in truth, equally a prince and a father: "The Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace."² Having settled this, thou wilt easily understand why it is said to Christians, "Now, therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners;" because, if they are in the number of those who are subject to the general laws of Christ, they acknowledge Him as their Prince, and consequently they are not foreigners but citizens; and if they are in the number of

¹ Coloss. i. 18.

² Isaiah ix. 6.

those who are subject not merely to the general but to the particular laws of Christ, then they acknowledge Him not only as their Prince but as their Father, and consequently they are not strangers but domestics. Therefore in whatever state thou art, vow obedience to Him with thy whole heart, tell Him that thou wilt always behave to Him as He deserves, that is, that thou wilt fear and love Him; fear Him as thy Prince, and love Him as thy Father; and desire, too, that this may be done by all those who do not yet acknowledge Him, so that the words of Christ may be more and more verified: "Behold an inhabitant shall come, who was not with Me, he that was a stranger to thee before shall be joined to thee."¹ "The inhabitant" shall come to the house, the "stranger" to the city.

II. Consider secondly, that this Church, that is, this community, both of "citizens" and "domestics," in which thou art, is built upon a great foundation, that of the Apostles and Prophets; for both these equally concur in proving the truth of our religion, the Prophets by their predictions in the Old, the Apostles by their preaching in the New Testament, the only difference between them being that the Prophets foretold what was to be done, and the Apostles preached it as accomplished. Otherwise they are one and the same thing, and therefore it is not said "built upon the foundations," but "upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets," for not the slightest discrepancy can be found between them. Take the Gospels in thy hand, and it will be a sweet subject of contemplation to see how every part of what the Prophets so long before foretold concerning Christ is fulfilled, according to these words: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an Apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God, which He had promised before by the Prophets."² It had been prophesied that the future Messiah was to come of the lineage of David, to be born of a Virgin in Bethlehem, and at a time when the sceptre should have passed from Juda; that He should be adored by the Magi, that He was to flee into Egypt and return thence, that He was to have for His Forerunner a man of great sanctity living in the wilderness, that He should work miracles, teach, preach, suffer, be sold for thirty pieces of silver, die a shameful death upon the Cross between two thieves, naked and abandoned; that He should be mocked, and that vinegar should be given

¹ Isaiah liv. 15.² Romans i. 1.

Him to quench His thirst; that afterwards He was to rise gloriously from the tomb, ascend into Heaven, send down the Holy Ghost from thence, and draw to His faith the most distant nations, and that by means of men who were poor, weak, and despised. All these things the Prophets foretold would come to pass, and all these we see the Apostles preached as having been accomplished. And this is a consolation to the faithful which cannot be expressed; for how could so full, perfect, and accurate a declaration of the future be made so many ages beforehand, unless it came from God? Unhappy people of the Jews, who read in their books these things concerning our Lord, see them so exactly fulfilled, and yet do not believe! But this, too, was foretold; that countless numbers would not believe even what they saw with their eyes. And this the Apostle intended when he quoted these words of the Psalmist: "Let their table be made a snare and a trap and a stumbling-block and a recompense unto them."¹ For, in truth, to the Jews this richly-spread "table" of the Holy Scriptures, which is theirs, instead of giving them wholesome food, is "a snare," when they find in them ambiguous expressions; "a trap," when, by crooked interpretation of these expressions, they are caught in some error of the understanding; "a stumbling-block," when from an error of the understanding they fall into obstinacy of the will; and lastly, it is "a recompense" when they are punished by the extremity of ignominy for all that in their pride they did against our Lord.

III Consider thirdly, that this foundation which we have in the Apostles and Prophets is, nevertheless, not the primary but a secondary foundation. The primary foundation is Christ, the "Foundation of the foundation," as St. Augustine said. On this, that is, on "Jesus Christ Himself, the chief Corner-stone," those glorious personages rested, and we rest on them; for which reason it is not simply said that we are "built" (*ædificati*), but "built upon" (*superædificati*), because their building came first, then ours upon theirs. It is true that ours is as firm as theirs, because, after all, it is one and the same, Christ Himself being the Corner-stone. We all equally rest on Him, the first Foundation-stone: "For other foundation no man can lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus;"² and the meaning of "chief Corner-stone" is not "chief" in the sense of grand or lofty, but chief in its

¹ Romans xi. 9.

² 1 Cor. iii. 11.

character of foundation, that is, primary. See, then, how beautiful is this stone, Jesus Christ our Lord; see how, in Him, is verified that prophecy of *Isaias*: "Behold, I will lay a stone in the foundations of Sion, a tried stone, a corner-stone, a precious stone, founded in the foundation."¹ Who that stands firm on this stone can fear anything? It is one which will never give way. Consider all the floods of fire, sword, wild beasts, furies, that Hell has poured forth from its gates in order to overthrow the lofty edifice built upon this stone, the Holy Church. Have they succeeded in doing so during all these centuries? In no degree; neither will they succeed through those that are yet to come: "The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."² How shouldst thou thank God when thou seest that He has founded thy faith on such a stone!

IV. Consider fourthly, that this stone is called a "corner-stone," because, in the primary foundation which it forms, it unites together (for this is the characteristic of corner-stones) those stones forming the second foundation, which are separated from each other by so great a distance of time, that is, the Prophets and Apostles; because it has united the Gentiles, to whom the Apostles preached, with the Jews to whom it was foretold by the Prophets, and so, of two nations, has made but one: "For He is our peace, Who hath made both one."³ And how has He done this? By "breaking down the middle wall of partition." Therefore, represent to thyself the Jews and Gentiles placed in the world, as in a vast plain. They were both alike under the obligation of the moral precepts enjoined by God, forbidding murder, fornication, theft, and the like; for these laws bind all men without exception; but they were not alike under the ceremonial precepts, such as circumcision, going up to Jerusalem, the offering of victims, purifications, and countless similar things. All these were like a high wall, which kept them asunder, even as to their souls. It is true, indeed, that this wall was merely temporary, and so when Jesus came into the plain, Who was the Lord of both peoples, He, by His authority, threw down the wall, and so "made both one" by making Jews and Gentiles, on believing in Him, become one nation. And so it is that the Old Law is at an end as regards ceremonial precepts; neither is this wonderful, since all of these were so many promises of our Lord, which were given to them under various forms, "to

¹ *Isaias* xxviii. 16.² *St. Matt.* xvi. 18.³ *Ephes.* ii. 14.

confirm the promises made unto the fathers,"¹ so that when once those promises were fulfilled, they were entirely useless. For how long is a deed valuable by which a property or a palace is promised? Surely till the property or the palace is given; after that, it is destroyed. And so it was with these ceremonial precepts; after the coming of Christ: "The promise is made of no effect."² But if the Law is at an end so far as they are concerned, it is not at an end as regards the moral precepts; on the contrary, it is strengthened by the powerful aid of the Evangelical Counsels. Thou seest, then, how true it is, that Christ came "not to destroy but to fulfil the Law."³ For the Law was divided into moral and ceremonial precepts. As to the former, He has fulfilled it by adding to the benefit of the precepts that of the counsels, enjoining, for example, not only not to hate an enemy—"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart"⁴—but also to do him good: "Do good to them that hate you."⁵ And as to the ceremonial precepts, He has fulfilled it by causing the figure to make way for that which it prefigured, namely, Himself; and so, as to this part of the Law, He has fulfilled it by the very act of making an end of it; just as we say of a pilgrim who has hung up his *ex voto* at Loreto, that he has both fulfilled and made an end of his vow. So true is it, that Christ has given to the Law all the perfection it was capable of receiving. Refresh thy soul, then, with these beautiful thoughts, that so, continually reviving thy faith in thy Lord, thou mayest show thy fidelity to Him alike in faith and in works, a thing which is especially required of thee by the feast we are celebrating to-day.

¹ Romans xv. 8.² Romans iv. 14.³ St. Matt. v. 17.⁴ Levit. xix. 17.⁵ St. Matt. v. 44.

THIRTIETH DAY.

THE COMMEMORATION OF ST. PAUL.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword? (As it is written: "For Thy sake we are put to death all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.") But in all these things we overcome, because of Him that hath loved us (Romans viii. 35, 36).

I. Consider first, how closely the Apostle must have been united to his Lord by the way of love, when he broke out into this fervent exclamation: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" It was as though he challenged all possible ills to try whether they could succeed in making him cease to love Him. For although it is true that the words "from the love of Christ" may have a twofold meaning, and signify both the love of Christ for Paul and the love of Paul for Christ, yet it is to be thought, according to the general opinion, that they rather bear the latter than the former meaning; otherwise it would seem that the Apostle might rather have said, "Who shall separate Christ from our love?" than "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Besides, what doubt can there be that all the ills which we suffer for God, "which we overcome because of Him that hath loved us," can never make Him cease to love us? Rather do they make Him love us still more. The danger is that they may cause us to grow slack in loving Him, and to think that we have to pay too dear for doing so. And this is what the Apostle declared never had happened in his case, therefore he concluded, "Who, then, shall separate us?"

II. Consider secondly, that, as I said, these words of the Apostle were a challenge to all possible ills. For all these belong either to life or to death, and thou seest that he defied both. And since, among those belonging to life, there are some which concern the body, and others which concern the mind, he defied first the former, and then the latter. Tribulations belong to the body, for their name is taken from those thorns (*tribuli*) which pierce the flesh so painfully; and so he exclaimed, "Shall tribulation?" Distress belongs to the mind, for it is the feeling which oppresses the heart of a man when

he sees no way of escaping from the tribulations which have come upon him; and so he exclaimed, "Shall distress?" Some of the tribulations referred to here consist in the want of what is necessary for the support of life, such as food and clothing, and so the Apostle defied first famine and then nakedness: "Shall famine or nakedness?" Others, again, consist in the endurance of what does not actually take away what is necessary, but may very easily do so; and all this is summed up in two words: "Shall danger or persecution?" for it is either an evil which comes of itself, and then it is called danger, or one which is brought about by men, and then it is called persecution. And as to the evils which belong to death, he expressed them all by saying, "Shall the sword?" for by this word is understood not a natural, but a violent death, torture, bloodshed, and slaughter. Well for you if but one of all evils is not enough to separate you from the love of Christ; think, therefore, how great was the virtue which defied the whole of them.

III. Consider thirdly, that the Apostle did not thus courageously defy these evils as being possible, indeed, but not probable evils, such as thou sometimes imaginest in time of prayer. Then thou picturest thyself taken prisoner by the barbarians for the love of God, bound, chained, and then dragged to the public square to be burned at a slow fire; and it seems to thee that thou art not merely heartily willing, but even desirous of bearing all these evils, because they are all very distant, and though possible, by no means probable. But this was not the case with the Apostle: the evils which he defied were not only near at hand, but imminent, and therefore he added, "As it is written," &c. He knew that he was in the number of those of whom it is written: "For Thy sake we are put to death all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet knowing all this, he held it for certain that no torture, no bloodshed, no slaughter would shake his love for Christ: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" This, then, is the lot of the saints, not only to mortify themselves, but to be mortified, or rather dead: "We are put to death," and that too, "all the day long," that is to say, for the whole of their lives: "We, who live, are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake."¹ What more can be said than that they are in the position of sheep set apart to be killed? "We are accounted as sheep for the

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 11.

slaughter ;” that is, they are like animals which men put to death readily, gladly, and without the slightest pity: “The hour cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God.”¹ What thinkest thou of that, thou who art so tender of thyself? This is the lot of the saints, to suffer for God’s sake, “to be put to death,” and that in the most cruel manner, “as sheep for the slaughter.” This is why the Apostle did not defy prosperity, though it, too, often has great power in separating people from Christ: it was adversity only that he defied, because he knew that, by the grace of his Lord, it was not written of him that he should be well treated, caressed, applauded by the world, but, on the contrary, that he was to be ill-used by it: “It is written: For Thy sake we are put to death all the day long.” Alas, for those of whom the contrary is written!

IV. Consider fourthly, that thou, too, sometimes thinkest thyself well prepared to suffer many things for God, as to evils which are not only possible, but probable: in food, clothing, and others of the same sort; but when it comes to the proof, it is not so, thou art overcome by the first attack. How different was it with the Apostle! He defied evils to the attack; and then when they came, he conquered them: “But in all these things we overcome because of Him that hath loved us.” At times thou overcomest some, but not all: for example, if thou art able to resist those which affect the body, thou art overcome by those which affect the mind, or the reverse. He overcame them all: “In all these things we overcome.” Do I say, he overcame? he did more, he went purposely to encounter them; and so the word which, in the Latin version, is *superamus*, “we overcome” or “conquer, signifies in the Greek “we are more than conquerors.” He is a conqueror, who courageously endures the evils which happen to him in the day; but he who is not content with this, but also goes forth to encounter others, is not merely a conqueror, but more than a conqueror: just as the great Patriarch Job was not satisfied with the continual and severe sufferings with which the enemy afflicted his body, but increased them, by irritating with sharp substances the sores, which he might have relieved by bandages: “He scraped the corrupt matter with a potsherd.”² What canst thou say for thyself, who not only art not able to be more than conqueror, but not even to conquer in things that are so much less? Is

¹ St. John xvi. 2.

² Job ii. 8.

not this a just reason for humbling thyself? Listen to the Apostle's words: "In all these things we overcome;" he does not say, "we overcome all these things," but "in all these things we overcome," to show that his victory was not at an end with the evils he enumerated, but that if any others had been possible, he was ready to overcome those also.

V. Consider fifthly, that this is not a reason for being discouraged. Thou too, if thou wilt, mayest attain to this according to thy state. All that is needed is to be enkindled with the love of Jesus. It was this which gave the Apostle so much strength: "In all these things we overcome," he says, "because of Him that hath loved us." There are two things which he might mean us to understand by the words "because of Him:" the love which he bore to Christ, and the help which he received from Christ, and surely both these things may encourage thee also. If, then, thou wouldst feel this love, and hope for this help, do this: set thyself to consider how greatly our Lord has been pleased to love thee. Not only He loves, but He "hath loved," for He loved thee even before thou didst set thyself to love Him, before thou wert even capable of loving Him. He loved thee, when He elected thee, before the foundation of the world, to admit thee to a share of His glory, if only thou art willing; He loved thee when He created thee; He loved thee when He preserved thee; He loved thee when He gave thee such great opportunities of doing good; but above all, He loved thee when for thy sake He endured evils so much greater than any which He requires of thee in return. For what evil is it which assails thee? "Tribulation"? but thy thorns can never be like those of thy Jesus, which made so sharp a crown for His Head. "Distress"? but what distress, after all, is that which is thy portion? Is it such as to make thee sweat blood? Is it "hunger" or "nakedness"? but can thy food and clothing be as poor as those of Christ, Who always led so hard a life for thy sake? "I am poor and in labours from My youth."¹ Is it "danger"? but think of the dangers to which He, a tender Infant, was exposed in a strange land. "Persecution"? but what did He receive, when grown to Manhood, from His own country even? Or "the sword"? but as to this, thou hast only to cast a glance on thy crucifix.

Psalm lxxxvii. 16.

Canst thou ever be reduced to such a condition for Him? See, then, how thy Lord was "tempted in all things,"¹ solely for love of thee; and if He "hath loved" thee to such a degree, canst not thou love Him with all possible love, expect from Him all possible help, and so be able to say with the Apostle: "But in all these things we overcome, because of Him that hath loved us."

¹ Hebrews iv. 15.

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